



SHARPE INITIATIVES: EARTHGOUGER



Pelgrane Press

BY CAL MOORE



CREDITS

**13TH AGE MONTHLY
CREATIVE EDITOR
AND DEVELOPER**
Rob Heinsoo

LAYOUT
Chris Huth

WRITING
Cal Moore

**13TH AGE MONTHLY
CONCEPT**
Rob Heinsoo and Simon Rogers

COVER ART
Rich Longmore

COPYEDITING
Christopher Smith Adair

**13TH AGE MONTHLY
PUBLISHERS**
Simon Rogers and Cathriona Tobin

EDITING
Christopher Smith Adair

INTERIOR ART
Rich Longmore

**13TH AGE IS A FANTASY ROLEPLAYING GAME BY
ROB HEINSOO, JONATHAN TWEET, LEE MOYER, & AARON MCCONNELL**

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SHARPE INITIATIVES:

EARTHGOUGER

An adventure for 3rd and 4th level heroes

INTRODUCTION

In this adventure for three to six heroes of 3rd to 4th level, the PCs must travel into the underworld to help a dwarven explorer recover an ancient artifact of her people. Alternatively, PCs with ambitions that don't include helping the Dwarf King could use this opportunity to make off with dwarven loot, but we'll present the adventure as if the PCs were at least somewhat favorably inclined to dwarves.

This story should take about one session, possibly two if the dice go against the heroes. If the PCs adventured through Robin D. Laws' *The Strangling Sea* adventure at 1st level, they'll be acquainted with a shifty inventor named Inigo Sharpe. Inigo features in this adventure's backstory. You may find opportunities to riff off of consequences of the PCs' previous mishaps on the Stranglesea's weed mat, but this adventure also works just fine if the PCs have never learned to be wary of all things Sharpe.



STORY SETUP

A dwarven explorer named Greta Silvervein has made a find that could promise fame and riches. But ancient artifacts don't always operate like "normal" magic items, and Greta couldn't get her prize up out from where she had found it without sending for the inventor/engineer named Inigo Sharpe. True to form, Inigo helped a little, then made things worse, and now Greta needs competent warriors like the adventurers to rescue her prize.

The opening paragraphs below are backstory, what the PCs learn from Greta when they take the job.

THE FIND OF AN AGE

Not long ago, Greta and some of her fellow dwarven explorers discovered a wonder walled off in a vault in a long-unused cavern near the borders of dwarven territory in the underworld. They

found an ancient dwarven invention of unknown purpose, but massive, well designed, and obviously created by her kin in a past age during the height of their power. It was huge, rectangular, and constructed of steel and iron and other strange materials. Obviously a construct, perhaps even a clockwork; Greta could tell that much from her basic investigation. But the construct wasn't about to go anywhere due to its size, and if she was to get credit for the discovery, she'd have to figure out how it worked and find a way to transport it (or have it transport itself) back to safer terrain in the nearest dwarven settlement.

Research and consulting her engineers led to one name, someone who could figure the contraption out and get it working: the great inventor Inigo Sharpe. A magical summons was sent, payment agreed upon, and the great man arrived a short time later. Greta's exploration team delivered Sharpe to the construct and his work began.

THE SHARPE EFFECT

Sharpe started well. He identified the construct's original creator, a dwarf named Igar Tunnelshaft. Sharpe identified the construct as capable of self-propulsion, naming it one of the fabled "earthgougers" of the 10th Age. And finally, Sharpe uncovered the runes on top of the thing that he said would activate it.

Greta had started composing her Great Festival speech while she stood beside Sharpe in the cavern, gazing up at the earthgouger. But of course this was a Sharpe project, so her run of good luck couldn't last. Sharpe surprised Greta by suddenly proclaiming the runewords of control in a loud and portentous voice. It surprised Greta even more because she didn't recognize the words at first, or even that Sharpe was trying to speak dwarven. Sharpe's accent was bizarre, and he misplaced every umlaut.

Greta wasn't the only one who objected to Sharpe's accent. The earthgouger made a low rumbling sound followed by sharp pops. Vents flapped open in the side and released stale air from an earlier age. Then a large, spoked cylinder wheel emerged from the rear and began to spin, driving the construct forward into the closest wall with a mighty crash. The ceiling partially caved along with that wall, revealing a hollow beyond—a short tunnel to another cavern! That's when the screams and the crazed jabbering and the hum of enemy magic started. Sharpe and the dwarves weren't alone with their construct anymore, and the newcomers were *crazy*.

A SHARPE RETREAT

The earthgouger came to a stop and powered back down with a series of popping tings. Inigo Sharpe staggered away as a band of derro rushed through the new opening, attacking Greta and her team. She, Inigo, and the few members of her team who survived the initial attack were forced to flee. Somewhere during the escape, Sharpe took his leave, saying Greta had the means to retrieve the construct once the "derro problem" was solved.

After Sharpe left, Greta sent scouting missions to see what the derro were up to and to judge whether she could recover the construct. The derro weren't able to move the earthgouger either, or didn't care, but they were camped out around it. Her scouts did send some concerning reports about how they heard the construct power up a few times after a bout of mad cackling from the derro, but the derro didn't seem able to control it any more than Sharpe had. Probably less.

Worse, the scouts also reported seeing many more derro inhabiting the larger cavern beyond the opening the earthgouger had created (perhaps twenty). There were so many, in fact, that a protracted battle would be dangerous and unlikely to succeed without heavy casualties. With somewhat limited resources, Greta needed another option, and she has recently heard about a band of adventurers in the region. . . .

MAKING CONTACT

Greta has contacted the heroes and gathered them at the edge of dwarven lands not far from the earthgouger's cavern in the underworld.

The PCs might already have a good story reason for being in the region. If one or more of the PCs has a relationship with the Dwarf King, a past friendship or other acquaintance with Greta makes perfect sense.

If you'd rather introduce other PC motives, consider the following three options, based on the icon or icons that might have the most influence on the PC.

- **By Order of the Icon** (Dwarf King, Elf Queen, Emperor, Lich King): One of the icons has sent the PCs into the underworld seeking the mysterious artifact known as the *Crown of Rulership*. It was said to have been worn by a previous icon before a band of dark elf bandits "acquired" it and headed for the deep dark.
- **The Dwarf General's Army** (Crusader, Great Gold Wyrn, Orc Lord, The Three): One of the icons seeks to find the hidden location of the clockwork army of the Dwarf General Joruna Coaldaughter. If it still exists, whoever controls the army could wipe out an opposing force of troops twice its number, and it was rumored to hold many thousands of warriors.
- **The Nullmage** (Archmage, Diabolist, High Druid, Priestess): Rumors have surfaced of an extremely odd woman, or perhaps a man, who wields a strange and terrible power. It's said this "nullmage" can bring great works of magical power to naught with little more than a touch. The followers of your icon are likely to have different reasons for wanting to talk with or capture this "person," particularly since survivors' stories indicate that the power is being used for as much evil as possible. The last reported sighting of the nullmage was in the underworld on the edge of the dwarven lands. So maybe one mission leads to another.
- Of course the Prince of Shadows might be involved with any of these stories—as instigator, fabricator, or opportunist.

THE OFFER

Greta looks the PCs over (or says hello to her old friends!) and makes her pitch. She tells them that she needs them to travel to a nearby cavern (a vault) and clear out a group of derro party crashers. She reveals that the derro are guarding a construct she discovered, and relates the story of what Sharpe did. She also indicates that the construct is capable of movement, gouging its way through earth and stone with ease.

Their job is to "take care of" the derro guarding the construct, then activate it and navigate it back toward Greta, either by using existing tunnels or traveling through the stone directly to her location. She reveals the information about the connecting cavern and presence of more derro, telling them to move quickly once they've defeated the first group of derro; otherwise, a whole horde will show up (she strongly advises not trying to take on both groups). She suggests using the direct route since she's unsure how long the construct's energy source will last, and Sharpe only hinted at how to fuel the thing.

Dwarven legalities: Greta can't take care of this herself for two interrelated reasons. Her original failure to bring the earthgouger back directly has opened her up to a legal challenge from the supposed descendants of the original creator, Igvar Tunnelshaft. Greta expects this legal problem to clear up eventually, because the clan pretending to be related to Tunnelshaft are in fact relative newcomers from the tin zone who took the name Tunnelshaft when they immigrated so that people would think more highly of them.

But the legal case means she can't use dwarves or dwarven clan resources to recover the earthgouger. She has to pay for the operation on her own, and she needs to hire outsiders who owe their passage to the hot zone to her. It's complex. If the PCs can get the earthgouger close to the current strong (i.e., somewhat defended) border of dwarven lands, then Greta can show up and help.

SHARPE CONNECTIONS

If the PCs survived *The Strangling Sea*, they probably know that Sharpe is different now. We're trying to avoid spoilers here, so let's just say that Greta won't be surprised by Sharpe's island adventures. She's sorry to hear that you still can't shut him up.

Compensations: At this point, Greta asks what the PCs want in compensation for bringing the earthgouger back to her. Unless you established that Greta is already friends with one of the PCs, she is hoping they underbid. She immediately accepts any requests for gold up to about 100 gp per PC. But truthfully, she'll go a lot higher than that if it's gold the PCs want, up to 200 apiece without much of a problem. If the players seem to want to roll dice instead of roleplay, you could push the gp amount slightly higher (250 max) if PCs succeed in negotiations with a hard (DC 20) Charisma check.

Decide if other offers make sense and are something Greta can provide, considering her position. For example, she can't grant mining rights or land, but could provide knowledge about the local dwarves or their enemies, or about local geography,

and could definitely offer 1d4 one-shot magic items, though not any true magic items.

There's also the fact that rewards of this type are a great way to seed another adventure you want the PCs to go on, making it look like a reward! If friendship with Greta, icon missions, and the rewards mentioned above aren't doing it, here are some other possible incentives to choose from:

- She can provide knowledge about an underworld location the PCs are searching for, possibly a hidden or lost site. It might be something she discovered, or she may be willing to cash in a favor that other dwarven explorers owe her to find things that will interest the PCs.
- She can provide knowledge about certain dwarven nobles and power players with ties to the Dwarf King; they're rumored to have or know about what the PCs are seeking.
- She can obtain up to three access passes for group "descent" into the deep underworld that the dwarves guard.
- Assuming that the earthgouger gets back to her and she can learn to operate it, she'd be happy, maybe even amused, to help the PCs out by bringing it on one of their expeditions, if it looks like having a giant earth-digging construct could help with a particular mission that wasn't against the interests of the Dwarf King.
- She will spread word of the PCs' help in the matter with influential people among the Dwarf King's folk (each gets a 6 with the Dwarf King that lasts until they use it or level up).
- If one or more of the PCs are principally motivated by the iconic storyline established at the start of this adventure, come up with information Greta possesses that could ensure that mission's success. She'll trade it for the earthgouger. . . .

THE DEAL IS SEALED

Once the PCs have agreed to compensation for securing the earthgouger and bringing it back to Greta (or agreed due to debts owed to an icon, etc.), she asks them to sign a contract and then provides them with the passphrase Inigo discovered to activate the construct. Choose something you think is fun as the password, or go with our suggestion: ancient dwarven for *Awaken Beast of Steel!*

Note that Greta believes that you simply command the construct in the direction in which you wish to go once it's activated. That's faulty information she received from Inigo, which will come into play later.

She also gives the PCs a small iron bead on a silver chain, explaining that it will lead them directly back to her operating cavern-base on the edge of dwarven lands if they hold it by the chain and watch which way it leans. She wishes them luck and reminds them of what they will gain by helping her. The rest is in their hands. At that point, one of her scouts leads them toward the vault cavern, saying goodbye before they are in violation of the technicalities of the law.



MEANWHILE, BACK AT THE VAULT

After the earthgouger opened up the passage to the derro cavern, the mad dwarves killed a few of the intruders and made an amazing discovery—waiting there on the other side of the limestone wall was the answer to their own dark dreams. And what were those

derro dreaming about? That's up to the GM; probably something about bizarre metallic echoes or dropping into the center of the world to eat the core. Whatever they think the big iron and steel box is, these derro are convinced that it's The Answer.

Since discovering it, the derro have tried mostly unsuccessfully to operate the construct. They know it's a construct because a few times when they had a really good gibbering going as they discussed the issue, the thing suddenly came to life for a moment and spun around in circles and opened side vents. Obviously (to their warped minds), they were getting through to it.

In truth, the construct is carrying a number of "helper constructs" within it that have limited intelligence, and the gibbering has annoyed them and messed with their programming, which will become apparent when the PCs finally get the earthgouger moving. But first, the PCs have to defeat the derro and their allies in the vault.

LOCATION DESCRIPTION

The vault is a long, narrow cave (80' × 40') carved from limestone and other ore-bearing minerals with a 35-foot-high ceiling. The entrance to the vault is a smooth 15-foot-diameter circular opening with limestone blocks covering the entrance to form an opening 8 feet wide and 6 feet high. The blocks are covered in plaster designed to hide the vault by making it look like a natural tunnel from the outside. Anyone looking through the entrance sees a dim phosphorescent glow coming from a lantern hung on a wall and a few shadowy figures (the derro) moving about within next to the large rectangular shape of the earthgouger. The earthgouger looks almost featureless, except for a couple vents in its side. Greta mentioned that it changes shape when it's activated, so there's more evidence that the derro haven't got it working yet.

There is only one other exit from the vault—the newly created 10' × 10' rough gap in the middle of the right wall that connects it to the derro cavern through a 60-foot-long tunnel. The rest of the cavern is empty except for a pair of low stalagmites that rise up at its far end that could offer some cover.

The construct sits near the opening in the wall amid a pile of limestone boulders and rock dust. It's 15 feet wide, 10 feet high, and 20 feet long, forms a nearly perfect rectangle, and is made from steel and iron and other materials.

TERRAIN & TRAPS

Anyone trying to climb the construct before it's activated (and steps appear) must succeed on a DC 10 Strength check since the handholds are shallow. (Out of battle it's automatic.)

The derro might be mad, but they're also devious. They've set up a tripwire rockfall trap across the entrance to the vault. A PC checking the gap can detect the wire with a successful DC 20 skill check, probably using Wisdom unless they've got some better method of noticing traps. If the trap goes undetected, make the following attack against the first person through:

Rockfall tripwire +10 vs. PD—4d6 damage, and the derro hear the commotion.

MONSTERS

The group of derro camped out by the construct are paying attention to it, not their surroundings, and insofar as they can be said to have a concept of tactics, they trust in their tripwire to warn them of trouble. PCs bypassing the tripwire can surprise them. One sage (if any) and a maniac are dancing or meditating on top of the construct.

The derro are ruddy-skinned dwarves with pale eyes, black beards, and ill-kept clothing and armor. They dislike bright light sources, preferring their lanterns filled with phosphorescent beetles.

You'll recognize these derro from the *13th Age* core rulebook, but we added a couple more spell options (*brain spasm* and *screaming dark*) to keep things fresh.

TACTICS

The derro on top of the construct use ranged attacks, while the others directly engage any enemies. They split up to make sure no enemies can reach a sage.

Any sages try to use *mind scream* as much as possible. They also have the *group gibbering* ability, which they use every round unless it will drop them.

For simplicity's sake, if the PCs try to activate the construct during battle, you could say that it takes a round or two to warm up. Or if you're not shy about bringing on the crazy, play it as a contest of will (DC 20 Wisdom check) as a standard action between the activating PC and any remaining derro, with the earthgouger potentially dealing 3d10 damage to a member of the side that lost that round as it spins and transforms.

Note that the derro in the second cavern won't detect the battle unless there are loud sounds of battle such as cracks of lightning or rumbling thunder. They hear (and feel) the earthgouger when it starts up. If they become aware of a battle early, feel free to add one extra derro maniac to the next battle as a penalty.

Number/ Level of PCs	Derro Maniac	Derro Sage
3 × 3 rd level	2*	0
4 × 3 rd level	2	1
5 × 3 rd level	3	1
6 × 3 rd level	3*	1
3 × 4 th level	2	1
4 × 4 th level	3*	1
5 × 4 th level	5	1
6 × 4 th level	5	2

* Give each derro maniac 10 extra hit points.

Once the derro are defeated, give the PCs a quick rest as they catch their breath and get ready to activate the construct (only a few seconds of "real" time go by; reset the escalation die).

LOOT

Each derro carries a bit of raw ore on them, in this case silver. There's a total of 300 gp in various ores on them, but collecting all that in the short time between fights would require at least one PC who doesn't need to recover any hit points. If everyone in the party is using a recovery in the quick rest, the most they find is 180 gp. The derro sage (or a maniac if no sage) carries a halfling skull polished and painted with an eerie, smiling face.

DERRO MANIAC

4th level troop [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +8

Shortsword +9 vs. AC—12 damage

Natural 16+: The derro can cast one of the following close-quarters spells as a quick action this turn.

Brain spasm: The nearby enemy with the most hit points takes 1d8 psychic damage and 4 ongoing damage.

Cloaking dark: All nearby derro gain a +1 bonus to attacks and defenses until the end of the derro maniac's next turn (cumulative).

Screaming dark: Each enemy that is presently removed from the battle using a power such as the rogue's *shadow walk* takes 2d10 psychic damage.

R: Light repeating crossbow +9 vs. AC—10 damage

Natural 16+: The target also takes 5 ongoing poison damage.

Natural 19+: As above, and the derro maniac can make another *light repeating crossbow* attack as a free action.

AC 19

PD 16

MD 18

HP 52

DERRO SAGE

4th level caster [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +7

Staff +7 vs. AC—7 damage

Natural 16+: The derro can cast one of the following close-quarters spells as a quick action this turn.

Brain spasm: The nearby enemy with the most hit points takes 1d8 psychic damage and 4 ongoing damage.

Cloaking dark: All nearby derro gain a +1 bonus to attacks and defenses until end of the derro sage's next turn (cumulative).

Screaming dark: Each enemy that is presently removed from the battle using a power such as the rogue's *shadow walk* takes 2d10 psychic damage.

Sonic squeal: Two random nearby non-derro creatures take 2d8 thunder damage.



R: **Mind scream +9 vs. MD—12** psychic damage, and the target is confused (*make a basic or at-will attack vs. ally*) until the end of the derro sage's next turn

Natural 16+: The derro sage can make another *mind scream* attack against a different nearby target as a free action.

Group gibbering: The derro sage starts a group of derro gibbering as a quick action. It can maintain the gibber as a free action at the start of each turn by taking 1 damage. Each nearby non-derro creature that hears the gibber must roll a d6 at the start of its turn and takes psychic damage equal to the die roll or to the number of gibbering derro, whichever is lower.

AC 18
PD 15 HP 40
MD 18

READY, SET, GOUGE!

Activating the earthgouger isn't difficult; someone must be standing on top of it and say the command phrase (*Awaken Beast of Steel!* or another of your choosing). Upon activation, the construct begins glowing with dim magical light and transforms out of its boring pure rectangle shape into its earthgouger aspect. With a roaring hum that covers two octaves, it pushes out a front grinding cone

that's slightly wider than its body and a thick, spoked roller wheel at the back that drives it, as well as a recessed open cabin on the top where the control mechanisms are located. The cabin is roughly 10' × 12' and should hold all of the PCs, but there's another few feet of platform on the back of the construct over the roller too.

The problem comes from getting the earthgouger to move the way the PCs want it to go. There are a number of levers, wheels, and pedals in the control cabin, and none of them are marked. Inigo Sharpe failed to mention this aspect of the construct to Greta, and so it may be a surprise for the PCs.

Once powered up, getting the construct to turn, rotate its front grinder, and propel itself forward takes trial and error with the controls. The longer it takes for the PCs to get it moving means more opposition, because the derro and other enemies in the next cavern will be moving to stop them from taking the wonderful steel box.

Each PC can make a DC 20 Wisdom or Intelligence check. It takes three successful checks to get the construct in proper working order and moving the direction the PCs want (assuming someone has the directional chain out that Greta gave them). Each time the same PC makes a new check, add another failure to the total (even if the roll is successful) since more time has gone by (it's best if the whole team works on the solution). It seems likely that calling on a 6 with an icon relationship, with a

plausible story, should count as a success. Consult the following chart for what the failures mean.

Total Failures	Result for Next Battle
1	None
2–3	Add 1 derro to the next battle
4–5	As above, and add two extra debris pickers to the next battle
6+	As above, and the PCs can't use the escalation die until it's 2+ during the next battle

STRANGLING SEA JETSAM

We're not going into all the crazy pieces of iconic debris that the PCs might have acquired while tracking Inigo Sharpe on the Stranglesea weed mat, but there's one that must be mentioned: the stone sextant associated with the Dwarf King that identifies items of dwarven construction when pointed at them! That could come in extremely handy in this adventure. If your PCs were lucky enough to find and hold on to that item, well, they've probably already figured out that this mission is going to be a lot simpler. In fact, Inigo Sharpe probably created the sextant after this fiasco, so in a sense the PCs are carrying on the good work.

ENEMIES AND HELPERS

Once the construct begins to move, traveling back out the entrance tunnel or creating a new one as the PCs wish, the derro and their yet-to-be-revealed mysterious ally begin to pursue at a distance just out of attack range, waiting for their chance to reclaim the earthgouger in less tight quarters where they won't be smushed.

In addition, an odd thing happens. Vents on the sides of the construct open as groups of dog-size debris picker constructs made of steel emerge and begin to skitter about the earthgouger. They don't harm the PCs (yet) and move along the grinder and roller with ease, picking out small bits of rock that get lodged in them, allowing free movement of the parts.

So how does the construct tunnel through hard stone so easily? It could be disintegration magic, diamond-coated grinders, perfect engineering, or another option you prefer. The construct is a wonder of another age designed for quick tunneling.

If the PCs decide to break their contract and take the earthgouger for themselves, you probably have a strong underworld campaign about to start. Of course, such

CHASING THE CONSTRUCT

The derro in the next cavern over are happily gibbering away about their big plans for the wondrous new toy they found when they hear the PCs start it up. Babbling like maniacs, they come running to try to keep the PCs from escaping with their prize. But they are too slow to catch up immediately, and rather than attack in a narrow tunnel where the construct could potentially back up and squish them into puddles of flesh, they follow from a distance biding their time (they might be mad as loons, but they're also not stupid). Make it clear to the PCs that there are at least twenty of them, perhaps more, and a straight-up fight would not end well for the heroes. That should keep them on the earthgouger.

The derro are cunning, however, and they get their chance to reclaim the construct when it slices through another tunnel that begins to parallel the construct's path. A few maniacs and their special guest move down this new tunnel, eventually emerging into a large cavern ahead of the construct, which tunnels at a walking pace. They arrive just before the construct.

When the earthgouger rips into the cavern, there is a wide chasm to the right and a ledge that parallels it on the wall to the left, with a narrow expanse between just wide enough for the earthgouger to move along. The enemies are waiting on the ledge and leap down among the PCs on top of the construct after it enters the cave.

GM, note that this battle is a little more difficult than normal, but not quite double-strength.

LOCATION DESCRIPTION

The cavern is a few hundred feet long, and nearly 80 feet wide, but there's a 30-foot chasm in the floor that splits the chamber, leaving about 25 feet of room between it and the wall to navigate the earthgouger. The ceiling is 40 feet high, and a 5-foot-wide ledge starts near the newly made entrance and runs up 15 to 20 feet above the ground (only a few feet above the construct). It takes the construct 7 rounds to reach the far end of the cavern and re-enter into the next stone wall, and there's not enough room to turn and bore into the wall on the left.

TERRAIN & TRAPS

Chasm: The chasm is 30 feet wide and 90 feet deep. Anyone falling into it takes 4d10 damage, and if the construct falls in, it is damaged badly, perhaps destroyed, and unable to move any further. Climbing back up the sides of the chasm requires a DC 15 Strength check.

THE EARTHGOUGER

constructs tend to be finicky and probably require costly repairs, refueling on gems or magic, and similar foils to the PCs dreams to riddle the underworld with tunnels. It's also highly valuable, and every underground race is going to want to take it from them, not to mention Greta. Have fun with the big target the PCs have painted on themselves.

Earthgouger: As previously stated, the construct is 15 feet wide, 20 feet long, and 10 feet high, providing plenty of room on top for fighting to occur. During the battle, some combatants might be hanging from the sides of the construct in precarious positions. Any dicey moves to maneuver around the construct require a DC 20 skill check by PCs, or a normal save by the enemies, though jumping down into the control cabin doesn't require a roll. On a failure, the creature is torn up by the grinding cone, rear roller, or other moving parts for 2d10 damage, but they remain on the construct. Very bad rolls could result in a fall off the construct.

In addition, as a standard action a creature could attempt to use the gouger to hinder or scrape off an opponent, but doing so without causing the construct to do something random (like go into reverse) requires a successful DC 15 Wisdom or Intelligence check. On a success, something bad happens to that creature's enemy (GM's call, but dazed, 4d8 damage, or other effects all work). On a failure, something slightly bad happens to that creature or its allies (no miss damage for allies that round, 2d6 damage, vulnerable for a round, etc.). On a natural 1 failure, something really bad happens (GM, have fun).

MONSTERS

In addition to the derro maniacs that are following the PCs as they ride the earthgouger, there are two other enemies the PCs have to deal with when the construct breaks into the cavern.

The first may be unexpected: the debris pickers that so far have been avoiding the PCs and helping clean the construct. When the derro start to yell battle cries and gibber, these constructs break from their programming (something that started when Inigo failed to activate the construct properly the first time, and then was worsened when the small constructs were exposed to the mad gibbering of the derro sages). At that point, they see the PCs as debris, and try to "remove" them from the construct, which means squeezing and poking them with their pincers and sharp claws. They avoid the derro, however, until all PCs who are bigger than dwarves have been removed from the earthgouger—they're starting with the big pieces first. (Fine: if your PCs are all gnomes and halflings, add another derro and give the debris pickers a chance of going after derro instead!) The debris pickers can move over the construct with ease, coming from all angles.

The second enemy depends on the PCs' reason for being in the region and their icon relationships. Pick one enemy that meshes with a story you played off earlier in the adventure. This iconic foe is working with the derro, though the relationship may be fraught. If none of these options work for the group's story, you can also just use a derro sage from the last battle.

- **By Order of the Icon** (Dwarf King, Elf Queen, Emperor, Lich King): **Sanuk Ruol, a dwarven thief** hired to steal the crown out from under the PCs. He has a few potions that allow him to endure the derro's gibbering and believes the crown might be in the construct.
- **The Dwarf General's Army** (Crusader, Great Gold Wyrn, Orc Lord, The Three): A **wound-down apex zorigami** named Two-ticks Bong Bong (deliberately deviant nomenclature, if you're familiar with zorigami from the *13th Age Bestiary!*) has been trailing the PCs in an effort to stop them from finding

the clockworks. It throws in with the derro to stop the PCs, who will surely find the army with the earthgouger.

- **The Nullmage** (Archmage, Diabolist, High Druid, Priestess): The nullmage exists, and it knows the PCs are getting close, so it set a trap for them. One of the derro in the cavern spontaneously transforms into a **chaos beast** when the PCs show up. The nullmage's power is such that the beast only hungers for the PCs, not the derro fighting with it.

Number/Level of PCs	Derro Maniac	Iconic Foe	Debris Picker (mook)
3 × 3 rd level	2	1	3
4 × 3 rd level	3	1	3
5 × 3 rd level	3	1	8
6 × 3 rd level	4	1	5
3 × 4 th level	3	1	8
4 × 4 th level	4	1	9
5 × 4 th level	5	1	8
6 × 4 th level	6	1	9

TACTICS

If there are three or fewer derro maniacs at the start of the battle, they move up the ledge and leap onto the construct from above. If there are more than that, the others trail the construct along the



ledge firing crossbows. Once in the construct's control cabin, the derro are mad enough to try to send the earthgouger off course into a wall or even into the chasm. Messing with the controls is a standard action that provokes opportunity attacks. GM, feel free to require balance checks (DC 15 Dexterity) or control checks (DC 15 Wisdom or Intelligence) as a move action to counteract these acts of sabotage (see Terrain & Traps).

The iconic enemy also drops down on top of the earthgouger from the ledge. If it's the chaos beast, a derro lands and then immediately transforms into the beast.

The debris pickers are constantly moving around the construct, but when the derro start their gibbering and mad babbling, the small constructs go a little crazy and begin trying to clear off the PCs (foreign bodies). They tend to swarm whichever PCs are in the most precarious position.

LOOT

The derro have 50 gp in coins and small valuables on them.

If the iconic foe is Sanuk Ruol, he carries 20 gp, and his crystal dagger is worth 200 gp (GM's call if it's magical).

If the iconic foe is the zorigami, it has a few parts made from silver and small gems worth a total of 80 gp.

If the iconic foe is the chaos beast, it has nothing but memories of pain.

In addition, there's a chest-like compartment in the control cabin. Opening it requires a few minutes of study using the correct rune phrase (or someone who can pick the lock or magic it open; no check required). Inside are two vials of +1 oil (originally meant to be used on the construct's gears) and a metallic wrench-like item. It's a wondrous magic item called an *engineer's fixit*.

Engineer's fixit: Once per day, the user can try to fix or adjust any type of machine, mechanical contraption, or broken construct. Simple fixes work automatically. More complex fixes, especially on any living constructs, require a saving throw (easy, normal, or hard based on GM's call) to work. Alternately, in a game with a forgeborn PC, the item allows the construct to heal using a free recovery once per day. Quirk: Wielder is always trying to fix something.

DEBRIS PICKER

3rd level mook [CONSTRUCT]

Initiative: +8

Steel claws and pokers +7 vs. AC—6 damage

Miss: 1 damage.

Construct climber: The debris picker can climb walls easily, and can hang onto metal surfaces of all types, even upside down.

AC 18
PD 17 HP 12 (mook)
MD 11

Mook: Kill one debris picker mook for every 12 damage you deal to the mob.

DERRO MANIAC

4th level troop [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +8

Shortsword +9 vs. AC—12 damage

Natural 16+: The derro can cast one of the following close-quarters spells as a quick action this turn.

Brain spasm: The nearby enemy with the most hit points takes 1d8 psychic damage and 4 ongoing damage.

Cloaking dark: All nearby derro gain a +1 bonus to attacks and defenses until the end of the derro maniac's next turn (cumulative).

Screaming dark: Each enemy that is presently removed from the battle using a power such as the rogue's *shadow walk* takes 2d10 psychic damage.

R: Light repeating crossbow +9 vs. AC—10 damage

Natural 16+: The target also takes 5 ongoing poison damage.

Natural 19+: As above, and the derro maniac can make another *light repeating crossbow* attack as a free action.

AC 19
PD 16 HP 52
MD 18

SANUK RUOL, DWARVEN THIEF

This dwarf isn't like the others; his eyes show sanity. He watches you warily, looking for the best place to drive in his black crystal blade.

4th level wrecker [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +9

Black-crystal dagger +9 vs. AC—10 damage

Natural 18+: The attack is a critical hit.

Crystal pain: Once per battle when Sanuk hits with this attack, he can twist the blade to shear off a piece a crystal in the target. The target takes 5 ongoing damage, and his *black-crystal dagger* attack now only deals 8 damage.

R: Poisoned dart +9 vs. AC—6 damage, and 5 ongoing poison damage

Natural 16+: The save is hard (16+) instead.

Cunning swashbuckler: Twice per battle as a move action, Sanuk Ruol can perform a dicey move that automatically succeeds. For example, he could leap to the grinding cone for one round, keeping his footing and forcing enemies to come to him.

AC 20
PD 19 HP 48
MD 13

TWO-TICKS BOΠG BOΠG (WOUND-DOWN APEX ZORIGAMI)

The clockwork man sputters and spurts, at times moving with brilliant speed, then rocking erratically the next moment.

4th level spoiler [CONSTRUCT]

Initiative: +7

Sprocket blades +9 vs. AC—10 damage

Natural even hit: The zorigami can make a second *sprocket blades* attack as a free action for only half damage. It can't make a third attack this way, however.

First natural even miss each turn: The zorigami can make a *clamp grips* attack this turn as a quick action.

Clamp grips +9 vs. PD—1 damage, and the target is locked in its grip unable to move and takes a -2 penalty to attacks (save ends). On a crit, it's hard save ends (16+). An enemy that deals 20 damage to the zorigami with one attack also breaks free.

Falling apart: When the wound-down apex zorigami rolls a natural 1 or 2 with an attack, it takes a -1 attack penalty (cumulative) until the end of the battle as some important parts come loose.

AC 18
PD 17 HP 50
MD 16

CHAOS BEAST

4th level troop [ABERRATION]

Initiative: +6

Bestial chaos +9 vs. AC—Damage and effect depends on the natural roll

Natural even hit (peckpeckclaw): 7 damage, and the chaos beast can make another *bestial chaos* attack as a free action.

Natural odd hit (slapgushslap tweeee): 10 ongoing damage, and cancel one magical effect on the target of the GM's dramatic choice—this is new Nullmage magic, and should be described as such!

Miss (splooshglumpbrekkk): The chaos beast pops free from all enemies and moves to engage a random nearby enemy as a free action, preferably one it wasn't just engaged with.

Chaos combined: Once a chaos beast is staggered, it can combine with another chaos beast next to it as a quick action to become a full-strength chaos brute acting on this beast's initiative. Replace the other beast with a chaos glorp mook.

AC 18
PD 14 HP 48
MD 17

GAMEMASTER

Story Failure: If things go terribly wrong and some or all of the PCs would perish at the hands of the derro or they are forced to flee, here's another option. As a group, they are overcome by the derros' madness. Once the PCs' thinking changes, the derro leave the PCs alone. The PCs "snap out of it" sometime later (days or weeks?) with only vague memories of the "madness time." What happened during that period? What did they do? Whatever it was, there are going to be interesting new strangers looking for them, confusion in their wake, and misdeeds to atone for. A perfect chance to put the PCs on the wrong side of the paladins, priests, and imperials they usually get along with!

CONCLUSION

Unless the construct is damaged in the chasm, once the battle with the trailing derro is completed, the construct and PCs tunnel through the far wall. At that point, the remaining derro give up the chase to go back to their mad plans.

Victory! The PCs' next step is up to them. Hopefully they'll return the earthgouger to Greta and receive their compensation, which should include leads to some new adventures.

Alternatively, in the tradition of Inigo Sharpe, they may decide to keep the earthgouger and head off for new adventures. As you'd expect, the construct eventually breaks down if not kept in repair. We've already mentioned the complications that should plague PCs who steal the earthgouger for themselves, so let's just top that situation off with the fact that Greta will win her court case and have dwarven law on her side as well. Probably the worst thing you could do to the PCs in this case would be for everyone in the world to think of them as Inigo Sharpe's apprentice troublemakers! And Sharpe? He'll think this earthgouger could make a fine mount for his new improved condition. . . .

Iconic storylines: As for the iconic storylines, Greta's reward may contain a clue to the crown's location if they were pursuing the "By Order of the Icon" storyline.

If the PCs were following the "Dwarf General's Army" storyline, perhaps the appearance of a zorigami indicates the supposed clockwork army is something more complex.

Finally, if they're pursuing the "Nullmage" story, the chaos beast has traces of unique magical energy that should be able to serve as a sign that the nullmage is in the area. Maybe the nullmage takes after Inigo Sharpe and is the type of mastermind who is also their own worst enemy.