

Approach to Mount Asphyxia

The peak of Mount Asphyxia stands 4,400' above the valley, above the snowline but being an active volcano there are only patchy snow fields interspersed with hot vents of black rock and sulphur deposits. As the party climb the mountain, they will initially travel through dense woodlands before entering a scrubby region with increasingly sparse vegetation before reaching harsh, rocky terrain. Each region is inhabited, and each represents different dangers.

1. The Forest The first 1000' of the climb is through dense pine woodlands, with a single narrow trail used by inhabitants of Asphyxia along which it is possible to lead but not ride horses. The woodlands themselves feel warm, damp and unwelcoming, with occasional pockets of hot gas or magma close to the surface of the ground creating a near constant mist. Thick growths of lichens and algae cling to each tree trunk and fallen tree branch, making travelling off the pathway difficult and noisy (it is impossible for PCs to surprise any creatures within the woodland without each member making a woodland stealth skill check). The forest is densely inhabited with capercaillie, wood pigeons, pine martin, squirrels and other small animals, but few creatures larger than a lynx are found there. The woodland is a perfect home for fungi, and the elevated temperature created by the volcano facilitates their growth all year, and any character making a foraging, survival or similar check may readily fill a basket with edible (or if they choose poisonous) mushrooms (saffron milk caps, pine boletes and chanterelle are plentiful). This ring of woods around the mountain is also home to Prox, a morchellid myconoid, and (at present) 110 morchellid myconids (see New Monsters Section). (Morchellid Myconid: AC: 8, HD 3****, Move 90' (30'), att 1 weapon or 1 spell, dmg 1d8 or by weapon or by spell, Save as MU6, morale 6 (12), I: 17, AL: L, XPV 95). The myconids always travel in groups of 10, meaning that each casts spells as a 10th level caster (25% cleric, 25% druid and 50% magic user – spells should be selected randomly), and all are armed with normal swords and/or spears. Neither Prox nor its myconids are in any way aggressive, and will choose to talk to the party unless grossly insulted or attacked, and even if that occurs they will try to leave the site rather than fight. Only if seriously threatened will they turn on the party, and in such a scenario they will seek to leave and return in greater numbers (with the resulting increase in magical power).

Prox knows that there are infernids (fire gnomes) living in mount asphyxia, and that there are larger creatures that resemble them but which are different (the fire giants, but it does not know what they are). It has limited knowledge of other creatures, but knows that a scadugenga passes through its forest as it wishes, and fears this being. It knows and has talked with the riddler that has moved in to the mountain caves, and holds said creature in high respect, and it understands that there is a roper residing in a cave higher up the mountain which occasionally comes as far down as the woodlands to hunt. Prox is willing to trade for items of equal or greater value than it already has, and is delighted to hear information of events further afield via stories told to its myconids. In the centre of the densest patch of woodlands on the mountains, Prox has its treasures in the hollows of tall trees, well hidden and untouched for years. This includes 6000gpp, 9000pp and 30 small diamonds each

worth 2000gp. Of more value perhaps is that it also has a *ring of fire resistance* that it will trade to the party for treasures to the value of 10,000gp.

Following the pathway takes the party on around half a circuit of the mountain, and will take 1 day. Travelling through the denser wooded areas may appear more direct but this territory is so densely overgrown that it will take no less time.

2. The Scrublands Above the tree line, for the next 1000' of climb, vegetation becomes sparse until there are only a few juniper, astracantha, gorse and similar inhospitable plants growing between patches of mountain herbs, disturbing what becomes progressively more of a black and grey moonscape. Mountain hares and ibex graze thyme and sage, hunted by golden eagles and a family of hippogriff (5 hippogriff, AC 5, HD 3+1, HP 16, Move 180'(60') or 360'(120'), Att 2/1, Dmg 1d6/1d6/1d10, Save As F2, MI 8, AI N, XPV 50). The hippogriff are wary of humanoids, but if they see opportunity to swoop in and carry off a beast of burden or adventurer they will do so. A party following the pathway over this part of the mountain can do so in around 8 hours, but if they choose to travel over-land instead they can do so in 4. Such an overland course cannot accommodate horses, but mules or donkeys can manage.

3. The Lava Beds Between 2000' and 3000' the mountain consists of craggy, coarse, ankle breaking lava beds with few patches of vegetation, interspersed with steam vents spewing toxic vapour and hot water. Numerous hot springs trickle bright coloured deposits down the mountainside and into the woods below, with wide areas of jagged and broken rocks making going hard. There is no defined pathway up the mountainside, but there are numerous ancient lava flows making flat beds that are easier to traverse. This part of the mountain is completely impassable to any beasts of burden that cannot fly. There is little or no vegetation, and other than spiders hunting insects that blow up hill there is little animal life. The mountain side in this area is cold, frequently battered with freezing rain that evaporates rapidly from patches of warm rock creating an almost permanent thick mist. There are dozens of crevices and small caves in this region, many too small for habitation although larger caves may make useful base camps for adventurers heading higher up the volcano, but are also sites of habitation for various monsters making their home here. The following encounters may be placed anywhere in this region. Note that the in each map the standard 10' scale is used, and maps may be of any alignment, depending on which side of the volcano they are placed.

3a. Troglodyte Lair



A tribe of troglodytes living in the valley below use this cave as a spawning site every year. Currently, 22 adult troglodytes are tending dozens of eggs. There are two pools of water, warmed in the hot rock is has percolated through, the upper one connecting locations 1 and 3 through a submerged tunnel, with the water running into this pool from above and slowly leeching through pores in the rock down into the larger pool in location 4, before seeping slowly out again at the far end. The water is at a steady 39°C, perfect for the troglodytes needs, and their eggs are floating on mats of vegetation in the pool at 4.

If PC's enter this cave, a lookout in the pool in 1 will swim through to 3, alerting a group of 10 of the troglodytes there, who will swim back to 1 to try to surprise the party from behind (surising on a 1-4 on 1d6 due to their chameleonic ability). If the PC's proceed to location 2, the remainder of the troglodytes (another 11) will charge at them from location 4, where they are watching over their eggs. Thus the troglodytes plan is to surround and overwhelm any enemies who enter. (Troglodytes, AC 5, HD 2, HP 10, Move 120' (40'), Att 2/1, Dmg 1d4/1d4/1d4, Save as F2, MI 9, I 10AI C, XPV 25). Note, troglodytes produce a nauseating oil requiring a save vs. poison or hand held attacks are made at -2 to hit.

The troglodytes consider the waters in this cave to be sacred and have been leaving offerings in the pool at 4 for generations. If the party have the means and inclination to do so, they can recover 4000sp, 5000gp and 1000pp from the waters.

3b. Spring of the Giant Leeches



This whole cave is flooded, to varying depths, with the shallowest point being only around 1' deep, 90' inside the cave. A bright green trickle of algae filled warm water coming from the opening makes this cave visible at a distance. At that shallow point, at the narrowest part of the cave, glinting in the light of the cave entrance or any artificial light created, is a natural formation of obsidian protruding from the water, shining as if coated in gold. By chance it appears somewhat like a valuable statue, suggesting perhaps that the other rocks visible in the shallow water may be other items of unguarded treasure. There is, in truth, no treasure anywhere within the cave, but the warm volcanic waters here are visited by just enough potential victims for leeches living within the water to have grown to a monstrous size. There are 3 in total (AC7, HD 6, HP 30, Att 1, Dmg 1d6, suck for 1d6 per round thereafter), Save as F3, MI 10, I 1, AL N, XPV 275).

3c. Cave of the Shadows



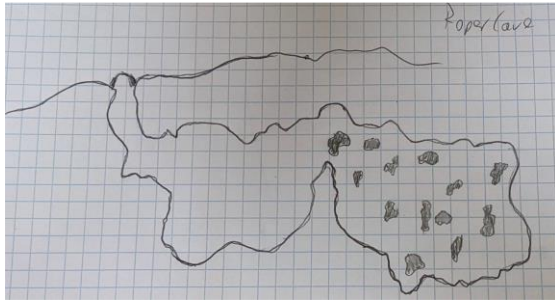
Victims of the scadugenga risen again as shadows are drawn to the caves, and for reasons unknown they congregate in this cavern, from which groups periodically form bands and leave for new lands to ravage. This dark cave has within it a dozen shadows (AC 8, HD 2+2, HP 11, Mv 90'(30'), Att 1, Dmg 1d4+1 strength point), Save as F2, MI 12, AI C, XPV 35).

Any creatures that are not extraordinarily cautious will be surprised by shadows on a 1-5 on 1d6. Any strength drained is recovered in 1d8 turns. Note that the shadows will aim to wait until the whole party is inside the caves, aiming to surround them before attacking. If the party looks set to rest

and set up camp in this large, seemingly safe and dry cave, the shadows are prepared to wait until the party choose to rest before attacking.

Buried under a simple cairn of rocks in the innermost part of the cave are the remains of two adventurers, long since forgotten. Among rusted arms and armour are a few items of use, including 1500gp, 500pp, a *potion of climbing*, *scroll of dictation*, *scroll of protection from elementals*, *singalong lute*, and human sized *plate mail +1, dimensional*.

3d. Roper Cave



A particularly bitter, twisted old roper mostly sleeps in this cave. It occasionally hunts for prey down in the woodlands below, slowly trundling up and down the mountain, but it prefers to slumber here, with nothing but its own hateful company. It primarily resides in the bolder and column strewn area, where it can readily be mistaken for another rock. The roper will not hesitate to attack the party (AC0, HD 12, HP 70, Mv 30'(10'), Att 1 bite/6 strands, Dmg 5d6/weakness, Save as F10, MI 10, I 4, AI C, XPV 3875). Note – strands can attack up to 60' range, a hit reduces strength by half for 3 turns (no save), wrap around prey and pull it to the mouth to be bitten. A strand can be severed with 5+ damage from a magical edged weapon, but this doesn't affect HP of creature. Immune to level 1-3 spells.

While this roper, like others, does not covet treasure, should the party be desperate enough to dissect it they will find 10 garnets among gastroliths in its gut, each with a value of 200gp.

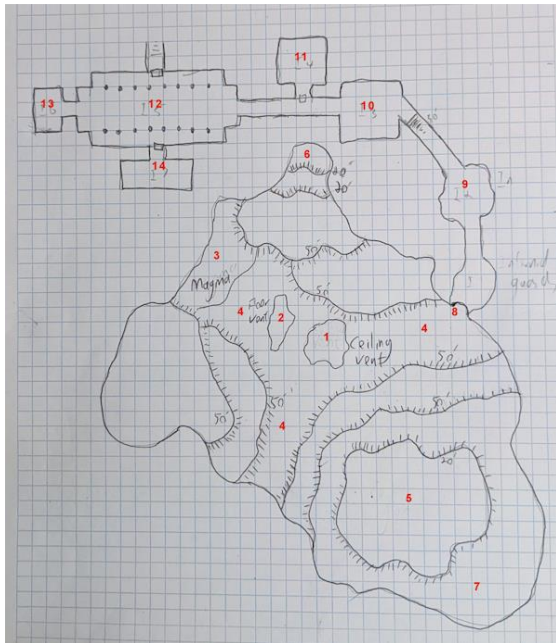
4. The Summit of Mount Asphyxia



Above 3000' Mount Asphyxia is a blasted hellscape of brimstone and rock, with hot gases seeping through vents, interspersed with snow fields. Sharp rocky outcroppings surround deep, black fissures that may be filled with either snow or boiling water.

Multiple openings to the main complex of caverns are found near the summit. In the Southern Caldera, the ruby dragons make their lair in a great chamber, from which there is also a route to the infernids (fire gnomes). Access to the Southern Caldera is via a single vent.

The dragons are not interested in fighting the party, and even if earlier encounters with them in the valley below have been hostile they will attempt to avoid conflict on the mountain top. They will however fight to defend themselves and their lair if the party are aggressive, or to protect their friends and allies the infernids. Ruby dragons are lawful creatures for the most part disinterested in the affairs of adventurers, but they are wary that the party may represent significant danger.



1. Ceiling Vent. From ground level in the Southern Caldera, the opening leads through 30' of rock into the chamber below. The ground is a further 200' down. The rock above is strewn with patches of sulphur, and twisted, black volcanic boulders.

2. Floor Vent. This route down goes straight into the complex of gas vents in the volcano. It constantly spews hot gas, reeking of rotting eggs, and any character standing within 20' must make a save vs. poison each round or begin to fill sick and light headed. A character not heeding this warning must make further saving throws each round at increasing penalties of -2 or pass out unconscious, dying 10 rounds later. The gas in the vent itself is unbreathable and cannot support a character without *neutralise poison*, *resist fire*, and *create air*. Eventually, the vent leads to a platform alongside the fire elementals in the magma chamber below.

3. Magma Pool. Here a pool of magma cools slowly, heated by a hot gas vent from below. It isn't fully liquid any more (and any creature on top will never sink into magma, which is always more dense than the character) but they will ignite taking 4d6 damage per round. The light given off illuminates the entire chamber with a dull, shadowy, red glow.

4. Chamber floor. The lowest level floor of the chamber feels warm to the touch, and is scattered with flowery crystalline structures of sulphur. Any fire effects (dragon breath, *fireball*, etc.) will melt and ignite the sulphur, producing toxic gas within 30' of the effect for 3 rounds. Any creature not immune to this will suffer uncontrolled coughing and vomiting for 1d3 rounds, and take an extra 4d6 acid damage.

Above the floor of the chamber are multiple levels of platforms and ledges, representing the remains of older lava flows and eruptions. They all see more traffic than the floor level, and the dragons, anticipating their young will be hopping from perch to perch soon enough, have been keeping them clean of sharp rocks and sulphur.

5. Nest Site. This highest platform has been chosen by the two dragons as their nest site. Walls of re-melted magma have been constructed around a 25' nest in the centre of the platform, to a height of around 4', and the centre filled with fine volcanic sand. 6 eggs have been deposited therein, and are regularly tended by both dragons. One or other dragon will always be nearby, if both are still alive.

Ruby Dragon (small, male), Dearg: AC -1, HD 10, HP 60, Mv 90'(30') or 240'(80'), Att 2/1 or 6, Dmg 1d8/4d8, Breath area 90'(30'), Save as F10, I9, MI 10, XPV 2300

Spells: Ventriloquism, Protection from Evil, Light, Invisibility, Detect Invisible, Mirror Image, Haste, Create Air, Water Breathing

Ruby Dragon (large, female), Rhuddem: AC -3. HD 15, HP 80, Mv 120'(40') or 300'(100'), Att 2/1 or 6, dmg d10+1/4d4+4, Breath 135'x30', Save as F10, MI 10, XPV 5150

Spells: Ventriloquism, Shield, Detect Magic, Charm Person, Read Languages, Phantamal Force, Wizard Lock, Detect Invisible, Continual Light, Hold Person, Haste, Dispel Magic, Dimension Door, Wizard Eye

6. Buried Treasure. Higher value treasure is buried here, under a 6' layer of volcanic sand and ash, covered in turn with 6" of sulphur. This corner of the cave smells strongly of rotting eggs, but unless characters spend an excessive amount of time here or start a fire they are not unduly affected. In tightly sealed chests beneath this there is a hoard, containing the following gems and jewellery:

Number	Value (gp each)	Gem Type
3	100	amethyst
7	100	garnet
7	500	pearl
8	10	eye agate
5	1000	black emeralds
2	1000	serpentine
8	1000	carbuncle
8	100	citrine
22	1000	rubellite
10	1	very poor lapis
3	5000	black opals
5	40000	very large orange sapphires
1	500	spinel

Value	Type
1000	brooch
5000	heart
500	brooch
100	bracelet
2500	cameo
4000	collar
3000	chain
2500	buckle
3000	pin
1000	clasp

Underneath this chest is a larger barrel, again tightly sealed, into which the following items have been crammed.

Light crossbow +2

Human sized banded mail +3

Shield +1 of dosing

Scythe+4

Staff +1

Staff of Creating 20 charges

Rod of chaos

Potion of fire elemental form

Potion of ethereality

Potion of fortitude

Potion of Ferocity

Scroll of druid spells anti animal shell, summon weather

Scroll of equipment (50' rope, 6 pitons, climbing spikes, grappling hook, parachute)

7. Lesser Treasures. The dragons keep their lesser treasure (coins) here in the open, hoping that any intruders will be distracted by this and fail to find their higher value possessions. In total, the mixed pile of coins contains 104,000cp, 106,000sp, 75000gp and 8000pp. Note that while in theory a PC may find a way around the dragon's nest to this site. It is highly unlikely that they will be able to disturb this unstable mountain of coins without drawing attention to themselves.

8. Opening to Infernid Lair. This cave opening shows obvious signs of use, with sulphur deposits having been cleared from the site. Careful investigation will reveal small footprints, shod feet of a creature that cannot be bigger than 3' to 3' 6" tall.

9. Robing Room. This round, crudely worked chamber is ringed by small (1' high) three legged stools a dozen in total, and 4' tall, 10' long rack in the middle of the room upon which are hung 12 outfits sized to fit a small humanoid, each with a big goldfish bowl like helmet. The outfits are 'all in one', with strangely spongy feet linked to tubes that connect all the way to the head *via* a box on the back. The shoes act as pumps for air, with the box containing a filter to remove all of the effects of toxic air in and around the volcano. At a push, a halfling could fit one of the suits, but they are sized for a gnome.

10. Disrobing Room. The North side of this neatly cut chamber seems to have strange metal tubes coming from the wall, ending in round, many holed ends, beneath which is a tiled floor and a gutter. Standing on the tiles immediately causes pressure plates underneath to trigger, allowing the flow of water through and out of the tubes above creating showers. At a height of 2' from the ground there are shelves on the north wall containing bars of soap, and there are shelves to the East (just outside the shower area) with neatly folded towels. Alongside the towels are gnome sized dressing gowns. The South wall has racks for ordinary gnomish cloths. This room is used for changing out of work clothes before donning protective clothes to enter the volcanic chamber inhabited by dragons to the South. On the way back, the gnomes are careful to decontaminate fully, just in case of contamination.

11. Guard Workshop. Four guards are posted here, that being deemed sufficient to protect the colony in this direction, having a family of friendly dragons just outside. The room is also used as a staging post for taking goods to or from the dragons, so is always filled any trinkets and valuables that the gnomes believe the dragons may like. In return, the dragons drop off game (deer, elk, wild cattle, *etc.*) for the gnomes. Whenever the PC's pass through, there will be a range of such materials here.

The gnomes themselves are armed and armoured to fight if necessary (AC3, HD 2, HP 11, Move 90' (30') Att 1, Dmg 1d6, AL N, XPV 10). They are armed with light crossbows (having a cache of 100 bolts in this room) and war hammers, and wear plate mail armour. Each carries a horn, and one of them will sound their horn at first sign of intrusion, to warn gnomes at 12 of approaching trouble. Each gnome also carries 10gp and 10sp.

One of the gnomes is always on sentry trouble at the door, which is kept open, while the other three carry on with whatever tasks they wish. There are a couple of inexplicable gnomish contraptions half made in the room, a tool kit containing metal cutting tools, four chairs, a table, a barrel of fresh drinking water, and a stack of cheese and pickle sandwiches.

12. Finishing Shop. 6 fire gnomes are working in finishing of some inventions in this room, specifically they are experimenting with jetpacks for their yeti allies. Their foreman (a fifth level character) is an accomplished engineer and has high hopes that some of the prototypes may be survivable. If the party approach these gnomes from the East without the guard gnomes from room 11 having warned them, they will assume the worst, that those guards have been killed. One will make a dash for the North door to head down stairs to warn the others, while the others will fight as desperately as necessary to hold the party off. They are variously armed with hammers and picks, and their heavily pocketed work overalls are equivalent to leather armour (5 gnomes, AC7, HD1, HP6, Move 90' (30') Att 1, Dmg 1d6, AL N, XPV 10). If they have time, they can rig the jetpacks to explode. This takes 2 gnomes 2 rounds to accomplish, with a single rounds further delay for them to run away to 13. At the end of this round the jetpacks explode for 6d6 damage (save vs. wands for half) to all within 30'. Note that a wise party will be wary of gnomes fiddling with technology during a fight. The foreman is a tougher prospect, wearing a *ring of protection* +2 as well as carrying a *war hammer* +2, with which he is skilled. (AC4, HD 5, HP 30, Move 90' (30') Att 1, Dmg 1d6+5, AL N, XPV 50). He If necessary he will try to hold the party off while two of his colleagues rig the jet packs to explode.

If the jetpacks are retrieved intact, the party may try to make use of them. They are large, fitting where a backpack would fit, with an encumbrance of 500cn. They carry enough fuel (a compound made of volcanic sulphur, iron and coal) for up to 10 rounds of flight, at a rate of 360'(120'), with a green ring to go faster and a red string to slow down. The jetpacks make a loud noise as if of constantly tearing paper, and produce a noxious, sulphurous smell ensuring that however impressive it looks arriving by jetpack, nobody doing so will ever be welcome.

Each of the worker gnomes carries 10gp and 5sp, while the foreman carries in addition 10pp. Various tools, spare parts, thingummies, doodads and whatchamacallits fill their pockets.

13. Upstairs Tool Store Shadowboards cover the walls of this chamber, many with tools placed neatly back into their places. The list of tools found in here is extensive, as shown below.

Anvil	Hammer, normal (4)
Axe, hatchet	Hammer, sledge
Axe, pick	Mallet (8)
Bellows	Miners pick
Billhook	Plane
Block and tackle (4)	Pliers (6)
Brush (wire, smiths) (4)	Punch, smiths
Brush (besom)	Rake
Chisel, wood (carpenters)	Rasp (5)
Chisel, rock (masons)	Ruler, 1' (4)
Compass (building)	Saw, frame
Crowbar (9)	Saw, hand
Dividers, measuring (5)	Saw, jig (2)
Drawplate (4)	Scissors
Drift Punch (12)	Screwdriver (6)
Drill, hand (4)	Shears (cloth)
File (4)	Snips (4)
G Clamp, small (16)	Swage (5)
G Clamp, large (8)	Tongs (3)
Hamer, claw (3)	Wire cutters (3)
	Yardstick

14. Fuel Workshop This room is locked, the foreman in room 12 has the key. This chamber is full of materials that the gnomes have been experimenting with to create fuel for the rocket packs. Even infernids fear what can go wrong when rocket fuel is poorly mixed, so materials in here are carefully kept separate. Each container is labelled in gnomish. For details of specific materials see Cyclopedic Compendium. Note, if PC's are foolhardy enough to mix these materials together without passing alchemy checks, the DM should feel free to punish them with amusing or embarrassing effects.

Acid of sugar, 1lb	Guano, bat, 4lb
Alcohol, Grain, 10 pints	Jewellers Rouge, 8oz
Aqua Regia, (Aqua griseo gelata) 2 pints	Lunar caustic, 8oz
Aromatic Spirit of Ammonia, 1 pint	Lye, 6lb
Bichrome, 1lbz	Magnesia, 1oz
Bitter Salt, 1lb	Mosaic gold, 4oz
Blue copperas, 1lb	Muriatic Acid, 1 pint
Caustic Lime (slaked lime) 1lb	Natron, 1lb
Caustic Potash, 4lb	Nitre, ½ lb
Chrome Green, 8oz	Pearl Ash, Potash ½ lb
Chorome Red, 12oz	Philosophers wool, ½ lb
Chrome Yellow, 1lb	Pyrites, 4oz
Copperas, 1lb	Red Lead, 1oz

Corrosive Sublimate, 8oz	Rock Salt, 24lb
Corundum Powder, 4oz	Saltpetre, ½ lb
Crocus Powder, 4oz	Soda Ash, ½ lb
Emery Powder, 1oz	Turpeth mineral, 1oz
Flowers of Sulphur, 12 lb	Water Glass, 1oz
Glaubers Salt, 8oz	White Vitriol, ½ lb
Green Vitriol, 1oz	Zinc, 1 lb ingot