

TUNNELS OF THE ANCIENT WORM

Beneath shifting Stone, the slumbering Ancient Worm thrashes, reshaping tunnels while the Burrower's Cult drums to guide its awakening. Scalding steam geysers erupt from pressurized rock pockets, forcing intruders to seek shelter or face instant death.

HOOKS & RUMORS

- A cultist begs for silence near a rumbling wall, claiming their drums can soothe the worm before it crushes the entire cavern system.
- Three explorers vanished after triggering a steam vent; their gear remains near a narrow crevice that shifts every time the earth shakes.
- The cult plans to breach the surface tonight; stopping them requires sneaking past drummers while avoiding sudden bursts of superheated gas.
- A map found on a crushed body shows safe paths through the worm's thrashing tunnels, but only if one moves before the next vent erupts.
- Force may be needed to silence the cultists, yet attacking them risks waking the worm prematurely and releasing deadly steam from deep below.

RANDOM EVENTS (D6)

1	Sudden Tremor	A violent shake cracks the floor, dropping loose rocks and forcing everyone to make a dexterity save or fall prone.
2	Steam Burst	A hidden vent erupts with scalding gas, creating a thick cloud that obscures vision and deals fire damage to unprotected targets.
3	Cultist Patrol	A group of drumming cultists rounds the corner, unaware of the party's presence, offering a chance for stealth or ambush.
4	Wall Shift	The tunnel walls grind together, narrowing the passage and blocking one exit while revealing a hidden crevice behind loose stone.
5	Gas Leak	Toxic fumes seep from a fissure, causing coughing and reduced visibility until a character opens a vent or uses air magic.
6	Bone Collapse	A large section of the ceiling gives way, creating a new obstacle course of rubble that must be climbed or navigated carefully.

LOCATIONS

Shifting Stone Threshold

Damp air reeks of sulfur as rhythmic drumming echoes from deep below.

Echoing Drum Hall

Rhythmic thumping vibrates through heated basalt walls, disorienting visitors with low frequency...

Steam

Fissure Corridor Pressurized gas vents hiss violently from jagged floor cracks, releasing scaldi...

Crumbling Rib Cage

Massive fossilized bones arch overhead, shifting violently as the worm thrashes below and shedding...

Cultist Ritual Heart

The Burrower's Cult drums frantically on heated basalt as the Ancient Worm's thrashing cracks the...

ENCOUNTERS (D6)

1	Rhythm Disruption	Cultists drum frantically to soothe the worm, but interrupting them causes a violent tremor that collapses the ceiling. Players can sabotage drums with ranged attacks, negotiate to stop the ritual, or hide behind pillars during the quake. Failure triggers a massive rockfall that blocks the exit.
2	Steam Ambush	-Fissure Corridor: A rogue vent erupts unexpectedly, forcing cultist scouts and adventurers alike to scramble for cover behind Stone slabs. The heat creates a visibility barrier while combatants use the Steam cloud to flank or retreat. Timing is crucial as the geyser lasts only ten seconds before receding.
3	Bone Collapse	A section of the fossilized archway cracks under pressure, dropping boulders that crush anyone standing in the open. Cultists try to flee while adventurers must dodge falling debris or use the chaos to strike. High ground on bone ridges offers safety but limits movement options.
4	Ritual Sabotage	The lead cultist attempts to accelerate the worm's awakening by beating a faster tempo, causing walls to grind together. Players can steal the ceremonial drumsticks, poison the water supply used for cooling drums, or challenge the leader to single combat. Success delays the ritual and weakens the worm's influence.
5	Heat Wave	-Fissure Corridor: A massive pressure buildup forces a superheated blast that sweeps the corridor, incinerating unprotected targets instantly. Cultists wear thick leather aprons for protection while adventurers must find deep crevices or use water spells to mitigate damage. The blast reveals a hidden alcove containing ancient mining tools.
6	Shifting Ambush	The worm's thrashing causes the floor to tilt, sliding combatants toward a central pit filled with sharp bone shards. Cultists attempt to push enemies into the pit while adventurers can anchor themselves to stable bones or use grappling hooks. Falling results in severe injury and exposure to toxic gas.

TREASURE

Drumstick of Resonance — This golden rod amplifies sound waves to shatter stone walls when struck against basalt. Found in the Echoing Drum Hall, it was used by Vora to control the worm's movements. The item is cursed: each use causes temporary deafness and attracts hostile creatures from deep tunnels.

Heat-Resistant Apron — A thick leather garment treated with alchemical oils that protects against scalding steam for one hour. Discovered in a hidden mining cache within the Steam-Fissure Corridor, it was worn by miners who survived geyser eruptions. The apron becomes brittle and flammable if exposed to fire magic or extreme heat.

Fossilized Bone Key — A sharp, curved bone fragment that unlocks ancient pressure valves to redirect steam flow. Hidden in the Crumbling Rib Cage beneath a pile of rubble, it was crafted by early miners to control gas pockets. Using the key incorrectly can cause a catastrophic explosion that destroys nearby tunnels.

Worm's Eye Gem — A pulsating crystal that glows red when the worm thrashes nearby, warning of impending tremors. Stolen from Vora's altar in the Ritual Heart, it was used to time ritual chants with the beast's movements. The gem drains the wearer's stamina over time but grants advantage on survival checks against environmental hazards.

NPCS

High Priestess Vora: A fervent cult leader who believes the worm's awakening will cleanse the surface world of sin. She wears robes stained with sulfur and carries a golden drumstick that channels magical energy. She can offer safe passage if convinced the party aids her ritual or fight fiercely to protect her sacred space.

Miner Jarek: A disillusioned former cultist who knows the tunnel layout but fears the worm's growing power. He hides in secret alcoves and offers maps in exchange for protection from his former allies. Jarek is paranoid and will betray the party if he senses they plan to kill Vora immediately.

Stone: Singer Elara A blind musician who uses her voice to harmonize with the worm's vibrations, acting as a reluctant ally. She seeks to calm the beast rather than awaken it fully and can predict tremors before they happen. Elara helps the party navigate safely but demands they destroy Vora's drumming equipment.

Rival Prospector Kael: A greedy treasure hunter who wants to mine the worm's fossilized bones for their rare minerals. He leads a small group of mercenaries and will attack anyone blocking his path to the central chamber. Kael can be bribed with gold or tricked into triggering a steam trap himself.

PLOT RESOLUTIONS

The adventurers could silence High Priestess Vora to stop the ritual, causing the worm to thrash wildly and collapse...

The adventurers might ally with The Burrower's Cult to guide the beast safely upward, gaining access to surface tunne...

The adventurers could use Stone's voice to calm the worm, requiring them to destroy all drumming equipment and perman...

The adventurers might trick Rival Prospector Kael into triggering a steam trap, clearing the path but causing a catas...

The adventurers could steal the Fossilized Bone Key to redirect steam vents, opening a safe route while risking a mas...