

A HØLE TØØ DEEP

Introduction

The desperate old woman is digging for her greatest desire. It is her last chance and she is willing to die for it.

Rating

COMBAT	EXPLORATION	SOCIAL
☆☆☆	★★★	★★☆

Average Player Level

The encounter is designed for an APL of 5 with four characters but can be used at any level.

NUMBER	APL 4	APL 5	APL 6
2-3 Characters	Very Weak	Weak	Average
4 Characters	Weak	Average	Strong
5-6 Characters	Average	Strong	Very Strong

Adjusting the Encounter

Following ways to adjust the average difficulty:

- **APL 2:** Decrease the skill challenge DCs to 10 and 13
- **APL 10:** Increase the skill challenge DCs to 14 and 18

Plot Hooks

Following motivations might interest your players:

- **Appeal to Reward.** A part of whatever her greatest desire will be.
- **Appeal to Heroism.** Help or the old woman will surely drown.
- **Appeal to Discovery.** What could it be that you will find?

NPCs & Creatures

Barsael (LN **commoner**): old female dwarf, muscular build, sun burned skin, long unkempt white hair.

- **Agenda.** Find her greatest desire.
- **Instinct.** Dig. Dig more. Dig quicker.
- **Moves.** Shovel as quickly as possible. Find a new spot and shovel there.
- **Secrets.** Barsael has an inexplicable fear of birds, especially seagulls, and tries to avoid them. Despite having dealt with a hag, she harbors a deep distrust and dislike of magic.

Location

A large local beach close to a small town or village. The beach is a peculiar sight, as it is covered in countless holes of various sizes. All holes are clearly dug with a shovel, but the number would mean that would have taken a lifetime to create them, whatever their purpose may be.

Encounter Details

The town is in panic, and everybody is fleeing after messengers have warned the townsfolk about the threat of the coming waves. The GM decides their cause: massive storm, tsunami, sea leviathan, or similar. It is only important that there is no way to stop it from happening. A young girl begs people (and the group) to not forget about Barsael, the old lady digging down at the beach.

When Barsael was young and restless she made a deal with a hag. She wished for her greatest desire. True to her word the hag promised her that when Barsael travels to a certain beach, she will find it buried there. She can't remember the exact words anymore or even what her greatest desire is but throughout the years her digging became an unwavering routine. She is determined to find it and will not give up no matter the cost anymore.

Skill Challenge - Helping Barsael.

To find what she is looking for the characters must succeed on a skill challenge. They need 6 successes before they accumulate 3 failures. The DC for primary skills is 12 and for secondary 15. See Appendix for more info.

Outcomes

Barsael can't be convinced to leave and will fight anyone trying to stop her shoveling before the waves make it impossible to discern where she already tried to dig. Otherwise, the skill challenge resolves as follows:

- They succeed and find a small, withered chest with "For Barsael" written on it (see Rewards).
- They fail and are overwhelmed by the waves. Barsael will not survive. The characters must succeed on a **DC 15 Constitution save** or drop to 0 hit points. On a success, a character drops to 1 hit point. Should all characters fail, they awaken later at a location determined by the GM and miss some of their equipment.
- For each failure, the group gains one level of exhaustion after the skill challenge.

Rewards

The chest contains two pieces of paper, after inspecting them, Barsael will offer them to the characters as a reward before going her own way.

- A letter: "You were weak-willed and asked me for the unshackle determination and iron will to achieve your desires. You wanted to impress the world leaving an unforgettable legacy. So, here is your prize, a magic scroll to imbue yourself with unwavering confidence. But maybe you don't need it anymore...?"
- A scroll of **fake determination** (9th level)



Appendix

A skill challenge is a unique kind of way of playing the game where you let your players decide how to solve a problem with the skills they are proficient with. The skill checks need to beat either the primary (lower) DC when they are direct and useful or the secondary (higher) DC if the provided explanation is not perfectly suited to the circumstances.

At the start, you roll for initiative to determine the order in which players provide attempts to help with the given situation. Then a player chooses a skill their character has proficiency in and then explains how they are going to use it. For example, in a situation where the characters must find their way out of a crumbling dungeon, a player may decide to use Perception to look for a shortcut. As this is a good idea, the primary DC applies. Another player may not have the right skills for the situation and can only offer a Persuasion check to keep everybody calm. As this would be only indirectly helpful, the secondary DC applies.

The skill challenge goes on until the predetermined number of successes or failures is reached. A failure, can trigger a direct effect or have an effect after the challenge ends. Once a character successfully uses a skill, they can't use that skill again.

You can view this [video](#) from Matt Coville if you need a more detailed explanation.

Skill Challenge - Handout

Use your skills to achieve a number of successes before, you fail three times.

Requirement to Use Skills

- You must have proficiency in the skill you want to use.
- You must then explain how to apply the skill.
- Somebody else should not have done the exact same thing, but you can use the same skill as someone else in a different way.

Primary and Secondary Skills

- Primary skills are direct and obviously helpful in that situation. Therefore, the DC for them is lower.
- Secondary skills all other skills. Think about how they still can help in the situation. As their indirect help, their DC is higher.

Optional: Group Checks

- When a character makes a skill check. Other characters with the same proficiency can try to help.
- To help the assisting characters must succeed on a DC 10 skill check.
- Each success adds a +2 bonus to the check of the check of the original character's check.

Fake Determination

Level 1 Enchantment

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M (a heart of a fly)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 hour

You fill a creature with a fake sense of an unwavering determination and gain one of the following benefits:

- **Unrelenting.** The target gains advantage on saving throws against the Exhaustion condition.
- **Unswayed.** The target becomes immune against the Charmed condition.
- **Unwavering.** The target becomes immune against the Frightened condition.

A creature can only have one effect of this spell at the same time.

Using a Higher-Level Spell Slot. The spell lasts until dispelled, without requiring concentration, if cast with a level 9 spell slot.

