



# STRANGE LIGHTS

3rd LEVEL





# Strange Lights



*Strange Lights* is intended for four characters with an average party level (APL) of 3. Characters who complete this adventure should earn enough experience to reach approximately halfway to 4th-level. Will-o'-wisps are luring people to their deaths at the mandibles of ankhegs in an old abandoned mine. This campaign takes place in Omeria in the Vaskil Valley. Any party composition should be able to finish the adventure with intelligent play.

## Background

The old Dustrock Mine used to be a profitable endeavor nestled in the hills just outside of Steeproost. A few years back though, ankhegs burrowed up from deep underground and the mine had to be abandoned. Now, the ankhegs have built a nest within the twisting caves and passageways. Most folks stayed clear of the old mine and all was well. Recently, however, a pair of nasty and nefarious will-o'-wisps have been luring folks to their death in the belly of the mine. They use their unearthly glow to draw people in and then relish the carnage as the ankhegs drag them inside to be turned into dinner. At first it was just random travelers, but now a member of the town has disappeared and the local militia is worried. They've put out a reward of 100gp for anyone who can bring back the missing man, dead or alive.

## Adventure Hooks

**Missing Friend.** The characters have a friend who went missing. Hearing the rumor about the strange lights, they go searching for them.

**Lights on the Horizon.** The characters notice the strange lights on the horizon and decide to investigate.

**Just Another Job.** The characters heard of the reward for the missing townsfolk and aim to collect.

## Leaving Town

As the characters go to leave town, they're stopped by a member of the town militia named Zekariah Fulsom, a lawful good male human **veteran**. He tells them it's not safe to travel outside at night. Folks have been going missing. If pressed, he knows the following.

- Ankhegs have been a problem recently. They burst up from the ground and devour whatever they can get their grubby little mandibles on.
- The lights appeared a few weeks ago. They only show up at night and no one's been able to figure out the source.
- One of the town militia, a man named Gregor Talleson, went missing last night. Search parties went looking for him this morning but couldn't find anything. He has a distinct shield with a lion emblazoned on it, that's how the characters can recognize him.
- There are lights out on the horizon. They show up at night and vanish in the morning. Gregor was headed out to investigate them before his disappearance.

## Travel Encounter: Ankheg

Turning off the main road, a dirt path leads further into the wilderness. In the distance, lights can be seen dancing on the horizon.

As the characters make their way down the dirt path, the landscape is barren and quiet. Suddenly, the ground shakes and rumbles and a creature explodes out from beneath the surface.

**Encounter: Ankheg.** A lone **ankheg** has attacked the characters. It's probably outmatched, but it's hungry, so it fights savagely. If it reaches 13 hp or less, it flees off into the wilderness.

## Travel Encounter: Wild Dogs

As the characters continue following the old dirt path further away from the main road and town, they find themselves slowly surrounded by larger and larger hills and brush. As they turn a bend, they find themselves face to face with a pack of wild dogs feeding on the remains of an ankheg's victim.

**Encounter: Wild Dogs.** there are eight **mastiffs** here. They're feral and hungry. They've been feeding on the remains of the ankheg's victims along the path, but now the characters look like a better meal. They fight until half of them have been downed and then they flee into the hills.





# Corpses on the Road

The lights can be seen more clearly now, two phosphorescent orbs floating in front of what appears to be a cave entrance of some kind. Lying on the road ahead, a corpse can be seen.

The corpse was actually a victim of the **will-o'-wisps**. They drained the life from this poor soul when he wouldn't enter the mine. A DC 14 Wisdom (Medicine) check reveals that the man was killed by some kind of magical shock, followed by some sort of life draining ability.

## Dustrock Mine

The mine is full of dust and cobwebs. Aside from the wisps, ankhegs, and poor souls who are led here, no one one really goes out this way anymore. Unless specified otherwise, the mine has the following features.

### General Features

**Ceilings.** The ceilings are 10 ft. high.

**Floors and Walls.** The floors are made of packed dirt and the walls are made of dirt and stone.

**Lighting.** Once inside the mine, there is no light.

**Unusal Features.** The ankhegs, despite their size, can squeeze through the smaller tighter passageways. They move through them at half speed.

### 1. Entrance

The two orbs of light dance in front of you, almost beckoning you into the cave ahead.

**Encounter: The Trap.** The two **will-o'-wisps** are trying to lure the characters into the mine. Just inside in a tunnel on the southern side of the main tunnel is an **ankheg** waiting to strike. If the characters enter the tunnel, the ankheg attacks the closest one. The wisps only attack if the characters try to flee the tunnel. If reduced to 7 hp or less, the wisps turn invisible and flee deeper into the mine to area 7. If the characters defeat the ankhegs there, the wisps take advantage of their weakened state and attack them.

### 2. Collapsed Tunnel A.

This large tunnel once lead deeper, but a cave in has since rendered it a dead end.

The rocks here are large and heavy. It would take a sizable workforce a week or so to clear the rubble and open the passage up once more. The wisps, if they flee, pass right through the rocks using their incorporeal movement to do so.

### 3. Small Tunnel

**Trap: Unstable Roof.** This tunnel is only 3 ft. high and appears to be rather unstable. Every time someone tries to move through it, roll 1d4. On a roll of a 1, the center three squares of this tunnel collapse burying the person or persons in those squares. A buried person is restrained and cannot breathe. A creature not currently trapped can make a DC 12 Strength check to clear out 5 ft. worth of dirt and rubble freeing someone in that space.

### 4. Burrowing Chamber

Four large holes can be seen in this room. Three appear to be small tunnels leading deeper underground, while one appears to be some kind of rubble filled pit.

This is where the ankhegs originally burrowed their way up into the mine. The three smaller tunnels end about 15 ft. down in loose earth, while the large one is about 10 ft. deep and full of loose earth and rubble.

**Encounter: Ambush.** Two **ankhegs** are present in this room, one in the big pit and one in one of the three tunnels (choose at random). They wait for the characters to enter the room before attacking. They fight until reduced to 13 hp or less, then they burrow underground and flee.

### 5. Collapsed Tunnel B.

The tunnel here continues down another 30 ft. before it ends in rubble and dirt. It appears the cave in that caused the previous collapse also affected this portion of the main tunnel as well.

The mine beyond this point is fully caved in. There is no way to dig it out. Treat anything off this edge of the map as inaccessible.





## 6. Missing Miner

This chamber is sealed off by a pile of rocks and rubble. They can be cleared with eight hours of work by a party of four characters. Inside is the corpse of a long dead miner who was trapped inside when the tunnel collapsed behind him.

**Treasure: Pick & Axe.** The miner has a small pouch on him with ten gems each worth 15 gp each, as well as his trusty mining pickaxe and his +1 *handaxe*.

## 7. Ankheg Lair

This large chamber contains a clutch of massive eggs sitting against the northwest wall. Nestled among them appears to be a corpse of a man with a large shield by his side.

This is where the ankhegs lay their eggs. The body near them is that of Gregor the missing militiaman.

**Encounter: Ankhegs.** Two **ankhegs** are sleeping in this chamber. If they're awoken, they fight to the death to protect their eggs.

**Treasure: Brave Shield.** The shield is a magical item that Gregor inherited from his father. It will serve as proof that he fell at the hands of the ankhegs.

**Lionheart Shield Armor (shield), uncommon (requires attunement)** This shield is oddly light for its size. It has a lion's face mid-roar emblazoned on the front of it. As an action, the wielder can raise the shield in front of them and unleash the lion's roar. They cast the spell *thunderwave* at 1st-level with a save DC of 13 from the mouth of the lion. Once used, this property cannot be used again until the next dawn.

When the characters defeat the ankhegs, if the **will-o'-wisps** retreated here from earlier, they turn visible and attack the weakened characters. With their source of amusement gone, they fight to the death.

## Aftermath

With the will-o'-wisps dealt with, no one else will be drawn to the Dustrock Mine anymore. The ankhegs, having either been killed or driven away, will no longer plague this area. If the characters return with the shield to town and bring it to Zekariah Fulsom, he'll mourn the loss of his fellow militiaman, but he'll honor their claim to the reward. In addition, he'll insist they keep the shield as Gregor would've wanted someone brave to wield it in his stead.





# Art: Shutterstock

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