

# THE GROTTO

## AN INTRODUCTION

**T**HE CAVE'S ENTRANCE IS A JUMBLE OF ROCKS AND ERODED arches, almost invisible from the cliffs above, without the fisherman's directions you would never have found it. As you enter the sound of the waves changes to a low rumble, the air is heavy with seaspray, the scent of rotten seaweed and ozone fills your nostrils.

The cavern walls glisten with crystallized salt, every surface is slick with a thin coating of slime making the footing here treacherous. Cracks and crevices, many too small for a person to fit through lead away into the darkness of the cave's interior. You pick the largest of these, slowly making your way deeper into the maze of switchback tunnels and deadends.

Your sputtering torches give off just enough light to push back the oppressive darkness, the booming sound of waves subside, replaced by water dripping and a constant low pitched echo. You find yourself at an opening into another cavern, this one larger than the first. A pool of water glows in the northern section where you stand, a narrow ledge leads round its edge to an open area beyond. Boxes and barrels are strewn around the cave, mostly broken open or smashed into splinters. It seems this cavern was once used for smuggling contraband, although whoever was using this place has long since abandoned it.

Walking around the pool's edge you notice eddies and ripples indicating the water is flowing in and out of underwater passages. Ahead are a few crates which seem mostly undamaged, you make your way to them, but before you can inspect their contents you hear a faint splash behind you. You turn to see a woman, skin grey and scaly standing at the edge of the pool looking at you with sad dark eyes. She begins to smile revealing a grotesque set of shark like teeth. Stepping back in horror you are about to draw your weapon when she starts to sing... This beautiful sea goddess has the most amazing voice you have ever heard. You must go to her, do her bidding for only then can you be truly happy. What luck you decided to explore this cave today.

## NOTES AND TIPS

- 30x45 map grid
- This place can be a hideout for smugglers. Maybe they are arriving as the party is exploring and don't appreciate the company.
- In the intro I suggest a Siren has taken over a smugglers hideout, which has a rather nasty song you should be careful of using as it can be extremely powerful.
- The pools can be connected to make it easier for creatures to move from one location to another.
- Place enticing treasures on the rocks in the pools to attract unsuspecting adventurers, I'm sure there will be nothing in the water.
- Use the front or back parts of this map as separate smaller battle maps. Both have entrances and exits for use in a longer cave exploration.
- This could work in conjunction with some of my other maps. 'The Workshop' and also 'The Excavation' come to mind as two

that would work.

- Sea Hags often use these kinds of places as home, or you could go with any number of sea based creatures. Cave based creatures would also work, so Ropers, Bulettes, Basilisks, Cloakers or Troglodytes and many more.

## VARIANTS

Sign up to my Patreon to get access: [patreon.com/afternoonmaps](https://patreon.com/afternoonmaps)

