

Coming Next Issue:

Megadungeon Mayhem!

More:

Maps

Monsters

& Magic Items

**From the mad mind behind
The Tower of the Archmage**

The Archmage's Octavo

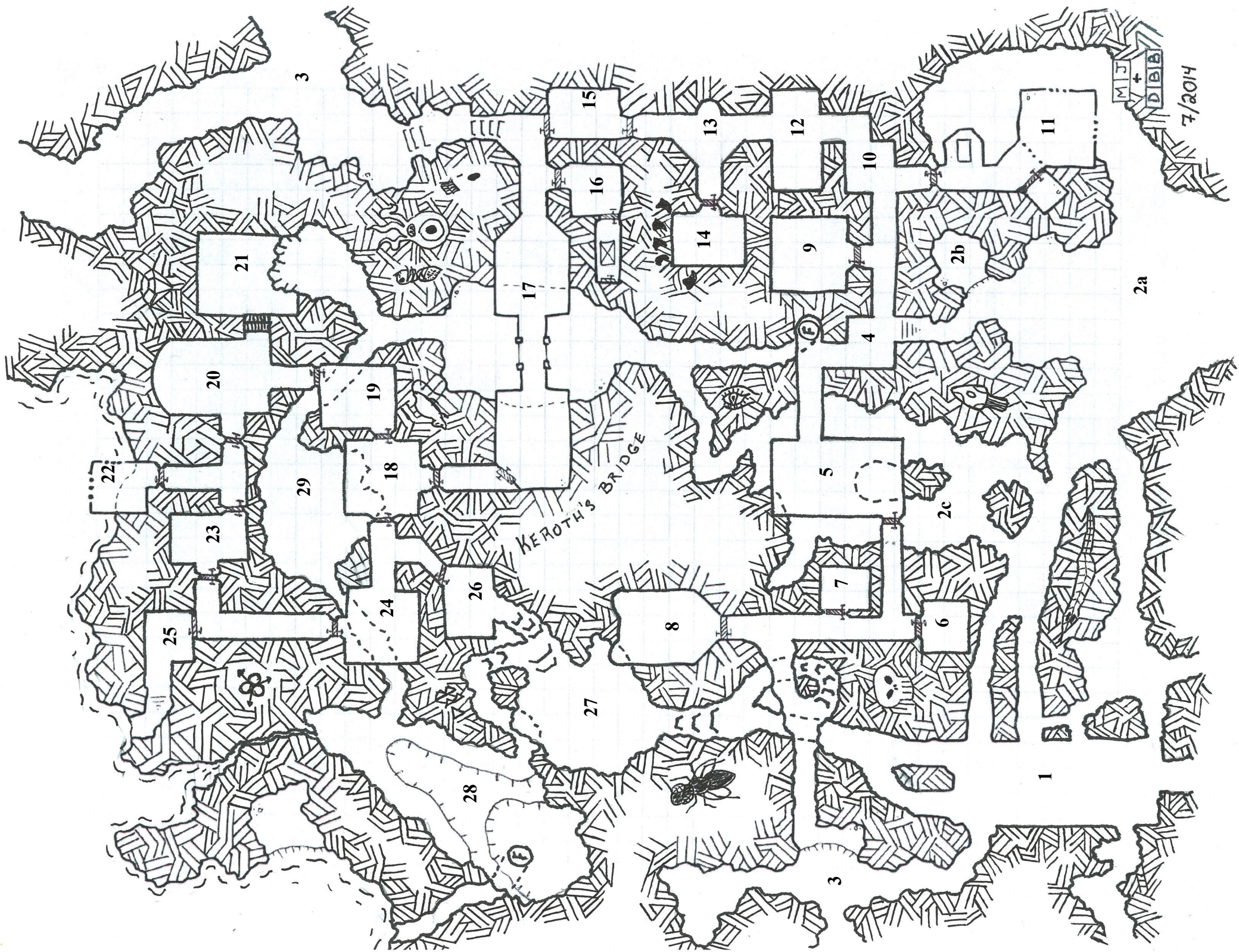
Keroth's Bridge

(aka The Jester's Mud Pie)

**A Swords & Wizardry Adventure
for 5th to 7th level characters**



Issue 2, July 2014



Magic Items

Amulet of Undead Control

This magic item allows the wearer to control up to 8HD of undead. Any attempt to control more than 8HD results in a cumulative 5% chance of failure for every HD above 8. In the event of a failure, all undead will immediately attempt to kill the wearer, and will ignore all attempts to turn (destroyed results still apply).

Bruthwol the Necromancer's Spell Book

This spell book contains the following Magic

User Spells:

- Darkness
- Detect Undead
- Fingers of Death (Magic Missile)
- Protection from Evil
- Scent of the Black Lotus (Sleep)
- Shield
- Detect Invisible
- Fear
- Phantasm's Grasp (Web)
- Monster (undead) Summoning 1
- Protection from Evil - 10' radius

Jester's Laugh

Ornate leather armor dyed primarily in purple & green to resemble a jester's outfit, complete with grinning mask and small silver bells, provides anyone who wears it with an AC of 5 (14), a +1 bonus to surprise rolls and can once per day cause Fear as per the wizard spell.



Keroth's Bridge (aka The Jester's Mud Pie)

A Swords & Wizardry Adventure for 5th to 7th level characters

Keroth's Bridge is an adventure location comprised of 4 main sections: The mostly uninhabited Outer Halls which connect with the Underdark, The Demon Caves full of mud, and the dwarven stronghold of Keroth's Bridge itself which is split between The Jester's Lair and the Halls of the restless dead.

Each area will be described in more detail, including the various sights, smells, textures, and sounds that adventurers will encounter, in addition to the monsters and NPCs that inhabit Keroth's Bridge. At the end of the adventure is a bestiary that contains the Swords and Wizardry stats for the various creatures encountered. New magic items found in the adventure follow the bestiary.

In a previous age, the dwarves built outposts deep in the roots of the world, both to mine the riches and to keep a wary eye on the dark things below. Uncounted skirmishes, battles, and wars took their tolls, and over the centuries many of the dwarven holds fell, leaving their riches behind.

Keroth's Bridge was one such outpost, perched over a sprawling cave complex that reached out from the wild Underdark, and upon the edge of a tributary that flows into the great Sunless Sea. Now Keroth's Bridge is haunted by the ancient dead that once guarded it, and also claimed by a Prophet of Bobgububilz known as the Jester. Following the commands of the great demon lord of amphibians, the jester has turned the dwarven stronghold into a demon infested sinkhole of evil. Throughout much of the complex and the caves below, fat carnivorous flies buzz about in flesh tearing swarms. The caves are now all covered in mud, and the stench of rot and swamp gas permeates everywhere.

Welcome to the second issue of The Archmage's Octavo. As promised, this issue contains my complete entry into the *So You Want To Be An OSR Superstar Contest*.

I'd like to take a few lines to thank everyone who made this contest a possibility. First, Erik Tenkar for hosting, arranging, putting up real cash for prizes, and generally being a big booster of the OSR and RPGs in general. Thanks also to Matt Jackson for providing a challenging seed map for the final round. I made 4 different drafts of the final map before settling on the one in this issue (the others will probably show up at some point in my blog). I'd also like to thank the judges: Rob Conley of the blog Bat in the Attic, Tim Shorts of the blog Gothridge Manor, and Mark Gedak of Purple Duck Games. Big props to Richard LeBlanc of Save Vs. Dragon for the OSR Superstar Graphic (as shown on the front cover). A huge thanks to all of those who've donated prizes (seriously, it's insane!)

Finally, I owe so much to the one person who always encourages me to game more, Tigs. Thank you love!

I hope you enjoy my adventure.

Images snagged from the following and used without permission:

Joker's Armor:

<http://geekcrafts.com/14824-medieval-joker-armor/>

MudMaw:

<http://unleadedartists.blogspot.com/2010/04/demon-toad.html>

Mudskippers:

<http://blogs.yahoo.co.jp/mqhdq538/62987343.html>

Anura:

http://farscape.wikia.com/wiki/File:Sheyang_Fireball.jpg

The Outer Halls

The outer halls are part of the uncountable passages, caverns, and dungeons that make up the vast network that is the Underdark. Keroth's Bridge is not out in the true wild depths of the Underdark, but lies within a week's journey to the great dark elf City of Webs, and the great Sunless Sea. As such it is known to those who prowl the lightless depths, though not often visited.

Patches of molds, mushrooms, and fungus dot the area, growing mostly wild, and feeding off the natural heat and radiation of the Underdark, lending a somewhat musty taste to the air. Organic materials do not survive long.

Most floors in this area are smoothed stone, with ceilings anywhere from 20'-50' above. All areas are dark unless otherwise noted.

The Outer Halls locations

1. Broken Hall - This once grand place of remembrance for the dwarves is full of broken statues and defaced murals that are covered in patches of mold and small mushrooms. This is a landmark location for those traveling the Underdark, and graffiti marks nearly every surface.
2. Caves & Caverns - The outer reaches of the area once controlled by the dwarves of Keroth's Bridge is generally unworked stone, with only minor efforts at improvement, mostly to widen any narrow area so that two dwarves standing abreast could walk through without bumping against the walls.
- 2a. Shroom Caverns - Giant mushrooms grow on the floor of these sandy caves. The walls are covered in anemone-like fungus with what looks like tiny mouths on the end of each stalk. A small flexible spine flicks in and out of the opening, and the stalks bend to follow anyone who approaches within 10'. There are 3 **Shreikers** that slowly wander these caves, and a **Shambling Mound** (7HD) that frequents the eastern end of the caves.
- 2b. Hidden Cave - This cave is 10' above the floor and is partly hidden by a curtain of hanging fungus. Within is the forgotten bolthole of an adventuring party. A selection of ruined equipment and dried rations molders in bags and casks. A small

hidden chest (locked) contains mixed coin (1400gp value) and a dwarven beard clasp (1,200gp).

- 2c. Inner Shroom Cave - This area was the dwarves' mushroom farm, and while it has gone wild, most of the mushrooms here are edible. The frequenting of the area by the Jester's Guard has driven the shreikers and shambling mound out of the area. The walls of the dwarven construction can be seen spanning the cave.
3. To the Underdark - These halls and caverns spread out into the wider Underdark.

Random Encounters in The Outer Halls

Anyone wandering these outer halls may chance upon one of the following random encounters.

1. Jester's Guards
2. Anura Raiders
3. Minotaur
4. Flesh Golem
5. Dark Elf Traders/Slavers
6. Migrating Grillics
7. Mycanoids
8. NPC Party (1-2 Adventurers, 3-4 Lone Survivor, 4-5 Underdark Adventurers)
9. Stirge Flight
10. Cleaner (Gelatinous Cube, Ooze, etc.)
11. Lots of moldy zombies (treat as ghouls)
12. Chicken
13. Deep Dwarf Necromancer
14. Earth Quake
15. Wild Magic Wave
16. Voices in the dark
17. Dancing motes of light (mold spores)
18. Pit Trap & starving goblins
19. Abandoned hidden & secure hideaway.
20. Petrified Orcs



MudMaw

Armor Class: 2 [18]

Hit Dice: 10 (L)

Attacks: Tongue (1d12+2), 2 kick (1d8)

Special: Magic Resistance 20%, Mud burst (1d10+1)

Move: 6

HDE/XP: 12/2,000

The Mudmaw is a giant 6 legged toad demon covered in spikes, plates, and warty bumps. It is incredibly lazy and disinclined to move from the mud pits it creates around itself wherever it is found.

In combat, the Mudmaw will use its barbed tongue to entrap its enemies, and try to swallow them. Anyone struck by the tongue must make a saving throw, or be caught and unable to move or attack. The following round the MudMaw will pull the victim into its mouth, swallowing them. Anyone swallowed will take an automatic 3d6 points of damage every round until dead. If the tongue is attacked while holding someone and 12 points of damage are done to it, it will release its hold. This damage is not subtracted from the MudMaw's total. It will target the smallest and least armored foes first, since they're easier to chew.

The Mudmaw can also cause the mud around it to boil explosively. Every round, the Mudmaw will pick a spot that will begin to bubble. The following round the mud will explode, causing 1d10+1 damage to everyone within 20'.

When the Mudmaw reaches half hit points 1d12+6 Mudskippers (larval MudMaws) will emerge from the MudMaw's back, diving into the mud pit and attacking anything they can reach.

The MudMaw's treasure is all found within its gullet. Any potions and scrolls will have a 75% chance of having been ruined in the beasts gullet. If banished, the treasure goes with it!



Mudskipper

Armor Class: 8 [11]

Hit Dice: 1 (S)

Attacks: bite (1d4)

Special: Blood Suckers (1d4)

Move: 8/12 (in mud)

HDE/XP: 2/30

Mudskippers are demonic 3' tadpoles with 6 clawed flippers and a lamprey like mouth. They attack as 3HD monsters, and whenever they successfully bite an opponent, they will latch on and cause an automatic 1d4 points of damage every round until killed or turned. In water or mud they can speed along much faster than on dry land.

Bestiary



Anura

Armor Class: 7 [12]
Hit Dice: 3 (M)
Attacks: weapon (1d6)
Special: Spits napalm
Move: 8
HDE/XP: 5/240

These lumbering frogmen are belligerent, arrogant, and absolutely convinced of their own superiority. They're also pretty stupid. They prefer to fight at range by spitting small fireballs at their opponents. These cause 1d6hp, and the target must make a saving throw or catch on fire. For melee combat they use pole arms in combat, unless they are close to death, in which case they will switch to daggers and other close weapons. This suicidal tendency is due to the fact that upon death Anura tend to explode for 1d6 damage to all within 10' who fail their saving throw.

Bruthwol the Necromancer

Armor Class: 8 [11]
Hit Dice: 6 (M)
Attacks: staff (1d6) or spell
Special: Spell Casting (Magic User 6)
Move: 12
HDE/XP: 7/600

Bruthwol is a deep dwarf with an unnatural interest in the dead. Though beardless, he retains some serious muttonchops. He isn't at all interested in fighting adventurers, and would be thrilled to see the wraith destroyed, since he knows he can't do it himself.

Fly Swarm

Armor Class: n/a
Hit Dice: n/a
Attacks: Bite
Special: Buzz
Move: 12
HDE/XP: n/a

Swarms of biting flies cause only negligible damage, but their annoyance causes anyone within the swarm to suffer a -1 penalty to attack rolls and AC. In addition, the loud buzzing can be heard for a significant distance. Can be dispersed with area attacks, lots of smoke, or strong wind.

Jester

Armor Class: 4 [16]
Hit Dice: 8 (M)
Attacks: Mace (1d6+1) or spell
Special: Spell Casting (Cleric 8)
Move: 12
HDE/XP: 10/1400

The Jester is a Prophet of Bobugbubilz, though that creature's thoughts are inscrutable even to him. While technically human, Bobugbubilz has caused his skin to become warty, his eyes to bulge, and his mouth to widen. He despises these changes, and hides behind the mask of his armor (see below) at all times now.

He keeps prepared the following spells: Cure Light Wounds, Protection from Good, Bless, Hold Person, Curse, Prayer, Cure Serious Wounds, Neutralize Poison, Commune, and Insect Plague..

Jester's Guard

Armor Class: 5 [14]
Hit Dice: 3+1 (M)
Attacks: weapon (1d6)
Special: Jump
Move: 8
HDE/XP: 5/240

Human's "blessed" by Bobugbubilz with slightly froglike features. They can make a jump attack with a +2 to the attack if there is space. None of them are happy to be this deep in the Underdark, or hanging around demons.

Keroth's Bridge (Halls of the Restless Dead)

The Halls of the Restless Dead were the last areas breached by the dark elf invaders, and where the dwarves made their final stand. As is typical with dwarven architecture, the halls are well built, carved from the living rock, and embellished with decorative carvings depicting great battles, myths, and legends of the dwarves. Hallways are 15' tall, while chambers are 25' high, unless otherwise noted. The ceilings are all vaulted, and dry oil lamps hang at regular intervals.

Unlike the rest of the areas in this adventure, the Halls of the Restless Dead are without molds and mushrooms. These halls are colder and dry with a sharp hint of incense lingering in the air.

4. Guard Room - The doors to this room are all missing, the frames all showing evidence of ancient damage. The walls all show damage as might result from various destructive magics being unleashed within. Following the hallway to the north leads to an alcove that once held the statue of a dwarven hero. Now it has a hole leading down into the caves. Miraculously the statue is intact in the caves below.
5. Great Hall - Ruined banners still hang from the 35' high ceiling. Two massive tables run the length of the room with benches on either side. Ruined crockery covers the floor and tables, and **11 Ghouls** (6 dwarf, 5 dark elf) lurk in the shadows and under the tables, waiting to attack anyone entering the room.
6. Acolytes Chambers - **4 Wights** (former dwarf acolytes) perpetually prepare for their daily rites. Donning and removing their tattered robes. 4 holy symbols have been tossed into the cold brazier in the corner.
7. Priests Chambers - A shattered bed dominates the room. The floor is littered with broken stone tablets. Piecing them together will take hours, and will reveal the history of Keroth's Bridge up to its invasion. An unlocked chest in the corner contains a dwarven priest's robes, but is empty of treasure.
8. Shrine - This desecrated shrine is now devoted to Orcus, and tended to by a

spiteful **Wraith** (can cast *Hold Person* x2 and *Fear*). **4 Skeletons** assist in her dark rites. The chamber is lit by black flame candles (like a black light). Within the defaced alter is a chest containing 1,200gp, a jeweled ewer worth 140gp, and a mithril hammer & anvil holy implement worth 540gp). Killing the wraith will end the unnatural cold of the area.

9. Guard Barracks - 20 dwarven zombies bunk in this room, and rill rush as one at anyone attempting to open the door.
10. Intersection - The dismembered corpses of 3 dark elves and a dwarf are tossed into the northwestern corner.
11. Prison - Locked in the cell overlooking the shroom caves is a dead dark elf sorceress. Her **Spirit** haunts the cell still, harmless but lonely. She often sings to the shambling mound that lurks below. Would appreciate being laid to rest. Knows about the Jester's demon summoning. The trap door and iron stairs are stuck in the raised position, and difficult to reach from the shroom cave.
12. Forge - This smithy is still in working order, with all the tools needed for any sort of armor or weapon work, including bars of worked dwarven steel, and a small amount of iron ore. Hidden in the bottom of the fire pit are several bars of mithril worth 450gp total.
13. Shrine - A statue of Keroth lies on the floor of this chamber, having suffered only minor damage. A depression in the base under where the statue stood is empty. The door to the north is covered in runes (explosive runes, 5th level caster)
14. Store Room - Extra clothing, dry goods, lumber, coal, oil, etc. fill this room.
15. Necromancer's Workroom - A deep dwarf, **Bruthwol the Necromancer** has arrived recently to try and take control of the undead in the halls. The Jester is aware of him, though Bruthwol thinks he is unobserved so far. Thus far he has managed to gain control of **5 Zombies**.

Bruthwol keeps his spell book with him at all times, and wears around his neck an Amulet of Undead Control.

Keroth's Bridge (Jester's Lair)

The Jester's portion of Keroth's Bridge was the first breached by the dark elves. Since then it has traded hands numerous times. The guards are unhappy with their current lot, dealing with the demonic Anura, the ever present biting flies, and the smell. Not helped is the never ending diet of fish and mushroom stew. They'd be much happier abandoning Keroth's Bridge and returning to the surface.

The Jester is rarely in one spot for long, and there is a 20% chance he can be found in rooms 18-25. He will quickly arrive if the alarm is raised.

Swarms of flies tend to make their way around the lair if given half a chance. If the PCs leave doors open flies will begin to congregate and swarm. Swarms will follow PCs, creating a buzzing racket, and a biting distraction that causes a -1 penalty to attack rolls and AC.

16. Trapped Hall - The Jester added the pit trap, false door, and the one way door into the room after taking this area over.
17. Keroth's Bridge - This dual chamber is linked by a cavern spanning bridge. Empty aside from some random detritus. Both chambers and the bridge are covered with dried muddy Anurian footprints. The walls are ornately carved and decorated with geometric shapes and scenes depicting dwarven battles against orcs, elves, and giants. A single **Anura** lurks in the mud in the cavern below the bridge. If discovered it will spit at whoever spotted it and flee to 21.
18. Guard Room - Locked door with a caged viewing window. **6 Jester's Guards** watch for Anura (they'll get the Jester) and Underdark raiders of various types. The guards really don't like the Anura, but put up with them because of the Jester.
19. Guard Barracks - 24 Bunks (dwarf sized) and footlockers fill this cramped room. **2d6 Jester's Guards** will be resting here at any given time. 139gp can be recovered from the footlockers.
20. Mess Hall - The northern portion of the room is taken up by a raised platform with a large fireplace. In it simmers a pot of

mushroom and fish stew. The fireplace burns dried mushroom stalks. **14 Jester's Guards** will be eating and relaxing unless otherwise alerted.

21. Bricked Up - This chamber has begun to collapse into the cave beneath it. The Anura have claimed it as their lair. **5 Anura** will be squatting here enjoying their 10,000gp, and the fine dining of the giant flies.
22. Jester's Lair - This locked room has barred and warded windows looking out to the river. Under the bed is a treasure chest that is locked and trapped (1d6 poison damage per round for 1d4 rounds) containing polished river stones.
23. Supply Room - Locked, contains a dwindling supply of grains and lamp oil. Tents and backpacks for the entire group.
24. Shrine to Bobugbubilz - **4 Jester's Guards** on duty praying here at all times. No matter how much effort goes into it, there are always annoying buzzing flies in the shrine. None of the guards like this duty, and will use any excuse to abandon it.
25. Guard Post - **4 Jester's Guards** watch for any activity on the river while fishing. A small rowboat is tied up at the water's edge.
26. Abandoned - The southern wall of this room has been mined through from below. The guards keep the door closed and locked in an attempt to keep the flies out of their lair. The Jester uses this path to get to the MudMaw. If this door is opened, a swarm of flies will burst forth. The buzzing will alert the guards in room 18 and 25, and the biting will be such a distraction that anyone in the swarm will suffer a -1 penalty to attack rolls and AC.

Demon Caves

These natural caves were, until recently, dry. When the Jester summoned forth the MudMaw, it warped the environment, causing the natural caves to fill with mud. It has also created (unbeknownst to the Jester) a tunnel connecting its cave with the river.

Movement in any of the caves is reduced by half. The overwhelming presence of the biting flies is such that AC and attacks are reduced by 1. Killing the MudMaw will allow the mud to dry out, and will disperse the flies.

Anyone trapped in mud will have to make a saving throw every round after the first or take 1d6 drowning damage.

27. Mud Pit - The center of this cave is 15' deeper than the edges, and filled with mud. The **4 Anura** will attempt to maneuver anyone entering the cave into the pit. The **9 Mudskippers** are just evil little beasts and attack without strategy. The Anura will not hesitate to use their spit attack even if Mudskippers are in the way.
28. MudMaw - The multiple tiers of this cave are hidden by the mud. The **MudMaw** wallows at the surface over the deepest part of the cavern. **14 Mudskippers** lurk around the room, sometimes popping out to catch flies.

The MudMaw cares nothing for the Anura or even it's own spawn the Mudskippers. It cares even less for the Jester, and has considered eating him on numerous occasions since being summoned to this plane. As soon as it builds up the motivation, it intends to make it's way into the river and out into the greater Underdark.

It has the following in its gullet: 4,400gp in coin, 6 gems (total value 746gp), and a Silver Horn of Valhalla.

27. More Mud - **4 Anura** and **5 Mudskippers** soak in the warm, bubbling mud of this cave.
28. Cliff Cave - This cave overlooks the river, and is used as a watch post to keep an eye on the Jester's guards who come out fishing, and anything else that floats down the river. Currently **2 Anura** watch.

River

The river flowing slowly past Keroth's Bridge is one of many tributaries flowing from the far corners of the upper Underdark into the great Sunless Sea. As with the other parts of the Underdark, the river offers both opportunity for great reward, and the strong possibility for a violent death (or worse). While this adventure only briefly touches on the river, a random encounter chart is provided below in case your players opt to spend some time on the water. Some encounters may be with creatures on the shores, rather than in/on the water.

Random Encounters on the River

1. Dark Elf Slavers
2. Bloat Zombies (expels a poison gas cloud)
3. Anura
4. Albino River Snake
5. Spiny Shell Beasts (as Giant Rats, AC 3/16)
6. Whirlpool/Rapids
7. Lightning bugs
8. Halfling w/ ring of invisibility
9. Orc Raiders w/ Ogres
10. Goblins w/ Cave Troll
11. Wererat Gang
12. Strangle Kelp