**Chapter 5:**

**The Tunnels**

The Tunnels are a massive collection of criss-crossing natural and unnatural tunnels, caves, caverns, and city-states underneath each of the continents. Built by the Predecessors to make Earth Aether excavation easier, as well as providing a way to live and travel underground, during and after the Predecessors’ War for Dominance, the Tunnels became filled with horrible monsters of all kinds. Since the Cataclysm, they have adapted to the darkness, evolving into the stuff of true nightmares, lurking in and stalking its dark, endless corridors and twisting, confusing passages. With its seemingly endless maze-like layout and the horrific nightmares that still flourish in its depths, many who accidentally wonder into the Tunnels never find their way out again, either dying or being eviscerated by one of the myriads of prowling creatures that have made the Tunnels their home.

But this is not always the case, for during the Ages of Discovery and Learning, hundreds of thousands of Sentients set themselves to clearing out and populating several of the discovered city-states, as well as establishing (and sometimes constructing) trade routes between cities, making much of the Tunnels relatively safe and inhabitable – though never permanently so, for the Tunnels are vast, and the monsters populating them are many. The primary Sentient inhabitants of the Tunnels are the Darklings, for they have spent millennia adapting to the darkness, and now feel quite comfortable calling it home, though they are by no means adverse to visiting the surface when the need arises.