



# RUINED GATEHOUSE

A Web Enhancement for *Deep Horizon*  
by Skip Williams



The DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® adventure *Deep Horizon* is the sixth of eight adventures designed to take character from the beginning to advanced levels of play. This mini-adventure can be added easily to any campaign or used when playing with the *Deep Horizon* adventure, and it should work nicely with a group of four PCs of about 13th level. You will need a copy of the *Deep Horizon* adventure to run the desmodus, however.

## PREPARATION

You need the *Player's Handbook*, the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide*, the *MONSTER MANUAL*®, and the *Deep Horizon* adventure to run this mini-adventure.

Text in shaded boxes is player information. Monster

statistics noted in each encounter are radically abbreviated, but provide the *Monster Manual* page number or *Deep Horizon* appendix notation for full statistics of common monsters.

## ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The PCs come across a ruined gatehouse that was formerly a fortified gate leading into the drow city of Chael-Rekshaar. A quartet of beholders have laid claim to it and use it as a strongpoint to keep interlopers out of the ruined city while they loot it. Look to the Adventure Background within *Deep Horizon* for more information about how to fit this into that particular adventure. If you're using this ruined gatehouse as a stop in your campaign, you can arm the NPCs with whatever information or specific treasure you wish so that you can draw the PCs to this location.

## THE GATEHOUSE

The PCs can explore the ruined gatehouse so long as they take care of the beholder and its desmodu mercenaries first. Maps 3 and 3A show the gatehouse.

## Features

The gatehouse originally had a pair of towers three stories high, but the upper floors have fallen into ruin and the beholders have gutted them. They use only the ground floor.

**Arrow slits:** Only the lowest row of arrow slits (about 5 feet above the floor) show up on the map. There are two identical rows of arrows above the ones shown on the map. Creatures behind an arrow slit have nine-tenths cover (+10 AC, +4 Reflex saves).

**Light:** Phosphorescent fungus covers the entire exterior of the gatehouse (provides 5-foot radius of light). The interior of the gatehouse is not so lighted.

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## Residents

The gatehouse is currently home to a beholder and six desmodu mercenaries. The beholder is here to see that nobody enters Chael-Rekshaar until the beholders are done with it. The four beholders involved in looting the city rotate their assignments, and the beholder here is very familiar with operations in the city.

The desmodus are less well informed. All they know is that they have been hired to do a job and that some of their comrades also are employed in the city (though they're not sure where). They also know that the beholders have some slaves in the city, including some desmodu who were stupid enough to be captured and not smart enough to know a good deal when it was offered. They're not sure how many slaves there are, but they're pretty sure there are at least two beholders in the city. The desmodus have never visited the city and have no useful information for the party, other than the general history of the area. (Dungeon Masters should either utilize the information within *Deep Horizon* to fill in the gaps, or they should create their own reason why the beholders and their hired mercenaries are at the gatehouse and the city.)

**Ad Hoc XP Award:** When the PCs' defeat creatures in the gatehouse, increase their experience awards by 50% to account for the superior defensive position the beholders and their allies have.

### 1. Moat and Bridge (EL Variable)

When the PCs approach the ruined gatehouse, they can see the moat and bridge.

Before you stands a moat, perhaps 20 feet wide, filled with rushing water. Thin tendrils of vapor rise from the water, tainting the air with a hint of sulfur. Shards of some great, broken statue lie at your feet.

A crumbling stone arch wide enough for at least nine humans to march through, shoulder to shoulder, and at least that high lies behind the moat. A smashed portcullis of rusty iron partially blocks the arch. Beyond the portcullis, the passage takes a sharp turn to the left, leaving you staring through the arch at a natural stone wall pierced with three rows of arrow slits. The lowest row is perhaps 5 feet above the chamber floor, with the upper two rows at about 20 and 35 feet.

The bits of statue came from a war bat a desmodu explorer rode toward the gatehouse. The beholder in area 3 turned the bat to stone, and the statue plum-



meted to the ground and shattered. Then the beholder and its minions captured the explorer and sent it off to toil as a slave in the ruins of the city.

The moat is 20 feet wide and 40 feet deep. Water from an underground river rushes along the moat. It is 30 feet deep (leaving 10 feet between the water's surface and the top of the moat) and moves north to south. Spiked gratings block the north and south ends of the moat, though they are out of sight below the surface.

The water flows from a volcanic cavern and is very nearly boiling hot (hence the vapors and sulfur smell). The dotted line on the map shows the river's course underground. Anyone who falls into the water suffers 10d6 points of fire damage (just touching the water inflicts 1d6 points of damage) and must make a Swim check (DC 15) to stay afloat. Characters who fail are swept against the south grating and suffer 2d6 points of damage. They also must make Reflex saves (DC 20) or become stuck on the spikes below the surface. Stuck characters remain held fast until rescued.

Characters can extend a stone bridge over the moat. The bridge retracts into the eastern side of the moat and is currently fully retracted. It is visible from the west side of the moat as a thin rectangle of stone; however, the PCs must operate the bridge only from area 5.

➤ **Ruined Iron Portcullis:** 2 in. thick; hardness 10; hp 30; AC 1; Break DC 28.

Please note that it's possible to simply move through gaps in the portcullis (which are shown on the map). The portcullis is jammed and cannot be lifted out of the way. The portcullis does not block spell effects, but if any ranged attack (including a ray) passes through the intact portion of the portcullis, the target gains one-quarter cover (+2 cover bonus to AC).

➤ **Moat Grating:** 4 in. thick; hardness 10; hp 120; AC 4; Break DC 35.

**Development:** The beholder and the desmodu in area 3 keeping watch over the moat can spot anyone approaching. The beholder quickly uses its antimagic cone against anyone trying to fly over the moat. Lines and shaded areas on maps 3 and 3A show where the cone (or any ranged attack) can reach. The beholder, thanks to its flying ability, can use the higher arrow slits and can aim the cone down at angle of up to 45 degrees (also shown on map 3A). So, it is quite possible it can make characters using fly spells or magic flying devices fall into the water, especially if it catches them over the western half of the moat. See area 3 for more information on the beholder's tactics.

The desmodus in area 6 joins the fight one round after the beholder is alerted.

## 2. Passage (EL Variable)

The PCs find themselves in the passage once they pass the moat.

You find yourself in a twisting passage that turns right, then left, and ends in a high, broad archway blocked by a portcullis of black iron. The natural rock walls to either side are well provided with arrow slits arranged in three rows, just as you saw at the moat. There are cracks in the walls to your right and left that are easily large enough to admit a human or even an ogre. However, they are both 20 feet off the ground and are at the level of the second row of arrow slits.

The portcullis is brand new (the beholders had it repaired). It is operated from area 5.

➤ **Iron Portcullis:** 8 in. thick; hardness 10; hp 240; AC -1; Break DC 45 (lift DC 55).

Please note that it's not possible for a creature of less than Gargantuan size to lift the portcullis. If some

immensely strong creature were to make a lift attempt, the portcullis would simply tear away; treat such lift attempts as break attempts.

**Development:** The desmodus in areas 3 and 4 spot anyone entering here, and they fire their bows at any intruders. The beholder in area 3 uses its eye rays on any intruders it sees. See areas 3 and 4 for details.

## 3. South Tower (EL 14)

The drow built this chamber to control access to the moat and bridge (area 1). It has a floor strewn with rubble and a ceiling 50 feet high. There is a crack in the wall leads north to area 2, but the crack is 20 feet above the floor level in area 2 (15 feet above the floor level in here).

**Creatures:** A beholder and a desmodu keep a vigil on area 1 from here.

➤ **Beholder:** hp 72; see *Monster Manual* page 24.

*Possessions:* 5 pinches of *dust of appearance*, 4 pinches of *dust of disappearance*.

➤ **Desmodus (2):** hp 114 each, see Appendix II in *Deep Horizon*.

**Tactics:** When a desmodu spots anyone, it alerts the beholder and uses its *hope* power.

The desmodu and the beholder stays inside as long as they can attack effectively from the tower. They make ranged attacks against foes in areas 1 or 2. The beholder uses its eyes and the desmodu uses its bow. The beholder uses its antimagic cone to keep foes from crossing the moat by magic.

The water in the moat does not block magic or the beholder's eye rays, but it does limit vision. Creatures and objects can be seen clearly through up to 15 feet of vapor. At more than 15 feet, but at less than 30 feet, creatures have one-half concealment. Beyond 30 feet, all vision is obscured. Increase the amount of concealment one step (see Table 8–10 in the *Player's Handbook*) if someone looks at a submerged creature from above the surface.

If nobody tries to cross the moat, or if foes get across despite the antimagic cone, the beholder switches to its other eyes.

Characters can avoid the beholder's eye rays and the desmodus' arrows by hugging the blindspots around and below each arrow slit (though this leaves them exposed to attacks from area 4). Once the characters figure out how to hide from the beholder's eye rays, the beholder uses some of its *dust of disappearance* and flies out the crack



in the wall to carry the fight to the PCs. (It carries its containers of magic dust in its mouth.) When the beholder leaves the tower, the desmodu follows suit (though it must climb up to the crack and then jump down to area 2). If faced with invisible opponents, the beholder uses its *dust of appearance* against invisible PCs (it watches where the desmodus direct their attacks to figure out about where the invisible foes are); the beholder's *telekinesis* ray is handy for sprinkling dust over a distant foe. If reduced to 20 hit points or less, the beholder tries to escape invisibly, disintegrating its way out through a wall if it has to. If it is apparent that one or more foes can detect invisible creatures, the beholder attempts to obliterate them with its most potent attacks (*disintegrate*, *finger of death*, *flesh to stone*, and *charm monster*) before it goes.

When the beholder leaves the tower, the desmodu does, too. Once within melee reach of foes, the desmodu uses its stunning screech on opponents and a smokestick or two to give itself concealment. The desmodu stays with the fight so long as the beholder is in the battle (it fears being disintegrated or petrified if it displeases its employer). If the beholder is slain or flees, the desmodu surrenders.

**Development:** Any disturbance here brings the desmodu from area 6A in two rounds.

#### 4. North Tower (EL 13)

This area is similar to area 3.

**Creatures:** Two desmodus keep watch on area 2 from here

➤ **Desmodus** (2): hp 114 each; see Appendix II in *Deep Horizon*.

**Tactics:** The desmodus fire arrows at any intruders they spot in area 2. If they find they cannot attack effectively with their bows, they climb or jump up to the crack in the wall and enter area 2 to make melee attacks. They otherwise use the same tactics the desmodu in area 3 uses.

**Development:** Any disturbance here brings the two desmodu from area 6B in two rounds.

#### 5. Machinery Room (EL 0)

This chamber contains two large windlasses. One on the west wall operates the bridge at area 1. The mechanism is functional, but stiff. It takes a Strength check (DC 20) to turn the windlass for one round. Each round of operation extends or retracts the bridge 5 feet; the moat is 20 feet wide, so that means it will take 4 rounds to extend it fully. The east wall holds the windlass that operates the portcullis at the east end of area 2. The mechanism turns smoothly, but requires a Strength check (DC 10) each round to operate. Each round of operation raises or lowers the portcullis 5 feet.

#### 6. Barracks (EL 11)

These chambers once housed the gatehouse's drow garrison and are now home to the desmodus. Each desmodu sleeps in a canvas hammock slung from the chamber's ceiling, which is about 6 feet off the floor.

**Creatures:** Area 6A is home to two desmodus, though only one is here at any time. The other is on duty in area 2. Area 6B houses four desmodus, two of which are on duty in area 3 at any given time.

**Treasure:** Area 6A contains a stack of five silver bars. Area 6B has ten silver bars, and each bar weighs 5 pounds and is worth 25 gp.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

A senior roleplaying game designer at Wizards of the Coast, Skip Williams is a game industry veteran who started behind the cash register at TSR's Dungeon Hobby Shop in 1976. He was part of the team that created the newest edition of the D&D game, was the primary author of the new *MONSTER MANUAL*, and is *DRAGON*® Magazine's Sage. Skip is fond of old movies, old airplanes, and old books, but not necessarily in that order.