

## Invisible Stalker (solution)

by Celestine Lau

The invisible stalker likes to attack *couples*, which suggests looking out for doubled letters. This is also clued by the image of the monster facing a double width space in the given blanks, as well as words such as *creeps* and *attack* in the flavortext.

None of the meta answers contain doubled letters, but there is a close synonym of each answer that contains doubled letters and fits the given blanks. For example, PREEMPT for ANTICIPATE, with the doubled Es filling the space.

Each of these synonyms should now have their *couple* attacked by the monster – each of the doubled letters can be replaced by a single letter to still form a valid word.

Puzzle	Answer	Synonym fitting blanks	After replacing the doubled letter with a single letter
Ooze	DIVIDER	SPLI <b>TT</b> ER	SPLI <b>C</b> ER
Displacer Beast	BLINDING	DA <b>ZZ</b> LING	DA <b>R</b> LING
Aboleth	ANTICIPATE	PRE <b>EE</b> MPT	PR <b>O</b> MPT
Ropers	UNTYING	UNKNO <b>TT</b> ING	UNKNO <b>W</b> ING
Beholder	SUPERFICIAL	SHA <b>LL</b> OW	SHA <b>D</b> OW
Minotaur	COWS	CA <b>TT</b> LE	CA <b>B</b> LE
Alduin	BLACK DRAGON	<b>OO</b> LONG	<b>A</b> LONG
Beast Master	HEREDITARY	<b>INN</b> ATE	I <b>R</b> ATE

Taking the replacing letters in order gives the meta answer **CROWD BAR**, a handy tool for preventing attacks against couples.

Constructor's Notes:

"Two's company, three's a crowd" is the inspiration for this pun, the idea being that a "crowd bar" would protect the couple from the monster. Apart from that, this puzzle incorporated a fairly simple wordplay that is hopefully approachable by most teams to provide a nice closure to the first round's puzzles.