

## THE NEXUS

Encounter Level 7 (1,590 XP)

### SETUP

When the characters first enter this chamber, there are no creatures. Once the PCs start climbing to the top, have the players roll for initiative. At the start of each round until the adventurers seal the Nexus, a wave of creatures enters the chamber. Roll 1d6 to determine which tunnel the enemies appear in and then roll for their initiative as normal, placing them at the mouth of the tunnel at the start of their turn. If the die results in a tunnel sealed off by the activated control panel, no additional creatures appear that round.

This encounter includes the following creatures organized by waves.

Wave One

2 orc drudges (D)

Wave Two

2 orc militants (M)

2 orc drudges (D)

Wave Three

Tusk (T)

Myrissa, shadar-kai dark warlock (S)

2 orc bolt throwers (B)

Wave Four and Onward

3 orc drudges (D)

When the characters enter this room, read:

*You step into a massive chamber in which the ceiling rises 100 feet above you. At the center of the chamber is a pillar of solid steel that is screwed into the stone and that stand as tall as the ceiling. Two bronze and steel pipes emerge from the eastern walls and travel toward the steel column before vanishing into the stone. Rising around the outside of the room is a stone catwalk that connects to steel grating that wraps around the steel pillar like scaffolding. Dark tunnels pock the walls, leading to who knows where.*

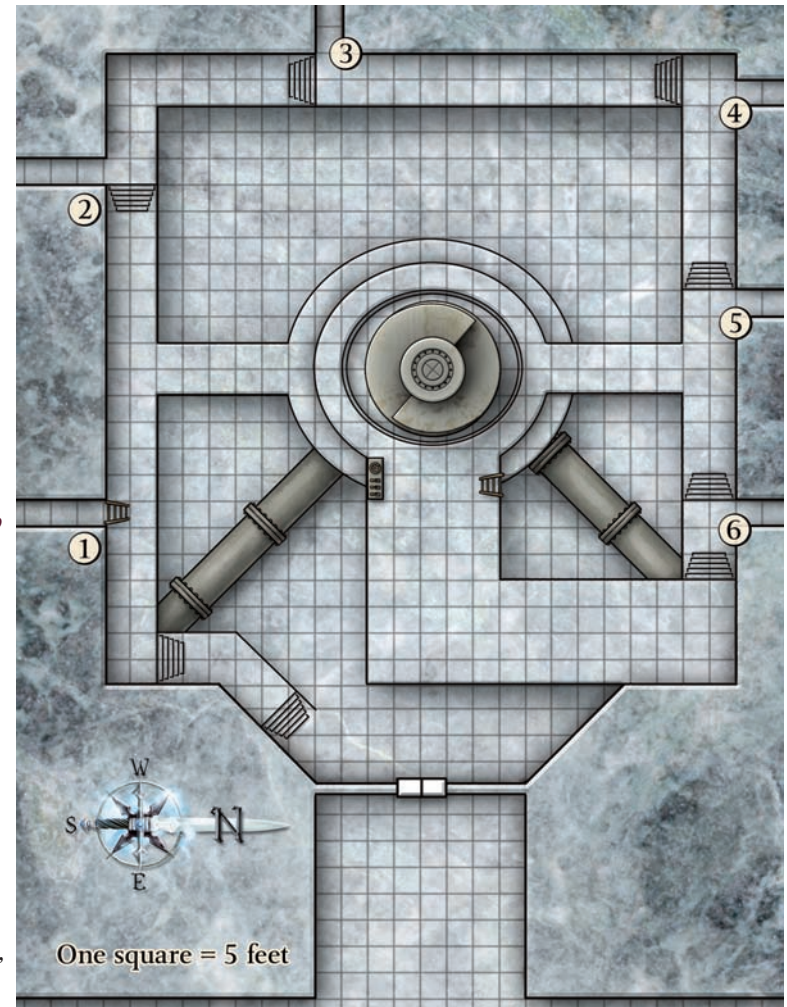
### Perception Check

**DC 21:** You smell the faint odor of sulfur in this room.

**DC 26:** The stone around the base of the steel column is dark, as if damp.

### TACTICS

Tusk's objective here is obvious: Stop the PCs from sealing the Nexus. Once he arrives, he heads straight for the top, smashing through allies and enemies to block the PCs' efforts. The drudges and bolt throwers harass the PCs and support their leader. Myrissa, finally, hits the characters with ranged attacks, hoping to slow their ascent or disrupt their efforts to activate the control panel. All the creatures here fight to the death.



### FEATURES OF THE AREA

**Illumination:** This room is dark.

**Ceiling:** From the bottom of this room, the ceiling is 100 feet overhead.

**Tunnels:** Six passages, marked 1-6, lead into the chamber. The passages are 5-feet wide and lead off,

eventually coming out on the western side of the mountains.

**Ladders:** Two ladders are in this room. One leads to tunnel 1 and the other leads up to the escape hatch. Climbing a ladder requires a DC 5 Athletics check (DC 10 when in boiling water; see below). The ladders are 10 feet tall.

**Stairs:** Around the outer edge of the room, stairs climb up to higher levels. Stairs count as difficult terrain.

**Platforms:** The platforms are fashioned out of steel grating, which allows a character standing on them to see, but it blocks ranged and melee attacks.



**Pipes:** Two massive pipes run across the floor. When the valves in V3 are opened, any character touching them takes 5 fire damage.

**Control Panel:** The control panel stands at the top of the room. Activating the control panel requires a skill challenge. DC 18 Dungeoneering or Thievery. Complexity 1 (4 successes before 3 failures). Success activates the control panel. Failure results in two more orc drudges entering the room from a random tunnel (roll 1d6), and the character must start the skill challenge all over again. If Kalad is present, the character gains a +5 bonus to all checks related to the skill challenge.

**Boiling Water:** Once the control panel is activated, boiling water floods the chamber. At the start of each round, a steel door drops down over the lowest tunnel and the water level rises to cover that tunnel. After 6 rounds, the room is flooded enough that no more enemies join the fight. Creatures that fall into the water or start their turn in the water take 2d8 + 4 scalding (fire) damage.

**Steam:** Steam rises from the boiling water. Any characters above the water level, but below the next higher tunnel entrance, gain concealment.

**Escape Hatch:** A ladder near the control panel leads up 10 feet to a trapdoor set in the ceiling. The door opens easily. It can be sealed shut from the other side by depressing a button. Once sealed, the door can be opened by only pressing the button a second time, or by succeeding on a DC 37 Strength check.

<b>Tusk, Orog Chieftain (T)</b>	<b>Level 5 Elite Soldier</b>
Large natural humanoid	XP 400
<b>Initiative</b> +4	<b>Senses</b> Perception +3; low-light vision
<b>HP</b> 138; <b>Bloodied</b> 69	
<b>AC</b> 23; <b>Fortitude</b> 22, <b>Reflex</b> 17, <b>Will</b> 16	
<b>Saving Throws</b> +2	
<b>Speed</b> 5	
<b>Action Points</b> 1	
⬇ <b>Falchion</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	Reach 2; +12 vs. AC; 2d4 + 7 damage.
⬇ <b>Brutal Offensive</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	Requires falchion; +12 vs. AC; 2d4 + 7 damage, and Tusk can shift 1 and make a secondary attack. <i>Secondary Attack:</i> +12 vs. AC; 4d4 + 7 damage.
⬅ <b>Skull Harvest</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	Requires falchion; close burst 2; +12 vs. Reflex; 2d4 + 7 damage.
⬅ <b>Champion's Scorn</b> (minor; at-will) ♦ <b>Fear, Healing</b>	Close blast 5; one creature; the target becomes the object of the orog's scorn. Tusk's melee attacks deal an extra 2d4 damage to the target, and if he reduces the target to 0 hit points, he heals 34 hit points. Tusk can designate only one target as the object of its scorn at a time.
⚔ <b>Fearsome Leader</b> (minor; at-will)	Targets one orc or orog; the target gains a +2 bonus to its next attack roll before the end of Tusk's next turn.
<b>Alignment</b> Chaotic evil	<b>Languages</b> Common, Giant
<b>Skills</b> Endurance +12, Intimidate +8	
<b>Str</b> 24 (+9)	<b>Dex</b> 15 (+4) <b>Wis</b> 13 (+3)
<b>Con</b> 21 (+7)	<b>Int</b> 11 (+2) <b>Cha</b> 12 (+3)
<b>Equipment</b> plate armor, falchion	

**Myrissa, Shadar-Kai Dark Warlock (S)** Level 2 Elite Skirmisher  
Medium shadow humanoid XP 250

**Initiative** +3      **Senses** Perception +1; low-light vision  
**HP** 74; **Bloodied** 37  
**AC** 17; **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 16  
**Saving Throws** +2  
**Speed** 6  
**Action Points** 1

⊕ **Dagger** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**  
+6 vs. AC; 1d4 + 2 damage.

↗ **Spiteful Glamour** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Psychic**  
Ranged 10; +7 vs. Will; 1d8 + 3 psychic damage, or 1d12 + 3 psychic damage against targets at full hit points.

↖ **Cursebite** (standard; encounter) ♦ **Necrotic**  
Close burst 20; +7 vs. Fortitude; 2d8 + 3 necrotic damage; affects all creatures suffering from *warlock's curse*.

**Warlock's Curse** (minor; at-will, 1/round)  
Closest enemy; Myrissa designates target as cursed. Her attacks deal an extra 1d6 damage. A target can have only one curse at a time.

**Darkspiral Aura** (free; at-will) ♦ **Necrotic, Psychic**  
Whenever an enemy Myrissa has cursed is reduced to 0 hit points, she adds 1 point to her *darkspiral aura*. Once per round as a free action, when an enemy makes a melee or ranged attack against her, she can use her *darkspiral aura* to deal 1d6 necrotic and psychic damage per point in the aura and reset the aura to 0. If her aura deals at least 12 damage, she can reset the aura to 1 instead, but the attack deals half damage.

**Shadow Jaunt** (move; encounter) ♦ **Teleportation**  
Myrissa teleports 3 squares and becomes insubstantial until the start of her next turn.

**Alignment** Evil      **Languages** Common  
**Skills** Acrobatics +5, Bluff +9, Insight +6, Intimidate +9, Stealth +5  
**Str** 10 (+1)      **Dex** 14 (+3)      **Wis** 11 (+1)  
**Con** 13 (+2)      **Int** 16 (+4)      **Cha** 16 (+4)  
**Equipment** leather armor, dagger, rod

**7 Orc Drudges (D)**      **Level 4 Minion**  
Medium natural humanoid      XP 44 each

**Initiative** +0      **Senses** Perception +0; low-light vision  
**HP** 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.  
**AC** 16; **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 12, **Will** 12  
**Speed** 6 (8 while charging)  
⊕ **Club** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**  
+9 vs. AC; 5 damage.

**Alignment** Chaotic evil      **Languages** Common, Giant  
**Str** 16 (+5)      **Dex** 10 (+2)      **Wis** 10 (+2)  
**Con** 14 (+4)      **Int** 8 (+1)      **Cha** 9 (+1)  
**Equipment** hide armor, club

**2 Orog Militants (M)**      **Level 3 Soldier**  
Medium natural humanoid      XP 150 each

**Initiative** +3      **Senses** Perception +2; low-light vision  
**HP** 48; **Bloodied** 24  
**AC** 20; **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 13, **Will** 14; see also *discipline*  
**Speed** 5  
⊕ **Bastard Sword** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**  
+10 vs. AC; 1d10 + 4 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the orog militant's next turn.

⊕ **Relentless** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**  
Requires bastard sword; +10 vs. AC; 1d10 + 4 damage, and the target is pushed 1 square. The target is marked until the orog's next turn. The orog militant can shift into the vacated square as a free action.

⊕ **Fierce Counterstrike** (immediate reaction, when adjacent ally is first bloodied; encounter) ♦ **Weapon**  
Requires bastard sword; +10 vs. AC; 2d10 + 4 damage, and the target is pushed 1 square. The orog militant can shift into the vacated square as a free action.

**Discipline**  
Orogs gain a +2 bonus to saving throws against any ongoing effects when adjacent to an ally.

**Alignment** Evil      **Languages** Common, Giant  
**Str** 19 (+5)      **Dex** 10 (+1)      **Wis** 13 (+2)  
**Con** 16 (+4)      **Int** 9 (+0)      **Cha** 11 (+1)  
**Equipment** plate armor, heavy shield, bastard sword

**2 Orc Bolt Throwers (B)**      **Level 1 Artillery**  
Medium natural humanoid      XP 100 each

**Initiative** +2      **Senses** Perception +4; low-light vision  
**HP** 26; **Bloodied** 13; see also *warrior's surge*  
**AC** 13; **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 11  
**Speed** 6 (8 while charging)  
⊕ **Battleaxe** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**  
+6 vs. AC; 1d10 + 3 damage

⊕ **Bellybow** (standard; at-will; recharges when the creature uses a move action to reload it) ♦ **Weapon**  
Ranged 20/40; +8 vs. AC; 1d12 + 2 damage, and the target is pushed 1 square.

⊕ **Warrior's Surge** (standard, usable only while bloodied; encounter) ♦ **Healing**  
The orc bolt thrower makes a melee basic attack and regains 6 hit points.

**Alignment** Chaotic evil      **Languages** Common, Giant  
**Skills** Stealth +7  
**Str** 14 (+2)      **Dex** 15 (+2)      **Wis** 9 (-1)  
**Con** 14 (+2)      **Int** 9 (-1)      **Cha** 8 (-1)  
**Equipment** leather armor, battleaxe, bellybow with 10 bolts