

# Horrors from the Bewildering Deep

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# Part One: Snufflefungus

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Once upon a time, a restless young Snufflefungus started digging. At first, he dug a hole through the floor at the back of a closet in Malex's house. Then he dug a cavern. And tunnels. And a whole secret laboratory.

Why did he feel compelled to dig? He wasn't sure. Maybe it was an ancient instinct passed down from his ancestors.

But once his laboratory was set up exactly the way he wanted, his urge to dig receded.

Until one day, his friends didn't come back. Malex and Linus were gone and Snufflefungus was alone.

And once he was alone, Snufflefungus's urge to dig came back with a vengeance. So he dug. Tunnels and chambers. Junctions and stairways. Grand caverns as ornate and symmetrical as cathedrals. More labs.

Years went by, and his complex of tunnels grew ever larger. While he dug, he considered the fate of his friends. He didn't have a spaceship of his own, or he could have gone to find them. What could he do?

Lost in thought and distracted by the problem, occasionally he made mistakes. Sometimes a tunnel would collapse. Sometimes he would run into a dead end or encounter something that he really shouldn't dig through.

In the end, the Snufflefungus delved too greedily and too deep. And he feared to face what he might have awakened in the darkness under Ohioville...

**Mara:** What do you mean, Snuffy? Why would it be a bad idea to go down into your tunnels to find Mike's dog?

**Linus:** Honestly, it just sounds like more work. And Mike hasn't even paid us for finding his dog in the first place!

**Mike:** Why do I feel like I might be getting scammed here?

**Snufflefungus:** I'm just not sure how to find that section of the tunnels. There are a **lot** of tunnels.

**Malex:** How long are these tunnels?

**Snufflefungus:** Well, there are over 200 miles of tunnels in the main system, but that's not the hard part.

**Mara:** Excuse me what.

**Snufflefungus:** The hard part is: not all the tunnels exist in euclidean space.

**Malex:** (Sarcasm.) Of course they don't.

**Mara:** How is that possible?

**Snufflefungus:** We brought back a sample of the technology from New Civilatham. Remember their doors?

**Mara:** Oh yeah!

**Snufflefungus:** So, I incorporated their transdimensional engineering technology into my digging machines.

**Linus:** Why would you do that?!

**Snufflefungus:** I was bored!

**Malex:** So what's the relationship between your underground tunnels and a map of Ohioville?

**Snufflefungus:** (Cheerfully.) Tenuous at best!

**Mike:** So, what exactly did Doggy fall into?

**Malex:** If I understand what Snuffy did, the bottom of that sinkhole is a place where more than one part of the universe is intersecting with itself. Which, I guess, explains why so much of the ground has collapsed into it. Who knows where it ended up.

**Mara:** (Somber.) And who knows where that monster might have come from.

**Malex:** Snuffy, do you have any kind of map of your tunnels?

**Snufflefungus:** I do! It's just... kind of mathy.

**Linus:** I've seen it, it's incomprehensible.

**Malex:** Let me take a look. I bet I can figure it out.

**Mike:** How long do you think this will take?

**Malex:** I would expect this to take a while, Mike. Like, a few days. Why don't you head home and we'll call you when we have a plan.

**Mara:** About that...

**Linus:** (Nonchalantly.) We destroyed his house too.

**Malex:** Oh, that's unfortunate.

**Mike:** Can I live here now?

**Malex:** No, you may not.

## Part Two: Malex

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Three days passed. Malex, invigorated by the problem, called in sick and locked himself in his bedroom.

Snufflefungus's map was meticulously detailed in every respect, but it hardly fit on a single piece of paper. Instead, the map was stored in a cardboard box full of hand-written journals. On each page, and in chronological order, Snuffy had scrawled the precise details of his digging activity, including exactly which machines were used and what their settings were.

It took some convincing, but Malex eventually coerced Linus into entering the entire box of journals into a database. With Snufflefungus helping him, it went pretty quickly.

Malex wondered if this was the first time in their friendship that Linus being a computer had actually come in handy.

While Linus worked on digitizing the entire map, Malex wrote a program to analyze the data and assemble it into some kind of cohesive graph.

From there, armed with an N-dimensional graph of the entire underground tunnel system, and armed with a handful of concrete reference points, Malex was finally done.

**Malex:** Okay everybody! I figured it out!

**Mara:** Ugh, shower.

**Mike:** Did you find out how to get to my dog?!

**Linus:** (Screams.) How are you still here?!

**Mike:** Snufflefungus said I could live here!

**Snufflefungus:** We *did* destroy his house.

**Malex:** We're going to need to have a conversation about that.

**Mara:** So *what* exactly did you figure out?

**Malex:** Take a look! This is a map of Ohioville. And *this* is an overlay with Snuffy's tunnels. At least, the cross-section of tunnels that exist in the same space as Ohioville.

**Snufflefungus:** Oh yeah! That looks *really* familiar.

**Mike:** So what are we waiting for?! Let's go down there and get my doggy!

**Linus:** Are you forgetting the *monster*?

**Malex:** I hate everything about this, but... If we're going down there, I think we're going to need reinforcements.

## Part Three: Mara

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Everything about this plan unnerved Mara. Malex was very convincing when he had a plan, and Mara *was* glad to see some of the spark come back into Malex's eyes. Still, she couldn't shake the feeling that something was about to go horribly wrong.

She was standing alone in a stone hallway deep underneath Ohioville. Just in front of a set of double doors that led to the bottom of the sinkhole. To the monster, and to Mike's doggy.

Linus and Snufflefungus were up above, watching the opening to the sinkhole from a vantage point above ground. They were also running crowd control on Mike. Mara had only encountered Mike a few times, and she didn't remember Mike being so much chaos.

She checked her makeshift hostess stand and hostess outfit once again. Everything was in order, she just hated waiting.

Suddenly, around the corner came Malex and Malex's special guest.

**Malex:** Aha, here we are! Didn't I tell you the most exclusive restaurant in Ohioville was down here?

**Fat Purple Riding Squirrel:** You did, yes.

Mara gulped. Despite her best efforts, she had not been prepared for the sight of Fat Purple Riding Squirrel. His prodigious mass undulated around his frame exactly like the mockery of nature that it was. What he couldn't heft along, he dragged behind him. His feet hadn't been visible to mortal eyes in living memory.

Malex cleared his throat, and Mara realized she was staring. She blinked and smiled.

**Mara:** Welcome, sir, to The Underground. We serve the finest and freshest tako sashimi in our all-you-can-eat buffet.

**Fat Purple Riding Squirrel:** (Gasps.) I love tako sashimi!

**Mara:** Would you like a table for one?

**Fat Purple Riding Squirrel:** Get out of my way!

*(Sounds of stand being knocked over and doors being opened.)*

Fat Purple Riding Squirrel passed through the doors and entered the chamber. Mara quickly pulled the radio from her belt and spoke into it.

**Mara:** Fat Purple Riding Squirrel has entered the pit. I repeat, Fat Purple Riding Squirrel is in the pit!

**Snufflefungus:** (Over radio.) Roger!

**Malex:** Well the hard part is done. Now we just wait for him to finish, then we can go grab the dog and be done with this mess.

**Mara:** He wouldn't- He wouldn't **eat** the dog, would he?

**Malex:** I don't think so. Not on purpose anyway. He does kind of lose control though, so anything's possible.

*(Sounds of rumbling and roaring.)*

The feeding had begun. Tremors passed through the floor and Mara grabbed the wall to steady herself.

*(Sounds of slapping and crashing.)*

The noise beyond the doors got louder and took on a more urgent quality. Then, suddenly, an eerie quiet descended.

**Malex:** Uh oh.

*(Sounds of doors being opened and closed.)*

**Fat Purple Riding Squirrel:** The tako sashimi was too fresh. It escaped, and I believe I am entitled to a refund.

**Mara:** Oh no.

**Snufflefungus:** (Nervous. Over radio.) Guys, uh-

**Linus:** (Over radio.) Run! **Run!**

**Mike:** (Over radio.) I'm running! I'm running!



## Part Four: Ohioville 9 Nightly News

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**Anchor A:** Breaking news tonight, and a *shocking* development centered around the giant sinkhole.

**Anchor S:** That's right! Take a look at this footage, which is coming to us live from our crew on the ground.

**Anchor A:** It seems a giant eight-limbed monstrosity has emerged from the depths of our ruined city, and now it seems to be destroying everything in its path!

**Anchor S:** How exciting! What would you say that thing looks like?

**Anchor A:** Well, it's got tentacles like an octopus, but a head with tusks like an elephant. And wait, is it-?

**Anchor S:** Oh my, will you look at that? It appears to be taking flight using its ears as wings!

**Anchor A:** It also appears to be propelling itself with its tentacles, almost as if it can *swim* through the air!

**Anchor S:** Isn't nature beautiful?

**Anchor A:** It sure is!

## Part Five: Linus

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*(Sounds of the door opening.)*

Linus, Snufflefungus, and Mike burst through the front door to Malex's house and into the living room. Mara and Malex were already there.

Everyone but Linus was panicking.

**Linus:** (Panic.) What do we do? *What do we do?!*

**Snufflefungus:** We've unleashed a monster on our fair city!

**Malex:** Okay, it can't be that bad, can it?

**Linus:** Quick, turn on the TV!

*(Sounds of television turning on.)*

**Anchor S:** (Over television.) -again, if you're just tuning in, the monster seems to have perched on the Valley View Bridge.

**Malex:** Okay, yeah. It is that bad.

**Anchor A:** (Over television.) It seems to be swiping cars off the bridge as they approach.

**Anchor S:** (Over television.) I'm no traffic expert, but if you were planning on heading that way, you might want to find an alternate route!

*(Sounds of television anchors continuing in the background.)*

**Mara:** Ugh those guys.

**Malex:** Yeah, I don't like them at all. They give me the creeps.

**Mike:** Those two news anchors kinda look like you guys, don't you think?

Dumbfounded, the entire group turned to look at Mike.

**Linus:** (Simultaneously.) No.

**Snufflefungus:** (Simultaneously.) I don't think so.

**Mara:** (Simultaneously. Scoffs.) Huh!

**Malex:** (Simultaneously.) I don't see it.

**Mike:** Okay, jeez, I guess not. Whatever.

**Mara:** So what do we do about this mess? This is *our* mess.

**Linus:** Dang it Mara, I was just getting ready to compartmentalize myself *right out* of this situation!

**Snufflefungus:** Let's ask him nicely to fly somewhere else!

**Mike:** I got a flame thrower, want to use that?

**Malex:** That hardly has the range we would need to even get close to it. See how it's wrapped all the way around the bridge? Just *one* of its tentacles has to be *at least* three hundred feet long.

**Snufflefungus:** If he says no, we can *make* him fly somewhere else.

**Malex:** We could construct a trebuchet out of- I'm sorry, Snuffy, *what* did you say?

**Snufflefungus:** Remember when Santa emerged from his eternal prison made out of space and time so as to wage the last war and bring death to all mankind?

**Linus:** Let's imagine I don't remember.

**Snufflefungus:** Once upon a time, Santa emerged from his eternal prison made out of space and time so as to wage the last war and bring death to all mankind.

**Linus:** Thanks for that refresher.

**Malex:** Oh yeah! We ended up building a device that kicked him back into his prison. We loaded it into a rocket propelled grenade.

**Mara:** You want to do the same thing to that octopus thing?

**Snufflefungus:** Only if he's going to be as mean as Santa.

**Malex:** I'm pretty sure this qualifies as a Santa-level crisis.

**Snufflefungus:** Okay!

**Mara:** Now I'm just imagining that thing locked in mortal combat with Santa for all eternity.

**Malex:** You're assuming they would never decide to team up and seek revenge on us as their mutual enemy.

**Mara:** Oh yeah, I am assuming that. Very intentionally.

**Linus:** So what are we waiting for? Let's do this!

**Malex:** It's no good. How are we going to get close enough? You saw on the TV how that thing is swatting everything away that gets anywhere near it.

**Linus:** (Dramatic.) Oh I know what to do, you can leave that to me.

(*Short pause.*)

**Malex:** Okay...?

**Linus:** Oh I've got a cache of tripod-mounted machine guns. We'll toss one of them on the roof of your car.

**Malex:** I'm sorry. You have a cache of *what*?

**Linus:** Don't worry about it.

**Mara:** Linus, how will that help?

**Linus:** With any luck it will be so distracted by the hail of bullets that we can get close enough to hit it with the RPG without it noticing us.

**Mike:** Or maybe we'll draw its attention and it'll swat us away faster?

**Linus:** (Disappointed.) You're really something, you know that?

Malex's car was small, old, and rusty. If you made a list of the things that the designers of the car **least** expected it to be used as, *Improvised Civilian Fighting Vehicle* would surely be near the top of the list, alongside such unconventional uses as *Dental Drill* and *Square Dance Partner*.

As improbable as it was, the group quickly converted Malex's car into a light improvised war machine, piled into it, and hit the road.

*(Sounds of road noise and a struggling engine.)*

**Malex:** Okay, we're about to hit the on-ramp, is everybody in position?

Mara was in the passenger seat, hanging out the window with the rocket launcher. Linus and Mike were in the back seat. Snufflefungus was strapped to the top of the car.

**Mara:** Ready to fire! Just get close enough and I'll blow that thing to next Christmas!

**Snufflefungus:** (From outside car.) Ready to fire when you say!

**Linus:** I'm ready to call the shot when we're in range!

**Mike:** (Panicked.) What do I do?!

**Linus:** We've been over this! You're ballast so the car doesn't flip over!

**Mike:** (Screams.)

**Malex:** I see it, there it is!

They crested the ridge, and there it was. Like the unholy offspring of a cephalopod and a pachyderm, it loomed over the landscape, dwarfing even the enormous bridge upon which it was perched.

As they pitched down the hill toward the valley, they picked up speed. Linus wondered what it would be like for his stomach to be in knots. Another moment and they would be in machine gun range...

**Malex:** Okay, Snufflefungus, fire!

**Snufflefungus:** (From outside car.) What?

**Malex:** *Fire!*

**Snufflefungus:** (From outside car.) *What?!*

**Linus:** (Simultaneously.) *Fire!*

**Mara:** (Simultaneously.) *Fire! Fire!*

**Malex:** (Simultaneously.) *Shoot at the thing!*

**Snufflefungus:** (Excited.) Oh, yeah!

*(Sounds of machine gun fire.)*

A few rounds went wide, then they started making contact.

**Mike:** You got him!

*(Sounds of monster roaring.)*

**Malex:** Keep it up! Linus, are we in range?

**Linus:** Not yet! Almost there!

**Mara:** Uh oh, it spotted us!

**Mike:** (Screams.) Oh no!

The creature had indeed spotted them. It huffed, then sent a giant tentacle straight down at them.

**Snufflefungus:** (Simultaneously. From outside car.) Look out!

**Mara:** (Simultaneously. Screams.)

**Malex:** (Simultaneously. Screams.)

**Linus:** That was *close!*

**Malex:** *What are you doing?! Don't look out the window, watch the rangefinder!*

**Linus:** Sorry, sorry! Oh, we're in range! Shoot- *fire!*

**Mara:** *Me?!*

**Linus:** Yes, you! *Shoot it!*

*(Sounds of rocket launcher firing.)*

**Mara:** Grenade is away!

**Mike:** Turn us around! Get us out of here!

*(Sounds of tires screeching.)*

**Malex:** (Teeth gritted.) Somebody tell the ballast to stop back seat driving.

*(Sounds of space and time explosion.)*

An overwhelming darkness filled the horizon as a bubble of empty space expanded, enveloping the creature's head and most of its tentacles.

And then, as suddenly as it had appeared, it vanished, leaving behind a few tips of severed grey tentacles. The bridge had been carved neatly into two with a spherical section removed out of the middle.

Malex brought the car to a stop on the side of the road and parked. Everyone piled out to survey their handiwork from a safe distance.

**Linus:** (Ecstatic.) We did it! We're heroes!

**Snufflefungus:** We destroyed the monster and closed our first case!

**Mike:** So, um, where is my dog?

**Malex:** Mike, your dog almost certainly escaped with its life.

**Linus:** He's still at large, roaming free in the non-euclidean space underneath Ohioville.

**Mara:** Who knows where he'll turn up?

**Snufflefungus:** Don't worry Mike, I'm sure wherever he is, he's living his best life!

**Mike:** Well, I guess the REAL doggy was the friends we made along the way.

**Mara:** Wow. That's quite a sentiment, Mike.

**Mike:** Thank you.

**Linus:** (Scoffs.)

**Malex:** Okay, everyone get back in the car. We're going to find somewhere for Mike to live. Preferably on the far side of town.

**Snufflefungus:** Hooray!

**The End**