



#9

## THE NEST

BY DOMINIC COVEY

In this adventure, *The Nest*, the PCs come across an old abandoned mining town in the mountains just as a seasonal sandstorm begins to hit. Seeking shelter for the night (and from the storm) the PCs explore the deserted town before finding a suitable place to pass the storm, unaware that the ground beneath them - and the town around them - is in fact infested with a nest of extremely dangerous creatures, intent on making the party their next meal.

*The Nest* is designed for characters of levels 6-9. Unlike some adventures, *The Nest* requires you to be familiar with the material and fully understand how the course of the story unfolds, phase by phase. More than anything, a proper feel for the story's pacing is vital to the enjoyment of the adventure.

### GETTING STARTED

*The Nest* begins as the PCs are making their way through the mountains; the destination isn't important (it can be en route to another job, or this adventure can even take place on an otherwise uneventful leg of an existing scenario), but along the way they happen upon an old abandoned town nestled in a small valley in a dry, desolate forest. What's worse, a sandstorm is now blowing over the region, forcing them to take shelter for the night...

*The journey has been rough going, but it looks like its only going to get rougher. The rugged mountains are covered in dry forests, and the old trail you've been taking is almost totally overgrown with weeds. But for the past few hours the wind has picked up and shows no signs of dying down, and with it a full-blown sandstorm*

*has hit the mountains.*

*Visibility has dropped to just a few yards. The ghostly forms of dead trees vanish in and out of the storm. The sand bites at your eyes and every exposed bit of flesh. If you don't find cover soon*

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### TINDALE

The small town of Tindale predates the Fall by almost fifty years. Built around a prosperous tin mine, Tindale first began as a shanty town for the miners, but when the seam showed no signs of exhaustion grew into a full-fledged community with all the amenities necessary to sustain a small mountain town year-round. Around the time of the Fall the town's inhabitants fled, but the town was not entirely abandoned. Over the years the changes from the Fall came to alter and mutate even the small and insignificant things that naturally lived in the old mines, and in time these creatures - *doom harvesters* - came to infest the tunnels and passages beneath the town.

Today Tindale resembles a ghost town. The hills are forested, and the old shadowed entrances of numerous mines dot the hills. But the trees merely serve to hide the movement of the town's secret infestation. The forest brings a false sense of security, and quickly seems more like a foreboding barrier keeping the PCs trapped *in* town, rather than keeping danger *out*. And though they may think they're the first people to find this place since the Fall, they soon find out they're wrong. Others have been here before, but all have vanished mysteriously. As the PCs arrive to make camp, things begin to happen.

*you might not make it to see morning.*

*Through the trees you see a small town ahead, nestled in a lost valley here in the mountains. The storm has already hit the town, but at first glimpse it looks lifeless. Dark storefronts and old homes look out across dusty streets. This place will have to do.*

## EXPLORING THE TOWN

When the PCs arrive the sandstorm is just reaching full force. Rules for sandstorms are detailed on page 172 of *Darwin's World 2nd Edition*, but they are slightly modified in this adventure. As is typical, visibility is reduced to 30 feet and hearing is almost

useless (except where noted) in the storm, but since the PCs have been traveling in this weather for a while they will only take 1 point of damage for each round they spend exposed (this includes walking around the streets of town and moving through the forest, but not when indoors or underground in the mines). For all intents and purposes the sandstorm will last the entire adventure.

When the PCs enter town read the following:

*The wind lashes at you like a cat-o-nine-tails as you walk through the old streets. Through the amber murk of the storm your eyes behold old brick buildings that appear and disappear with the fickle change of the wind. Already sand has begun to pile up in the dark alleys and on the rooftops of ancient, rusted automobiles abandoned on the streets. Though the place seems inexplicably foreboding, there is certain to be shelter in any one of these old empty buildings.*

## LOOKING FOR SHELTER

Looking for a place to hole up for the night is simply a matter of finding the right place. The town is full of empty buildings, but more likely than not the PCs will want to find something “defensible”. Note that most outlying buildings are “ruins” - these buildings generally lie nearest the forest, and should be portrayed as having no intact doors or windows, collapsed roof, and even 1-3 walls collapsed, leaving them exposed to the storm. To find suitable shelter, the PCs will have to move deeper into town...

Individual buildings in the abandoned mining town aren't detailed here. Instead, each time the PCs explore the shell of an old building, roll on the table below to determine the pertinent features:



Roll	Finds
1-2	Desolate wreckage of an old home; 1-2 outer walls are completely missing, leaving the interior exposed.
3-4	Desolate wreckage of an old home; roof collapsed in sections, entire upper story exposed to the storm.
5	In an eerily abandoned house the PCs find a dusty table set for Sunday dinner, but the state of things suggests the inhabitants simply vanished, or ran off never to return. PCs ransacking the house will find old rotted clothes, silverware, dishes, and a bunch of aging - but powerless - home appliances.
6	A row of 3d4 old trailer homes, their windows caked with dust and their once-shiny chrome bodies now rusted over. Each of these small “houses” is no longer mobile, but are relatively complete inside (bed, kitchen area, some minor belongings), though very vulnerable (only one entrance).
7	The PCs enter an old grocery store; the food has long rotted away, and most of the place is filled with junk and fallen ceiling panels. A search uncovers a few newspapers in an old dispenser near the check-out. The faded headlines, barely visible through the grime-encrusted glass, proclaim “Impending War!” - giving an impression of how long this town has been abandoned.

- 8 As “5” above, but in the backyard there is a strange sight: a collection of rusted metal buckles, rotted leather straps, and old spurs lying in haphazard piles and covered in a semi-hardened “slime” that defies identification. *These are that’s left the remnants of a mule train brought by traveling merchants to the town a few years ago. Lost in a mountain storm, the merchants came here seeking shelter but they are their beasts of burden became prey to the doom harvesters. These items are the only remnants of that “big meal”, items that the ‘harvesters forgot to take underground and hide from sight (see Area K in the mines).*
- 9 The PCs find a rustic home, with windows partly boarded-up as if someone tried to hold out within. The interior is utterly empty, and even the furniture was apparently broken down to board up the windows. There is no front door (it is missing), and no sign of why the drastic effort was deemed necessary.
- 10 The PCs find a small two-story motel, with lots of small rooms with intact doors and windows, though they all face out onto a dusty, abandoned parking lot.
- 11 The PCs find a small clothing store nestled in a row of other stores. The front is faced with glass display windows, and the front door is made of glass, but it can be locked. Dusty mannequins sit in the windows; the interior is largely empty. There is a back door (metal, locked from inside), and a stair leading to an apartment on the second floor, with windows giving a good view of the street.

- 12 The PCs find an empty building with doors that seem to have fallen off their hinges. Inside is what appears to be an old campsite, around which sit a few rucksacks and canteens. The canteens have dried up, but the condition of the sacks (which contain some scavenged clothing, a blanket, a knife or two, and perhaps a few dented cans of preserved food) seems to suggest they are only a few years old. However, there is no sign of the former owners.

*Do not duplicate rolls of 5-12; if a second roll indicates this kind of structure, use the result described under 1-2 instead.*

## SPECIFIC BUILDINGS

A map of Tindale is provided nearby, and though most of the buildings in town aren’t intimately detailed, a few specific locations are noteworthy. They are described in more detail below.

### “REDOUBT”

This building resembles every other building in town, a dilapidated old structure covered in sand from the storm. Though it is quiet now, this place was the scene of a desperate - and ultimately vain - attempt by a group of travelers to hold off the doom harvesters infesting the town. Trapped here in circumstances not unlike the PCs, the travelers made their stand here - and were slaughtered.

Inside the PCs find the building almost completely empty, except for a few pieces of rotting furniture here and there. Wind howls through open windows - none of which have any glass in their frames. The front door appears to have been ripped off its hinges

by some unknown force. Going inside the PCs find an empty interior. But in addition to shards of broken glass all over the ground, a Spot check (DC 14) notices literally dozens of spent brass casings littering the floor. It appears as if a massive firefight occurred here. There are no bodies to be found, though a Search check (DC 21) will reveal strange greenish-gray stains and “splashes” on the walls and in the dry grass surrounding the building (“gore” from the numerous doom harvesters struck by gunfire as they scrambled into the building to overwhelm those who held out within).

## HOTEL

The remnants of an old hotel overlook one part of town. A three-story building, it represents the most formidable place the PCs can possibly find to hold out against the doom harvesters.

The interior of the hotel is dusty, and over the years the wind has blown in a great deal of refuse on the first floor (cluttering the lobby with old newspapers, tree branches, sagebrush, and other garbage). A rickety stair jackknives back and forth connecting the upper stories, with an open-air area directly over the lobby from which anyone upstairs can look down to the ground floor.

All three floors are filled with simple rooms, furnishings long destroyed/rotten/disintegrated. Walls are rotting too, and the old pipes are rusted through, but there are numerous places to hide and hold out. Finding some intact furniture should not be a problem, so making a temporary barricade could even be possible if the PCs want to lock themselves in a room to hold off the doom harvesters.

## BUDDLE HOUSE

This building smells of fungus and decay. Most of the interior is taken up by a huge circular stone pit (30 ft. wide and 20 ft. deep, with a rusted ladder leading to the pit bottom), which was once filled with water and

## SEARCHING AROUND TOWN

The ruins of Tindale are assumed to be largely empty, but if you have the supplement *Scav's Swag*, you can allow the PCs to find one or two items from the *Junk* or *Useful Item* tables for every few buildings they search.

in which crushed tin was separated from its impurities by means of a mechanical impeller. The pit is now dry, the water having drained away decades ago.

The buddle house is extremely dark inside, and the PCs will find it to be filled with numerous hiding places (+4 to Hide checks if trying to avoid any doom harvesters that may be chasing them). However, there is a surprise for anyone going down into the pit (or shining a light down into the hole from above).

At the bottom of the pit is a heap of bones and skulls, which when illuminated prove to be a collection of humanoids and mutants. Though most are mere skeletons, a few still have flesh on them, and as such a few horrific faces (eyes sunk into their sockets, hollow cheeks, looks of terror on their faces) and withered, wracked, and contorted bodies meet the eyes of anyone who investigates the pit bottom. These are the ghastly remains of past victims of the doom harvesters, carried here and dropped into the pit months ago; none of the corpses has anything of value, and they pose no threat to the PCs - though anyone screaming in surprise might alert nearby doom harvesters...

## KIBBLE TOWER

The most visible landmark in town is the old “kibble tower”, a prominent feature of most tin mines. The tower is merely a scaffold-type structure of aging rusted metal, rising vertically over a shaft sunk into the earth. The “kibble” is the large iron bucket (larger than a man) with which ore is lifted out of the mines by operators in the adjoining wooden shack.

The kibble tower rises menacingly at the center of

town, and can be seen (even through the sandstorm, albeit vaguely) from virtually anywhere in the community. The metal supports groan and creak in any strong wind, and with the help of the sandstorm creates an eerie thunder that easily masks the sounds of creatures moving through the streets (PCs and doom harvesters included).

The engine house connected to the kibble tower is empty and boarded up (and the machinery rusted over and useless), but the shaft into the mines is wide open. The hole itself plummets into what appears to be absolute darkness (in reality it leads directly to *Area L* in the mines).

The doom harvesters use this exit to the surface often, though there are other entrances to the mine as well. If the PCs investigate the kibble tower early on the doom harvesters will not make an appearance here (though they may certainly be present in the mines below, watching and listening), but later they will begin pouring out from this hole (and others) to chase the PCs around town, or to escape once the *huge doom harvester* at the heart of the Nest is killed (see *Area L*).

## FLEEING TO THE FOREST

At some point the players may think of trying to flee the town. After all, there isn't exactly a “wall” preventing them from running away. But the fact that the same tree cover works just as well for their attackers as it does them should give them pause, and the prospect of getting split up in the sandstorm should be stressed as being very real.

If the PCs persist anyway, use the following

guidelines. Once the PCs plunge into the woods the doom harvesters will certainly pursue them to prevent them from getting away. In fact, a large number of the creatures are already out in the forest, enforcing a perimeter around the town specifically intended to prevent the escape of their trapped “prey”. For every 50 feet traveled there is a flat 50% chance the party stumbles upon (or is noticed by) a group of 1d3+1 doom harvesters. In addition, they will also be pursued by a like amount of doom harvesters from the rear (following them from the town), meaning that at some point they’ll be surrounded and have to make a fight for their lives.

The important thing here is to enforce the idea that trying to flee through the sandstorm is suicide. Ramp it up a bit if the threat of 1 point of damage per round from exposure isn’t enough. As the storm rages around them, impose a 20% miss chance to all ranged attacks over 30 ft, to simulate the lack of visibility. In addition, every other round of combat 1d2 additional doom harvesters will be attracted to the scene by the sounds of any gunfire (and led by the nest’s primitive “hive mind”), so that eventually the PCs will realize that their route of escape is compromised, and they’ll soon be outnumbered.

If any PCs get separated from one another by more than 40-50 ft., assume that neither group can find the other in the storm - separating the party members from each other. This should give them a real sense of peril, especially as the doom harvesters begin to close in!

Eventually the PCs should realize retreating back to town and looking for another solution is in their best interests. Encourage it. If they start to retreat back to Tindale have a few of the doom harvesters pursue, but the majority should stay behind, maintaining their tight noose on the forest surrounding the town. The PCs should make it back to Tindale without being cut down while running.

## SEQUENCED ENCOUNTERS

*The Nest* isn’t necessarily a location-based adventure, and as such the action behind the story takes place on a loose timeline, starting soon after the PCs arrive. To keep the action going (and suspense growing) there are a number of encounters that will take place during the adventure. The exact timing of each encounter is up to you, the GM, and should be tailored depending on what the PCs do and where they go in town, and whether or not they split up or stay rigidly together.

*Though the encounters below tend to dictate the actions of the doom harvesters, and may make assumptions about how the PCs will act, be ready to ad lib and modify them on the spot, since once the action gets started you never know how the PCs will act to the changing situation!*

### FIRST ENCOUNTER (EL 1)

The first encounter takes place soon after the PCs arrive in town, perhaps after they have searched a few buildings (including abandoned buildings on the outskirts of town, and at least 1-2 regular buildings with prospects of being used as a shelter). By now the doom harvesters are aware of the group, and though unwilling to attack right away, begin to shadow the PCs.

As a result the first encounter is merely a sighting, not an actual confrontation. Curious about the PCs, the doom harvesters remain out of sight at first, staying to the shadows and their various hiding places throughout the abandoned town. However, doom harvesters aren’t very good at hiding (Hide checks are made at -2), so it is likely the PCs notice something out of the ordinary.

Every now and again call for Spot checks for the PCs (if nothing else, making checks will keep the players on edge). Eventually they will beat the Hide check of a given doom harvester; at that point read the following:

*Through the roaring storm you swear you see something, if only for a second. Movement. Something scuttled away quickly just as you turned to look behind, vanishing out of sight down a nearby street. You didn’t get a good look at it, but it was big.*

The creature(s) shadowing the PCs will be a group of 1-2 doom harvesters, but they will immediately run off when they are spotted. Any PC making the Spot check will notice movement (as they dart down side streets to avoid being seen), but due to the sandstorm will not get a good look at whatever it is that was following them. If they pursue, assume the creatures will have gotten away (either due to fast movement or scuttling into dark places or even into the sewers beneath the streets).

### SECOND ENCOUNTER (EL 2)

This encounter will take place if and when one of the PCs manages to get separated from the group. This can happen in a number of ways. Though it’s unlikely to happen, if the PCs split up (for example, with one PC checking the upstairs level of a potential shelter the others search the rest of the building) this encounter can happen to any of them. Also, if any PC strays more than 30 feet from the others you can say she gets lost in the storm, and until she finds her way back (or the other party members find her) she is on her own. If the PCs refuse to split up, then the encounter will happen to whichever PCs happens to be in the rear of party.

In any event a single *doom harvester*, intent on snatching a quick meal before the rest of the nest is roused to action (and pours out of the mine for an all-out massacre) trails the PCs through the storm, and eventually tries to make a snatch-and-grab of a lone PC (or failing this, merely attacks the last person in the party’s marching order).

The encounter starts with the doom harvester sneaking up on the solitary PC. The ‘harvester reaches its prey by using its Hide ability, and can even scurry up vertical walls to reach upper-level windows or scuttle up on a wall to stay out of a character’s peripheral vision, dropping down from above. The idea here is for it to reach its prey before its prey can react.

The doom harvester hopes to take its prey by surprise and make a silent kill, but of course this may not be the case. If the PC fighting it discharges a firearm or manages to shout for help, after 3 rounds of combat (or 1 round before other PCs show up) the creature will flee, giving up the attack. However, the PC who encountered the creature will have seen it (use the description on page 290 of *Darwin’s World 2nd Edition*), and will be able to warn the other PCs that they aren’t alone in town...

**Doom Harvester (1):** HP 37.

## THIRD ENCOUNTER (EL 5)

The third encounter takes place soon after the encounter with the solitary doom harvester in the

street, perhaps even only a few minutes later (once the party has regrouped). Having seen one ‘harvester stalking them, the PCs should feel motivated more than ever to either flee (see *Fleeing To The Forest*) or find shelter (see *Looking For Shelter*). As the PCs quicken their pace, read the following:

*The town is a maze, and finding your way out seems harder than finding your way in. Coming into an intersection you suddenly stop as a number of “things” scuttle out from nearby alleys, push themselves out of vacant storefront windows, and even scamper down the sides of walls. You’re surrounded!*

There will be 1 doom harvester for each member of the party, plus an additional 1-2 doom harvesters that will show up one round after the fighting begins.

These doom harvesters comprise the “forward elements” of the Nest, which is just now beginning to muster its strength in response to the party’s intrusion into town. Eager to feed before the full might of the Nest arrives, they will attack with as much speed as possible.

During the battle individual doom harvesters will fight only until reduced to half hit points, at which time they attempt to flee into the storm.

Eventually the PCs will drive off the ‘harvesters, at which time they can continue either trying to flee or find shelter.

**Doom Harvesters (1 per PC):** HP 37.

## FOURTH ENCOUNTER (EL 9)

Eventually the PCs will make it to cover (if they try to flee to the forest, they’ll be forced to retreat back into town; see *Fleeing To The Forest* for details).

Give the players time to hastily come up with preparations for a defense; making barricades, setting up sniper positions, placing traps, and tending to any wounded among them. The Nest is already beginning to filter down into town, and dozens of doom harvesters are already moving through the streets and ruined buildings towards the party’s position.

If the PCs set a watch or lookout, allow her to make a Spot check (DC 21). If successful, read the following:

*Looking out into the storm for any sign of more creatures, your heart skips a beat. For a moment all you see is currents of sand blowing past the building, but for a brief second the density in the air thins, and through the dusty haze you spot movement. Lots of movement. In that brief instant you see dozens upon dozens of spidery monsters gathering in the streets, or scurrying into and out of buildings. An impossible number, at least more than a hundred, are now encircling the building you’ve chosen for your stand.*

Whether or not they are spotted moving into position the onslaught inevitably begins as the storm continues to rage. Luckily for the PCs the doom harvesters attack in somewhat manageable waves, sending in only one ‘harvester per PC, at first assaulting

### BREAKING AWAY

If the PCs don’t catch on that the doom harvesters are herding them to the mines (or even if they do, but don’t want to go along with it), they may try to smash through the doom harvesters and go elsewhere in town. Let them. After a brief battle they may get away, but they’ll still be stuck in town (unless they try to flee into the woods). The doom harvesters will try to follow them. If the PCs try to hide to evade the ‘harvesters, go with the flow. Change the pacing to one of stealth and high tension. Instead of outright combat, allow the PCs to use Hide and Move Silently rolls to slip past roving patrols of ‘harvesters that are out to find them. Allow them to move from building to building, hiding place to hiding place, etc. If they’re caught, the doom harvesters will attack, trying to move them back towards the mines. If the PCs run for another hideout, a repeat of the Fourth Encounter (and more waves of enemies) may be in order...

Remember that fleeing Tindale is always an option, and though it won’t be easy, PCs intent on getting out of the town can leave if they keep their wits about them, stick together...and of course, if their hit points hold up.

the obvious entrances (doorways), then shifting to windows and any other opening they can find (remember, the doom harvesters will scuttle up vertical surfaces such as exterior walls to come in through holes in the roof). If they manage to get inside they will attack whichever PC is closest. If prevented from getting inside they will attack barriers with force (it may take time, but they'll eventually get through). Meanwhile the PCs can fire away with whatever weapons they have on hand; the doom harvesters seem unconcerned about being hit, and in fact are trying to get the PCs to use up all of their ammunition. Though their fellows continue to attack, wounded doom harvesters (reduced to 1/2 HP) pull back and into the storm. PCs engaged in the battle may make Spot checks (DC 21) to notice this. Though the PCs may not realize it yet, these creatures are returning underground to the mines to recuperate, being replaced by fresh 'harvesters just like "reinforcements" in an army.

After three waves have thrown themselves against the building, PCs still able to see outside notice that the numbers have begun to thin, but not from losses, but for some other reason; the 'harvesters seem to be pulling back, leaving only a minor force to hold the PCs down.

Smart PCs may realize now might be a good time to pull out and either relocate to another shelter (theirs should be badly damaged by now) or flee into the woods. If they don't, a few rounds later *another* wave will assault the building, this time with 3 doom harvesters per PC.

If the PCs are in the Hotel, on the second round of this final wave, another 1d4 doom harvesters will emerge from a sewer connection into the basement of the building, coming up *inside* the party's defenses! If the PCs haven't yet realized the doom harvesters have access to the underground, they will now. Additional doom harvesters pour up out of this hole at a rate of 1 doom harvester per round.

**Doom Harvesters (many):** HP 37.

## FIFTH, SIXTH, SEVENTH... ENCOUNTERS (EL 3)

Once the doom harvesters dislodge the PCs from their hideout, as one they begin to try and herd the party towards the mines. The doom harvesters hope to push the PCs underground, effectively "feeding" them to the more powerful doom harvesters in the mines, and eventually into the belly of their lair where they will be overwhelmed.

As the PCs leave the building and start running (or making an orderly withdrawal, depending on how the PCs play it), doom harvesters seem to come out of the woodwork - from nearby alleys, buildings, and even pouring from manholes in the street. The 'harvesters try to push the PCs towards the mine entrances, but don't overtly attack unless they are resisted. If the PCs try to go a different direction, for example, groups of doom harvesters shuffle out of side streets to prevent them from doing so, attacking if they have to. Unless they're witless pretty soon the PCs will get the idea that they are being "herded". And while going along with whatever the doom harvesters have in mind might not seem like an ideal plan, the alternative - hacking their way out of town through a seemingly endless horde of spiders - may be even more dubious.

Of course, if the PCs flee now don't stonewall them; have them fight moderate-sized (3-6 per) groups of doom harvesters as they flee town, and then consult the rules on *Fleeing Into The Forest*.

Once the PCs reach any of the entrances to the mines, with or without doom harvesters at their heels, proceed to the section on *The Mine*.

## THE MINE

The old tin mines lie right under the town of Tindale, having been dug out of the surrounding bedrock. The mine is composed of essentially a single sloping level, its numerous chambers and caves connected

via sloping passages that exit quite close to the town itself.

## A. ENTRANCES (EL 0)

*As if the sandstorm outside wasn't bad enough, as you enter the mines dust falls from the ceiling above, hinting at the mine's great age. A roughly-hewn tunnel leads off into darkness; you're going to need lights to navigate by.*

There are several of these mine entrances in the side of the mountain. Each was constructed more than 200 years ago for the tin mines, and though dilapidated and often overgrown, all are still negotiable by even Large-size creatures.

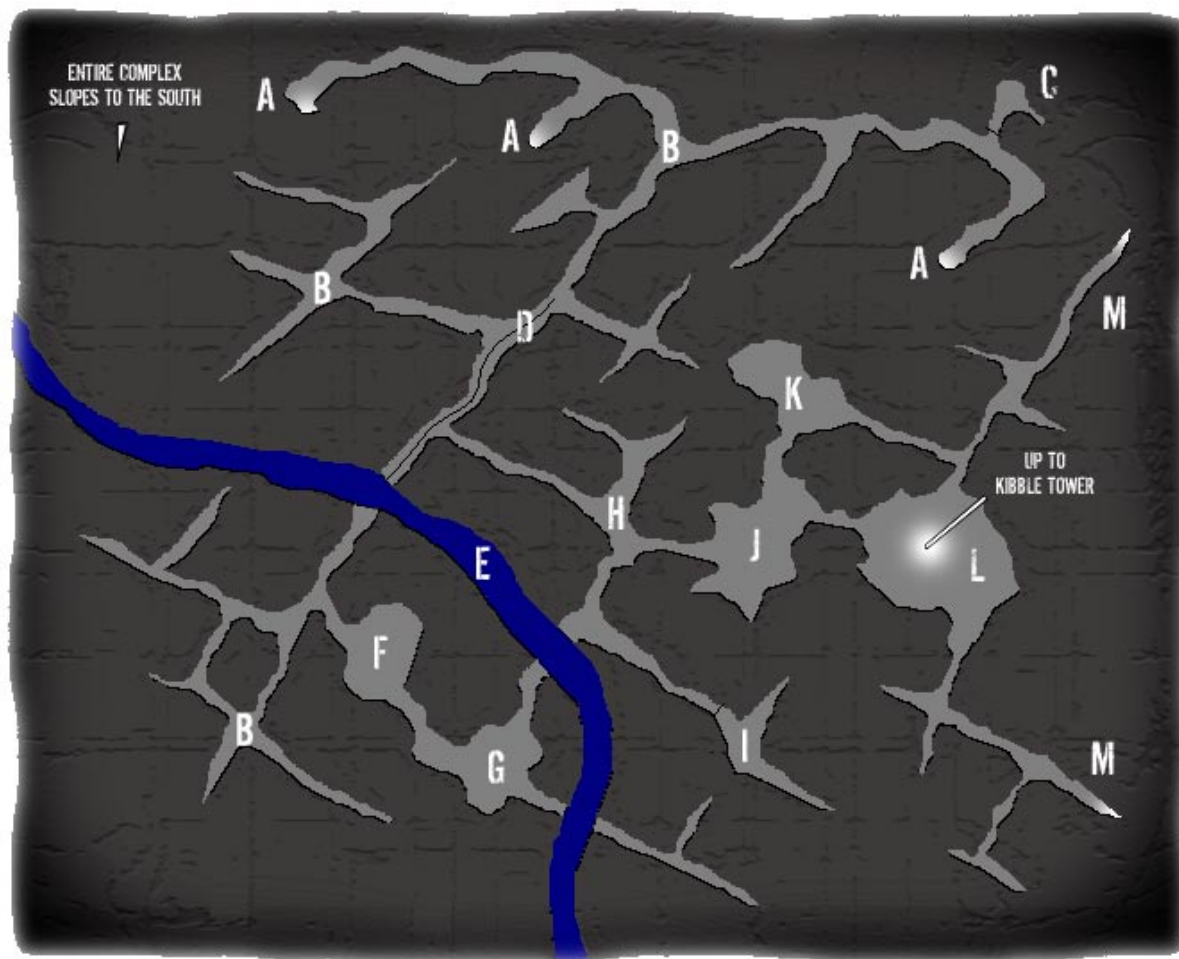
**Development:** In the latter part of the adventure the PCs will be driven here by the masses of doom harvesters. Once the PCs enter the cover of the mine entrance the masses will stop, remaining outside but not pursuing the PCs in. However, if the PCs do not descend lower into the mines, or if they merely stand their ground and start shooting at the doom harvesters outside, the masses will surge forward. In this case, 1d4+1 doom harvesters will scramble into the entrance to pursue the PCs and "force" them to go deeper into the mines.

## B. LANTERNS (EL 0)

These spots simply mark the location where old battery-powered lanterns hang on support beams, or lie on the mine tunnel floors. PCs wishing to do so may use these lanterns for illumination, but since they are centuries old the PCs must have fresh power cells (or find some) to power them.

## C. EQUIPMENT ROOM (EL 0)

*A door made of metal bars, somewhat like a prison door, blocks the passage up ahead. Your*



*lights illuminate a small chamber beyond. A rotted bench can be seen at the edge of the light, on which sits an old dusty mining helmet. The sound of water dripping echoes in the darkness.*

The door to this room is locked with a rusted padlock (Disable Device DC 14, or Strength check DC 21 to open). The door must be dealt with before the party can investigate the interior.

**Treasure:** If the PCs manage to get past the door they find a small equipment room that the doom harvesters were never able to enter. Sitting on benches and hanging in old rusted lockers are the rotted remains of four suits of civilian clothing, three advanced breathing apparatus (one of these has a fatal flaw that after 1d4 rounds of continued use will stop working permanently), seven mining helmets with built-in headlamps (each requires a power cell), three

battery flood flashlights, four shovels, five picks, and 1d3 empty beer bottles poorly hidden behind one locker.

On top of this, a Search check (DC 14) will uncover a small rotting cardboard box on the top shelf of one of the lockers. Inside the box are 2d4 power cells (fully charged), a pack of 2d4 cigarettes, and a cigarette lighter.

Finally, there is a map posted on the side of one of the lockers (see nearby map). Since it was made of plastic sheet and fixed to the locker, the map hasn't faded or rotted. The map gives a general overview of the mine, showing the primary entrances, as well as the general passages, and even the location of the *Generator (Area F)*, *Diesel Storage (Area G)*, *Explosives Room (Area I)*, and *Forest Exits (Area M)*.

## D. SLOPING PASSAGE (EL 5)

*Your light illuminates a mine tunnel that descends at a relatively steep angle to the south. Rail tracks lie on the tunnel floor, and on one of them sits an old rusting ore cart. You hear an unsettling shuffling noise somewhere in the darkness down the tunnel.*

When the PCs reach the top of this passage (to the north) their lights alert a number of doom harvesters below to their presence. The doom harvesters move up the passage as fast as they can, hoping to attack the party unaware. For each round of movement the PCs may make a Listen check (DC 14) to hear them coming. If the party doesn't hear them and wanders off, or if they flee, the doom harvesters will chase them as stealthily as possible, and may show up when the party least expects it.

There are three doom harvesters at the bottom of the passage, including one exceptionally large specimen of the arachnoid breed.

**Doom Harvesters (2):** HP 37.

**Advanced Doom Harvester (1):** CR 3; Large vermin; HD 7d8+21; HP 52; Mas 16; Init +2; Spd 60 ft; Defense 14, touch 11, flatfooted 12 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +3 natural); BAB +5; Grap +13; Atk +8 melee (2d4+4, pincer); Full Atk +8 melee (2d4+4, pincer), +3 melee (2d6+4, bite); FS 10 ft by 10 ft; Reach 10 ft; SQ improved grab, vermin; AL none; SV Fort +8, Ref +4, Will +2; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 19, Dex 14, Con 16, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 2.

**Skills:** Listen +5, Spot +5.

**Feats:** None.

## E. UNDERGROUND STREAM (EL 0)

*You hear the sound of rushing water in the darkness up ahead. Approaching you see a mine tunnel, apparently flooded, flowing downstream - to the south. Unless you plan on swimming, you'll have to find another way around.*

A natural underground waterway was diverted to the mines long ago to aid in the process of flushing useless rock from the mine passages (via a number of "adits", or mine exits located far downstream from which the sediment and rock could be washed away). The waterway still runs through the tunnels.

The water here is cold subterranean runoff, but the temperature is not low enough to cause hypothermia. The PCs can swim the waterway with regular Swim checks, but the DC is 15 (rough water). If any of the PCs fail the check, she makes no progress, and is swept downstream from her current position at a rate of 30 ft. This continues each time a Swim check is failed (the PCs may also drown if they fail by more than 5; see page 74 of *d20 Modern*).

**Development:** If the PCs are being chased by doom harvesters, the creatures will not pursue them into or across the waterway.

## F. GENERATOR (EL 0)

*Up ahead you see a room where the ceiling appears to have been opened up a bit, making more headroom. Inside you see some large rusted and dilapidated machine, sitting lifelessly against one wall. Numerous rusted and sagging ducts rise from the thing like tree branches, hugging the roof, and vanishing down connecting passages. Despite its great age an oily smell still lingers in the place.*

The "machine" is an old-fashioned diesel generator once used to provide electricity to the mines. This old reliable piece of machinery once generated power that lit up some of the deeper passages of the mine through power lines along the tunnel ceilings, lighting up old bulbs situated every 20-30 ft or so. The maze of ductwork described above carried poisonous diesel exhaust out of the mines.

The generator has been offline for years and is in poor working order. If the PCs try to get it back online (to provide a more consistent light than mere lanterns) it will require a Repair check (DC 20), as well as diesel fuel. The former can be accomplished by anyone with the right skill, and a supply of diesel can be found at *Area G*.

**Treasure:** A fire extinguisher hangs on one corner of the generator.

**Development:** If the PCs get the generator up and running it will begin to hum and rattle noisily as it begins to generate electricity. With power restored all of the passages (but none of the rooms) should be considered lit, and thus the doom harvesters - and the PCs - will be much more visible as they move underground.

3d4 rounds after the generator starts up a group of 1d4+2 doom harvesters will come here, attracted to the noise, to investigate. They batter and smash the generator for 2d6 rounds (the sound can be heard anywhere in the mines with a Listen check at DC 23),

at which point they destroy it. When this happens all power will fail throughout the mines permanently.

## G. DIESEL STORAGE (EL 3)

*This room reeks of gasoline. Looking around you see numerous shiny black drums clustered in the center of the room, a few of which are on their sides and empty. A faded yellow placard on one wall depicts an open flame with an "X" over it.*

This room was hollowed out and used to store diesel fuel for the generator. Most of the fuel is gone, but a few of the drums miraculously contain a small supply of fuel.

Two doom harvesters dwell in this area, hiding among the drums. They will pounce on any PC that goes to investigate the drums (roll their Hide against the party's Spot; they receive a total +0 bonus to their rolls due to the cover provided by the contents of the room).

**Doom Harvesters (2):** HP 37.

**Treasure:** There isn't a whole lot of diesel here, certainly not enough to cause a catastrophic fire (as the placard may seem to suggest), but the PCs could use the fuel to get the generator up and running (*Area F*) or even to make a handful of molotov cocktails if they have the materials.

## H. BONES (EL 3)

*Your light sweeps across a scene of carnage. Bones - of people and animals - lie strewn all over the tunnel. For a moment you fail to notice the enormous daddy-long-legs hanging from the ceiling.*

The bones here are just some of the victims of the Nest, left here after their flesh was consumed. A single *advanced doom harvester* occupies the tunnel, hiding (and hanging) on the ceiling. Due to the

circumstances it gets a +0 to its Hide check; if the PCs fail to spot it, it will be able to get surprise on them.

Whether or not the doom harvester achieves surprise it will leap down on the lead party member from above and attack. Unlike other doom harvesters encountered so far, it will fight to the death.

**Advanced Doom Harvester (1):** HP 52 (see *Area D*).

## I. EXPLOSIVES ROOM (EL 0)

*Your light washes over a rusted metal cage door blocking this tunnel passage. A bright red placard hanging on the outside of the door depicts an exploding fireball. Through the bars of the door you see a chamber cloaked in darkness, and the vague outline of a stack of crates.*

Like *Area C*, the door to this room is locked with a rusted padlock (Disable Device DC 15, or Strength check DC 23 to open). The door must be dealt with before the party can investigate the interior.

**Treasure:** Inside the PCs find a stack of large metal boxes (each about the size of a locker), each of which once stored explosives used in the mine to blast new tunnels into the bedrock. There are a total of 24 sticks of dynamite in these boxes; 12 of these have been bundled together and were at one time fitted by a mine demolitionist to increase the burst radius by 50% (see page 105 of *d20 Modern* on how this can be accomplished).

In addition to regular flammable fuses (which must be lit by hand, and have a delay of eight rounds), there are two timer detonators here. Note that only one of these detonators actually works, so if the PCs use the dynamite later to try and blast the Nest (*Area L*) there is a flat 50% chance that the timer fails to work. If so, the PCs will have to go back, replace the detonator, and try again...

## J. BIG STASH (EL 7)

*Gray and rotting body parts and flesh-stripped bones lie strewn all over this large cave, so much so that the stone floor is no longer visible. The smell of decaying flesh is strong, but mercifully the rock is too dark to show just how much blood was spilled here. In the center of this storeroom of charnel remains you see three huge, spidery things, tearing at a rigid blue corpse with their deformed fanged maws.*

This large cavern connects to the Nest (*Area L*). It is here that victims of the doom harvesters (travelers, wanderers, folks lost in the mountains, and even their pack animals) are brought - sometimes kicking and screaming - to be torn apart and shared among the 'harvesters of the Nest. As such, there are parts from almost a hundred or more bodies strewn all over the place.

When the PCs enter the three doom harvesters - all

of them advanced - stand their ground (at the areas marked "DH") and rise up on their rear legs in a menacing posture, showing their fanged maws. This is a ruse to get the PCs to charge (or at least enter the room).

The areas marked "X" indicate positions where smaller (but no less hungry) doom harvesters hang from the ceiling, concealed in the darkness over the party's head. Once the PCs enter the cavern to do battle, they will begin dropping down from above (on their initiative order), hoping to land amidst or behind the party to trap them in the cave.

**Advanced Doom Harvesters (3):** HP 52 (see *Area D*).

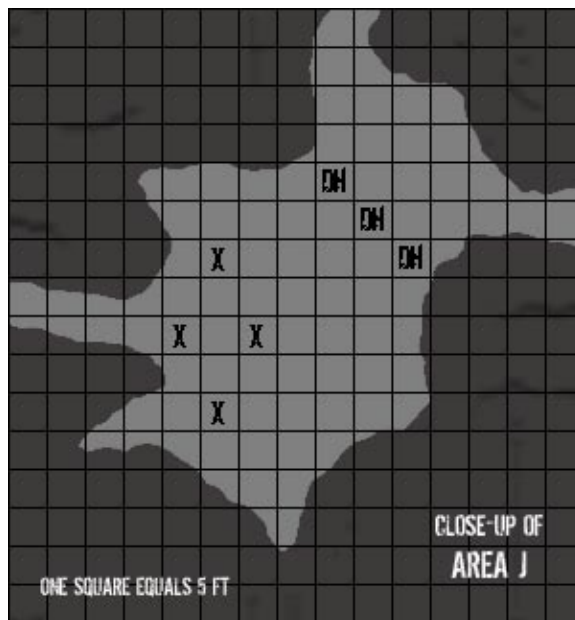
**Doom Harvesters (4):** HP 37.

## K. TROVE (EL 2)

*Even the light of a flashlight couldn't reveal the entirety of this underground cavern. But looking around you are surprised at what you see: Lying all around the cave are objects and machines that seem totally out of place here underground: cars, motorcycles, horse saddles, boots, leather jackets, armor plate, weapons, and heaps of clips and ammo.*

This eerie place is where the doom harvesters bring the vehicles and equipment of their former victims, clearing the streets and the town above so that other victims aren't tipped off to the fate that's in store for them. The very presence of this place seems to hint at a malevolent intelligence behind the doom harvesters, but for the time being the PCs don't have time to ponder this.

Though the cave is unusually quiet, it isn't uninhabited. A doom harvester lies in wait in the front seat of the moving truck (see below). It will pop out only if a PC opens the driver's door to investigate inside. If this is the case, it automatically surprises the PCs.



## Doom Harvester (1): HP 37.

**Treasure:** Searching the cavern the PCs find the following: two battle cars, three battle cycles, an entire moving truck, seven leather saddles (from assorted horses and mules), and an assortment of miscellany including 1d3 leather jackets, 1d2 suits of leather armor, 1d2 suits of chainmail, 1d2 combat knives, 1d6 light rods (10% chance each is used-up), a corium lantern, a gas mask, 1d2 firestarter cubes, 2d10 power bars (in a small satchel), an energy grenade, 4d6 bottles of synthihol (50% chance of being empty), 1d2 spears, 1d4+2 black powder rifles, an Uzi, a Bizon, a hand stunner, and 1d3 Valtro PM-5-530s. All of the weapons will have a full clip, minus 2d6 rounds/charges (if this results in 0 rounds/charges, then assume the weapon is empty).

*All of the items mentioned above, even the vehicles, are stained with blood and sticky gray-green matter (the blood of doom harvesters), indicative of the fact that these "prizes" were taken only after brutal fighting.*

## L. THE NEST (EL 10)

*An unnerving shuffling sound - sounding like the rustling of thousands of leaves - echoes through the darkness up ahead. Entering this massive cavern you find you have no need for artificial illumination; a column of hazy ochre light comes pouring down through a large hole in the cavern roof, apparently an exit to the surface since you can hear the roar of the sandstorm coming from outside. But it may as well be on the moon, it is so far overhead. Even the remnants of old chains (probably from some mine machine's lift mechanism), which hang down through the hole, dangle well out of reach.*

*The ugly, dust-laden light illuminates a rough cavern floor studded with fallen rocks and rubble, and heaps of sand. But this desolate cavescape isn't empty. Dozens of huge, long-legged spidery*

*creatures scurry, shift, and shuffle all about at the edge of the light, some climbing up walls and vanishing into the shadows. Several remain where they are, in the center of the chamber, turning as you enter. These are far larger than the average beast, with one at the center that must be as large as a truck.*

This is the heart of the doom harvester nest. Over 100 'harvesters are clustered in the room, including four advanced doom harvesters (one of which is of considerable strength; see the *huge doom harvester* below).

**Playing Out The Battle:** The doom harvesters have been waiting for the PCs to arrive, whether they were driven here by the doom harvesters in town or foolishly came here on their own. As such, once the party makes an appearance the eager creatures move to encircle them - and *feed*. On the first round of combat three standard doom harvesters will drop down from the cavern ceiling, one landing in each of the 5 ft squares of the passage directly behind the PCs, blocking the tunnel exit (or at least until the PCs can cut/blast/smash their way through them). On the same round the *advanced* and *huge doom harvesters* will move forward to attack. The remaining doom harvesters (90+) scurry to the side like spectators, climbing up the walls and forming a circle to prevent the PCs from escaping, but not actually attacking themselves.

Note that all of the standard doom harvesters here are *wounded*. All of the injured doom harvesters that fought the PCs in earlier encounters, as well as those that fought past victims (i.e. those that came before the PCs), come here to slowly recover from their wounds. As a result, all standard doom harvesters will be at reduced hit points for the battle.

**Doom Harvesters (3+):** HP 10 (injured).

**Advanced Doom Harvesters (3):** HP 52 (see *Area D*).

## VISITING THE MINE TOO EARLY

If the PCs somehow come to the mines early in the adventure, before the unfolding encounters in town take place, let them explore the mines as normal. However, unless they kill the *huge doom harvester* at *Area L* or exit the mines via *Area M*, once they emerge the rest of the Nest will be present outside, waiting for them to come out. It could be a bloodbath.

**Development:** As the battle progresses, doom harvesters will drop from the ceiling or climb down the walls to replace those keeping the PCs bottled in. But the majority will not attack, staying out of the fight. Once the PCs realize this they can start ignoring the lesser 'harvesters and concentrate on killing the larger (*advanced* and *huge*) ones.

**Huge Doom Harvester (1):** CR 5; Huge vermin; HD 10d8+50; HP 95; Mas 20; Init +1; Spd 60 ft; Defense 15, touch 9, flatfooted 14 (-2 size, +1 Dex, +6 natural); BAB +7; Grap +23; Atk +13 melee (2d4+8, pincer); Full Atk +13 melee (2d4+8, pincer), +8 melee (2d6+8, bite); FS 15 ft by 15 ft; Reach 10 ft; SQ improved grab, vermin; AL none; SV Fort +12, Ref +4, Will +3; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 27, Dex 12, Con 20, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 2.

**Skills:** Listen +5, Spot +5.

**Feats:** None.

The doom harvesters continue to fight until the *huge doom harvester* is killed. Once this mighty specimen is dropped the rest panic and flee. Most of the lesser doom harvesters simply scamper up the walls to get away, while others attempt to flee to the surface. In any event, the pressure is off the PCs, and they can now try to flee.

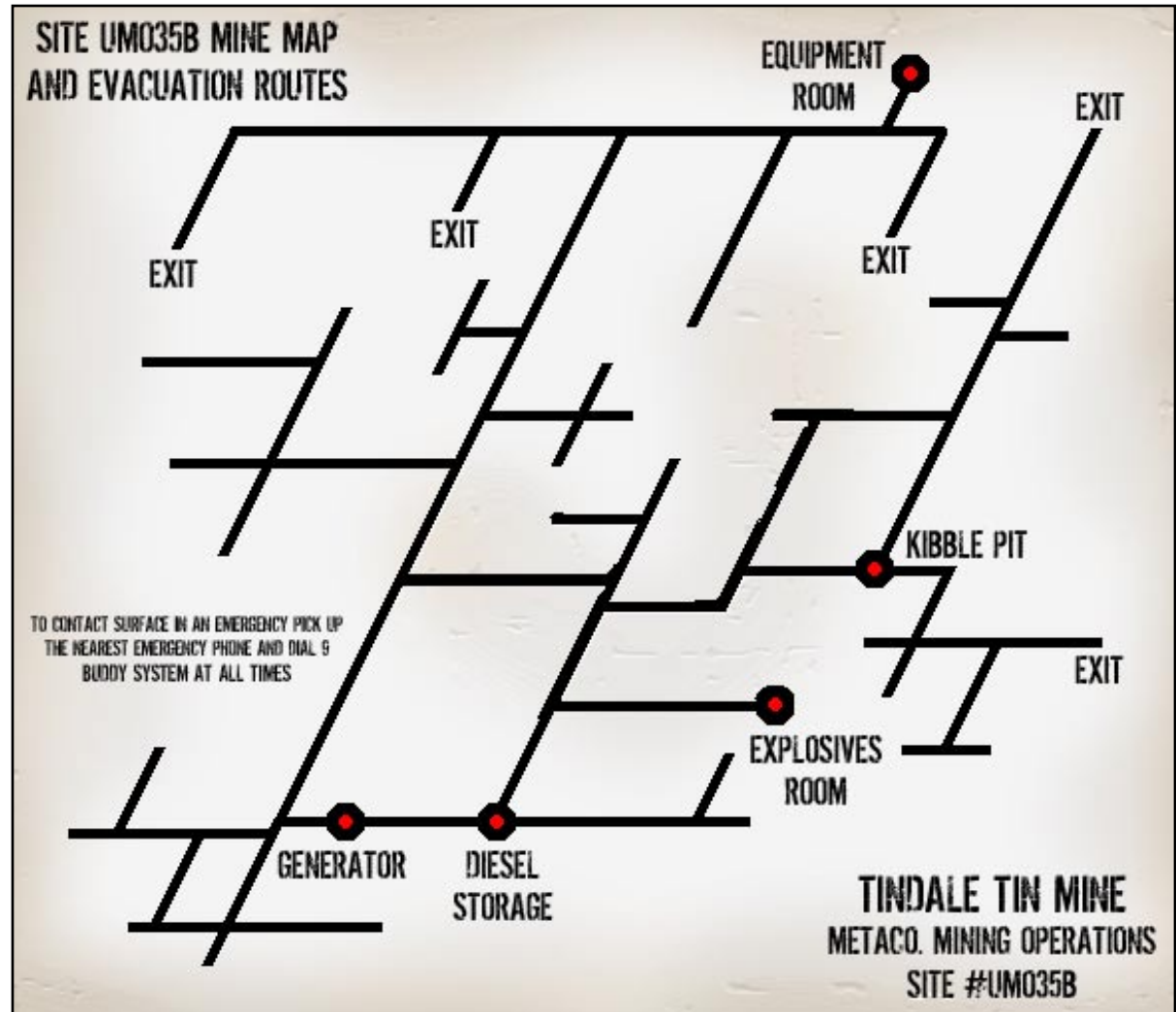
## M. FOREST EXIT (EL 0)

These areas mark the location of mine entrances that have been lost completely to underbrush - even the doom harvesters don't know about them. PCs finding either of these exits will see murky light up ahead (and hear the roar of the storm), but can escape if they so wish.

Forest exits open up deep in the forest. PCs going this way will be able to escape without running into any more doom harvesters out in the woods (contrary to what is described in *Fleeing To The Forest*).

## CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

If the PCs think of it they may plant dynamite from the *Explosives Room (Area I)* in the *Nest (Area L)* to try and blow up the heart of the doom harvester colony. Since the creatures don't recognize dynamite as a threat they won't try and stop the PCs from doing so. Eventually, when the charge does go off (assuming the PCs do it right), the blast will destroy the *Nest* cavern and collapse several other rooms and tunnels in the mines, effectively killing all the 'harvesters still underground. There may be more on the surface, but after this blow the survivors will scatter into the forest and will no longer present such a threat to people passing through the mountains.



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