

Scenario Goals

The scenario is complete at the end of the twelfth round. At the end of that round, read **73.2**.

Introduction

When this is over, when it's all said and done and you're no longer running from one side of the North to the other trying to keep the world from imploding, you swear that you will never go underground again. Not even a cellar. But right now, that's exactly where you find yourself.

You are in a tunnel, a perfectly round tunnel carved beneath the Copperneck Mountains. Unlike tunnels you've entered before, however, this one is unique, because it is being carved mere seconds before you pass through it. Crain is in front of you, marching with his seal contraption hoisted over his shoulder, and in front of him are the tunnelers—a squad of Shattersong. They move steadily, walking in two columns as they bore through the mountain, but rather than carve with any sort of tool or machine, they use their voices. You have no idea how it works, but the crystalline Savvas emit a sort of low, steady hum that destabilizes the rock in front of them, changing it from dense stone to a soft, gray material similar to mica. Then, they simply tap the wall and the transformed rock falls away, leaving a wide, perfectly circular tube in its place.

You've been watching them perform this feat for the past hour, and it would continue to fascinate you if it weren't for Crain, who just said something so disturbing that you asked him to repeat it.

"I said," he clears his throat, "that there might be a small—just a tiny—hiccup in our plan. Not even a hiccup really. A snuffle."

A snuffle. You remember to breathe. Count to five. You ask him to kindly explain himself and also, if he wouldn't mind,

mentioning why he didn't bring it up earlier, before you all decided to break into the Savvas source of life.

"Well, I didn't want to worry you."

You consider this. Your hand clenches involuntarily. Then something in your face makes the Quatryl explain more quickly.

"Ah, okay, and maybe I thought it would work itself out. Look, it isn't that drastic a problem, just a variable to keep in mind."

You gesture for him to continue.

"It's the third seal. So we know where the first seal was—down in the Unfettered, err, Quatryl, complex—and we know where the second seal is—in the Savvas source of life. But the third seal." Crain winces. "Well, we won't know exactly where that is until this one is secure. The problem there, well, as soon as we secure this one, the Harbinger will be focusing all its attention on that third place."

One of the Shattersong gestures from the front: they're getting close.

"So imagine a river—a big river full of trees and rocks and black water and demons and bones and death. Okay, now imagine that river has three outlets. If you dam up two of those outlets, that river will suddenly only have one place to go."

The Shattersong slow their pace and all but one of them step aside. This last Savvas waits in front, ready to break through the final barrier.

"So," Crain whispers, "right after we dam up this outlet, we'll essentially be racing a very large, very angry body of water to the final seal. That shouldn't be too much of a problem—unless the seal is especially far away."

You are about to say something unkind, something to let Crain know exactly what you think of his 'snuffle,' when then

the final sheet of stone falls away, and the tunnel opens onto a vast, arid dome. Crain gives you a short salute and runs out before you can stop him. Just like that, the conversation is over. You grit your teeth, stifle your anger. Time to work.

This is space between where the Harbinger sleeps and the Savvas source of life. The Harbinger created this source of life and uses it to influence the Savvas, turning them into its unwitting agents. You have no desire to extinguish the source, but strengthening the seal should cut off the corruption seeping in from below.

Crain rushes out into the cavern, right to the edge of a heart-dropping chasm, and raises his tripod like a hungry prospector about to swing his pick. You hear Satha's exhausted voice echo in your head, "Why couldn't you have found a nice, quiet Quatryl down in those catacombs?"

Crain stabs his contraption down and the whole area rumbles in response. A long flurry of anger rises up from all sides of the room—agents of the Harbinger, Savvas guardians bent to its will, have spotted you. A sound wells up from the chasm so loud and so full of rage that, for a second, it makes you hold your breath. Then the Savvas, seething with vicious magic, rush around the rocks and charge you, completely unhinged.

Crain activates his device and catches your eye—there is no time for words, but you know his look. This is it. Everything depends on you now.

Section Links

At the end of the fourth round, read **7.1**.

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