

Level 6A: Caves and Caverns — The Lair of the Spider Queen

This cavern connects the upper and lower levels of the Dungeon of Graves, and in most instances, PCs must traverse it to delve deeper into the hill. The cavern consists of several individual cave complexes linked by dire rat tunnels and river channels. The Spider Queen, Aldeth, an evil enchantress obsessed with small, hairy, eight-legged beasts, makes her home high above one cave's floor. The goddess (the demon queen of spiders and goddess of the drow) Aldeth worships has placed a demonic retriever in Aldeth's service. The wererats on **Level 1** report any activity to Aldeth. The PCs discover two tombs on this level: one houses the remains of a greedy merchant, and the other is a wizard's crypt, containing a trapped intellect devourer. **Area 6A–9** represents the lair of particularly large and intelligent trolls who use magic items and are affectionately known as the “naughty” trolls by those few who have survived their encounters. The map of this level is shown in **Map RA–6A**.

Rat: HD 1 hp; AC 8 [11]; Atk 1 bite (1); Move 12; Save 18; AL N; CL/XP A/5; Special: 5% are diseased.

Giant Spider (6ft diameter): HD 4+2; HP 11, 13; AC 4 [15]; Atk 1 bite (1d6+2 + poison); Move 4; Save 13; AL N; CL/XP 7/600; Special: lethal poison, webs.

Giant Rat: HD 1d4 hp; AC 7 [12]; Atk 1 bite (1d3); Move 12; Save 18; AL N; CL/XP A/5; Special: 5% are diseased.

Troll: HD 6+3; AC 4 [15]; Atk 2 claws (1d4), 1 bite (1d8); Move 12; Save 11; AL C; CL/XP 8/800; Special: Regenerate 3 hp/round.

Goblin: HD 1d6 hp; AC 6 [13]; Atk 1 weapon (1d6); Move 9; Save 18; AL C; CL/XP B/10; Special: –1 to hit in sunlight.

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Equivalent Dungeon Level: 8

Entrances: Rat tunnels from **Level 4** and **4A**; river tunnel from **Level 3**

Exits: Stairs to **Level 8**; river channel to **Level 10A**

Wandering Monsters: Encounters in caves **6A–1** through **6A–5** are limited to spiders or wererats.

When in those areas, check once every 15 minutes on 1d20, with 1–3 resulting in **2d6 giant spiders**, 4–6 resulting in **2d4 wererats** and 7–20 resulting in no encounter. In all other areas of **Level 6A**, check once per hour on 1d20:

1	3d6 normal rats
2	1d6 giant spiders (6ft diameter)
3	2d6 giant rats
4	1d3 trolls
5	A company of goblin scouts—2d4 goblins accompanied by 1d4 goblin leaders
6	1d4 wererats
7	2d6 giant spiders (4ft diameter)
8	2d6 stirges
9	1d3 large piercers
10–20	No encounter

Detections: Evil emanates from **Area 6A–4**.

Shielding: The shielding around **Area 6A–6** allows only astral or ethereal entry.

Standard Features: The floor in these caves is sandy and offers good footing. Walls, columns and so on—unless otherwise noted—have numerous handholds and holes, making them easy to climb, unless they are wet and

slippery. Fungus encrusts most surfaces in the natural cavern Areas on this level; 20% of the fungus is edible, while 10% is poisonous (lethal). (Druids and underground creatures can tell the differences, rangers can on a roll of 1–4 on 1d6.)

Traveling in Small Tunnels: Characters must crawl through a number of tunnels to access various areas of this level. Primary tunnels (dotted lines) are 3 to 5 ft. in diameter and can be walked through by small creatures like halflings. Huge creatures cannot navigate these tunnels unless they are long and slender or flexible (spiders are unaffected). Large creatures, like ogres, make all attack rolls at –2 and take a +2 [–2] penalty to AC, and man-sized creatures using all but thrusting weapons attack at –2. All area affect saves are at –10 while in primary tunnels.

Smaller tunnels (solid lines) are less than 3 ft. in diameter and require that even small creatures crawl. Large creatures (like ogres) cannot navigate these tunnels unless they are long and slender or flexible. Man-sized creatures make all attack rolls at –4 and take a +4 [–4] penalty to AC. Small creatures using all but thrusting weapons attack at –4. No saves are allowed for Area effects in small tunnels.

The River and Swimming: The river channel beyond **Area 6–14** is moderately hard to swim. Any creature attempting to swim to **Level 10A** must have a strength of 13 or greater. Failed checks require a successful saving throw; creatures failing this save drown and are dead on arrival at **Level 10A**. Swimming upstream is impossible, and leads nowhere in any case.

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Goblin Leader: HD 3; AC 5 [14]; Atk handaxe (1d6) or shortbow (1d6); Move 9; Save 14; AL C; CL/XP 2/30; Special: -1 to hit in sunlight. Gear: Ring armor, shield, handaxe, shortbow, 20 arrows, mining tools, thieves' tools, 2d4 sp, 2d4 cp.

Wererat: HD 3; AC 6 [13]; Atk 1 bite (1d3), 1 weapon (1d6); Move 12; Save 14; AL N; CL/XP 4/120; Special: Lycanthropy, control rats, surprise.

Giant Spider (4ft diameter): HD 4+2; HP 11, 13; AC 4[15]; Atk 1 bite (1d6+2 + poison); Move 4; Save 13; AL N; CL/XP 7/600; Special: lethal poison, webs.

Stirge: HD 1+1; AC 7 [12]; Atk 1 proboscis (1d3); Move 3 (Fly 18); Save 17; AL N; CL/XP 1/15; Special: blood drain (1d4), +2 to hit bonus.

Large Piercer: HD 4; AC 3[16]; Atk 1 drop and pierce (4d6); Move 1; Save 13; AL N; CL/XP 14/120; Special: None.

6A-1. The Spider's Nest

This cavern serves as a huge nesting area for the monstrous spiders that live on this level. Thus, **2d6 giant spiders** attack the party 3 rounds after it emerges from the small tunnel. As usual, the spiders try to ambush the PCs (2 in 6 chance of surprise). Every 3 rounds, **1d3 additional spiders** join the attack until all spiders are slain. The spiders are spread out over the cavern's entire length, so weapons of mass destruction (e.g., *cloudkill*) won't kill more than 1d6 of them, unless such a spell is cast in dangerously close proximity to the party. Various nests and hundreds of eggs festoon the cavern. One PC working for 2 hours might clean it out; if the cavern is not cleared of eggs, the spider population recovers at a rate of 15 per month. If the nests are cleared, add a story award of 500 XP to the encounter experience.

Development: Clearing out the cavern draws the denizens of **Areas 6A-3** through **6A-5** to the cavern. The remaining spiders and the retriever (from **Area 6A-5**) attack the PCs while they are burning the nests. The Spider Queen remains in her lair above but supports her attacking spider pets with spells (see below). These spiders have no treasure.

Referee Note: PCs can access this level by using the *teleportal* from **Level 3A, Area 3A-10**.

Giant Spiders (35): HD 2+2; AC 6 [13]; Atk 1 bite (1d6 + poison); Move 18; Save 16; AL N; CL/XP 5/240; Special: lethal poison, 5 in 6 chance to surprise prey.

6A-2. Empty Caves

The occasional piece of junk or debris litters those areas marked **6A-2**. Referees should spice up each of these areas with random items or garbage such as torch stubs, bones, unidentifiable stains, cobwebs, clothing and pieces of wood. Referees should also roll a wandering monster check each time PCs enter areas designated "6A-2."

6A-3. The Spider Bridge

This bridge, made of woven spider silk, connects **Area 6A-4** with **6A-5** and is suspended 80 ft. above the cavern floor. Dead stirges and bats decorate the web bridge's sticky exterior. The bridge is defended by **12 giant spiders**. These spiders hide on and above the bridge until the PCs arrive. Any PC *flying* or *levitating* near them is webbed and reeled in. Again, these spiders have no treasure. The bridge itself has 30 hp, has been treated with fire-resistant oil and owes its damage resistance (only harmed by +1 or better weapons) to the retriever's

masterful spinning.

Giant Spiders (12): HD 2+2; AC 6 [13]; Atk 1 bite (1d6 + poison); Move 18; Save 16; AL N; CL/XP 5/240; Special: lethal poison, 5 in 6 chance to surprise prey.

Any creature of less than huge size can be partially webbed and pulled to the bridge. Each spider can make a ranged (strikes opponent as if unarmored) at +2, using its spinner to snare a creature with a strand of silk. Each silk strand has 6 hp and takes half damage from fire. Multiple spiders can attack the same opponent; to avoid being drawn to the bridge area and attacked, a victim must make an open doors check against the attached spiders. Anyone drawn onto the bridge must make a saving throw to avoid being stuck to the bridge. Once in combat, the spiders shoot webs, bite webbed opponents until they fall and wrap them in webs. Any webbed opponents are left alone until all opponents are subdued.

6A-4. The Lair of the Queen

This area marks the entrance to the lair of the **Spider Queen, Aldeth**. She does not bargain with intruders, especially those who have slain her spiders, whom she considers her children. Aldeth, a human magic-user, has long served the goddess. The Spider-Goddess blessed Aldeth with several mutations, including chitinous skin and a poisonous bite. The Spider Queen employs wererats as spies; they are very loyal to her. She despises all worshipers of Hecate and preferentially targets any PC devoted to that deity. (Hecate cursed and destroyed Aldeth's sister, Akbeth.) Aldeth developed an affinity with spiders and can communicate with them. All spiders that can hear her voice immediately obey her every command. She is currently tended by **12 giant spiders**. If Boris the retriever has not yet been encountered, it enters through the west cave entrance 2 rounds after the PCs land on the bridge. Aldeth hides as the PCs approach, casting spells from her hiding place. Her other servants, **8 wererats** (in rat form), sneak along the ground until they are in the party's midst, change into hybrid form and attack.

Aldeth the Spider Queen, Magic-User 12: HP 33; AC 3 [16]; Atk 1 bite (1d4 + poison) or +2 *dagger* (1d4+2); Move 12 (Climb 9); Save 5 (3 vs. spider poison); AL C; CL/XP 15/2,900; Special: +1 or better weapon to hit, spells (1st – *charm person, magic missile x2, shield*; 2nd – *darkness 15-ft radius, invisibility, stinking cloud, web*; 3rd – *dispel magic, haste, slow, suggestion*; 4th – *confusion, massmorph, polymorph other, wizard eye*; 5th – *animate dead, feeblemind x2, wall of stone*; 6th – *death spell*). Gear: +2 *dagger, cloak of arachnidia, spellbook, robes*.

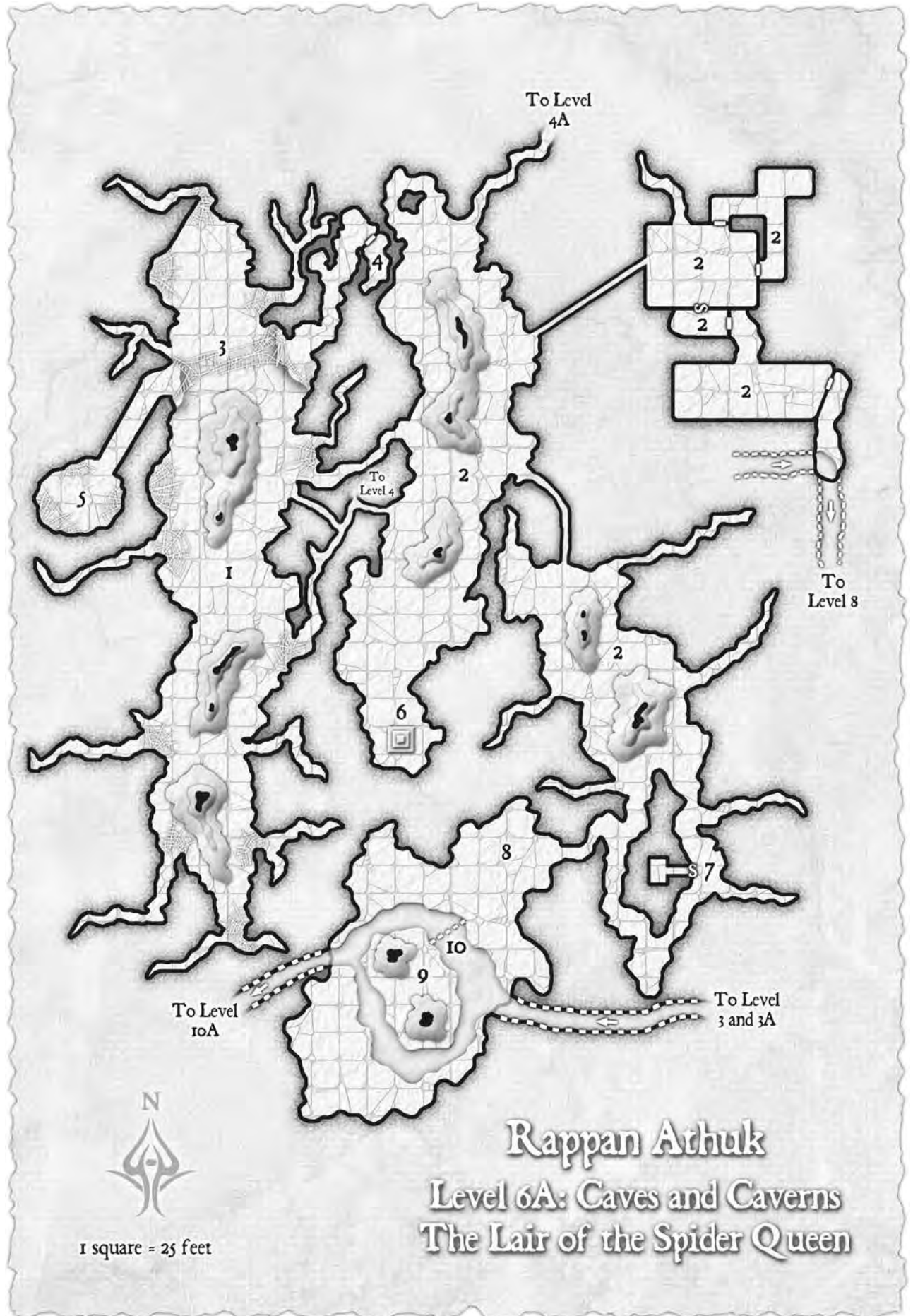
Giant Spiders (12): HD 2+2; AC 6 [13]; Atk 1 bite (1d6 + poison); Move 18; Save 16; AL N; CL/XP 5/240; Special: lethal poison, 5 in 6 chance to surprise prey.

Wererats (8): HD 3; AC 6[13]; Atk 1 bite (1d3), 1 weapon (1d6); Move 12; Save 14; AL C; CL/XP 4/120; Special: Lycanthropy, control rats, surprise.

Aldeth prepares for combat by casting her defensive spells on herself. She casts *haste* on her servitors and remains hidden while the wererats and spiders attack. The wererats mutate and attack spellcasters and thieves, while the spiders attack the closest PCs. Aldeth and Boris focus on fighters, she with her spells, he with his eye rays, as described in **Area 6A-5** below. During the first combat round, Aldeth casts *slow*, followed by *confusion*. She then uses her other enchantment spells to confuse and bewilder the PCs. If discovered and attacked directly, Aldeth runs to **Area 6A-4**, protecting herself with a *wall of stone*. The wererats and spiders fight to the death. Boris acts as described below.

Treasure: Aldeth's lavish quarters are appointed with silks and tapestries of extraordinary craftsmanship, altogether worth over 15,000 gp in the markets of any large city. Much of it spider silk; it is very soft

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but strong. A set of stone shelves (along **Area 6A-4's** back wall) house stacks of Aldeth's spellbooks. These books contain all the spells that she has prepared, as well as four extra spells of each level from 1 through 5, two of level 6. All other treasures and items are worn by Aldeth.

Each wererat also carries 2 gems worth 15 gp each, 3d12cp, 2d6 sp, and 1d8 gp.

6A-5. Demon Spider Nest

The Spider Queen's pet retriever, a magically altered dog named **Boris**, lives here. It attacks all non-spider, non-wererat, non-Queen beings it sees. It fights until slain or until Aldeth tells it otherwise. Aldeth uses the retriever to keep this area clear of those things that would prey on her pet spiders, and most monsters in the adjacent few levels know this and are afraid. The retriever cannot leave this area, as it is too large to successfully negotiate any of the exit tunnels.

Boris the Retriever: HD 10; AC -1 [20]; Atk 4 claws (1d8), eye-ray; Move 9; Save 5; CL/XP 12/2000; Special: Eye rays, crushing damage on natural 20.

6A-6. The Wizard's Crypt and Psychic Surprise

A 20-ft.-high pyramid of black stone constitutes the southern portion of this cavern. Runes and writings cover the pyramid's entire surface. The ominous script, written in Draconic, reads as follows:

*"Me'Nak has gone into the void
Enter his tomb and be destroyed.
Beware intruders who disturb Me'Nak's rest;
You are not welcome, do not molest,
Nor enter to respects be paid
You are not welcome at this grave.
Pyramid ensorcelled tomb—
Me'Nak has warned thee of thy doom!"*

This pyramid, the crypt of a long-dead wizard, is protected to prevent theft of the treasures within. Accessing the tomb requires astral or ethereal projection, as there is no mundane entrance. The 3-ft.-thick stone of which the pyramid is constructed resists magic (75% magic resistance). The crypt's protective features once included a *temporal stasis* effect, but an **intellect devourer** triggered that trap when attempting to enter the tomb astrally and has been stuck in the stasis field ever since. Any PC entering the crypt releases the intellect devourer from its confinement. Battle then commences on the ethereal plane.

Note: If a creature ceases to be ethereal when inside the tomb and cannot immediately reassume that state, it is forever trapped within the crypt!

Intellect Devourer: HD 6; AC 1 [19]; Atk 4 claws (1d3); Move 15; Save 11; AL C; CL/XP 7/600; Special: Possess dead victims by inhabiting their skulls and animate corpse for 7 days, spells (*invisibility*, *diminution* (as potion), *cure light wounds* (1/day), *shield* (1/day)).

Treasure: The tomb contains a gold circlet set with a diamond (worth 1,750 gp), a *robe of eyes* and a scroll of 5 spells (*anti-magic shell*, *fear*, *conjunction of demons*, *reverse gravity* and *wall of iron*). The intellect devourer carries a journal (written in his native tongue which requires a *comprehend languages* spell to translate) that contains a brief description of **Level 6**—providing a clue as to the one-and-only hidden entrance to **Level 7**. The intellect devourer's alien text can be roughly translated as follows:

"Had wet day after silly swim from home. Found odd fungus things near path over water made by man-things. One was time changer for man-things. Very dangerous. Need new entrance to home to avoid swim wet, but man-things and dead-man things no find home because of swim wet. Mazes confuse one bunch of man-things, and they swim past ball of light, find home. Brains small, but taste good. No more man-things find home, so me go get some to eat. Find strange man-thing of stone; will look into stone-thing to see power within. Must look inside."

The rest is either undecipherable code, gibberish or unimportant. Referees should note that the above describes in great detail **Areas 6-13** through **-15**. The pool on **Level 6, Area 6-15**, is the only entrance to **Level 7**.

6A-7. Nadroj's Tomb

Though difficult to locate, the secret entrance, if found, leads to a small room containing a stone sarcophagus. The secret door opens by sliding up. Opening the stone sarcophagus requires a successful open doors check. A wealthy and exceedingly evil merchant-prince paid a high price to be entombed here. His soul lingers elsewhere. He is otherwise known as Nadroj the spectre and lives on **Level 4** of this dungeon. Other than the difficult-to-find entrance, there are no traps or monsters in this crypt. This should terrify the PCs.

Note: If this tomb is robbed by the PCs, Nadroj is permanently destroyed if he is subsequently slain on **Level 4**. Conversely, if Nadroj was previously "slain" by the PCs, he is here at full strength.

Treasure: Hidden in a secret compartment in the crypt is a scroll of 3 spells (*control weather*, *dimension door* and *prismatic sphere*). The crypt contains jewelry worth 850 gp (a gold and sapphire necklace, a ring and broach).

6A-8. The Cathedral Cave

This cave has a very high ceiling, arching higher than torchlight can illuminate. The cavern is immense, containing a large lake where a river slows to flow around a central island. From the island, two huge, natural stone columns, each fully 70 ft. thick at the base, ascend into the darkness above. This island (**Area 6A-9**) is home to 3 trolls (see below). The river runs from **Level 3** above, down to **Level 10A**.

6A-9. The "Naughty" Trolls

These **trolls** are very intelligent (as trolls go) and use several magical goodies acquired over the years. These items make them far more dangerous than ordinary trolls.

Referee Note: Do not treat these trolls as "normal." Read their statistics and magic items very carefully before running this encounter. The naughty trolls are old, wise, and very cunning. If overmatched they try to escape to fight later (actually, they hunt for the party almost anywhere in the dungeon) and neither die stupidly nor fight to the death if they see they are losing.

Gurang the Speedy Troll: HD 10+3 (47 hp); AC 2 [17]; Atk 2 claws (1d6), 1 bite (1d8); Move 15 (Swim 15); Save 5; AL C; CL/XP 12/2000; Special: Regenerate 3 hp/round. Gear: *Boots of striding and springing*.

Warasch the Sneaky Troll: HD 9+3 (46 hp); AC 3 [16]; Atk 2 claws (1d6), 1 bite (1d8); Move 12 (Swim 15); Save 7; AL C; CL/XP 11/1700; Special: Regenerate 3 hp/round, backstab for double damage. Gear: *Ring of fire resistance*.