

A HEROIC TIER ADVENTURE

AGE 12+

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

ENCOUNTERS™

WAR OF EVERLASTING DARKNESS™



AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTERS OF 1ST-8TH LEVEL

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to **DUNGEONS & DRAGONS ENCOUNTERS™**, an exciting official **DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®** program. This adventure is something new for the D&D Encounters program. *War of Everlasting Darkness™* is an exciting mini-campaign designed for play at your local Wizards Play Network location and an opportunity to playtest elements of the next edition of the **DUNGEONS & DRAGONS** rules.

The most important element of the new rules that we have tried to implement in this season of D&D Encounters is the idea that you should be able to do more in an hour and a half of play than complete a single combat encounter. As a result, this adventure looks significantly different from previous D&D Encounters adventures. Rather than a string of encounters, one per week, that form a linear adventure, this booklet presents a series of short adventures incorporating elements of exploration, interaction, and combat in roughly equal measure.

All the adventures offer much more flexibility than the linear adventures of the past, and each is designed to be played in a single session. Taken together, the adventures tell the story of the War of Everlasting Darkness—the conclusion to the Rise of the Underdark™ story that has played out in D&D® game products and novels throughout the year.

TESTING THE NEXT EDITION

War of Everlasting Darkness is a new kind of D&D adventure, combining elements of the current edition of the game with features that will drive its successor. Two of the goals of the next edition of the **DUNGEONS & DRAGONS** game are these:

- ✦ Finding a balance among the three significant elements of the D&D experience: exploration, interaction, and combat (the “three pillars”).
- ✦ Making combat take less real-world time, to allow more exploration and interaction in a game session.

In the current edition, combat is designed to be a sort of centerpiece experience, or almost a game within a game. In the next edition, combat could sometimes be an experience of minimal importance to get through quickly so the characters can get on with the story.

This adventure tries to model that style of play within the framework of the current edition. This approach will have a number of significant effects for you and your players. It's important that you become familiar with all of this adventure's introductory material, particularly the section “Running This Season” on page 4, so that you can communicate these changes to the players before their characters get under way.

Preparing for Play

The DUNGEONS & DRAGONS Encounters play kit provides all you need to DM this adventure, including poster maps of encounter areas and a sheet of tokens to represent monsters, adventurers, and battlefield effects.

Follow the steps below to prepare for play.

Before you run session 1:

- ◆ Read the **Background and Adventure Summary** for the flow of the story.
- ◆ Read **Session 1: Nightfall in Methegrist**. If you are starting at another point, read the appropriate sections and what has come before.

At the table for session 1:

- ◆ Ensure that each player has a character to play. Players can use one of the characters provided in the kit or can create their own personas using the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS rules.
- ◆ Give each player a D&D Encounters Play Tracker. This sheet, found in the play kit, allows the players to track benefits their characters gain during each play session.
- ◆ Acquire a session tracking sheet from the organizer. Record all the players' DCI®/RPGA® numbers on it, along with your DCI/RPGA number. If you or any of the players don't have a DCI/RPGA number, ask the organizer for a membership card.

During the session:

- ◆ Each session is a single, self-contained short adventure. Typical play time for a session is 90 minutes to 2 hours.
- ◆ Make decisions and adjudications that enhance the fun of the game. As the DM, you can adjust the adventures (see "A Changing Group") to maximize the fun for the players.

At the end of each session:

- ◆ The adventurers take an extended rest.
- ◆ Record level advancement. Rather than tracking experience points, this playtest season allows players to increase their characters' level by one after each session they play. Make sure the players write down their level advancement on their D&D Encounters Play Trackers.
- ◆ Turn in your session tracking sheet to the organizer. Make sure you've recorded all the DCI/RPGA numbers on it, along with names and the date of the event.
- ◆ Collect your special reward for providing your time as a DM to make the event happen. Your organizer has more details on this reward.

- ◆ After you've been the DM for a few sessions, it's easy to prepare for your next session. Read the next adventure and you're ready to go.

A Changing Group

Since you can never tell who's going to show up to a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS Encounters session, you might wind up with a different group of players from week to week. Some players might have missed a session or two, and others might have played sessions with a different DM. That's fine. Catch new players up with a summary of what has come before.

Majority Rules: If some element of the adventure plot hinges on the adventurers making a decision in a previous session, and the group is different during the current session, find out from all the players what decisions they made. Go with the majority, and if it's an even split, side with the most positive result. For example, if three of six players' characters at your table won the respect of the orc shaman in a previous encounter and two didn't, the characters are considered to have won his respect for the session this week.

Treasure

As the characters progress, they have the opportunity to gain treasure in the form of gold pieces, valuables, and magic items. Whenever characters discover treasure, follow the instructions provided in the adventure. Use the following rules to divide treasure among the characters.

Awarding Magic Items: When the characters find a nonconsumable magic item, the players can decide which character receives it. Usually, these decisions are easy, since certain items are better suited for certain characters. If this is not the case, then you assign the new item to a character who has no nonconsumable magic items. If two or more characters lack nonconsumable magic items, have each of those players roll a d20. The character belonging to the high roller receives the new item.

Selling Items: If none of the characters wants a particular magic item, the group can sell it at the end of the session, using the information on pages 277-278 of the *Rules Compendium*™. Divide the gold pieces received evenly among the party members.

The special magic items found by the characters in this adventure are needed for success in the final session. They cannot be sold.

When to Gear Up: Characters can buy equipment at the start of each session.

Unlike past D&D Encounters seasons, there are no random magic items in this adventure. Because the characters advance so many levels over the course of the season, treasure given out during the adventure can't possibly keep pace with the treasure gain expected in the game.

For this reason, characters gain flat bonuses as they advance in level, using the system described in *Dungeon Master's Guide*® 2. All characters gain a +1 bonus to attack rolls and damage rolls at 2nd level, and again at 7th level. They also gain a +1 bonus to AC, Fortitude, Reflex, and Will at 4th level.



Trolls take a toll on the heroes in session 6

BACKGROUND

Deep in the darkness of the Demonweb Pits, Lolth has been spinning a web of deceit, treachery, and ambition. Her goal is to seize control of arcane magic, a domain that has lain vacant since the death of Mystra a hundred years ago.

To facilitate this grab for power, Lolth has sent the prophet Danifae Yauntyrr to all the cities of the drow. Danifae is a fallen priestess, a scoundrel, a seductress, and—if history is any guide—an avatar of Lolth. Whispering to the leaders of all the great drow houses, Danifae has spurred them to gather ancient knowledge and relics to aid Lolth's ascent.

The drow have scoured the world for the physical remnants of dead or sleeping primordials, sought out the remains of great wizards, gathered artifacts once

sacred to Mystra, and fought for control of magical locations on the world's surface. As the dark elves have gathered arcane energy and channeled it to Lolth, her strength has grown.

Lolth's web has extended to cover most of the world, forming a Demon Weave to replace the Sundered Weave that Mystra maintained. This new matrix of arcane magic grants the priests and wizards who serve Lolth access to newfound abilities, and their task now is to use them.

Across the surface world, Lolth's servitors draw on the Demon Weave to create shrouds of darkness that they call the Darkening. Under this pall of shadow, the drow can move and fight with darkness on their side during what would normally be daylight hours. With this newfound advantage, they hope to help complete Lolth's ascendancy to her new role as Goddess of Magic.

Adventure Summary

This series of adventures takes place in the Silver Marches (also called Luruar), a region in the *FORGOTTEN REALMS*® setting. This area includes the city of Silverymoon, the dwarf stronghold of Mithral Hall, the orc-infested Spine of the World Mountains, and numerous forests, ruins, moors, and dungeons.

The following is a summary of the eight short adventures that make up the War of Everlasting Darkness campaign. The adventures take place over the course of almost two years, starting in the spring (of the year 1484 in the Dalereckoning calendar) and coming to a close in the autumn of the following year (1485).

Nightfall in Methegrist (Session 1): Drawn by their own motivations, the characters gather in the village of Quaervarr, under the eaves of the Glimmerwood. Setting off together, they investigate rumors of a mysterious wandering phantom bound to a ruined fortress deep in the forest.

There, the adventurers can either ally with, mislead, or fight off a group of would-be tomb raiders. Inside the ruins, a short dungeon offers exploration and a couple tricks and traps. The characters then have a chance to end the phantom's wandering by defeating the minor devil that has cursed its former home. Just as the characters lift the curse, however, a sinkhole opens up in the dungeon. From it, a stream of darkness pours upward, slowly growing to cover the sky.

Envoy to Many-Arrows (Session 2): Orcs from the Spine of the World are attacking the village of Winter Edge. The village elder asks the characters to approach and parley with the orc King Obould in Dark Arrow Keep. After years of peace, why have the orc tribes begun another war in civilized lands?

The characters are quickly ambushed and captured by more orcs than they can easily handle. However, they can attempt to save themselves in one of two ways. The characters, hoping to impress King Obould with a

show of strength and martial skill, can offer up one of their own as a champion in the arena known as the Pit. Or they can talk the orcs into letting them go.

While negotiating with the orcs, the characters can see that the king is having difficulty keeping his subjects from succumbing to the bloodlust that was the way of things before the first King Obould. The characters have an opportunity to remove some of the orc tribes from the war.

Siege of Mithral Hall (Session 3): A horde of orcs spreads across the Glimmerwood and the Moonlands, while their raiding parties reach as far as Silvermoon and Everlund. In response to Obould's position on the war, the characters travel to inform and seek aid from the dwarves of Mithral Hall. However, orcs are laying siege to the dwarven defenses. The characters must win through the siege lines to get into Mithral Hall.

Descent into the Depths (Session 4): A bumbling dwarf mystic named Axelcrantz informs the characters that they must obtain a magic relic lost in the Underdark—a relic that will play an important part in the thwarting of Lolth's plans. Unless they can use diplomacy to convince the xenophobic dwarves of Citadel Adbar to give them safe passage, the adventurers must fight their way through the hazards of the Underdark to succeed in their mission. The dwarves might require the characters to accomplish a secondary task before granting passage.

Spirits of the Fell Pass (Session 5): Axelcrantz performs an augury, revealing that a key to breaking the magical darkness that hangs over the Marches lies in the Fell Pass, where drow work to raise an undead army. The adventurers must protect Axelcrantz from orc patrols and restless spirits as he travels to the apex of Fell Pass to perform a ritual that can banish the darkness. However, the drow wait in an ancient fortress located in the pass. They have no intention of allowing their undead-raising ritual to be thwarted.

Trolls of the Evermoors (Session 6): In the Fell Pass, the characters uncovered information telling them that the town of Nesmé is on the brink of being overrun by trolls, and Silvermoon is next. Forced to dwell beneath the constant shadow of the Darkening, the people of Nesmé have succumbed to hopelessness and have little chance of defending themselves. The adventurers must reach the town, help direct and assemble its defenses, and prepare for the assault.

Shores of the Darklake (Session 7): As Lolth's Demon Weave nears its completion, the magic of surface-dwelling spellcasters begins to falter, even as the drow are empowered. As the magical wards protecting Silvermoon fall, the characters follow another of Axelcrantz's visions to the svirfneblin city of Blingdenstone. There, on the shores of the Darklake, they must help overcome devils to open up the trade routes without which the Silver Marches will fall.

Spellcaves of Eryndlyn (Session 8): Armed with the treasure, knowledge, and power they have acquired in their adventures around the Silver Marches, the characters travel to the ruined drow city of Eryndlyn to confront Tsabrak Xorlarrin, the powerful wizard responsible for the darkness that covers the land. But are they prepared to face Danifae, the avatar of Lolth? The key to their success lies in helping a reborn Mystra seize control of the Demon Weave and restore her tattered Weave.

RUNNING THIS SEASON

War of Everlasting Darkness makes a number of changes to the usual structure of D&D ENCOUNTERS. Not only that, but it alters some of the basic rules of DUNGEONS & DRAGONS in its current edition. Make sure to review this information carefully and communicate the relevant bits to any players at the first session.

Tell Your Players

Make sure your players know all this information at the first session. If you have players at your table in a later session who haven't played yet in this season, make sure to run through these changes for them as well.

No Short Rests: To make sure that combat remains at least somewhat meaningful, characters cannot take a short rest during a session. Among other consequences, this means that they can spend healing surges only when powers allow them to. They can use second wind once during a session. Encounter powers and daily powers are treated the same, each usable only once during a session.

There's no story explanation for this, such as the pressing demand to move from one encounter to the next. Rather, it's just a rule change in this season to help create the feel we're looking for in these adventures.

No Extended Rests: Similarly, even though some sessions involve characters traveling for long distance over the course of days or even weeks, characters gain no benefit from an extended rest within a single session. They're assumed to take an extended rest between each pair of sessions.

Highlight Reel: Over the course of these nine weeks, characters will advance from 1st level to 8th level in a series of adventures that last almost two years within the world. At least one season is assumed to pass between most sessions. During that passing time, players can assume that their characters are doing other things—traveling, following different leads to unrelated adventures, or helping the war effort in ways not described here. That is the in-game explanation for the characters' level advancement.

Along the same lines, some elements of the adventures that are presented in this season play out like a cut scene in a video game. A long journey is glossed over. The result of a battle is reported to the players. There's a level of abstraction throughout this season that's meant to keep the game moving along without getting bogged down in mundane details. That's necessary when the characters have so much to do within a single session—the adventure can't give equal attention to every task.

Why does it work this way? Because the War of Everlasting Darkness is a significant event in the world, a conflict that will rage for over two years as other dramatic events unfold in the FORGOTTEN REALMS. Normal seasons of D&D ENCOUNTERS bring characters up to only 3rd level, and we wanted to end this season with a bang. A group of 9th-level characters can have a major impact on the world at the end of this adventure, and it didn't feel quite right to have 3rd-level characters be able to do the same thing.

Things You Should Know

In addition to the information your players need to know, you should be aware of the following additional points.

Playing Fast and Loose: We wanted each session of this season to feel more like an adventure in its own right, rather than a single encounter in a string of encounters. By necessity, that means that the players have more choice in the actions they pursue and the approach they take to the unfolding events. Of course, this slim booklet can't account for every possible action the players might try. You need to be ready to think on your feet.

As always, if a character wants to try something that's not covered by the rules, use the guidelines in the rules to determine whether a check is called for, what kind of check to use, how hard the check should be, and the result of the check. (See pages 101-108 in the *Dungeon Master's Book*, found in the *Dungeon Master's Kit*™ boxed set, for more detailed information.)

If the party tries an entire approach to the adventure that's not covered in this booklet, your job gets more challenging. Use the information here to guide your response. Don't force them down a single path, but guide them gently toward the desired destination. Use as much of what's written here as you can or need to, and remember that the players don't know what's in this booklet. If you need to alter material in an adventure to suit a different course of action, go right ahead.

If worst comes to worst, it's perfectly okay to let your players help you. If you can't decide what the logical consequence of their actions should be, ask their advice. Sort out the obviously self-serving responses from the more reasonable ones, and go ahead and reward those reasonable players by having events turn out as they propose. Stay agile, stay flexible, and focus on the fun.

Mixing Maps: While we're talking about flexibility, you'll also notice that this season takes a different approach to tactical maps than past seasons have used. This package contains three poster maps, and each combat encounter suggests a map to use. In some cases, that looks just like what you've seen before: a map is included in the adventure text with starting positions of characters and/or monsters marked on the map. In other cases, it's a simple indication that the forest map, for example, works fine for a given encounter.

As always, stay flexible. The characters might end up fighting trolls in the wilds of the Evermoors (use the forest map), in the streets of Nesmé (use the village map), or both. You can ask the players to position their characters on the map and then place the monsters, or do the opposite.

In some cases, you might even dispense with a map altogether. When a party of adventurers faces a single stirge in the woods, the combat is not going to last very long and it won't be very complex. If you're comfortable, leave the map aside. Be sure to give the players accurate and consistent information about how far away opponents are, how close together the characters are, and so on, so that they can make informed decisions about how to use their powers. But in all likelihood, some fights will be over quickly enough that you don't need to worry too much about these factors.

Err Generously: In a series of adventures like this, you're going to make mistakes. You'll get home after the session and think of how you should have handled things differently or remember a rule you forgot. That feeling will bother you less, though, if the players had more fun because of your decision than it will if you squelched their fun. You're going to make mistakes, so when you have a choice, choose the option that's more fun for the players at your table.

SESSION 0: CHARACTER CREATION

The initial session of this D&D ENCOUNTERS season is intended to allow players to create characters. For this season, players can create characters using materials from the *Heroes of the Fallen Lands™* and *Heroes of the Forgotten Kingdoms™* rulebooks, as well as *Player's Option: Heroes of Shadow™*, *Player's Option: Heroes of the Feywild™*, *Player's Option: Heroes of the Elemental Chaos™*, and *Into the Unknown: The Dungeon Survival Handbook™*.

A player who misses this session can create a character elsewhere or start session 1 with one of the pregenerated adventurers provided in the play kit. Each player is responsible for bringing his or her character to each play session.

A player who joins mid-season can create a character of an appropriate level based on the current adventure.

Race Options

A player can create a character from any of the races presented in the books mentioned above—dragonborn, drow, dwarf, eladrin, elf, goblin, half-elf, halfling, half-orc, hamadryad, human, kobold, pixie, revenant, satyr, shade, svirfneblin, tiefling, and vryloka.

Class Options

In addition to the classes presented in *Heroes of the Fallen Lands* and *Heroes of the Forgotten Kingdoms*, a player can choose to create a character that uses class options from any of the other sources mentioned above.

Advancement

At the end of each session, each character who participated in that session gains a level. Players record the level advancement on their D&D Encounters Play Trackers.

Inherent Bonuses: Because this adventure doesn't give out as much treasure as characters would normally gain as they advance from 1st level to 8th level, characters gain flat bonuses as they advance in level, using the system described in *Dungeon Master's Guide 2*. Characters gain a +1 bonus to attack rolls and damage rolls at 2nd level, and again at 7th level. They also gain a +1 bonus to AC, Fortitude, Reflex, and Will at 4th level. If players are using the D&D Character Builder, they can check the "Inherent Bonuses" box on the "Manage Your Character" screen, and those bonuses will be added automatically. For characters created at higher levels, make sure the players incorporate the inherent bonuses.

Changing Characters

Players are allowed to switch characters during a D&D ENCOUNTERS season. If a player wants to do so, he or she can bring a new character of the same level as that of the previous character. However, the new character can keep neither regular treasure nor equipment from the previous character.

If an old character possessed one of the special magic relics featured in this season's adventures, that relic can be kept by a new character or transferred to another character in the party.

Character Death

If a character dies during a session, the player has two choices. He or she can bring the same character back at the start of the next session, or start a new character of the appropriate level.



Fimbrul devils try to stop the characters cold in session 7

SESSION 1: NIGHTFALL IN METHEGRIST

Level 1 Adventure—Spring

For reasons of his or her own, each character has traveled to Quaervarr, a village on the southwestern edge of the Glimmerwood. The adventure begins with the characters in the Whistling Stag Inn in Quaervarr.

When you're ready to start, read:

Near the end of spring, your travels bring you to Quaervarr, a pleasant logging village just inside the vast Glimmerwood. At the gate of the walled palisade that surrounds the village, a pair of militia guards leaning on spears asked you a few cursory questions about your business, then pointed you to the inn, a luxurious place called the Whistling Stag.

Half hunting lodge and half sumptuous mansion, the Whistling Stag offers heated baths, down pillows, warm blankets, and lovely views of the verdant forest outside. All this is complemented by bearskin carpets, stag heads on the wall, and a lush tapestry depicting elves on a boar hunt.

The common room is busy this evening, with at least a dozen locals crowding around the bar. The conversation concerns a ghostly apparition that has been passing through the village every night of late. The villagers seem spooked, but an older patron with silvered hair and the look of a former adventurer about him is trying to reassure them.

Prompt the players to describe their characters, but let any introductions flow naturally from the characters' interactions with each other and the secondary characters in the room. If the players decide that their characters know each other already, that's fine. Otherwise, assume that the characters are just now meeting for the first time.

RENNICK AND THE LOCALS

The silver-haired character is Rennick, a retired ranger who has spent his life adventuring in the Glimmerwood. He remains cheerful despite the strange haunting, and his presence lightens the mood of the crowd. He does most of the talking in any interaction with the adventurers, though other locals might pipe up from time to time.

The gist of the story is this: Five nights ago, at the end of the celebration of Highharvestide, a pair of villagers (Hurst and Drana; see villager descriptions below) saw a ghostly figure heading through the village as they left

the holiday feast held in the Whistling Stag. The phantom was a tall, thin human male in armor, walking through the village in a northeasterly direction.

Each night since, the phantom has appeared again. The second night, Grainge saw the spirit enter the village by stepping through the palisade on the southwest side of Quaervarr, and a few other people saw it making its way through the village. Last night, Faella saw it leave the village by moving through the palisade on the northeast side.

You can use the following brief character descriptions to help set the scene in the inn.

Drana, a grim-faced half-elf female with streaks of white in her dark brown hair.

Hurst, a muscular blond human male in his prime.

Grainge, a teenage human male with a mop of sandy brown hair.

Fenlock, a wizened elf male dressed in robes.

Medrin, a young half-elf male with brown hair and a sour face.

Faella, a middle-aged elf female with a pleasant face but a habitually worried expression.

EXPLORING THE VILLAGE

The characters are free to explore Quaervarr beyond the Whistling Stag, and they hear echoes of the same information heard in the inn wherever they go. This section describes three more secondary characters most likely to interact with the adventurers, and their views of the situation.

Axe-Mayor Galdrin Bressar: The mayor of Quaervarr is a retired human lumberjack with a weathered face and thinning gray hair. He downplays the tales of the phantom, but he admits the ghostly visitations have people shaken.

Forestarm Trienne: A druid of Mielikki, goddess of forests, Trienne is a mature half-elf female with golden hair and a tanned face with many smile lines. She finds no humor in the tales of the phantom, however.

Trienne is in regular contact with several rangers of the Glimmerwood, who report that they've seen the phantom beyond the village as well. The apparition follows a path that runs from just outside Quaervarr toward the old ruins of Methegrist to the northeast, but hasn't been seen past that point. Rangers have also told her of shadowy figures lurking in the forest, possibly drow. She has no idea if the phantom is connected to the rumors of dark elves.

Krystryd Mithralforge: The local smith is a strong dwarf with auburn hair and nut-brown skin. She saw the phantom one night and is reluctant to talk about it (she was terrified, and doesn't like to admit that).

Krystryd has heard from her kin in Mithral Hall that orcs have made attacks around that great dwarven stronghold, so her concern over the phantom is outweighed by that larger worry.

INVESTIGATING THE PHANTOM

The people of Quaervarr harvest wood from the edges of the forest, but the dark depths of the local Moonwood remain largely mysterious. They know the location of the old ruins Trienne mentioned, but they steer clear of the site on principle, because they know that ruins often serve as lairs for dangerous monsters.

Assuming the characters decide to investigate the strange apparition, they have three clear options:

1. Head straight to the ruins of Methegrist (assuming they have talked to Trienne). If they choose this option, go to "Stirge's Nest."
2. Wait for the phantom to appear in the village, then follow it on its nightly journey. If they take this course, go to "A Secret Conference."
3. Look for the origin point of the ghost's trek outside Quaervarr to the southwest. If they try this approach, go to "Crone's Path."

Stirge's Nest

An initial encounter with a foul predator reminds the adventurers of the danger of their quest.

As the characters venture into the forest, read:

The light of day quickly diminishes under the shade of the soaring trees of the Glimmerwood. The trees are mostly pines, their fallen needles forming a soft blanket over the forest floor. Here and there are the massive trunks of shadowtop trees, easily the size of a small house at the base, soaring up to dense clusters of copper-colored leaves at the top. The forest is also dotted with stands of duskwood trees, their black bark giving them an eerie appearance.

Logging trails wind their way through the woods, marked by the ruts of wagon wheels. Smaller game trails are occasionally visible through beds of fallen needles. One of the more prominent trails leads northeast, in the direction of the distant ruins.

After several miles, the trail comes to an end. The ruins must lie only a few more miles ahead, but you'll have to find your own path through the trees.

Just beyond the trail's end is the nest of a stirge, which responds quickly to the noise of characters tromping through the forest. You can use the forest map to represent the area, but since combat is against only one stirge, the encounter might end before tactical movement becomes important.

When the characters have dealt with the stirge, they have only a short distance to go before they reach the ruins. See "Ruins of Methegrist."

Stirge		Level 1 Lurker
Small natural beast		
HP 22; Bloodied 11		Initiative +7
AC 15, Fortitude 12, Reflex 15, Will 12		Perception +0
Speed 2, fly 6		Darkvision
TRAITS		
Nimble Bloodsucker		
While the stirge has a creature grabbed, the stirge gains a +5 bonus to AC and Reflex.		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⊕ Bite ⊕ At-Will		
Requirement: The stirge must not be grabbing a creature.		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC.		
Hit: 1d4 + 5 damage, and the stirge grabs the target (escape DC 12). Until the grab ends, the target takes ongoing 5 damage.		
Skills Stealth +8		
Str 8 (-1)	Dex 16 (+3)	Wis 10 (+0)
Con 10 (+0)	Int 1 (-5)	Cha 4 (-3)
Alignment unaligned		Languages —

A Secret Conference

As the characters follow the phantom, they happen upon a clandestine meeting in the forest and learn of the threats coming to bear against the Silver Marches and the North.

Read:

As the sun sinks below the horizon, the forest all around comes to life with the sound of birdsong. Then the sun is gone, and silence falls among the trees. Almost at once, the ghostly apparition appears, radiating a faint chill. The figure is a tall, gaunt human male with sunken eyes, striding slowly forward, his gaze fixed ahead.

Nothing can distract the phantom's attention. It can't be harmed by powers or weapons, and it passes through anything in its way. A character the phantom passes through experiences a terrible chill but suffers no other ill effects.

Though it ignores the trails and passes through obstacles, the phantom's pace is slow enough that characters who scramble through the forest can keep up without much effort. However, a few miles outside Methegrist, the characters stumble into a clandestine meeting among the trees.

Read:

Gruff voices are raised in anger up ahead, with one softer voice woven in. You can't make out any words.

If the characters decide to try to sneak up on the voices, allow them to make a DC 12 group Stealth check. With proper care, the characters can approach and spy on the conversation (see the sidebar) if they can remain hidden.

THE CONVERSATION

The orcs and the drow are arguing about the plans of the drow and the role of each orc's tribe in the coming attacks. They speak in Common, the only language they all know. Characters arrive as the argument is already under way.

Gut (Ripped Gut orc): "When's it coming? You said it be here by now!"

Drow: "There have been . . . complications. Soon, my friend, very soon."

Gut: "We tired of skulking in the forest."

Fang (Red Fangs orc): "So they raid lands that's ours. You said between the forest and the mountains is ours."

Drow: "That's right. The Ripped Guts should stay in the forest until the Darkening."

Gut: "You not Ripped Gut chief! Red Fang is too weak to raid those lands. We are too strong for the forest."

Fangs: "Ripped Guts afraid of howls in the north. That is why they run from the forest."

Gut: "Ripped Guts not afraid! Red Fangs afraid of Ripped Gut strength!"

Drow: "Enough, you imbeciles. I don't have time for this nonsense. The Spider Queen awaits my service. Just make sure you take the village of Winter Edge after the Darkening begins."

At this point, the drow slips away. If the characters keep listening, the orcs argue briefly in Giant before heading their separate ways.

Read:

Two orcs talk to a lithe figure swathed in black. The orcs wear the symbols of two different tribes. One has fangs painted in bright red hanging from its clothing and armor. The other wears dangling loops of what look like intestines draped over one shoulder and under the other arm.

History or Nature DC 12: The first orc's regalia indicates membership in the Red Fangs tribe of the western Rauvin Mountains. The second is a member of the Ripped Gut tribe that lairs in the northern slopes of the Nether Mountains. These tribes are enemies.

If the characters are not sufficiently stealthy, the orcs hear them approach, cut off their conversation, and head into the woods looking for the intruders. The shadowy figure (a drow) slips away as soon as the adventurers' presence is known, calling forth a cloud of darkness to cover her. Stealthy characters might get a good look at her and have a chance to make a single attack (she has AC 17, and all her other defenses are 15;

she notices a hit but continues her retreat until she disappears into the dark woods).

Their tribal affiliations make the orcs enemies, so it doesn't take much effort to provoke them into fighting each other. You decide what checks, if any, the characters should make to succeed at such efforts.

The phantom's route takes it far enough away from the meeting location that the orcs don't notice the phantom unless they're led into its path. The sight of the apparition is enough to send the orcs fleeing in fear.

If the situation devolves into combat, you can use the forest map to represent the area.

Treasure: The orcs carry 110 gp.

Following the Phantom: If the characters either sneak past the orcs or deal with them quickly, they can catch up to the phantom with several minutes of hustling through the forest. If they continue to follow the apparition, they reach the ruins after another few miles of walking. See "Ruins of Methegrist."

2 Orc Savages	Level 4 Minion Brute
Medium natural humanoid	
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	Initiative +3
AC 16, Fortitude 16, Reflex 14, Will 12	Perception +1
Speed 6	Low-light vision
STANDARD ACTIONS	
① Handaxe (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC	
Hit: 8 damage, or 12 with a charge attack.	
② Handaxe (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +9 vs. AC	
Hit: 6 damage.	
TRIGGERED ACTIONS	
Savage Demise	
Trigger: The orc drops to 0 hit points.	
Effect (Free Action): The orc takes a standard action.	
Str 16 (+5)	Dex 13 (+3)
Con 13 (+3)	Int 8 (+1)
	Wis 9 (+1)
	Cha 8 (+1)
Alignment chaotic evil	
Languages Common, Giant	
Equipment hide armor, 4 handaxes	

Crone's Path

An encounter with a mysterious stranger helps the adventurers choose their heroic path.

As the party heads into the Glimmerwood, read: The light of day quickly diminishes under the shade of the soaring trees of the Glimmerwood. The trees are mostly pines, their fallen needles forming a soft blanket over the forest floor. Here and there are the massive trunks of shadowtop trees, easily the size of a small house at the base, soaring up to dense clusters of copper-colored leaves at the top. The forest is also dotted with stands of duskwood trees, their black bark giving them an eerie appearance.

Logging trails wind their way through the woods, marked by the ruts of wagon wheels. Smaller game trails are occasionally visible through beds of fallen needles. One of the more prominent trails leads to the southwest.

A mile or so outside Quaervarr, that main trail forks. You notice a small figure standing at the branching point, peering down each path in turn. It's an incredibly old human female, hunched over and leaning on a walking stick.

As you approach, the crone lifts her stick to point down the path that leads to your left, speaking in a surprisingly loud voice without turning around to face you. "This way is laden with fruit and clear water. The path is even and wide, no beasts lurk among the trees, and the sun shines to warm the way."

She then points to the path on your right, ignoring any attempts to interrupt her. "This way is dark and dangerous. Food is scarce and the trail is broken and overgrown. Down this path is a gleaming city in danger, its battlements cloaked in night. Down this path is a villain scheming for his dark mistress. This way leads into the depths of the earth, from which few ever emerge."

Wheeling toward you, the old crone fixes each of you in turn with her cloudy eyes, then says, "Which way shall I go?"

Left-Hand Path: If the characters encourage her to go left, she says, "And is this the path you will follow?" If they say yes, she shakes her head, clearly disappointed, then turns and slowly makes her way down the left-hand path.

If the characters follow her, the old crone rounds a small bend and enters a clearing where the sun shines brightly through the forest canopy. Turning on the characters again, she says, "Do you seek a life of ease? Why not lie here and rest awhile?" Pointing her walking stick at the adventurers, she casts a spell that causes them to fall asleep. As they drift off, they see her turn into a bright yellow bird that flies off into the trees. The characters awake alone at nightfall, back at the fork in the path.

Right-Hand Path: If the characters encourage her to go right, the crone says, "Yes, that is the path I will take. Will you join me?" If they say yes, she nods and starts shuffling down the right-hand path.

If the characters follow the crone, she walks with them in silence until nightfall, when she pauses and smiles at them. "I have to go now," she says, "but I want you to take my stick. May it light your way in the darkness ahead."

The crone gives her walking stick to one of the characters, then turns into a bright yellow bird and flies off into the trees. The walking stick functions as a magic implement, either a +1 magic rod or a +1 magic staff. In an area affected by the Darkening (see "Coming of Darkness," page 15), it can be made (as a minor action) to shed bright sunlight to a radius of 20 squares. This light can be shut off with another minor action.

Neither: At any other suggestion, the crone snaps, "There's no turning back now. Can you reverse the flow of time? I must go forward, as must you. Which of these two paths shall I take?" She awaits another answer.

If the adventurers attack the crone, she flies away in bird form immediately. She ignores all other attempts at interaction.

The Phantom: If the characters ask the crone about the phantom, she has only this to say.

"Poor man, poor man. Jahar swore an oath to Helm, you see. Helm the Vigilant, the Watcher. He promised to watch and wait like the Watcher himself, to protect Quaervarr and the Moonwood until Helm forgave him for his failings. But with the Watcher slain, who can give Jahar rest?"

History or Religion DC 12: Helm was the patron deity of guardians and protectors, before he was caught up in a divine love triangle. Tyr slew him in the year before the Spellplague.

If the characters follow the crone down the right-hand path, the phantom appears just after the crone leaves. If they instead linger at the fork in the road until dark, they see the phantom striding toward them along the right-hand path.

Read:

As the sun sinks below the horizon, the forest all around comes to life with the sound of birdsong. Then the sun is gone, and silence falls among the trees. Almost at once, the ghostly apparition appears, radiating a faint chill. The figure is a tall, gaunt human male with sunken eyes, striding slowly forward, his gaze fixed ahead.

Treasure: If the characters carefully examine the site of the phantom's manifestation down the right-hand path and make a successful DC 12 Perception check, they notice that the earth has been recently disturbed at the base of a tree. Digging at that spot uncovers a metal helmet, caked with dirt but otherwise intact. It functions as a *headband of perception* (*Heroes of the Forgotten Kingdoms*, page 350).

The image of a right-hand gauntlet with an eye on the back adorns the helm's brow. This is the holy symbol of Helm (Religion DC 12 to identify).

Development: If the characters follow the phantom on its nocturnal journey, they pass through Quaervarr. Their path then takes them to "A Secret Conference," page 8.

RUINS OF METHEGRIST

Centuries ago, Methegrist was home to a small group of paladins known as the Moonwatchers. Dedicated to Helm, the paladins were the self-appointed protectors of the Moonlands. However, they were destroyed when a devil infiltrated their ranks and turned them against one another. Jahar, the knight whose phantom still haunts the ruins, was the first to strike a fellow knight in anger, and he blamed himself until his death for fracturing the order. The devil, a mischievous imp, still lurks in the dungeon beneath the ruins.

A Confrontation

When the characters discover Methegrist, they are not the first adventurers to do so.

Read:

Scattered remnants of ancient flagstones and masonry mark the location of the ruins, though the full extent of the former fortress is hidden beneath the undergrowth. Up ahead, four people move as if searching for something in the moonlight. A dwarf in chainmail is tapping around a pile of rubble and listening for a response. An elf wearing thick leather crouches down to the flagstones at the base of a tall tree, a look of intense concentration on her face. Two human males armed with stout clubs look on, frowning.

If the party is following the phantom, add:

Ignoring the others, the phantom continues its march until it stands beside the dwarf, who backs away, startled. The ghostly knight pantomimes lifting a trapdoor, then sinks down into the ground at the dwarf's feet.

When the others see the party, read:

The dwarf waves his crossbow in your general direction and says, "We got here first, so you'd best be on your way."

Roleplaying the Rivals

This adventuring party of tomb robbers and treasure seekers is driven purely by greed. They don't want to share their profits and are inclined to rebuff the characters, but they don't attack on sight. Even though these treasure seekers are minions, describe them as adventurers, bearing subpar equipment but savvy and experienced.

Karrik, the dwarf, is the leader of this little band and does most of the talking. As gruff, dour, and greedy as the worst of his kind, he is unhappy at the characters' arrival. However, he's not fond of unnecessary risk, and is willing to consider an alliance as long as he receives a good share of the profits. In combat, he hangs back, looking for a clear shot with his crossbow.

Lisstra, the elf, is reserved, partly because her grasp of Common is not perfect. She speaks with a thick accent if asked a direct question. She darts in and out of combat, trying to use difficult terrain when possible to keep opponents away from her.

Dran and Garn are twin human brothers. Garn is "the quiet one," affecting an air of thoughtful contemplation when he actually has no idea what's going on. Dran, on the other hand, constantly offers idiotic ideas and ill-informed opinions on every subject. In combat, they stick close together, trying to form a human wall between opponents and their allies. They are fanatically loyal to Karrik.

Dealing with the Rivals

You can use the forest map to depict the area around the entrance to the ruins. The dwarf stands beside the triangular pile of rocky rubble, and the elf crouches at the roots of the nearest large tree.

Bargaining: If the tomb robbers are promised more than half of any treasure acquired (because they reached the ruins first), they are willing to ally with the characters. They accompany the adventurers into the ruins and keep their end of the bargain.

Combat: The fact that the rival adventurers can be killed with a single hit makes a fight against them go quickly, and that's intentional. This isn't an important combat encounter. If the adventurers kill one or more of the group, or knock two or more unconscious, the rest agree to leave and not return, asking only to be allowed to carry their fallen friends away.

Other Options: It's possible to frighten the tomb robbers off, since they haven't seen the phantom before. Its appearance sets them on edge. Clever roleplaying of other sorts might also bring the confrontation to a peaceful but favorable close.

Treasure: The treasure hunters carry adventurer's kits in addition to the equipment shown in their statistics. Karrik also has two amethysts (100 gp each) in his belt pouch.

Karrik, Dwarf Warrior		Level 1 Minion Artillery
Medium natural humanoid		
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.		Initiative +3
AC 15, Fortitude 14, Reflex 12, Will 14		Perception +2
Speed 5		Low-light vision
TRAITS		
Dwarf Solidarity		
The dwarf gains a +4 bonus to AC and Reflex while adjacent to a dwarf ally.		
Stand the Ground		
The dwarf can move 1 square fewer than the effect specifies when subjected to a pull, a push, or a slide.		
Steady-Footed		
The dwarf can make a saving throw to avoid falling prone when an attack would knock it prone.		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
① Warhammer (weapon) ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC		
Hit: 4 damage, or 6 while the dwarf is adjacent to a dwarf ally.		
② Crossbow (weapon) ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Ranged 30 (one creature); +8 vs. AC		
Hit: 4 damage, or 6 against a target that doesn't have cover.		
Str 13 (+1)	Dex 16 (+3)	Wis 15 (+2)
Con 15 (+2)	Int 10 (+0)	Cha 10 (+0)
Alignment unaligned		Languages Common, Dwarven
Equipment chainmail, warhammer, crossbow, 20 bolts		

Lisstra, Elf Hunter		Level 2 Minion Skirmisher
Medium fey humanoid		
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.		Initiative +6
AC 16, Fortitude 13, Reflex 15, Will 14		Perception +7
Speed 7		Low-light vision
TRAITS		
Wild Step		
The elf ignores difficult terrain whenever it shifts.		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⚔ Short Sword (weapon) ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC		
Hit: 5 damage, and the elf shifts up to 2 squares.		
Miss: The elf can shift 1 square.		
Str 14 (+3)	Dex 17 (+4)	Wis 12 (+2)
Con 12 (+2)	Int 14 (+3)	Cha 14 (+3)
Alignment unaligned Languages Common, Elven		
Equipment hide armor, short sword		

Dran and Garn, Human Goons		Level 2 Minion Soldier
Medium natural humanoid, human		
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.		Initiative +3
AC 15, Fortitude 13, Reflex 11, Will 11		Perception +2
Speed 6		
TRAITS		
Mob Rule		
While at least two other human goons are within 5 squares of the goon, it gains a +2 power bonus to all defenses.		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⚔ Club (weapon) ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC		
Hit: 5 damage.		
Str 14 (+3)	Dex 11 (+1)	Wis 12 (+2)
Con 12 (+2)	Int 9 (+0)	Cha 13 (+2)
Alignment unaligned Languages Common		
Equipment club		

Descent to the Dungeon

A trapdoor is buried under a layer of rubble where Karrik was standing. Clearing the rubble away takes 5 minutes. The trapdoor resembles a normal flagstone, but it lifts to reveal a ladder that leads down to the dungeon level. The shaft and the room below are dark.

UNLIKELY ALLIES

For the sake of your sanity, assign each treasure hunter to one of the players to take on as an additional character. These characters don't take unnecessary risks and are loath to explore strange magic such as the pool, fonts, and braziers in the dungeon. Dran and Garn are happy to provide a front rank for the party, even though it means risking death. Karrik and Lisstra prefer to walk toward the rear.

DUNGEON OF METHEGRIST

Use the half of the dungeon map that has the glowing red rune for this part of the adventure. The ladder descends into the room with the rug (area 1). When you spread out the poster map, use paper to cover areas the characters have not yet explored.

Area 1 (Entrance)

The dungeons beneath Methegrist have been deserted for long years, but still hold clues to the identity and fate of the citadel's residents.

When the characters enter, read:

Clouds of dust billow around your feet. Beneath the dust, you can make out the shape and pattern of a large, tattered rug. Two doors lead out of the room.

If the characters brush the dust off the rug and examine it closely, they discern an image of knights holding round vials of water that give off a bright silvery light.

The heavy wooden door leading to area 2 is swollen in its frame, requiring a DC 12 Athletics check to open. The door to area 3 is stone and opens easily.

Area 2 (Forgotten Altar)

The power of a dead god still lingers in this lost shrine.

Read:

This room is less dusty than the first, but it shows no sign that it has been used for a long time. A statue in the far corner depicts a tall humanoid figure wearing heavy plate armor and holding a bastard sword. The back of his right gauntlet bears a stylized representation of an eye.

Religion DC 12: The symbol of the god Helm, slain before the Spellplague, is an eye on the back of a gauntlet. This statue represents that deity, with his heavy armor signifying the weight of responsibility he carries as one who is eternally vigilant.

Religion DC 19: Divine energy lingers within the statue, suggesting that Helm's influence has not entirely faded from this place.

The Statue's Power: If any character offers up a prayer in front of the altar—directed to Helm or to one of his associated deities, Tyr or Torm—the party gains a minor blessing. Each character can spend one healing surge and regain the use of one encounter power.

Treasure: A character who carefully searches the statue and the area around it, and who makes a successful DC 19 Perception check, discovers that the flagstone directly in front of the statue is loose. It conceals a small compartment that holds a silver-plated goblet (250 gp), a moonstone (100 gp), and 85 gp.

Area 3 (Hall of Traps)

Methegrist's denizens were protected against threats.

Read:

This T-shaped room has two doors on one side and another door opposite.

Perception DC 20: The flagstones are loose, perhaps concealing the mechanism of a trap.

A hidden spear springs up from the floor when a pressure plate is triggered. Five such spears are placed in the room at the map locations marked X. Each one is triggered individually. The trap attacks the character, then the spear withdraws back into the floor.

Spear Gauntlet	Level 2 Trap
Object	
Detect Perception DC 20	Initiative –
HP 10 per spear, 30 per trigger plate	
AC 13, Fortitude 10, Reflex 10, Will –	
Immune necrotic, poison, psychic, forced movement, all conditions, ongoing damage	
TRIGGERED ACTIONS	
⚔ Attack ⚔ At-Will	
Trigger: A creature enters one of the trigger squares or starts its turn there.	
Attack (Opportunity Action): Melee 1 (each creature on a trigger square); +7 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d8 + 6 damage.	
COUNTERMEASURES	
⚔ Disable: Thievery DC 20. Success: A single trigger square and its associated spear no longer function.	

Area 4 (Mirror Pool)

A magic pool allows the adventurers to engage with their own pasts—and to learn from the experience.

Read:

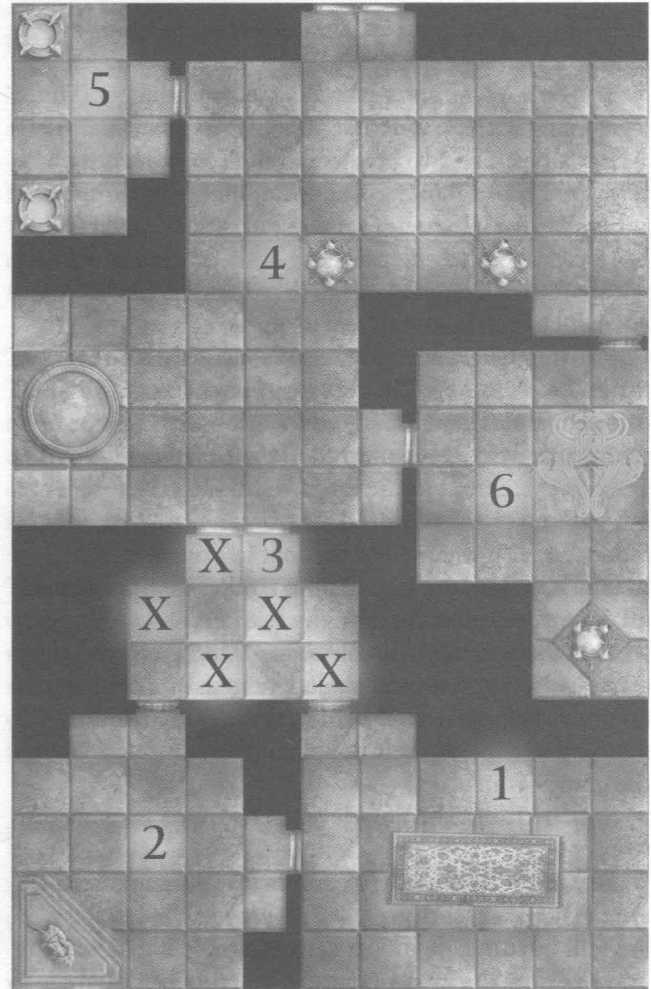
Flames from a brazier ahead cast a dim red light throughout this large chamber. The light reflects on a pool tucked into an alcove to the left, and on a brass door to the right. Two other doors stand past the pool and at the far end of the room. The chamber continues around a corner to the right.

Pool: This large basin has an edge that rises a few inches above the floor and a bottom sunk a similar distance below the floor. Several rough cracks scar the stone rim, a result of the imp in area 6 gazing into the pool (see below).

The water is clear and clean from a distance, but if a character moves close, the surface instantly becomes opaque and reflective.

If a character peers into the pool, read:

Your reflection appears on the surface of the pool, as clear as in any mirror. But a moment later, the image fades and



images of your past failures and misdeeds appear as if drawn from your memory.

Encourage the player to develop his or her character's past enough to come up with at least one past failure, and to describe the character's reaction to it. Players who need inspiration can roll on the following table.

d6	Past Failure
1	Failed in training for another character class
2	Estranged from family after fierce argument
3	Witnessed a crime and failed to intervene
4	Lost a dear friend or lover
5	Committed a crime
6	Angered someone who is now a fierce rival

Pool Effects: The effect of gazing in the pool depends on the character's emotional response. A character who feels guilty, remorseful, repentant, or otherwise sorry for past misdeeds gains a +1 bonus to all defenses until the end of the session, as a sense of release and forgiveness replaces the negative emotions.

A character who is unmoved by these memories takes a -1 penalty to ability checks and skill checks, as well as saving throws, until the end of the session.

A feeling of dread and danger takes root in his or her heart.

Treasure: A character who reaches into the pool finds a gold ring with an amethyst stone (250 gp).

Braziers: The two braziers in the room burn with crimson flames that need no fuel. Once holy flames symbolizing Helm's eternal vigilance, the braziers have been corrupted by the presence of the imp to now burn with hellfire. Any good or lawful good divine character adjacent to a brazier can feel its unholy energy.

Putting the braziers out requires a successful DC 12 trained Arcana check or Religion check from a member of a divine class. A character who uses any channel divinity power on one or both of the braziers also extinguishes them both. A prayer to Helm puts the braziers out with no check required. The braziers also go out if doused with water from the font in area 5. If the braziers are out, the imp in area 6 takes a -1 penalty to all defenses until the end of the session.

West Doors: The double doors leading off the edge of the map swing toward the opener easily, revealing an unworked stone wall behind them. The paladins planned to expand their temple in this direction, but they never finished the work.

South Door: The door leading to area 5 is made of wood and opens easily.

Temple Doors: The two doors leading into area 6 are covered with brass plates. As long as the braziers are still burning, the doors are extremely hot, dealing 1d6 fire damage to any creature that touches them or touches them with a tool.

A creature can sense this heat easily before touching the door, and a successful DC 12 Arcana check to detect magic reveals the connection between the doors and the braziers.

The doors are locked, requiring a DC 12 Thievery check or a DC 19 Athletics check to open them.

Area 5 (Font of Light)

Paladins of Methegrist carried light to the realms they protected, a power the adventurers can use.

When the party opens the door, read:

A soft light like moonlight radiates from two elegant fonts of water in the corners of the room. The light shimmers as the water ripples in reaction to the opening of the door. A round glass vial rests in one of the fonts.

If the characters are here at night, add:

The phantom's armored form kneels on the floor between the two fonts. He holds his sword upright in front of him, clutching the pommel in front of his bowed head. "Give me peace," he murmurs as if in prayer.

The Phantom: As before, this apparition does not respond to the characters' presence in any way. No attacks or powers affect it.

Tears of Helm: Water taken from either font continues to glow softly. If put into the glass vial, it sheds dim light to a radius of 2 squares. In an area affected by the Darkening (see "Coming of Darkness" below), the vial can be made (as a minor action) to shed bright sunlight to a radius of 20 squares. This light can be shut off with another minor action.

The water can douse the braziers in area 4 and area 6. If poured into the pool in area 3, it changes the water temporarily so that it shows images of past heroism and triumph, negating the penalty acquired from a prior remorseless viewing.

The vial filled with water from a font is called the *Tears of Helm*. It is an important item that can be used to defeat Lolth's plans in the final session. The water in the vial also acts as a *potion of healing*, and the vial refills slowly over time, making the potion usable once per session. If a character uses the potion, the vial cannot be used as a light source until the next session.

If the adventurers seem to be inclined to leave without the water, give further hints as to its magical nature.

Area 6 (Devil's Domain)

The imp that was the undoing of Methegrist still dwells here, waiting to engage adventurers with its wiles.

When the party opens the door, read:

A hellish red light flickers around this room, coming from a brazier in an alcove to one side. The light dances along the glowing lines of a strange symbol engraved in the floor.

Religion DC 8: The symbol is an infernal one, used to call forth devils or grant them power.

When a character enters the room, add:

A voice coming from the direction of the brazier whispers, "Why have you come, you pretty, pretty souls?"

The voice is that of an imp, which lurks invisibly behind the brazier.

If the characters mention the phantom, read:

A high-pitched and maniacal laugh erupts from near the brazier. Then the voice says, louder now, "If you would give rest to Sir Weepy, then answer this question creepy.

*I dance in hellfire gaily,
And delight in torture daily.
My sting will break your mind;
You'll leave yourself behind.
My face you cannot see,
But can you identify me?"*

If the characters answer the question correctly (an imp), the imp cackles again and poses a second riddle.

*"Now tell me my given name,
And I'll return whence I came.
First is a number whose letters count
True to its name's amount.
Then you can subtract a letter,
But adding six would be better,
To get the second part.
Then comes the sound of the start of start,
And finally, with a blast,
Sound out the last of last."*

The imp's name is Fortenesti, which the riddle phonetically spells as four, ten, S, and T. If the characters solve the riddle, the imp stays true to its word. It cackles again and disappears.

If the characters make no reference to the phantom or fail to answer the imp's questions, it mocks them. It remains invisible and attempts to sow discord among the party members, suggesting that a rogue found treasure not shared with the others, a wizard's research has led down an unsavory path, or a divine character's faith is weak, and so on. It does not attack the characters, but it fights back if they locate it and attack it.

Brazier: The brazier in this room can be extinguished just as the ones in area 5 can be. If all three braziers go out, the imp takes a -2 penalty to its defenses for the rest of the session.

Stashed inside the brazier is the imp's treasure, magically warded from the heat. If the brazier is lit, anyone who reaches in for the treasure takes 5 fire damage. The brazier contains 115 gp, two peridot stones (100 gp each), and a silver statuette of Helm (175 gp).

Symbol: A character standing on the infernal symbol gains vulnerable 5 to all damage the imp deals.

Imp		Level 3 Lurker
Small immortal humanoid (devil)		
HP 40; Bloodied 20		Initiative +8
AC 17, Fortitude 13, Reflex 17, Will 15		Perception +8
Speed 4, fly 6		Darkvision
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⊕ Bite ⊕ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC		
Hit: 1d6 + 5 damage.		
Vanish (illusion) ⊕ At-Will		
Effect: The imp becomes invisible until the end of its next turn or until it hits or misses with an attack.		
⊕ Tail Sting (poison) ⊕ Recharge when the imp uses <i>vanish</i>		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC		
Hit: 2d8 + 3 damage, and the target takes ongoing 10 poison damage and a -2 penalty to Will (save ends both).		
Skills Arcana +9, Bluff +9, Stealth +9		
Str 12 (+2)	Dex 17 (+4)	Wis 14 (+3)
Con 16 (+4)	Int 16 (+4)	Cha 16 (+4)
Alignment evil		
Languages Common, Supernal		

COMING OF DARKNESS

Whether the characters kill the imp or solve its riddles, all remaining lit braziers go out.

If the phantom is present (at night), read:

The phantom walks slowly through the area, becoming more and more transparent as he goes. He nods at you and gives a faint smile, then disappears.

Then the Darkening begins. Read:

The earth gives a mighty shudder as an unearthly chill fills the air. The floor beneath the engraved symbol cracks open and is swallowed in shadow. An instant later, the ceiling above the symbol also cracks open, creating a shaft leading up to the surface.

The crack in the floor is 2 feet wide. The hole is filled with magical darkness that defies all attempts to illuminate it. Dropping an object into the hole produces no sound. Anything lowered down does not reach bottom of the opening. Light in the room begins to fade, turning to darkness in 5 minutes.

CONCLUSION

When the adventurers return to the surface, they see what has occurred.

Read:

As the last of you reaches the top of the ladder, the earth gives another shudder. Where the ground tore open in the chamber below, a dark filament now shoots into the air, as if a huge spider were spinning a web caught up in the wind. More strands follow it as a shadow falls over you.

If the characters emerge from the dungeon at night, add:

Streams of inky blackness, darker than even the night sky around them, coalesce and weave together. The light of the moon becomes utterly shrouded, and the distant stars wink out one by one as the web of darkness grows ever tighter.

If the characters emerge from the dungeon in the daytime, add:

Streams of inky blackness coalesce and weave together, shooting into the air and arcing out away from you. The light of the sun becomes gradually dimmer as more and more of the tendrils cover its disc and the sky that surrounds it.

The Darkening shrouds the sky for as far around them as the characters can see, obliterating the moon and stars at night and reducing sunlight to dim light during the day.

SESSION 2: ENVOY TO MANY-ARROWS

Level 2 Adventure—Spring

Following the information learned in session 1, the adventurers move toward the tiny village of Winter Edge. (If the characters did not overhear the conversation during session 1, then assume that they picked up the news about an imminent attack on Winter Edge while they were on the road.) Orcs attack shortly after they arrive, and the adventurers can help the innocent villagers escape. The village's leader asks the characters to travel to Dark Arrow Keep and speak to King Obould, the orc monarch of the Kingdom of Many-Arrows.

Before starting, make sure that any characters who played in the last session have advanced to 2nd level and gained an inherent +1 bonus to attack rolls and damage rolls. See "Advancement," page 6.

ATTACK ON WINTER EDGE

When you're ready to start, read:

You know that orcs are planning to destroy the village of Winter Edge, a few miles from the western edge of the Glimmerwood, and that is your destination. However, getting clear of the shadowy woods does not bring more light. The darkness that erupted from the earth and covered the sky seems to have spread well beyond its point of origin. Only the dimmest radiance breaks through the inky air above you.

By racing through the forest, you manage to arrive in Winter Edge ahead of the orcs. However, you heard the horns of their advance patrols during your journey. The warriors of at least two orc tribes are bearing down on the village.

Ahead of you, along the path to the village square, only torchlight pierces the gloom. The tiny village is abuzz with panic. Its residents stand in the street, staring at the sky in fear and confusion. Crying children clutch at their parents' hands, while the adults speak to one another in fearful tones.

As you reach the center of the village, a stooped human female holding a thick, gnarled staff steps up to you and speaks. Her voice is loud and strong despite her many years. "What is this foul magic, and what is your part in it?"

Goodwife Winnstrom (whom everyone in the village calls "Goody Winn") is the closest thing to a mayor Winter Edge has ever known. When the adventurers begin a dialogue with her, use the following points to guide the conversation.

- ◆ Already fearful, the villagers grow more distraught when they hear of the approaching orcs. Their loud dismay and confusion makes further talk impossible until they are calmed. The characters can attempt to calm the villagers through roleplaying or with DC 9 Diplomacy checks. If the characters don't try to calm the villagers, Goody Winn does.
- ◆ Goody Winn instructs the villagers to pack essentials and get horses and carts together for an evacuation. She then asks the adventurers if they know a safe route along which to retreat. Since the party came from the direction of Quaervarr, the characters know that's the way to go.
- ◆ After initial plans are made, Goody Winn calls out the name "Rhupp," and a young half-orc woodcutter steps forward. She tells the adventurers that Rhupp's mother was an orc named Muhrella, who was rescued years ago after being attacked by wild animals and left for dead in the Moonwood. Goody Winn nursed the orc back to health, and Muhrella became a part of the community. She took a human forester named Uvaan, whom many villagers were sure had a trace of orc blood himself, as a husband.
- ◆ Rhupp's mother died a few years ago, but she taught Rhupp how to speak Giant and much about orc culture. His mother also told him that she had belonged to the Broken Arrow tribe, meaning that she and Rhupp are related to the king of the orc nation of Many-Arrows.

Goody Winn asks the adventurers to take Rhupp north to the place where the orc king lives, and to learn why these attacks are taking place after years of peace. Though the trip might be dangerous, having a member of Obould's tribe with them should at least enable the adventurers to seek an audience with the king.

Garl's Poppet

The villagers follow Goody Winn's instructions, returning quickly with horses, livestock, and carts, as well as enough food and drink to last the journey.

Before leaving, a young half-elf girl named Lethendle gives one of the adventurers a carved wooden doll the size of a human fist and attached to a tether. She tells the adventurers that Ithel (the doll's name) will bring good luck to the party. An odd gnome named Garl visited the village a few weeks ago and said funny words over the doll, telling Lethendle that it would keep the dark away and make her brave.

Arcana DC 13: The doll is magical.

Religion DC 13: The magic in the doll is divine in origin, placed there by a divine being.

Garl's Poppet: If worn about the neck, the doll acts as a +1 amulet of protection (*Heroes of the Fallen Lands*, page 351). In an area affected by the Darkening, the item can be made (as a minor action) to shed bright

sunlight to a radius of 20 squares. This light can be shut off with another minor action.

Like the *Tears of Helm* in the previous session, *Garl's poppet* can help foil *Lolth's* plans in session 8.

Orc Assault

The villagers begin moving along the road in the direction the adventurers indicate.

When this happens, read:

As the last of the villagers flee on the road out of Winter Edge, five orcs wielding handaxes break out of the forest into the unnatural darkness, howling in triumph and staring hungrily at the escaping villagers. One shouts in Giant, "We got here before stupid Ripped Guts. Red Fangs drink blood and take everything!"

The crashing in the forest indicates that a larger force might arrive any moment.

Rhupp can translate the orcs' speech if none of the adventurers speak Giant. If the adventurers fail to guard the retreat, some villagers perish while the others flee. The characters have 2 rounds to deal with the initial wave of orc savages, then must flee before the rest of the army arrives and overwhelms them.

This encounter is an opportunity to dispense with a map, since precise positioning of each combatant is unlikely to matter. If you wish, though, you can use the forest map or the wilderness road map for this encounter.

The orc savages start the encounter 75 feet away from the adventurers. On their first turn, the orcs close with the characters, attacking if possible.

At the end of the first round, noise in the forest indicates that dozens more orcs are coming. When the third round ends, describe other more powerful orcs about to enter the fray. Any adventurer who fails to flee during the fourth round is captured and taken to King Obould as a tribute.

5 Orc Savages

Medium natural humanoid

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.

AC 16, Fortitude 16, Reflex 14, Will 12

Speed 6

Level 4 Minion Brute

Initiative +3

Perception +1

Low-light vision

STANDARD ACTIONS

⚔ Handaxe (weapon) ♦ At-Will

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC

Hit: 8 damage, or 12 with a charge attack.

🏹 Handaxe (weapon) ♦ At-Will

Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +9 vs. AC

Hit: 6 damage.

TRIGGERED ACTIONS

Savage Demise

Trigger: The orc drops to 0 hit points.

Effect (Free Action): The orc takes a standard action.

Str 16 (+5)

Dex 13 (+3)

Wis 9 (+1)

Con 13 (+3)

Int 8 (+1)

Cha 8 (+1)

Alignment chaotic evil Languages Common, Giant

Equipment hide armor, 4 handaxes

TREK TO DARK ARROW KEEP

The adventurers and Rhupp begin the journey north toward Dark Arrow Keep, the home of King Obould and the capital of his Kingdom of Many-Arrows. The distance is approximately 125 miles, but the rough terrain stretches the journey out to seven days.

During the trip to Dark Arrow Keep, the adventurers notice that the Darkening is ever-present; it seems the entire North is shrouded in shadow. The full sun of day is reduced to dim light, while the night offers only darkness with the light of moon and stars blocked.

As the adventurers travel, read:

Although the darkness covers the sky all around you as you travel, the route to Dark Arrow Keep is easy to follow. You know that if you follow the River Surbrin north into the Spine of the World Mountains, heading toward the source of one of its tributaries, you will not be far from the center of the orc nation of Many-Arrows.

History DC 8: *The orcs of Many-Arrows have signed treaties with the civilized lands of the North. However, individual orc tribes sometimes tire of the peace, ignore the orders of their king, and attack anyway.*

You can spend a few minutes roleplaying the conversations between Rhupp and the adventurers. Rhupp is a forester in Winter Edge, but he has been curious regarding his orc heritage.

Before the party arrives at Dark Arrow Keep, read:

Along the way, you see signs that orc war bands have spread outward from the Spine of the World Mountains and begun attacking civilized areas. A group of human hunters who obviously ran afoul of orcs have been butchered and left on the trail. One of the hunters still clutches his bow in one hand and a broken arrow in the other.

Upon seeing this bloody sight, Rhupp pales and mutters under his breath, "Even a broken arrow ..."

Rhupp's words are part of a Broken Arrow tribal saying his mother taught him: "Even a broken arrow is deadly in the right hands." Repeat this mantra a couple of times during the characters' interactions with Rhupp. If an adventurer remembers it when speaking to King Obould, it could save the party (see "Diplomacy").

The adventurers now realize that the area is crawling with hostile orc raiders. However, most of these bands are moving south toward civilization to take part in attacks. As such, the adventurers can easily avoid trouble as they make their way north.

Unwelcome Visitors

The party enters the territory that is under the control of the Many-Arrows nation.

Perception DC 13: Characters who succeed notice that orc sentries hidden in the foothills are allowing the party to pass unchallenged into Many-Arrows territory.

As the group continues, read:

Where the River Surbrin roars out of the Spine of the World Mountains on its southward course, the foothills seem insignificant compared to the forbidding, snow-covered peaks that back them. Even if you survive that last stage of the journey, you face the prospect of entering a fortress full of orcs. Fortunately, you have the kin of the king of the orcs by your side.

You take no more than a few steps into the river canyon when a guttural cry interrupts your progress. On all sides of you, dozens of orcs emerge from hiding. More than a hundred arrows are nocked and aimed at you.

Rhupp steps forward, throws off his cloak, and takes on a proud demeanor. He calls out, in Giant, "My people, I have come to join you. I am of Tribe Broken Arrow. I and my companions seek audience with King Obould in his home at Dark Arrow Keep. Lead me to my kin."

A silence of four heartbeats follows. Then more than a dozen arrows sprout from Rhupp's chest, the look of pride given no time to drain from his face before he hits the ground. An angry voice shouts in Giant, "I gave no order to fletch that whelp, you maggots!"

A different, mocking voice laughs and snorts. "He forgot to say 'please,' Urphaer."

As more laughter rises, a short orc with bristling white hair steps out to shout at you in Common. "Lay down your weapons. You are prisoners of King Obould. No harm will come to you . . . unless you resist."

Rhupp can be saved with healing magic, if the characters elect to do so, and that kindness can change the course of the adventure. See "Diplomacy."

If the adventurers surrender, they are bound but not injured. Any characters who take hostile action against the orcs might kill a few, but the orcs' sheer numbers soon become overwhelming. Characters reduced to 0 hit points or fewer are not killed, however, but are knocked unconscious and taken prisoner.

The gray-haired orc is Urphaer, a trusted lieutenant of Obould and leader of the sentries who guard the pass into the land of Many-Arrows. He is angry that his troops shot Rhupp, but he has had trouble keeping them under control since the call to war was sounded throughout the mountains.

The adventurers are led (or carried if they fought against the orcs) into the mountains and up to Dark Arrow Keep. There, the characters soon learn that the king is in a precarious situation.

KING OBOULD

Their orc captors take the adventurers to a great meeting hall where King Obould is holding court. Any character who fought back against the guards is conscious and at full hit points again, but has lost four healing surges.

Read:

You enter a large chamber hewn from the mountainside that holds Dark Arrow Keep. Long stone tables fill half the hall, and the pelts and stuffed heads of wild beasts decorate the walls and floors. Weapons of all shapes and sizes occupy places of reverence in displays along the edges of the room. Dozens of orcs and half-orcs either sit at the tables or mill about, many of them hissing, whistling, and laughing as you are brought forward.

A muscular, heavily armored orc sits in a carved stone chair before you, glaring with a menacing air. His eyes shine with an intelligence beyond what you've seen in other orcs. He takes stock of you.

"I was told you were coming to attack us, but I think your threat might have been exaggerated." The orc's gravelly voice belies the wit behind it as jeers fill the room. "What business do you have with Obould, the King of Many-Arrows?"

The adventurers' equipment is not returned, but they can see it piled at the back of the hall among the orc guards.

Diplomacy

Allow the adventurers to state their case and explain why they are here. Once the characters register four successes, through roleplaying or social interaction skill checks (DC 13), they make a positive impression on Obould, who spares them. If they accumulate three failures, Obould throws one of them into the Pit to entertain his followers (see "The Pit"). Use the following points to guide the conversation.

- ◆ If the adventurers ask the king about the orc attacks on the peaceful communities of the Silver Marches, Obould states that orcs sometimes do what orcs do best, and that the rest of the world should get used to it. This response inspires a great deal of cheering and weapon-clashing from the assembled orcs. As Obould says this, give the adventurers the chance to make DC 13 Insight checks. Characters who fail the check think that Obould speaks coldly and without care. However, characters who succeed realize that these attacks are both angering and worrying King Obould. He is choosing his words carefully to play to a crowd that is in favor of war.
- ◆ If the adventurers mention the treaties between the Kingdom of Many-Arrows and the civilized settlements of the Silver Marches, Obould says that there are two ways for the orcs to get what they want: trade for it or take it. They've tried trade for many years.

Now some orcs are ready to try the other. Again, a successful DC 13 Insight check shows that the king does not mean what he is saying, but he knows that popular opinion requires him to say it.

- ◆ If the characters accuse Obould of wrongdoing or reveal his manipulation of his followers through political wording, they earn a failure for each such offense. Obould retorts with mockery and threats.
- ◆ If the adventurers remember and recite the Broken Arrow tribe's mantra that Rhupp told them ("Even a broken arrow is deadly in the right hands") to King Obould, he is impressed with their knowledge of his tribe. The party gains a success. Otherwise, they can make their case attempting to talk the orcs out of joining the drow in warfare.
- ◆ If the characters healed Rhupp, he speaks on their behalf. Rhupp boldly tells the story of the orcs shooting him in the canyon and the characters saving him, stating openly that the adventurers have more honor than cowards who shoot an unarmed man attempting to parley. This tale gains a success toward winning Obould's respect, and it earns Rhupp Obould's favor.

The Chieftains

Even if the adventurers make a positive impression on Obould, a number of chieftains speak up, making the situation more complicated.

If the characters win Obould's respect, read:

King Obould's harsh countenance softens into a grim grin, and he nods thoughtfully as he watches you. Before he can speak, a short and squat female orc wearing a helmet decorated with two deer antlers steps forward and speaks in Giant.

"Death Horns tire of talking!" she says. "Dark elves promised to help Gruumsh darken the sky, and did. We must join them and take back all that is ours."

This speech receives a hearty cheer in the hall.

The speaker is Chief Quetti of the Death Horn tribe. She has already decided to join the drow, regardless of what King Obould says. However, she hopes to encourage all the orc tribes to join the effort.

Let the adventurers speak. If any of the players ask, everyone knows Gruumsh is the one-eyed chief orc deity, an evil god of destruction.

After the characters interject, read:

A half-orc holds up his hands to gain attention. His green-hued leather armor and longbow set him apart from his axe-wielding kin. "To break the peace would be madness. We are finally flourishing. Why risk everything we and our ancestors have worked for?"

This speaker is Chief Strunge of the Green Moss tribe. He and his people have thrived in the current peace,

setting up profitable trade with the settlements of the Silver Marches. He wants no part of war.

Let the adventurers speak again, allowing the debate to play out and letting the party take center stage. After a couple of minutes, it is clear that the orcs in the hall are divided on the issue. Half want to join the drow, a quarter are against it, and the remaining orcs are waiting to see what their king will do.

At this point, another orc speaks. Read:

An old one-eyed orc wearing animal skins and carrying a feather-decorated spear shouts out. "We have seen what the drow can do, and how much power they have! They darken the sky! But what power do these intruders possess? If they can't stop the drow, we would be fools not to take the stronger side. I say the strongest of them should step into the Pit! If Gruumsh wishes us to listen to these ones, they will honor him with blood in the Pit! If he wishes to guide us through these ones, their champion will win."

A cheer rises from the orcs in the room, and even King Obould nods in agreement.

This orc is Ehnk, a shaman of Gruumsh. He leads the Crooked Path tribe and is pragmatic to a fault. He bristles at the thought that the drow might have a better connection to Gruumsh than he does, but he doesn't want to be on the wrong end of a war.

If the adventurers agree to choose a champion to fight in the Pit, proceed to the next section. If they don't, they have made the situation more difficult for King Obould. He is looking for a way to force the tribes loyal to him to not join the drow forces, but he needs to be able to do so while saving face. The blessing of a shaman of Gruumsh is a great opportunity for Obould to strengthen his case, a fact that the characters might discern through Insight and Religion checks (DC 13).

To help Obould without fighting in the Pit, the adventurers must do some fast talking. Skills such as Diplomacy, Intimidate, or Bluff can be used against the crowd (DC 20, four successes before three failures) to cause a majority of the orcs to see that joining the drow in a war against the Silver Marches would be foolish.

If the adventurers make a good case, King Obould states that he agrees that joining the drow is not in the best interest of the orcs. He saves face by claiming that the drow and the people of the Silver Marches are weakened by fighting each other, and the orcs can only be strengthened by this fact.

If the adventurers fail in this attempt to convince the orcs to keep the peace, one of the characters is forced to fight in the Pit.

The Pit

In the Pit, condemned prisoners battle for their lives and orc champions test their mettle. Ehnk takes charge of the event, helping the characters choose a champion

or picking the strongest-looking character if the adventurers have been forced into the challenge.

When the event begins, read:

Orcs cluster around you and shepherd you across the great hall to the edge of a wide, irregularly shaped pit. It looks like a 20-foot-deep natural cavern with two natural columns in it. Numerous bloodstains testify to the battles that have taken place here.

Ehmk instructs you as your champion's gear is returned. The shaman says, "Your champion fights for you all. You must not interfere, or you forfeit the battle and face the rage of Gruumsh's people. Do you understand?"

You can use the pit map. The blackened areas with no connection to a wall are the 20-foot-tall natural columns. They are as rough as the walls (DC 10 Athletics to climb), which are the same height.

Make sure the players understand that obvious interference will result not only in losing the fight but would provoke the orcs. However, subtle tactics can aid their comrade in the fight.

When the characters agree, continue:

A rope is thrown over the edge for your champion to climb into the Pit. When your champion reaches the Pit floor, a scarred, one-eyed guard drake emerges from a den into the main chamber. Ehmk uses whistles and clicks to guide the beast.

The drake and the champion begin their confrontation on opposite sides of the map. One possible starting position for the drake is indicated on the tactical map. The player of the champion can choose where that character will descend into the pit.

Encourage players whose characters are not in the Pit to assist in the fight without taking direct, observable actions against the drake. Below are four possible actions that can be used as a starting point for the players. The first three of these have consequences for failure (see the next section). Reward other imaginative solutions, using the actions below as examples.

- ◆ Attempt to use a power with no obvious sensory effect (DC 13 Bluff or Stealth) to affect the course of the battle. If this attempt fails, consequences occur before the power is used.
- ◆ Distract Ehmk (DC 13 Bluff or other skill, depending on the roleplaying). Success means the drake is dazed until the end of its next turn.
- ◆ Knowing the drake can hear better than orcs, distract the creature by using subtle noises similar to those Ehmk is using to communicate with it (DC 13 Nature). Success means the drake is dazed until the end of its next turn.
- ◆ Notice an unstable square of rock in the pit floor (DC 20 Dungeoneering). Success means the champion can knock the drake prone if it is hit by an attack while in that square. Telling the champion



this fact is not considered to be direct interference, and failing this check does not carry consequences.

Consequences: If a check made to interfere fails, a few orcs nearby notice the attempt and throw the offender into the Pit; then two orc savages climb down to continue the punishment. Fighting and killing these orcs is fine, since other orcs suppose the conflict was because of a personal challenge. Obould forbids a larger fight from breaking out.

Guard Drake (D)		Level 2 Brute
Small natural beast (reptile)		
HP 48; Bloodied 24		Initiative +3
AC 15, Fortitude 15, Reflex 13, Will 12		Perception +7
Speed 6		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⊕ Bite ◆ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC		
Hit: 1d10 + 3 damage, or 1d10 + 9 while the drake is within 2 squares of an ally.		
Str 16 (+4)	Dex 15 (+3)	Wis 12 (+2)
Con 18 (+5)	Int 3 (-3)	Cha 12 (+2)
Alignment unaligned		Languages –

**Orc Savage****Level 4 Minion Brute**

Medium natural humanoid

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.

AC 16, Fortitude 16, Reflex 14, Will 12

Speed 6

Initiative +3

Perception +1

Low-light vision

STANDARD ACTIONS④ **Handaxe (weapon) ♦ At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC

Hit: 8 damage, or 12 with a charge attack.

⑦ **Handaxe (weapon) ♦ At-Will**

Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +9 vs. AC

Hit: 6 damage.

TRIGGERED ACTIONS**Savage Demise**

Trigger: The orc drops to 0 hit points.

Effect (Free Action): The orc takes a standard action.

Str 16 (+5)

Dex 13 (+3)

Wis 9 (+1)

Con 13 (+3)

Int 8 (+1)

Cha 8 (+1)

Alignment chaotic evil Languages Common, Giant

Equipment hide armor, 4 handaxes

All such combatants are still prohibited from interfering with the champion's fight. If the champion can cajole any savages into attacking him or her (DC 13 Bluff or Intimidate), the orcs forfeit the battle and the champion wins. The same is not true if the champion attacks any orc and that orc retaliates.

If a check made to interfere fails by 5 or more, the attempt is so obvious that the character is considered by

all onlookers to have violated the rules of the battle. The characters forfeit the fight, and the champion loses.

Outcome: If the champion wins the fight, Ehnk takes that as a sign that Gruumsh wishes the orcs to sit out the drow war. If the champion loses, Ehnk is convinced that Gruumsh approves of the orcs joining the drow war. The players must record either result on their D&D Encounters Play Trackers—it's important later.

If the champion wins, read:

Ehnk takes stock of you with his one eye. A grim smile plays over his tusked mouth. "Gruumsh is pleased. He does not wish the Crooked Path tribe to join the dark elves."

Shouting and arguing erupt among the orcs. Many storm out of the hall despite King Obould's calls for them to halt.

King Obould honors the adventurers by having their equipment returned to them. He then offers them food and drink, and provides them with a room to rest before they leave the next day. Go to "Escaping Dark Arrow Keep."

The hero looks at the orc who attacked the champion, a minion named when attacking the champion.

Use the side of the wilderness map to map out the fort on it for the battle field. The hero's location is filled with an HL.

If the champion loses, read:

The one-eyed shaman turns his back on you, letting out a tremendous roar that whips the assembled orcs into a fury. Then he proclaims, "Gruumish judges these ones weak. He has brought the darkness to the sky as a sign for us to join the drow in war. Blood and glory!"

Most of the orcs in the hall turn to follow Ehnk as he departs. His speech has swayed the tribes to join the drow in a war against the surface world.

Obould looks grim. Orcs approach the adventurers as if to kill them, but Obould orders the characters taken prisoner instead. They are locked in a cell in the dungeons beneath the king's halls. Proceed to "Escaping Dark Arrow Keep."

ESCAPING DARK ARROW KEEP

At this point, the adventurers are either guests of King Obould, lounging in their quarters after proving their worth and honor in the Pit, or they are prisoners in a cell. Either way, they are still in danger, and they have to escape from Dark Arrow Keep before being killed.

If the characters are guests, read:

The quarters that King Obould has provided are comfortable. However, as you rest, the door to your chamber suddenly opens, and an orc wearing a cloak and hood slips inside without so much as a knock.

If the adventurers are in the dungeon, read:

The dungeons of Dark Arrow Keep are dank, but not as foul as you might have expected. You sit in silence for a time, and then hushed footsteps herald the arrival of a cloaked and hooded figure at the barred door to your cell.

In either case, continue:

The orc is a young female wearing the insignia of King Obould. She speaks in hushed tones, saying, "I am Gribbla, Obould's servant. The king has no love for drow, but he has lost sway over many orc tribes. Some of these traitors plan to kill you.

"Great Obould says Mithral Hall, dwarf home, is a target of drow and orc. The king releases you to go to Mithral Hall. Let dwarves know that orcs who shake spears and sunder shields beside the drow break with the throne of Many-Arrows. Mighty Obould shall bleed the traitorous tribes."

If the adventurers are in a cell, Gribbla unlocks the door and returns their equipment.

Gribbla continues:

"Wise Obould can't throw open his gates for you without seeming to be a betrayer. These halls are full of warriors who want your blood. You must go through lower halls, which are lightly guarded. Sneak out, or pretend you are orcs. Slay guards only if you must. If you lack bravery and craft, you can flee through a refuse chute in the lower level. If you attempt to fight your way out any other way, you will die. Luck to you."

Gribbla provides hooded cloaks for the adventurers. Use the scene below to play out the escape. If you're short on time, or the characters choose the garbage chute, the characters easily escape without any checks.

When the characters start their escape, read:

Gribbla's instructions have brought you to the lowest levels of Dark Arrow Keep. Guards patrol these halls, but they are few in number, as Gribbla mentioned.

Any two successful group checks allow the adventurers to make their escape. Give bonuses on these checks—or allow automatic successes—for good roleplaying.

Group Insight DC 13: You watch and wait until the patrol pattern is obvious.

Group Stealth DC 13: You sneak through the halls to avoid the notice of the guards.

Group Bluff DC 13: You fast-talk your way past a few disinterested orc guards in the lower halls.

Group Nature DC 13: Having knowledge of the behavior and demeanor of orcs makes it easy to pretend to be like them.

If the characters fail a group skill check made as part of their escape, three orc savages attack. If the characters slay three such groups, the party escapes after dispensing with the last group.

CONCLUSION

Any escape other than through the refuse chute is through a series of caverns.

After the adventurers escape, read:

Dark Arrow Keep looms behind you. Your next mission takes you to Mithral Hall, ancient stronghold of the dwarves. With many orcs joining the drow assault on the surface world and the terrible darkness that seems to extend everywhere, this conflict is larger than anyone could have imagined.

SESSION 3: SIEGE OF MITHRAL HALL

Level 3 Adventure—Summer

During the time frame of session 2, the Darkening inspired a horde of orcs to ally with the drow and rampage across the Glimmerwood and the Moonlands, with raiding parties reaching as far as Silverymoon and Everlund. As the dark spring wore on, these orcs laid siege to Mithral Hall, Citadel Adbar, and Sundabar. Thanks to the interference of drow agents in Silverymoon and Everlund, no military aid has come to the northern reaches.

As summer begins, the characters seek an audience with King Connerad and the dwarves of Mithral Hall, taking a warning and a message of truce from King Obould. But Mithral Hall is under siege.

Before starting this session, make sure that all characters have advanced to 3rd level. See “Advancement,” page 6.

When you're ready to start, read:

King Obould warned you that orcs, led by drow, might target the dwarven hold of Mithral Hall. Obould asked you to tell King Connerad Battlehammer, leader of the hall, that the orcs joining the war are no longer under Obould's rule. Obould opposes the drow and any orcs that have joined them.

You move quickly through the lands of the North. The Darkening that has obscured all light from the skies is unrelenting. Apart from a few orc patrols, you have seen little of your drow and orc enemies during your journey. However, you have learned that large groups of orcs, supported by drow troops, have been spreading throughout the region. Orc raiding parties have been spotted as far south as Silverymoon and Everlund.

Some fear that an attack on Silverymoon is imminent. The dwarves of Mithral Hall will be needed to help defend that ancient city.

ARRIVAL AT MITHRAL HALL

Few orc patrols roam the land between Many-Arrows territory and Mithral Hall because the troops in this area are taking part in a siege. The purpose of the siege is to keep the dwarves trapped in their fortress so they cannot assist other areas of the Silver Marches. A major battle is looming in the Rauvin Vale near Silverymoon, and the drow do not want the dwarves adding their forces to the battle.

When the party approaches the area, read:

In the distance is the snow-covered tip of Fourthpeak Mountain, under which lies Mithral Hall. Hundreds of orcs and a scattering of drow ring the mountain. Each of the main entrances to Mithral Hall is under siege, as are the largest caves and valley passes.

On the mountainside below you, a small camp has been set up. Tents and cook fires highlight the number of orcs and drow milling about. A lone orc leaves a prominent larger tent and walks to a plateau 500 feet away on which stands an enormous wooden horn with a small guard contingent around it. He blows a series of notes on the horn. In response to his signal, the enemy troops covering the entrances to Mithral Hall change their positions.

You have to get inside Mithral Hall. The main entrances, covered as they are by military forces and dwarven defenses, are out of the question as options. The fortress has side entrances, which you can see are more lightly covered, and knowing dwarves, the place probably has secret entrances as well.

The Horn: An adventurer who succeeds on a DC 13 History check recognizes the pattern of notes blown on the horn. An adventurer who has a theme or background dealing with military service or history, or any relationship to orc tribes, gains a +4 bonus on this check. Success means the adventurer knows how to blow the horn to force the orc troops to move.

Command Tent: The prominent tent is a command tent, which contains battle plans. Any character who has a soldierly theme or background realizes this. Otherwise, discerning that fact requires a successful DC 13 History or Insight check.

Give the players time to decide on a scheme to get into Mithral Hall. If they want to try the horn, go to “Using the Horn.” If they decide to look for a way in not guarded by orcs, go to “Secret Entrance.” If they want to take their chances with a squad of guards, go to “Side Door.” The “Battle Plans” section can be used if the characters try to sneak into the command tent and find the plans.

Light: Because the Darkening affects only areas that are open to the sky, it is not present inside the mountain where Mithral Hall is located—which means that the *Tears of Helm* and *Garl's poppet* do not give off light once the characters have found their way inside.

Using the Horn

The horn is far enough from the main camp that getting to it without being seen from the camp is no problem. But four orcs and a drow scout guard it. Moving toward the horn stealthily requires a DC 13 group Stealth check. If half or more of the characters succeed, the party gains a surprise round when attacking the horn's guards.

Use the side of the wilderness road map without the fort on it for the battlefield. The horn's location is identified with an H.

Drow Scout (D)		Level 2 Skirmisher
Medium fey humanoid		
HP 38; Bloodied 19		Initiative +6
AC 16, Fortitude 14, Reflex 15, Will 13		Perception +6
Speed 6		Darkvision
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⚔ Longsword (poison, weapon) ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC		
Hit: 1d8 + 6 damage, and if the target is granting combat advantage to the drow, it takes ongoing 3 poison damage (save ends).		
Effect: The drow can shift 1 square.		
⚔ Short Sword (poison, weapon) ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC		
Hit: 1d6 + 5 damage, and if the target is granting combat advantage to the drow, it takes ongoing 3 poison damage (save ends).		
Effect: The drow can shift up to 2 squares.		
⚔ Two-Weapon Attack ♦ Recharge when first bloodied		
Effect: The drow uses <i>longsword</i> and <i>short sword</i> .		
MINOR ACTIONS		
☁ Cloud of Darkness (zone) ♦ Encounter		
Effect: Close burst 1. The burst creates a zone that lasts until the end of the drow's next turn. The cloud blocks line of sight for all creatures except the drow. While entirely in the cloud, any creature other than the drow is blinded.		
Skills Stealth +9		
Str 12 (+2)	Dex 17 (+4)	Wis 11 (+1)
Con 14 (+3)	Int 11 (+1)	Cha 13 (+2)
Alignment evil		
Languages Common, Elven		
Equipment leather armor, longsword, short sword		

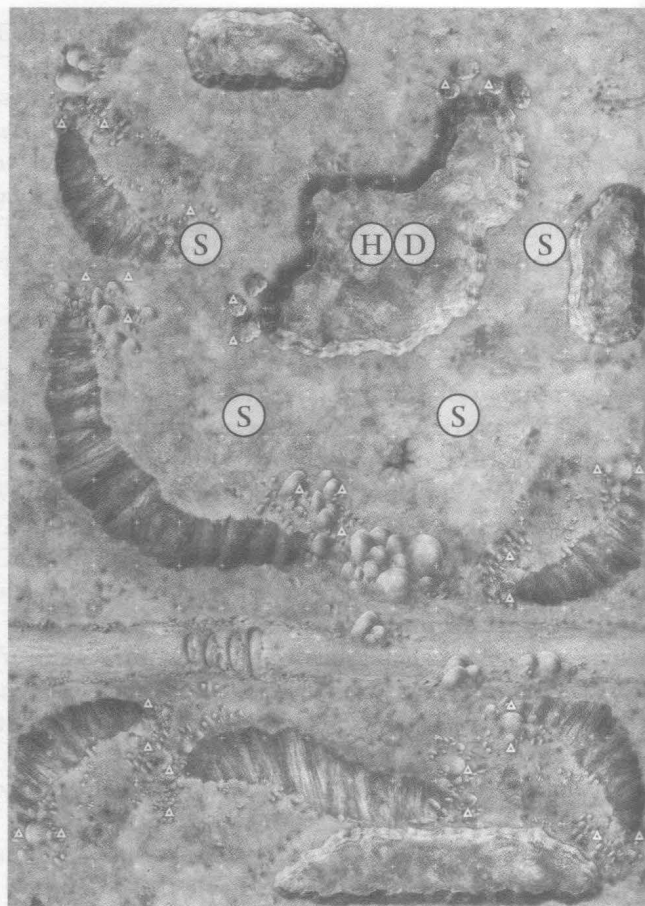
4 Orc Savages (S)		Level 4 Minion Brute
Medium natural humanoid		
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.		Initiative +3
AC 16, Fortitude 16, Reflex 14, Will 12		Perception +1
Speed 6		Low-light vision
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⚔ Handaxe (weapon) ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC		
Hit: 8 damage, or 12 with a charge attack.		
🎯 Handaxe (weapon) ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +9 vs. AC		
Hit: 6 damage.		
TRIGGERED ACTIONS		
🗡 Savage Demise		
Trigger: The orc drops to 0 hit points.		
Effect (Free Action): The orc takes a standard action.		
Str 16 (+5)	Dex 13 (+3)	Wis 9 (+1)
Con 13 (+3)	Int 8 (+1)	Cha 8 (+1)
Alignment chaotic evil		
Languages Common, Giant		
Equipment hide armor, 4 handaxes		

If a character blows the horn, read:

The troops in the siege below begin to respond to your call. Moments later, figures storm out of the prominent tent in the camp. They look in the direction of the horn.

If the characters are successful, they can use the horn to move guards away from an alternate entrance (see "Side Door").

If the adventurers attempt to hide after blowing the horn, have them make another DC 13 group Stealth check to avoid being seen. Whether the characters



are seen or not, another contingent of four orc savages and one drow scout leave the command tent and rush toward the horn, leaving the command tent empty for a few moments.

Even if the characters are seen after one of them blows the horn, they can easily escape by moving away from the area. Thereafter, however, a larger contingent of orcs guards the horn. It cannot be used again without significant risk of capture.

Battle Plans

The characters need to create a distraction to get the occupants out of the tent, sneak inside, locate the valuable information, and then sneak back out.

Causing a distraction is easy enough. Blowing the horn does so, as does any loud noise. When the distraction occurs, four orc savages and one drow scout exit the tent to investigate. A DC 13 group Stealth check allows the adventurers to sneak into the unoccupied tent through its back.

If the check fails, the orcs and the drow rush back to the tent, but the adventurers can flee quickly enough to avoid notice. (If they decide not to do so, they have a fight on their hands, with more orcs coming every couple rounds. Use the threat of impending overwhelming force to push the characters to flee. Narrate how the party then avoids search parties.) The

command camp then goes on alert, and the adventurers can no longer infiltrate it.

If the adventurers enter the tent, read:

The tent holds a combined sleeping quarters and planning area. Maps and papers are spread out on a makeshift table, illustrating the main entrances into Mithral Hall, as well as the locations of known and suspected side doors and secret passageways.

Even with a cursory inspection of these plans, it is apparent that this siege is meant only to keep the dwarven forces from leaving Mithral Hall. The orcs have no hope of breaking the hall's defenses, but they want to ensure that the dwarves can't add their armies to the growing conflict engulfing the North.

With the aid of the map and the papers, the party has no trouble finding a lightly guarded side entrance, as detailed in "Side Door."

If a character reads Elven, read:

A note handwritten in bold Elven catches your eye. The note reads, "Szordrin is proving to be no leader, as his mother feared. Shortly after the siege was set, he disappeared. I believe the fool entered the stronghold on his own, perhaps to attempt something detrimental to our plans. If it weren't for the power of House Xorlarrin and the retribution that would surely follow, I would kill him myself."

Szordrin Xorlarrin led the siege army. He is the youngest son of Tsabarak Xorlarrin, the drow wizard who leads the war. Tsabarak tasked Szordrin, his most headstrong son, with commanding the orc army whose sole purpose is to sit outside Mithral Hall and look threatening. Tsabarak didn't think his son could fail to accomplish so easy a task, but Szordrin has decided to make himself a hero by infiltrating Mithral Hall and assassinating King Connerad.

Secret Entrance

A few secret passages offer access to Mithral Hall. No orcs guard them. Locating one requires a DC 21 Dungeoneering check or Perception check. If that check fails, the adventurers must use some other means of getting in.

When the heroes find and enter a passage, read:

You locate a secret passage into the stronghold, a wide tunnel leading into the dark.

When the heroes have traveled a short distance, they come across the trap described here. After interacting with the trap, they must then navigate an area of traps and false passages. Go to "The Maze."

Dwarven "Swallow" Pit	Level 3 Elite Trap
Object	
Detect Dungeoneering or Perception DC 21	Initiative –
Immune attacks	
TRIGGERED ACTIONS	
↔ Attack ↔ Encounter	
Trigger: A creature moves into a square on the edge of the trap's 3-by-3-square area across from where that creature entered the trap's area.	
Attack (Immediate Reaction): Close burst 1 centered on the trap's center square (creatures in the burst); +6 vs. Reflex; a creature in the center square is automatically hit.	
Hit: The target falls 10 feet to the bottom of the pit, taking 1d10 damage and falling prone.	
Miss: The target slides into the nearest unoccupied square on the pit's edge.	
Effect: The pit opens and is no longer hidden.	
↔ Attack ↔ Encounter	
Trigger: A creature reaches the top of the trap's exit ladder.	
Attack (Immediate Reaction): Melee 1 (the triggering creature); +6 vs. Reflex	
Hit: The target falls 10 feet to the bottom of the pit, taking 1d10 damage and falling prone.	
Miss: The target slides into the nearest unoccupied square on the pit's edge.	
Effect: The trapped rungs are no longer hidden.	
Countermeasures ↔ Disable Pit: Thievery DC 21. Three Successes: The false floor is jammed closed and the trap cannot attack.	
↔ Fix Rungs: Thievery DC 21. Success: The rungs lock in place and cannot attack.	

Side Door

In addition to the two main entrances, any of several side entrances might allow a small group to enter Mithral Hall. These entrances are well guarded, however, and gaining access will not be easy.

If the adventurers approach one of these side doors without first removing the orc guards there, such as by using the horn, they must deal with those guards.

If the entrance is guarded, read:

Boulders and shrubbery provide plenty of cover to get you within fifty feet of a side entrance into Mithral Hall. Five orcs stand between you and the entrance, four wearing hide armor and talking among themselves. The fifth wears scale armor and is more attentive to her duties. She occasionally snaps commands at the other orcs, who respond with resentful looks.

In Giant, one says to the scale-clad female, "We should be killing dwarves, Mutruuch, not standing here watching our axes dull."

"Keep slacking and whining, and I'll sharpen my axe on your bones, maggot!" barks the female.

The warriors sullenly peer around in mock alertness.

Mutruuch is a battle-tested orc leading four savages.

Mutruuch, Battletested Orc	Level 3 Soldier
Medium natural humanoid	
HP 50; Bloodied 25	Initiative +5
AC 19, Fortitude 17, Reflex 15, Will 13	Perception +1
Speed 6 (8 when charging)	Low-light vision

STANDARD ACTIONS

- ⬇ **Battleaxe** (weapon) ♦ **At-Will**
 Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC
 Hit: 1d10 + 5 damage, or 1d10 + 10 with a charge attack.
- ✈ **Handaxe** (weapon) ♦ **At-Will**
 Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +8 vs. AC
 Hit: 1d6 + 5 damage.
- ⬅ **Hacking Frenzy** (weapon) ♦ **Recharge** ☒ ☒
 Attack: Close burst 1 (enemies in the burst); +6 vs. AC
 Hit: 1d10 + 5 damage, and the orc marks the target until the end of the orc's next turn.
 Effect: The orc grants combat advantage until the start of its next turn.

TRIGGERED ACTIONS

- Savage Demise**
 Trigger: The orc drops to 0 hit points.
 Effect (Free Action): The orc takes a standard action.
- Str 18 (+5) Dex 14 (+3) Wis 10 (+1)
 Con 18 (+5) Int 8 (+0) Cha 9 (+0)
- Alignment chaotic evil Languages Common, Giant
 Equipment scale armor, heavy shield, battleaxe, 4 handaxes

4 Orc Savages	Level 4 Minion Brute
Medium natural humanoid	
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	Initiative +3
AC 16, Fortitude 16, Reflex 14, Will 12	Perception +1
Speed 6	Low-light vision

STANDARD ACTIONS

- ⬇ **Handaxe** (weapon) ♦ **At-Will**
 Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC
 Hit: 8 damage, or 12 with a charge attack.
- ✈ **Handaxe** (weapon) ♦ **At-Will**
 Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +9 vs. AC
 Hit: 6 damage.

TRIGGERED ACTIONS

- Savage Demise**
 Trigger: The orc drops to 0 hit points.
 Effect (Free Action): The orc takes a standard action.
- Str 16 (+5) Dex 13 (+3) Wis 9 (+1)
 Con 13 (+3) Int 8 (+1) Cha 8 (+1)
- Alignment chaotic evil Languages Common, Giant
 Equipment hide armor, 4 handaxes

If battle breaks out and you want to use a tactical map, the wilderness road map can represent the area outside the exit. The nearest orc patrol is several hundred yards away. Even if the adventurers make a great deal of noise, reinforcements do not arrive in time to keep the party from entering the fortress.

If the adventurers try a ploy that calls for skill checks, use DC 13 for most checks, granting bonuses for good plans and good roleplaying.

If the characters use one of these side entrances to enter Mithral Hall, they must work their way through the mines and then down into the Undercity. Proceed to "Hall of Heroes."

Hall of Heroes

Adventurers entering through a side entrance arrive in abandoned mines near the Undercity.

When the party leaves the entrance, read:

After entering Mithral Hall through a series of long-abandoned tunnels and mines, you trek downward for a few miles. Your destination is the Undercity, where the dwarves maintain their homes and businesses. Along the way, you pass a few dangerous-looking side tunnels before coming to a twenty-foot-wide section that continues on for at least ten yards. Ten statues stand along each side, each depicting a dwarf warrior in heroic pose and full battle gear.

At the far end of the hall, three statues face you—a wise-looking old male dwarf flanked by two armored warriors, a man and a woman. Nameplates identify the sage as Brenn Silverbeard, the male warrior as Durn Bronzehammer, and the female warrior as Karyd Stonefist. A small socket is set in the base beside each nameplate.

On the floor at the statues' feet are three stone weapons that look as though they might fit in the statues' hands—an axe, a hammer, and a pick. Among the weapons are three precious stones—a ruby, a sapphire, and an emerald. Finally, five bronze disks, each about the size of a dwarf's palm and carved with Dwarven runes, are set into the floor in front of the statues.

When any character enters the hall, read:

The central statue at the far end of the hall seems to speak, its stone mouth opening but its lifeless lips not forming words. In the Common tongue, you hear, "Who are you to invade the resting place of the honored dead?"

Once the characters explain, read:

The statue shakes its head. "Fancy words do not a friend make. If you are indeed here to help and honor Mithral Hall, you know what to do with these." The statue gestures to the items on the floor. "See that each item takes its proper place." With a final nod of its head, the statue falls still once more."

Although the runes on the bronze disks are Dwarven runes, all the characters can read them thanks to a parting gift of the statue. Each one offers a simple clue:

1. Durn disdains the smithy's tool.
2. Karyd loved not leaf or grass.
3. Hammer's heat held ruby's fire.
4. Brenn was known as hewer of foes.
5. Sapphires grace not miner's tool.

The characters' objective is to solve this logic puzzle and place each weapon and each gemstone with the statue of the correct dwarf. Each weapon fits equally well into any statue's hands, and the sockets beside the nameplates will likewise hold any gem.

The characters must place the pick in Durn's hands and the emerald beside his nameplate, the axe and the

sapphire with Brenn, and the hammer and the ruby with Karyd.

If the players get stumped making sense of the clues, you can help translate the clues into more straightforward language (use DC 9 Intelligence checks):

1. The hammer doesn't go with Durn.
2. Karyd disliked green, so the emerald does not go with her.
3. The dwarf who gets the hammer gets the ruby.
4. Brenn used an axe.
5. The sapphire and the pick do not go together.

Here's the logic behind the puzzle: Durn doesn't use a hammer (clue 1), and he doesn't use an axe because Brenn does (clue 4). So Durn must get the pick. That means he doesn't have the ruby (which goes with the hammer, clue 3) or the sapphire (clue 5), so he must get the emerald.

If Durn uses the pick and Brenn the axe, then Karyd must use the hammer. Therefore, she gets the ruby (clue 3). That leaves the axe and the sapphire for Brenn.

Mistakes: If the wrong weapon or gemstone is placed into a statue, that statue animates long enough to attack the character who erred: +11 vs. AC, dealing 1d8 + 6 damage on a hit.

If the characters make a run for the end of the chamber, they find themselves back at the side from which they entered.

Success: When the adventurers have placed all the weapons and gemstones with the correct statues, the statue of Durn speaks again, saying, "Go forward and do honor to the dwarves who hold this place of strength." If the adventurers solved the puzzle without being attacked, they gain a +2 bonus to Diplomacy checks directed toward dwarves for the rest of this session. Continue with "A Demented Drow" (page 28).

The Maze

The maze is one of the lines of defense the dwarves have created for their citadel. Intruders who are lucky enough to discover the secret entrance must navigate the trap-filled maze before arriving at the Undercity, where the main population of Mithral Hall resides.

When the characters travel this route, read:

After entering through a secret passageway, you travel down a narrow, sloping chimney, then into a tunnel that winds onward into the eternal gloom. The tunnel forks just ahead, and if what you've heard of Mithral Hall before is any indication, you've made your way into the Maze.

Navigating the maze requires a special skill challenge. As the characters wander through the maze, they might get lost, they might spring a trap, and they might blunder into a raiding party of orcs just as lost as they are.

They must also navigate cliffs and chimneys and bypass obstacles along the way.

If all goes well, the characters will reach the other side of the maze in five hours. For each hour they travel, ask every player what their characters are doing.

Navigating: Have the character make a Dungeoneering check (DC 13). A dwarf character gets a +2 bonus to this check (in addition to the race's natural bonus to Dungeoneering). On a success, the group makes progress toward the exit—mark off one hour from the five they must travel. On a failure or if no one undertakes this task, the characters make no progress during this hour.

Searching for Traps: Have the character make a Perception check (DC 21). On a success, he or she spots any traps that lie along the path, and the party can successfully bypass or disable them. On a failure or if no one undertakes this task, each character loses a healing surge.

Watching for Enemies: Have the character make a Perception check (DC 13). On a success, he or she spots any enemies the party encounters and steers the group clear of danger. On a failure or if no one undertakes this task, the party blunders into the path of a group of four orc savages. (Use the statistics given earlier for the orcs, and place the characters and orcs on the dry half of the Darklake map.)

Working Past Obstacles: Have the character make either an Athletics check or an Acrobatics check (DC 21). On a success, the party makes it past the obstacles they encounter without harm or delay. On a failure or if no one undertakes this task, each character must make an Endurance check (DC 8) or lose one healing surge.

Help Another Character: Any number of characters can use the aid another action to help a character making one of these checks. The character must make a DC 11 check using the same skill in order to provide a +2 bonus to the acting character's check. If this check fails, the acting character takes a -1 penalty to the check.

Something Else: Listen to what the player wants to try and come up with a chance of success. If the player is thinking creatively, make it a good chance of success (DC 9 or 13). You can allow the character's action to fulfil the requirements of a different action described here or at least stave off the effects of another character's failed check.

Failed checks have no consequences other than those described above. The characters can fail any number of checks without failing the challenge as a whole—it's just a question of how long it takes them to get through the maze and what condition they're in when they reach the other side.

When the characters emerge from the maze, continue with "A Demented Drow."

A Demented Drow

This encounter takes place regardless of which way the adventurers entered Mithral Hall. As the characters might know, Szordrin Xorlarrin hopes to assassinate King Connerad.

When you're ready for this encounter, read:

The passages here show signs of recent travel. As you come to an intersection and move into a crossing corridor, you see an orc standing in the middle of the passage to your right. At the sight of you, he lets out a bloodthirsty scream and charges.

Szordrin ordered the orc reaver named Frouth to accompany him into Mithral Hall as added muscle. The orc is waiting here while Szordrin stealthily explores a nearby passage behind the adventurers. By the end of the first round, Szordrin hears the battle and drinks a *potion of invisibility*, then comes at the adventurers from behind. When he attacks, he becomes visible.

Use the portion of the dungeon map illustrated here as the tactical map for this engagement. The encounter begins as the adventurers leave the corridor containing an altar and one curtained exit, and enter the longer hallway. Frouth stands in the middle of the hall, while Szordrin comes from behind a curtain to flank the adventurers.

Frouth, Orc Reaver (F)		Level 5 Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid		
HP 63; Bloodied 31		Initiative +7
AC 19, Fortitude 18, Reflex 18, Will 16		Perception +3
Speed 6 (8 when charging)		Low-light vision
TRAITS		
Charging Mobility		
While charging, the orc gains a +4 bonus to all defenses.		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⬆ Battleaxe (weapon) ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC		
Hit: 1d10 + 8 damage.		
Effect: After the attack, the orc can shift 1 square.		
✂ Javelin (weapon) ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +10 vs. AC		
Hit: 2d6 + 6 damage, and the orc can push the target 1 square.		
TRIGGERED ACTIONS		
⬇ Blood-Crazed Charge ♦ Encounter		
Trigger: The orc hits an enemy.		
Effect (Free Action): The orc charges an enemy.		
Savage Demise		
Trigger: The orc drops to 0 hit points.		
Effect (Free Action): The orc takes a standard action.		
Str 18 (+6)	Dex 17 (+5)	Wis 13 (+3)
Con 15 (+4)	Int 8 (+1)	Cha 8 (+1)
Alignment chaotic evil Languages Common, Giant		
Equipment hide armor, battleaxe, 4 javelins		

Szordrin Xorlarrin (S)		Level 4 Lurker
Medium fey humanoid, drow		
HP 42; Bloodied 21		Initiative +10
AC 18, Fortitude 16, Reflex 17, Will 15		Perception +6
Speed 6		Darkvision
TRAITS		
Unrelenting Grasp		
If Szordrin moves, any creature grabbed by him moves with him, staying grabbed in a space of his choice adjacent to him.		
Creature Shield		
While Szordrin has a creature grabbed, he gains a +5 power bonus to all defenses.		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⬆ Short Sword (weapon) ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC		
Hit: 2d6 + 6 damage.		
✂ Garrote (weapon) ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature granting combat advantage to Szordrin); +7 vs. Reflex		
Hit: 2d8 + 5 damage, and the target is grabbed (escape DC 14) until the end of Szordrin's next turn.		
Sustain Standard: 2d8 + 5 damage, and the grab persists until the end of Szordrin's next turn.		
MINOR ACTIONS		
Cloud of Darkness ♦ Encounter		
Effect: Close burst 1. The burst creates a zone that lasts until the end of Szordrin's next turn. The zone blocks line of sight for all creatures except Szordrin. While entirely in the zone, any creature other than Szordrin is blinded.		
Skills Stealth +11		
Str 16 (+5)	Dex 18 (+6)	Wis 9 (+1)
Con 12 (+3)	Int 12 (+3)	Cha 14 (+4)
Alignment chaotic evil Languages Common, Elven, Giant		
Equipment leather armor, short sword, wire garrote		

Development

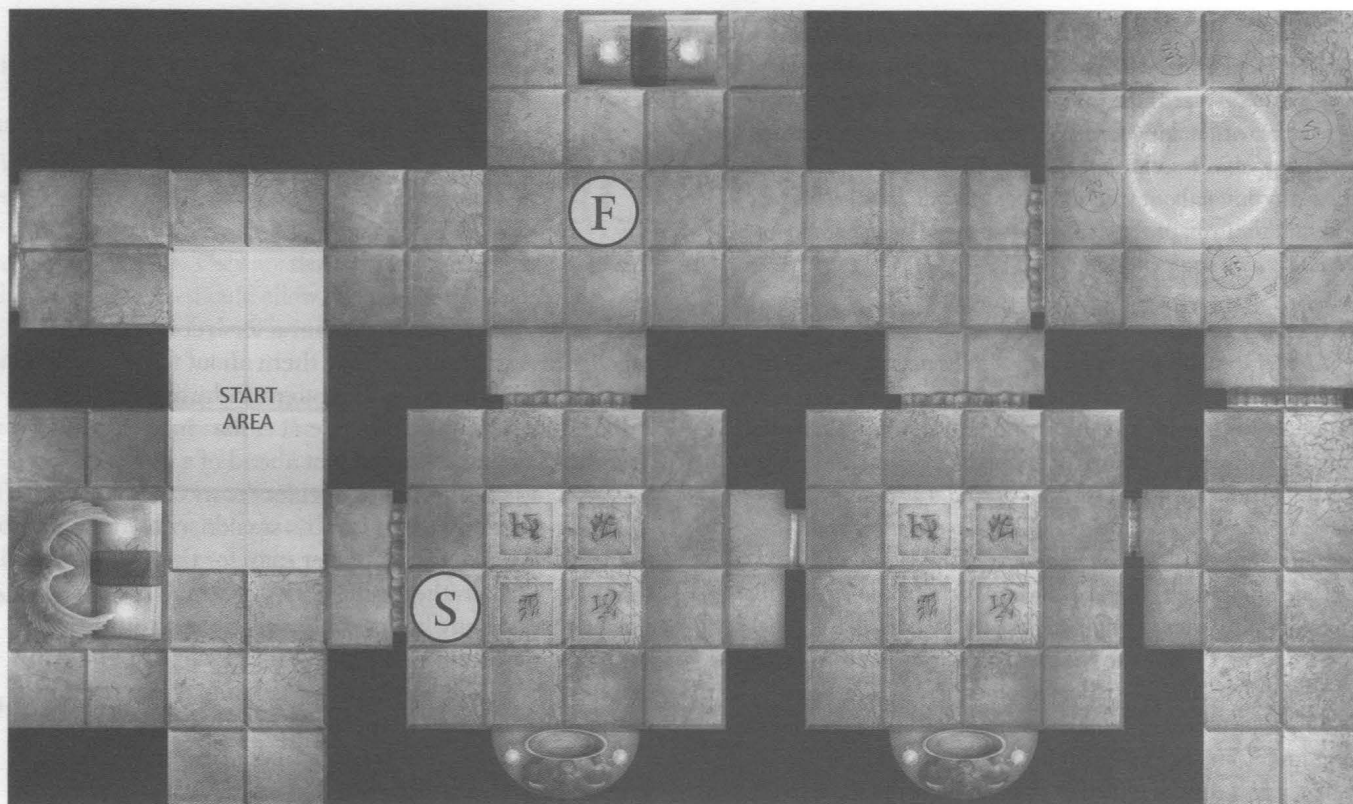
As Szordrin attacks, he talks from beneath his dark mask or whispers to a victim he has grabbed with his garrote. He speaks of how he intends to slay King Connerad as a way of helping the Spider Queen to bring the surface world under her reign.

Conclusion

If the adventurers capture and question Szordrin, he remains uncooperative, but a successful DC 15 Intimidate check causes him to break his silence. He goes on at some length about how Lolth's web is spreading even now to drain the power from the wizards of the surface and give it to her faithful drow servants. He brags that his father, Tsabrak, will be the Spider Queen's regent, a god among mortals once the war is over and the Spider Queen is also the Mistress of Magic. However, before he reveals anything more substantial than the information above, his mask splits and spiders pour from his mouth, nose, and eye sockets. He dies. Go on to "Royal Meeting."

ROYAL MEETING

In this scene, the characters encounter the dwarves of Mithral Hall.



If the adventurers act suspiciously, are of a race normally antagonistic toward dwarves, or if they have a prisoner in tow, Mithral Hall guards challenge them at once.

Let the adventurers interact with the guards as they wish. However, as soon as they express that they have a message for the king or information regarding the siege, the guards march them to see their leader.

The current King of Mithral Hall is Connerad Brawnnavil Battlehammer. He awaits the adventurers in a private sitting chamber, along with trusted advisors and guards.

When the meeting starts, read:

Several guards take you to see the king of Mithral Hall. They march you into a sitting chamber lit by two fireplaces. Among a throng of advisors sits a muscular, gray-haired, gray-bearded dwarf in ornate armor. He scowls at you from beneath bushy eyebrows.

"I understand you have news."

Here, the adventurers can relate their news about Obould's refusal to join the war on the side of the drow. Use the following points as guidelines for Connerad's responses.

- ♦ King Connerad is impatient, and he is more comfortable fighting than leading. He was looking forward to marching on Many-Arrows and slaying orcs by the score, but with this new information, his advisors will not currently back that plan.
- ♦ Connerad is not a direct descendant of King Bruenor Battlehammer, but is his kin. Bruenor is dead.

Connerad longs to honor his kinsman's memory by being as brave and skilled as the former king.

- ♦ Connerad is surprised that a drow made it inside Mithral Hall and grateful to the adventurers for thwarting Szordrin Xorlarrin. He is hopeful that the death of this drow leader will break the morale of the orcs laying siege to his home.
- ♦ If the characters bring Connerad the battle plans from the command tent, he hands them to one of his advisors and instructs the advisor to plan a counterattack.
- ♦ In any event, Connerad ensures the characters that the siege will soon be broken and Mithral Hall will aid Silvermoon according to the terms of the Articles of Confederation that united Luruar more than a hundred years ago.

For all of Connerad's optimism, however, it will be another year before the siege of Mithral Hall is broken.

MYSTERIOUS MESSAGE

After they have talked to King Connerad and his advisors, the characters receive a message.

Read:

A young dwarf wearing the livery of a squire approaches as you are escorted from the king's sitting room. He bows deeply and speaks. "Greetings. I have a message from your . . . eccentric friend. I believe you should read it." The young dwarf hands you a battered, sealed envelope.

If the adventurers ask the dwarf to explain, read:
“The message is from a dwarf named Axelcrantz. He was here a couple weeks ago. When he arrived at Mithral Hall, he said he was looking for his friends, a group of adventurers matching your description. He even knew your names. No one knew anything about you, so he got this odd look on his face and said that you probably hadn’t met yet. Then he said he would see you soon enough.”

The letter reads:

Good friends, with whom I have yet to be acquainted, I write to inform you that, should you be in Mithral Hall, I am not in that place, as is evidenced by my nonappearance. Know that I have been diverted from our meeting by ambush and villainy. A pair of drow draped in shrouds of spiderweb stole upon me as I made my way toward Quaervarr to meet you. They demanded to know the whereabouts of the Wand of Tir’Lien.

Can you imagine being drow and lacking knowledge about something like that? Embarrassing, to say the least.

Of course, I refused to tell them anything, but they began to cut my flesh and set spiders upon my eyes. I invoked a desperate prayer of sanctuary that returned me to my home. Regrettably, my home lies far away near the halls of Citadel Adbar, and I cannot return to you except by the short strides of my own legs. I therefore await you at the citadel. Your other adventures will delay you until autumn, but never fear. I shall not pass the time idly.

While you travel and adventure, I shall discover the precise location of the wand and divine what the drow might want with it. Hopefully it shall help us discover the key to undoing the sinister darkness these villains have placed upon our world.

—Axelcrantz

P. S. As you travel through the Glimmerwood, please pick some of the lovely moondrop blooms that grow there. I am not yet sure why, but I believe you will need some in the near future. Or perhaps you have already needed some? I hope not.

Axelcrantz appears in the next session. The moondrop plant is flowering now, and the characters can assume they pick some on their way to Citadel Adbar before the start of the next session. In session 7, its blooms are revealed as a component of the magic blade the adventurers require in the final session.

CONCLUSION

Regardless of what course they decide to pursue regarding the orc siege and the growing war, the dwarves of Mithral Hall help the adventurers leave the citadel and sneak past the orc siege alongside dwarven messengers and without incident. The adventurers eventually journey to Citadel Adbar and find out what Axelcrantz wants with them.

SESSION 4: DESCENT INTO THE DEPTHS

Level 4 Adventure—Autumn

At the end of session 3, the characters received a message from Axelcrantz, telling them about the Wand of Tir’Lien and instructing them to meet him at Citadel Adbar. The adventurers arrive at Adbar in the wake of months of orc attacks, and just ahead of a huge orc force that will lay siege to the citadel for many months more.

If you are using maps for this session, consider using the tunnels and caverns poster map for the encounters that take place in the Underdark. Use the large cavern poster map for any larger-scale encounters you run, such as the encounter with Matharic’s wraith. You can use the fort on the wilderness road map and a portion of the dungeon map to represent the dwarven outpost.

Before starting this session, make sure that all characters have advanced to 4th level. See “Advancement,” page 6.

CITADEL ADBAR

The adventure begins as the party reaches the gates of Citadel Adbar.

When you’re ready to start, read:

For weeks, as you make your way down the trade roads and through the foothills of the Ice Mountains, darkness continues to cloud the sky. Citadel Adbar clings to the edge of a mountainside. Silver banners emblazoned with a fiery axe—the standard of King Harbromm—fly from the battlements.

From this viewpoint, the fortress appears small for a place reputed to support a force of sixty thousand dwarves. But Citadel Adbar is merely the front door to the legendary domain that lies beneath the mountain. That door remains closed.

A frowning black-bearded dwarf in plate armor looks down from his post on the battlements. Dwarves armed with crossbows line the walls to both sides of him. “What business have you in Adbar?” the plate-clad dwarf barks. “Know this: If you have no official business or permission from the king, you might as well turn around and go back the way you came.”

Chief sentry Thanar Thornhammer is acting on explicit orders from the king when he denies the characters entry. If the party works together to create a compelling argument, use their roleplaying to determine the outcome. If checks using Diplomacy or Bluff are called for, the DC is 21. Grant bonuses for good roleplaying. Thanar is courteous to dwarves, who gain a +2 bonus on checks to influence him.

Axelcrantz arrives on the wall after the characters' initial attempts to gain access to the citadel.

When Axelcrantz appears, read:

A robed dwarf with glittering blue eyes and a fair, open face comes up beside the sentry.

"You've arrived!" he says. "Thanar, these are the heroes I've seen in my visions. They are the North's only hope against this darkness. You should allow them to see the king."

"The king's edicts don't bow to your visions, Axelcrantz," says Thanar.

"Well, no harm in talking here, then," says Axelcrantz. "I have much to tell you about the wand."

The mystic speaks enthusiastically about what he has learned regarding the wand. Use these points to guide the conversation.

- ◆ A drow named Matharic led a band of his evil kin to this region over a hundred years ago, bringing the wand along with him.
- ◆ Matharic and his band laid claim to a large section of Underdark wilderness near Citadel Adbar. They slaughtered merchants who were bringing trade to the citadel, and ambushed dwarven strike teams sent to eliminate them.
- ◆ The dwarves discovered that Matharic's secret lair lay hidden beneath one of their outposts, from where the drow had spied on them and learned their plans. The dwarves led a large force against the drow. Dozens of dwarves died in the assault, as did Matharic's entire band. Even though Matharic was slain in the battle, his evil spirit lingered on. Now his undead essence haunts the caverns of the area. As Matharic did in life, his shade now ambushes all those who trespass in his domain, draining their life force away.
- ◆ The dwarves steer clear of Matharic's haunted realm, and they have long abandoned their former outpost.
- ◆ In case they need to do so without moving through Citadel Adbar, Axelcrantz tells the characters how to find their way into the Underdark where he thinks the wand might be hidden.

After this discussion, Axelcrantz's advocacy allows the characters to try another round of talking their way into the fortress if they've failed so far.

If the characters successfully gain access to the citadel, go to "King Harbromm."

If the characters fail to convince the dwarves, they are denied access and must journey around the citadel.

If the characters are denied access, read:

Axelcrantz's face falls, but he tosses a heavy object wrapped in burlap down to you.

"You might need this!" he says.

The object is a whetstone blessed by a priest of Moradin. It is a component that Master Gemen, a duergar bladesmith, needs in order to create a powerful sword for the adventurers to use in session 7. Go to "Caverns of the Underdark."

King Harbromm

The adventurers deal with the disgruntled leader of Citadel Adbar.

If the characters are granted access to the citadel, read:

The enormous, reinforced doors of Citadel Adbar open before you, revealing a fortified gatehouse full of heavily armed dwarves. The dwarf mystic Axelcrantz walks alongside you, chattering about the history and construction of this place.

As Thanar leads you into the fortress, you pass through several guard stations and down one flight of stairs after another. The farther you descend, the more passages branch off from the main route. Several of the guard stations you pass are empty, but must have been occupied when the citadel was at its peak.

You travel for the better part of an hour before you arrive in the audience chamber of King Harbromm. The dwarf king sits upon a granite throne at the end of a long hall flanked by tall square pillars. The edges of the throne flicker with violet faerie fire. Thanar and Axelcrantz bow before the king.

Harbromm folds his arms as he eyes you suspiciously. "Why have you band of vagabonds been brought before me, despite my orders? Speak up for yourselves."

Insight DC 14: The king is annoyed that you have been allowed inside the fortress, but you can see from his body language that he is considering your possible usefulness.

King Harbromm has little time to deal with outsiders, what with an orc horde practically at his doorstep. Despite his curtness, however, the king is concerned with the nearby duergar, viewing them as likely orc allies who can undermine the citadel's defenses. He sees the adventurers as a possible solution.

The king sees trade treaties that northern lands have signed with the duergar of Gracklstugh as an insult to dwarven smiths and crafters. He also fears that the treaties might give the duergar an incentive to help orcs attack Citadel Adbar. The gray dwarves' trade partners include many of Citadel Adbar's former allies.

When the characters answer the king, read:

"Fine words," the king says, "but are you prepared to back them with action? The Silver Marches are plagued with troubles. Orcs march toward us even now. Drow are said to lead them, under the cover of this unending darkness. Trolls venture out from the Evermoors. Put the weight of your words behind your weapons. Strike down the enemies of the citadel, and I will deliver you to the treasure you seek."

"I know the haunted cavern where your wand is said to lie. But close by, a troublesome band of duergar has seized one of our old guard outposts. It is a minor concern, since the area is rarely traveled, but if the duergar establish a foothold, they could soon pose a threat to the citadel. Deal with the duergar. Use any means necessary, but get them away from our territory. This is the toll we command in exchange for passage through our realm."

If the characters agree to King Harbromm's terms, he orders Thanar to provide them with a map to the haunted cavern where the duergar—and the final resting place of Matharic—can be found. Continue with "Duergar Camp."

Characters who refuse King Harbromm's offer, are overly rude, make trouble, or waste the king's time are expelled from Citadel Adbar. If that happens, go to "Caverns of the Underdark."

Before the characters leave, Axelcrantz gives them the previously mentioned whetstone.

DUERGAR CAMP

The adventurers need to choose how best to approach the duergar.

As the party makes its way to the camp, read:

Thanar and a contingent of guards guide you into the deepest levels of Citadel Adbar. They then wave you through the inner gates of the dwarven fortress to the dark roads beneath the world. Following King Harbromm's map, you pass through the lightless underground realm to the haunted cavern where the vengeful ghost of Matharic is said to dwell.

The guard outpost is an enormous column of stone at the far side of a wide chasm. A natural stone bridge a hundred feet across spans the chasm, stalactites hanging above it. Beyond your light, the chasm is a black pit that descends to unfathomable depths. The smooth, dark face of the outpost is dotted with arrow slits, beyond which you can barely distinguish short humanoid shapes as they move.

Perception DC 14: Near the natural bridge, hidden among stalagmites, a pile of bones is scattered in the shadows off the path.

The dwarf-sized bones have been picked clean and are covered in thick mucus. A character who succeeds on a DC 14 Nature check or Dungeoneering check recognizes that these are duergar bones. If the skill used is Dungeoneering and the check result is 21 or higher, the character recognizes the mucus as being the digestive fluid of a mimic.

The bridge spans the chasm, which is 200 feet deep (DC 15 Athletics checks to climb).

If the characters attack from outside the walls of the outpost, the duergar take cover within.

DWINDLING DUERGAR

The duergar band consists of Suthik (a raid leader) and his four thugs. They have come to the haunted cavern seeking the *Wand of Tir'Lien*. Their king has ordered this relic found so that the duergar can sell it to the drow.

Originally, the band numbered fifteen duergar. However, an unknown threat soon began to prey on them. When their numbers started to dwindle, the survivors retreated to the abandoned outpost. This strategy has done nothing to halt the mysterious attacks. The thugs are convinced that the ghost of Matharic is responsible, but Suthik drives them on.

In truth, the duergar are being hunted by a mimic that has been picking them off one by one. See "The Mimic" sidebar on the facing page.

After a few exchanges or a call for parley, read:

A brawny duergar with dark gray skin and white hair streaked with red calls to you from the outpost. "There's no need for violence. The ghosts of this place will kill us all sure enough without helping them to it. Put away your weapons and let us speak together."

In exchange for a truce, Suthik gives the characters full access to the outpost. He claims that he and his troops are looking for signs of a missing patrol. A DC 21 Insight check reveals that he is lying.

While the characters search for the *Wand of Tir'Lien*, Suthik is courteous to them. However, when the characters find the relic, Suthik orders his remaining soldiers to kill them and take the wand.

4 Duergar Thugs

Medium natural humanoid

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.

AC 16, Fortitude 17, Reflex 15, Will 14

Speed 5

Resist 5 fire, 5 poison

STANDARD ACTIONS

① Warhammer (weapon) ♦ At-Will

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC

Hit: 8 damage.

MINOR ACTIONS

② Infernal Quills (poison) ♦ Encounter

Attack: Ranged 3 (one creature); +9 vs. AC

Hit: 6 damage, and ongoing 2 poison damage (save ends).

Str 14 (+4)

Dex 15 (+4)

Wis 15 (+4)

Con 18 (+6)

Int 10 (+2)

Cha 8 (+1)

Alignment evil

Languages Common, Deep Speech, Dwarven

Equipment chainmail, warhammer

Level 4 Minion Brute

Initiative +4

Perception +4

Darkvision

THE MIMIC

When the characters enter the outpost, roll a d6 to determine which floor the mimic currently inhabits. Three ordinary items are possible forms for the mimic.

d6	Mimic's Location and Form
1-2	Level 1, the rug over the trapdoor
3-4	Level 2, the armor stand with plate armor
5-6	Level 3, the commander's bed

The mimic strikes when the characters are split up if it can. If the mimic has no opportunity to attack the characters beforehand, it takes the shape of the rug concealing the trapdoor on level 1. It then attacks as the adventurers make their way out of the haunted cavern after they have recovered the *Wand of Tir'Lien*.

Suthik, Duergar Raid Leader Level 5 Artillery (Leader)

Medium natural humanoid

HP 51; Bloodied 25	Initiative +3
AC 19, Fortitude 17, Reflex 19, Will 15	Perception +4
Speed 5	Darkvision

Resist 5 fire, 5 poison

STANDARD ACTIONS

⚔ Warhammer (weapon) ♦ At-Will

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC

Hit: 1d10 + 5 damage.

🏹 Crossbow (weapon) ♦ At-Will

Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +12 vs. AC

Hit: 1d8 + 8 damage.

Raid Leader's Command ♦ At-Will

Effect: Ranged 5 (one ally). The target can make a basic attack as a free action.

MINOR ACTIONS

☠️ Infernal Quills (poison) ♦ Encounter

Attack: Ranged 3 (one creature); +12 vs. AC

Hit: 1d8 + 4 damage, and the target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends both).

Skills Dungeoneering +9

Str 11 (+2) Dex 13 (+3) Wis 14 (+4)

Con 15 (+4) Int 18 (+6) Cha 8 (+1)

Alignment evil Languages Common, Deep Speech, Dwarven

Equipment chainmail, warhammer, crossbow

Exploring the Outpost

The outpost has three levels connected by stairs.

Level 1 (Barracks)

This area can be represented by the ground-floor layout of the fort on the wilderness road map.

Read:

This level contains the living quarters partitioned into smaller sections by temporary wooden walls that have mostly rotted through. In one section, a small sideboard stands beside a tiny hearth and cauldron. A row of dwarf-sized beds with rotten wooden frames lies behind another partition, while a filthy,

mildewed rug covers the floor in the center of the space. An old stone stairway spirals up the side of the outpost to an oak door leading to the second level.

Stairs lead to the second level of the outpost. The rug conceals a trapdoor to the haunted cavern. The trapdoor is made of stone and magically fastened to the surrounding floor. A keyhole is painted on the stone, and the proper key (the parchment in the commander's desk on level 3) must be pressed against the keyhole to open it.

When the characters have opened the trapdoor, continue with "Haunted Cavern."

Treasure: A DC 14 Perception check made to search the straw mattresses turns up an amethyst (100 gp) and a gold ring set with garnet (250 gp).

The cauldron is a minor magic item. Once per day, when the cauldron is filled with water and "Kotark" is spoken, the cauldron fills with a delicious soup that can feed five. The word "Kotark" is engraved in Dwarven runes on the bottom of the cauldron.

Object Mimic Level 8 Lurker

Medium aberrant magical beast

HP 71; Bloodied 35	Initiative +11
AC 23, Fortitude 21, Reflex 19, Will 21	Perception +14
Speed 5	Darkvision, tremorsense 5
Resist 5 acid	

TRAITS

Ambush

The object mimic deals 2d6 extra damage against surprised creatures.

STANDARD ACTIONS

⚔ Slam ♦ At-Will

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. AC

Hit: 2d8 + 7 damage.

⚔ Crushing Tendrils (acid) ♦ At-Will

Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +13 vs. AC

Hit: 1d8 + 4 damage, and the mimic grabs the target. The target takes a -5 penalty to attempts to escape the grab.

Sustain Standard: The object mimic sustains the grab, and the target takes 15 acid damage.

⚔ Ravening Maw ♦ Recharge ☞ ☞

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +13 vs. AC

Hit: 2d8 + 11 damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).

MINOR ACTIONS

Shapeshift (polymorph) ♦ At-Will (1/round)

Effect: The mimic assumes one of the following forms. It can't change its size. It remains in the chosen form until it uses this power again.

Ooze Form: The mimic becomes an ooze. When it squeezes while it is in this form, it moves at full speed rather than half speed, it doesn't take the -5 penalty to attack rolls, and it doesn't grant combat advantage for squeezing.

Object Form: While in this form, the mimic has resist 10 to all damage, is immobilized, and cannot attack. In addition, a creature must succeed on a DC 24 Perception check to notice that the mimic is a living creature.

Skills Bluff +11, Stealth +12

Str 20 (+9) Dex 16 (+7) Wis 21 (+9)

Con 17 (+7) Int 19 (+8) Cha 15 (+6)

Alignment unaligned Languages Common, Deep Speech

Level 2 (Armory)

The deserted armory still contains dwarven magic. If you need a map for this area, use the room on the dungeon map that contains the triangular statue. (The statue can represent the suit of plate armor, if this room is where the mimic is encountered.)

Read:

An old armory occupies the second level of the outpost. Toppled wooden stands once held weapons and suits of armor, but the few pieces that remain are rusted. Two stands remain upright against the wall, both fixed to the floor. One holds three halberds, all as sharp and bright as if they were newly forged. The other holds a rusty suit of dwarven plate armor.

On the opposite side of the room stand a small forge and an anvil fixed to a stone block. A stone stairway leads upward to an oak door and the top level of the outpost. Arrow slits here grant a clear view of the bridge and the chasm outside.

The weapon stand is enchanted so that, once per day, a weapon placed on it is repaired, becoming clean and sharp, as if affected by a Make Whole ritual. It is affixed to the floor and cannot be moved without destroying its magic.

Because of the rack's magic, the halberds on it are intact. Other items here are useless or immovable.

Level 3 (Quarters)

These quarters formerly housed the commander. This level can be depicted with the small, circular chamber in the corner of the wilderness road map.

Read:

The commander's quarters contain a desk, a bookshelf, and a bed, all of which remain reasonably intact despite their age. Leather-bound books line the shelf, while stacks of tattered papers lie in disarray on the desk. An ornate wooden chair carved with dwarven runic designs stands behind the desk. Though most of the bed's mattress has been eaten away, the wooden frame beneath it looks solid.

Books: The bookshelf contains Commander Kotark's military manuals and journals. The journals mostly contain routine details of running the outpost. The most recent one tells of a battle with the drow Matharic and "the wand that extinguished the dark." The last entry describes how the commander retrieved the wand from the drow's corpse, then saw a dark shape lurking in the shadows of his chambers.

Desk: The desk contains a single locked drawer, which can be opened with a DC 21 Athletics check or a DC 14 Thievery check. Inside the drawer is an enchanted piece of parchment that has a blue key painted on it. This key matches the painted keyhole beneath the rug on level 1.

CAVERNS OF THE UNDERDARK

The characters must brave the Underdark.

Light: Because the Darkening affects only areas that are open to the sky, it is not present inside this portion of the Underdark—which means that the relics the characters have collected do not give off light during the following encounters.

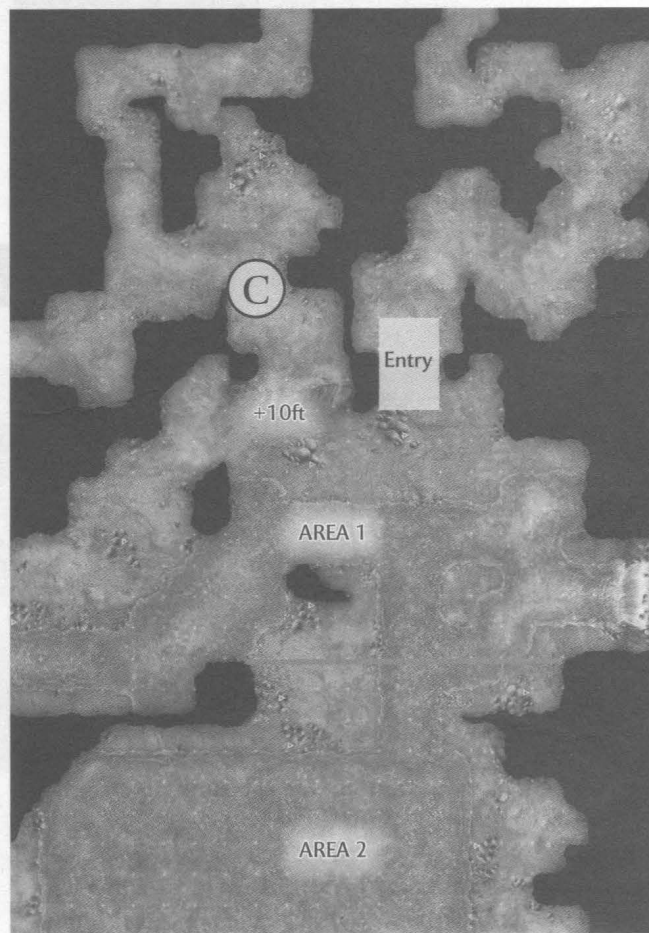
Read:

With the dwarves refusing to allow you passage through their fortress, your only choice is to take the path through the Underdark that Axelcrantz described.

After a day of travel in the mountains, you encounter a group of hunters who direct you to a cave opening hidden in a canyon beneath the eaves of encroaching fir trees.

"All sorts of nightmares crawl these slopes," the leader of the hunters says, "especially since the sky went dark. Yonder cave leads down to the Underdark, sure enough. Not many folk would be crazy enough to go that way, though."

The lead hunter, Grisoff, answers the characters' questions if treated respectfully. He knows that the dwarves of Citadel Adbar are a stubborn lot, though the hunters occasionally trade with them outside the fortress. The group carries little of value, and the hunting has been



poor in recent weeks because the invading orcs have killed off or driven away the game herds in the area.

When the characters are finished talking, the hunters move on. If the adventurers offer rations or coin, or help the hunters find game (a DC 10 group Nature check), Grisoff thanks them and offers a warning.

Read:

"There's a beast makes its home somewhere in that cave. By its tracks, it has at least a dozen legs and a long, heavy body. Whenever bears or wildcats settle in the area, the thing emerges from the depths. The cats run away, but sometimes it tangles with the bears. The bears always lose. We find the bones. It's as if they don't even put up a fight."

When the characters are ready to proceed into the cave, with or without Grisoff's warning, read:

A passage leads downward out of the back of the cave mouth. You descend through the dark tunnel for several minutes without incident, and then the terrain in front of you changes.

After descending into the darkness, the characters come upon a cavern. Use the Darklake map as the adventurers progress through area 1 and area 2. Their approach to area 1 is through the right-hand tunnel, as depicted on the tactical map.

Area 1 (Crawler Lair)

When the characters reach the area, read:

The twisting natural passageway you have been following opens onto a small cavern. Pools of water spread amid columns of rock and hanging stalactites. On one side of the cavern, a deep crevice splits the rock wall.

Perception DC 14: The stench of some cave-dwelling beast hangs in the dank cavern air.

This area is part of the lair of a carrion crawler. The monster is lurking in a side passage, and it sneaks up and attacks from behind as soon as all the characters are in the first cavern area. The crawler won't pursue characters into area 2.

Treasure: 175 gp are scattered at the back of the carrion crawler's lair.

Area 2 (Slime Gauntlet)

When the characters enter, read:

The ceiling of this cavern extends beyond the range of light and vision into an impenetrable gloom. Only the tips of enormous stalactites can be seen, poised high above like enormous stone spikes. Patches of a green, viscous substance coat the walls of the cave and dot a shallow pool of water on the floor. Every so often, a glob of the stuff falls from a high stalactite to splatter across the cavern below. At the far end of the cavern, the passageway continues on into the subterranean night.

Carrion Crawler (C)		Level 7 Soldier
Large aberrant beast		
HP 81; Bloodied 40		Initiative +8
AC 23, Fortitude 19, Reflex 18, Will 17		Perception +5
Speed 6, climb 6 (spider climb)		Darkvision
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⬇ Tentacles (poison) ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +10 vs. Fortitude		
Hit: 2d4 + 5 damage, and the target takes ongoing 5 poison damage and is slowed (save ends both),		
First Failed Saving Throw: The target is immobilized instead of slowed (save ends).		
Second Failed Saving Throw: The target is stunned instead of immobilized (save ends).		
Miss: The target is slowed until the end of the carrion crawler's next turn.		
⬇ Bite ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC		
Hit: 2d10 + 4 damage.		
Str 20 (+8)	Dex 16 (+6)	Wis 14 (+5)
Con 17 (+6)	Int 2 (-1)	Cha 16 (+6)
Alignment unaligned	Languages —	

Green Slime		Level 4 Lurker
Medium natural beast (blind, ooze)		
HP 47; Bloodied 23		Initiative +9
AC 18, Fortitude 17, Reflex 17, Will 14		Perception +2
Speed 4, climb 4		Blindsight 10
Immune blinded, gaze effects; Resist 5 acid;		
Vulnerable 5 fire, 5 radiant		
TRAITS		
Ooze		
While squeezing, the ooze moves at full speed rather than half speed, it doesn't take the -5 penalty to attack rolls, and it doesn't grant combat advantage for squeezing.		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⬇ Slam (acid) ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. Reflex		
Hit: 5 acid damage, and ongoing 5 acid damage (save ends).		
⬇ Engulf (acid) ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. Reflex		
Hit: 1d6 + 3 acid damage, and the slime grabs the target (escape DC 18). Until the grab ends, the target takes ongoing 10 acid damage. Attacks that hit the slime deal half damage to the slime and half damage to a single creature grabbed by the slime.		
Skills Stealth +10		
Str 11 (+2)	Dex 16 (+5)	Wis 11 (+2)
Con 17 (+5)	Int 1 (-3)	Cha 1 (-3)
Alignment unaligned	Languages —	

A huge colony of green slime grows in this cavern. Characters can attempt to avoid the stuff by moving cautiously. If the characters prod the slime with an object not made of stone, the part of the object that touches the slime dissolves.

When the first character enters the cavern, have the adventurers roll initiative, then roll initiative for a hidden cluster of green slime. This green slime does not start in a certain position. On its initiative count, it readies an action to drop on the next character who moves into the cavern and uses *engulf* on that character.

It takes no falling damage when it attacks. If all the characters take their turns before the green slime acts, it attacks the last character to enter the cavern.

Area 3 (Burning Grove)

As the characters proceed, they pass through a mysterious fungal forest. No map is needed for this encounter.

Read:

As you proceed downward, clusters of fungus cling to the walls in increasing abundance. Tiny white mushrooms feature caps that flicker with a skein of cold violet fire. The farther you progress, the larger the mushrooms become, until their trunks line the corridor like tall columns. Their glowing caps spread above you, obscuring the ceiling of the cavern. Ahead, the passage opens upon a forest of even larger mushrooms, all of them blazing with purple, blue, or white light. Somewhere beyond the fungal forest, you hear an underground river or stream.

Dungeoneering DC 10: This strange fungus radiates faerie fire rather than phosphorescent light. It is not strictly magical, however, and appears similar to certain edible fungi of the Underdark.

The characters can investigate the different varieties of fungus in this cavern. If a character strikes a mushroom, it looses a cloud of spores in a close burst 3. Any creature in the burst must make a successful saving throw or begin to glow with faerie fire of the same color as the fungus that was struck. The faerie fire deals no damage, but its radiance is distracting. An affected character grants combat advantage to attackers for the rest of this session.

A character who eats a piece of mushroom is subjected to an effect dependent on the color of the mushroom. When a character has eaten of a mushroom, eating additional mushrooms has no effect for 24 hours. Pieces of mushroom can be carried along and used as food, but they lose their supernatural effect a few minutes after being picked.

Blue: The character feels lighter than air. Until the end of this session, he or she gains a fly speed of 1 (altitude limit 2). While using this fly speed, the character grants combat advantage to attackers.

Purple: The character feels especially hardy. He or she gains 10 temporary hit points that last until the end of this session.

White: The character feels energized and agile, gaining a +2 bonus to Athletics checks and Acrobatics checks until the end of this session.

Area 4 (Cave Fishing)

The last obstacle between the adventurers and their goal is the watery home of a pair of deadly guardians. Use the center portion of the Darklake map for this encounter, cropped as indicated on the tactical map.

Read:

A stream flows through the cavern before you. The cavern is narrow, its high walls ruddy with iron deposits and pocked with dark cave mouths on either side of the stream. The passage you have been following continues across the way, in the direction of the flow of the stream.

Dungeoneering DC 14: Judging from the distance and the course you have traveled, you must be most of the way around the perimeter of Citadel Adbar by now. This cavern fits Axelcrantz's description of where Matharic once dwelled.

Two cave fishers lair here, hidden in caves 10 feet above either side of the stream. When the characters pass through the cave, the hungry creatures attack. They have no interest in fighting to the death, wishing only to snatch a meal and retreat to their lairs. Each creature concentrates its attacks on a single character and retreats with its prey. A cave fisher retreats if reduced to one-quarter of its hit points.

Cave Fisher Angler

Medium natural beast

HP 37; Bloodied 18

AC 18, Fortitude 16, Reflex 15, Will 14

Speed 6, climb 5 (spider climb)

TRAITS

Sniper

Whenever the angler is hidden and misses with a ranged attack, it remains hidden.

STANDARD ACTIONS

⊕ Pincers ♦ At-Will

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC

Hit: 1d10 + 6 damage.

✂ Filament Strangle ♦ At-Will

Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +7 vs. Reflex

Hit: 1d6 + 4 damage, and the angler pulls the target 3 squares.

The target is restrained (save ends). The effect also ends if the target teleports or if the target or another creature hits the filament in the target's square. The filament uses the angler's defenses. An attack against the filament deals no damage or effects to the angler. Only one creature can be restrained by this attack at a time. The angler can pull the target vertically, and the target can end the pull suspended in air.

Sustain Standard: The target takes 1d6 + 4 damage, and the angler pulls the target 3 squares.

Skills Stealth +8

Str 16 (+4)

Dex 15 (+3)

Wis 12 (+2)

Con 13 (+2)

Int 2 (-3)

Cha 5 (-2)

Alignment unaligned

Languages —

When the characters pass the cave fishers, continue with "Haunted Cavern."

Haunted Cavern

The adventurers discover the resting place of the Wand of Tir'Lien. The center portion of the Darklake map (in its entirety) can serve as a map for this event.

Cave Fisher Spiker		Level 3 Artillery
Medium natural beast		
HP 37; Bloodied 18		Initiative +4
AC 15, Fortitude 14, Reflex 15, Will 13		Perception +2
Speed 6, climb 5 (spider climb)		Darkvision
TRAITS		
Camouflage		
The spiker gains a +2 bonus to all defenses against ranged and area attacks.		
Sniper		
Whenever the spiker is hidden and misses with a ranged attack, it remains hidden.		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⊕ Pincers ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC		
Hit: 1d10 + 3 damage.		
⊕ Filament Spike ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +8 vs. Reflex		
Hit: 1d10 + 4 damage.		
✦ Filament Wrap ♦ Recharge ☼ ☼		
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +8 vs. Reflex		
Hit: The target is immobilized and takes ongoing 5 damage (save ends both).		
Skills Stealth +9		
Str 15 (+3)	Dex 17 (+4)	Wis 12 (+2)
Con 13 (+2)	Int 2 (-3)	Cha 5 (-2)
Alignment unaligned Languages —		

When the characters enter, read:

The stream continues on, seemingly a tributary of a larger underground river you can hear rushing through the black depths ahead of you. The rock formations in this cavern are strewn with scattered bits of bone, old rusted armor, and weapons. In the depths of the stream, skulls nest among the smooth river stones, tiny white fish darting in and out of their empty eye sockets.

A crude stone altar dominates the back of the chamber, illuminated by the glowing light of a long, spiraled unicorn's horn that floats in midair above it—the Wand of Tir'Lien. Before you can approach closer, the darkness of the cavern coalesces into the slender form of a drow elf. Its body is formed of shadow, its eyes two flecks of hellfire.

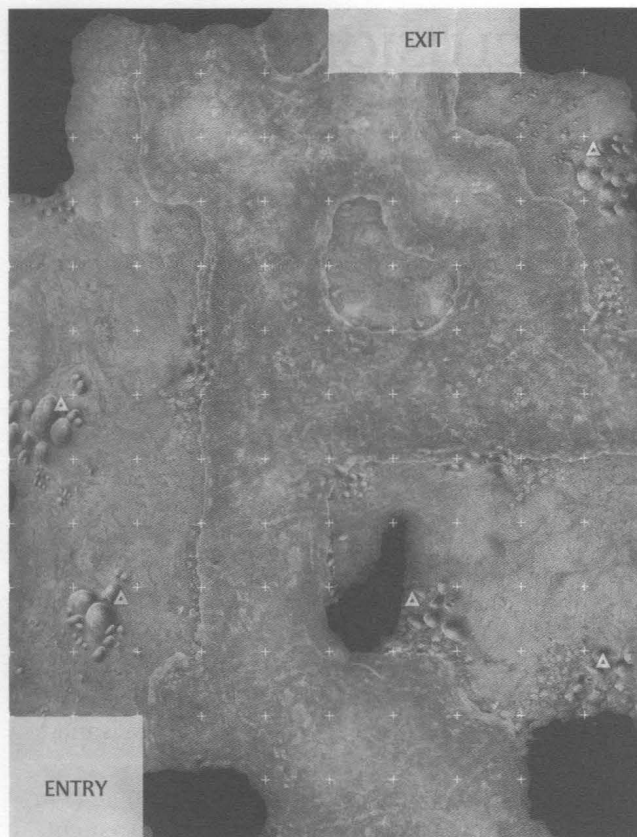
The wraith is Matharic, the drow who stole the Wand of Tir'Lien from the surface world.

Wand of Tir'Lien

The wand can be used as a +2 *magic implement* by a member of any class that uses implements. In addition, four times per day, one character within 10 squares of the wand can spend a healing surge to regain hit points.

In an area affected by the Darkening, the item can be made (as a minor action) to shed bright sunlight to a radius of 20 squares. This light can be shut off with another minor action.

Like the *Tears of Helm* from session 1 and *Garl's poppet* from session 2, the wand is one of the items needed to thwart the Demon Weave.



Matharic		Level 6 Controller
Medium shadow humanoid (undead)		
HP 73; Bloodied 36		Initiative +8
AC 20, Fortitude 16, Reflex 19, Will 18		Perception -1
Speed 0, fly 6 (hover); phasing		Darkvision
Immune disease, poison; Resist 10 necrotic		
TRAITS		
☼ Mad Whispers (psychic) ♦ Aura 3		
Any enemy that ends its turn in the aura takes 5 psychic damage, and the wraith slides it up to 2 squares.		
Insubstantial		
The wraith takes half damage from all attacks, except those that deal force damage. Whenever the wraith takes radiant damage, it loses this trait until the start of its next turn.		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⊕ Touch of Madness (psychic) ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. Will		
Hit: 2d6 + 7 psychic damage, and the target falls prone.		
⊕ Touch of Chaos (charm, psychic) ♦ Recharge ☼ ☼		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. Will		
Hit: 2d6 + 7 psychic damage, and the wraith slides the target up to 5 squares. The target must then use a free action to use an at-will attack power against its nearest ally.		
Miss: Half damage, and the wraith slides the target up to 2 squares.		
Skills Stealth +13		
Str 6 (+1)	Dex 20 (+8)	Wis 3 (-1)
Con 17 (+6)	Int 6 (+1)	Cha 19 (+7)
Alignment chaotic evil Languages Elven		

CONCLUSION

Their mission completed, the adventurers return to Citadel Adbar and Axelcrantz with the wand safely in their possession. The characters have a chance to rest and recuperate before determining their next moves. However, the visions of Axelcrantz will soon show that the party is fated to push even farther into the darkness.

SESSION 5: SPIRITS OF THE FELL PASS

Level 5 Adventure—Winter

In session 4, the characters delved into the Underdark near the dwarven Citadel Adbar to find the Wand of Tir'Lien. In this session, the characters must travel hundreds of miles to the Fell Pass and use the wand to prevent the creation of an undead legion.

Before starting this session, make sure that all characters have advanced to 5th level. See "Advancement," page 6.

When you're ready to start, read:

With the Wand of Tir'Lien, you returned to Citadel Adbar. Axelcrantz took the wand for study, and he invited you to meet him later in the season at his sanctuary, a secluded observatory hidden in a hollow peak high in the mountains. When you later arrived, Axelcrantz filled you in on the divinations he performed while you were away. The mystic stares into the empty air, his eyes focusing on a faraway vision.

"I have seen the end of life," he says. "A million flickering candles extinguished by a black wind gusting from a hole in the world where magic runs amok. A place where the dark elves once lived but were burned by blue fire.

"I asked Moradin to show me the way to stop this fell prophecy. Two paths he revealed to my mind's eye. Upon one path stand trials to test the body. Upon the other, trials of the mind and spirit. Where the two paths converge, they manifest into dark parallel shapes—one of might, the other of wit and cunning. Only should you choose to walk one of these paths with the Wand of Tir'Lien will the light grow and the shadows fade, so that the sun rises once again over the Silver Marches."

He unfurls a map on the table. His hand flits across the map, one finger suddenly descending as if at random. Where it touches down in the area of the Spine of the World Mountains, you see the symbol of a black tower.

"The Fell Fortress," the dwarf whispers. "A citadel hidden high in the Fell Pass, constructed centuries ago by a drow necromancer named Na'Zadhar. The fortress is a gate to the Shadowfell, which the drow plan to use to call forth an

undead army. Moradin has given me to know that the Wand of Tir'Lien can close the gate and push back the darkness.

"The Fell Pass lies hundreds of miles away at the end of a perilous journey. But there you must go as soon as may be, despite the coming of winter."

The characters can choose between two routes to reach the Fell Pass.

The Short Way: The characters skirt the mountain lowlands, following the line of peaks around the Coldwood and the Moonwood, and eventually to the Fell Pass. This route makes the party's movements difficult to track. However, a long trek through the wilderness means that the characters need to hunt and gather food, endure the natural hazards, and deal with the orcs whose territory they pass through.

The Long Way: The characters leave the mountains and head southeast along the road through Sundabar and Silvermoon. After traveling by ferry up the Rauvin and Surbrin rivers, they pass through a barren stretch of hill country, and finally to the Fell Pass. Taking this route means that the characters need not hunt or gather food as they travel in relative comfort. However, the distance is greater this way, and the route leaves the characters open to encounters with a greater number of potential foes.

Departure: Find out whether the characters would like to travel the long route by road and river, or the short route through the mountain wilderness, to reach the Fell Pass. If they choose to travel through the mountain wilderness, go to "Short Route." If they choose to travel by road and river, go to "Long Route."

Whichever route the characters choose, Axelcrantz insists on accompanying them. He spends the journey in meditation, performing auguries to learn how to defeat the drow. If combat occurs, Axelcrantz has the uncanny ability to be in the right place to avoid the most danger. (Monsters never choose him as a target if another is available.) Axelcrantz's auguries grant the characters a +2 power bonus on checks to endure, avoid, or perceive danger in encounters. The dwarf mystic does not participate in group checks, and he uses his skills only if all the characters fail a check.

If a player wants to run Axelcrantz during combat, allow it.

SHORT ROUTE

If the characters choose this route, they forge a path across rugged wilderness. The adventurers must procure their own food, shelter, and water, even as they cope with the environmental hazards of the northern frontier and the savage creatures that dwell there.

Read:

You set out from the Ice Mountains, heading down into the rocky valleys that span the distance between Axelcrantz's observatory and the Fell Pass. Under the pall of the Darkening, the world is dim and cold.

When you are ready to proceed, go to "Weather Trial."

Weather Trial

The harsh weather is a constant threat.

Read:

Cold winds sweep down the mountainside. Heat and shelter will be necessary if you are to survive this journey along the icy slopes. In these gusts and torrents, even fire must struggle to survive.

Ask the players how they plan to survive the frigid temperatures and savage winds of the cold mountain climes, reminding them that each character must do his or her part for the group's survival. Suggestions might include scouting out caves, building lean-tos, starting fires (including magical fire), an Endure Elements ritual, sharing extra cloaks or blankets that characters thought to bring along, and so on. The idea is to have the players brainstorm. Their strategies should make sense, but they don't need to be elaborate.

A DC 21 group check using either Endurance or Nature determines how well the group weathers the trip. At least one character must use Nature for this check. For each player who provides an idea to help the group, reduce the DC by 1. With a successful group check, the characters survive the cold and wind of the mountains. On a failed check, the characters must struggle to make it through. Each character loses hit points equal to one healing surge.

When the characters have completed this skill check, proceed to "Mountain Trial."

Mountain Trial

Terrain is also a hazard.

Read:

The mountains are a perilous place to travel. Falling rocks, deadfalls, and avalanches are common. In the endless night of the Darkening, such dangers are harder to predict.

To gauge the safety of their chosen path, the character must make a DC 21 group check using either Nature or Dungeoneering. If the check succeeds, the adventurers avoid the hazards of the journey. If the check fails, the party is caught in a rockslide.

If a rockslide occurs, read:

In the course of your journey, a rumble like distant thunder shakes the ground. A wall of snow and rock roars out of the darkness and collapses on top of you.

The whole party is subject to the rockslide's attacks until the slide fails to recharge or until the end of the third round after it starts.

When the characters have finished this encounter, proceed to "Hunger Trial."

Rockslide	Level 1 Hazard
Terrain	
Detect Nature or Dungeoneering DC 19	Initiative +3
Immune attacks	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
↔ Attack ♦ Recharge ☼ ☼ ☼ ☼ ☼	
Attack: Close burst 3 (creatures in burst); +4 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 2d6 + 6 damage.	
Miss: Half damage.	
Effect: The area of the burst becomes difficult terrain.	
Special: As soon as the attack fails to recharge, the rockslide is over and does not attack again.	
COUNTERMEASURES	
♦ Avoid: A creature that takes damage from the rockslide can use an immediate interrupt to take advantage of natural openings in the slide to avoid damage by making a DC 25 Nature or Dungeoneering check. With a successful check, a creature takes half damage (or no damage on a miss).	

Hunger Trial

The desolate mountains offer few opportunities for hunting and foraging.

Read:

Since the falling of the darkness, hunting has become far more difficult. Without light, foliage withers. Herbivores perish. Packs of emaciated wolves prowl the hinterlands, devouring every creature they encounter. Light like that of a torch frightens away game. But you must eat if you are to survive.

If the characters have magic items and rituals that provide food, those resources might be able to feed the party, in whole or part, for the journey. In such a case, the check described here is easier or unnecessary. If the heroes have no other resources, ask what each character does to help gather food for the party. Then have the characters make a DC 21 group Nature check. For each player who provides an idea to help the group, reduce the DC by 1. If the check succeeds, the party remains fed. On a failure, each character loses hit points equal to a healing surge. Some characters can volunteer to consume less provisions, voluntarily taking the damage for other characters.

When you have completed this encounter, proceed to "Orc Patrol."

Axelcrantz		Level 4 Leader
Medium natural humanoid, dwarf		
HP 34; Bloodied 17; Healing Surges 9	Initiative +2	
AC 16, Fortitude 16, Reflex 15, Will 17	Perception +11	
Speed 5	Low-light vision	
Saving Throws +5 against poison effects		
TRAITS		
Stand the Ground		
Whenever Axelcrantz is pulled, pushed, or slid, he can move 1 square fewer than the effect specifies.		
Steady-Footed		
Axelcrantz can make a saving throw to avoid falling prone when an attack would knock him prone.		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⚔ Staff (weapon) ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC		
Hit: 1d8 + 3 damage.		
⚔ Spiritual Hammer (implement, radiant) ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +8 vs. Reflex		
Hit: 1d8 + 6 radiant damage, and the target grants combat advantage until the start of Axelcrantz's next turn.		
⚔ Soul Forger's Blessing (radiant, healing) ♦ Encounter		
Effect: Close burst 5 (one ally in the burst); the target can spend a healing surge. Until the end of Axelcrantz's next turn, the target deals 5 extra radiant damage with its melee or ranged attacks.		
Skills Arcana +9, History +9, Religion +9		
Str 13 (+3)	Dex 10 (+2)	Wis 18 (+6)
Con 16 (+5)	Int 15 (+4)	Cha 12 (+3)
Alignment good Languages Common, Dwarven		
Equipment robes, staff, holy symbol of Moradin, adventurer's kit		

Orc Patrol

The adventurers must engage a party of orcs.

Read:

Your perilous journey through the mountains has carried you through many dangers, and now you return to the heartlands of the orc tribes you visited not long ago. Having traveled through this area previously, you are able to avoid the regions where you remember the orcs to be greatest in number.

After you pass beyond the range of your previous travels, you come to an area of rugged terrain where a headless statue stands tall, leaning on an enormous stone axe. Several savage orcs make camp around the statue. One looks in your direction and growls, "What are you doing here?"

These orcs from the Crooked Path tribe are camping around the statue because they believe it gives them luck in battle. The orcs' response is determined by what happened in session 2, as recorded on the players' D&D Encounters Play Trackers.

Success in the Pit: If the party won the respect of Ehnk in session 2, these orcs are not part of the war effort and are keeping watch over the area. In this case, the orcs are less aggressive. If the party is respectful, the orcs can be convinced to share a meal with the adventurers and allow them to rest briefly. Each party member can spend a healing surge to regain hit points.

Failure in the Pit: If the characters did not win the shaman's respect, these orcs are more aggressive and bloodthirsty than usual. The characters can negotiate with the orcs, who allow the party to leave if roleplaying and DC 21 Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate checks determine that the characters convince the orcs to leave them alone. (Three successful checks are enough.)

Battletested Orc		Level 3 Soldier
Medium natural humanoid		
HP 50; Bloodied 25	Initiative +5	
AC 19, Fortitude 17, Reflex 15, Will 13	Perception +1	
Speed 6 (8 when charging)	Low-light vision	
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⚔ Battleaxe (weapon) ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC		
Hit: 1d10 + 5 damage, or 1d10 + 10 with a charge attack.		
✂ Handaxe (weapon) ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +8 vs. AC		
Hit: 1d6 + 5 damage.		
⚔ Hacking Frenzy (weapon) ♦ Recharge ☐☐☐		
Attack: Close burst 1 (enemies in the burst); +6 vs. AC		
Hit: 1d10 + 5 damage, and the orc marks the target until the end of the orc's next turn.		
Effect: The orc grants combat advantage until the start of its next turn.		
TRIGGERED ACTIONS		
Savage Demise		
Trigger: The orc drops to 0 hit points.		
Effect (Free Action): The orc takes a standard action.		
Str 18 (+5)	Dex 14 (+3)	Wis 10 (+1)
Con 18 (+5)	Int 8 (+0)	Cha 9 (+0)
Alignment chaotic evil Languages Common, Giant		
Equipment scale armor, heavy shield, battleaxe, 4 handaxes		

4 Orc Savages		Level 4 Minion Brute
Medium natural humanoid		
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.		Initiative +3
AC 16, Fortitude 16, Reflex 14, Will 12		Perception +1
Speed 6		Low-light vision
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⚔ Handaxe (weapon) ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC		
Hit: 8 damage, or 12 with a charge attack.		
⚔ Handaxe (weapon) ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +9 vs. AC		
Hit: 6 damage.		
TRIGGERED ACTIONS		
Savage Demise		
Trigger: The orc drops to 0 hit points.		
Effect (Free Action): The orc takes a standard action.		
Str 16 (+5)	Dex 13 (+3)	Wis 9 (+1)
Con 13 (+3)	Int 8 (+1)	Cha 8 (+1)
Alignment chaotic evil Languages Common, Giant		
Equipment hide armor, 4 handaxes		

If battle breaks out, the wilderness road map can represent this area. Use the configuration shown on page 24 in "Using the Horn," placing the statue where the horn is located and dispersing the orcs around it as you see fit.

When the characters have finished with the orc patrol, continue to "The Fell Fortress."

LONG ROUTE

If the characters choose to go by way of road and river through Sundabar and Silverymoon, they encounter several obstacles, in the order presented below. Use the geographic map to show the players their progress. When the characters have touched on each point in the journey, continue on to "The Fell Fortress."

Crossroads Bandits

Bandits plague the dark roads.

Read:

Traveling south from Citadel Adbar, you approach a crossroads. Your route lies along the west road, which eventually passes through Sundabar and Silverymoon.

Bandits watch the crossroads. Have the characters make a DC 22 group Perception check.

If the check succeeds, read:

A single goblin lurks near the crossroads, and you see several more in the shrubs and rocks nearby. Noticing your gaze upon it, the goblin strides to the middle of the road. "Your money or your life," it snarls in accented Common.

If the group check fails, the goblins remain hidden and surprise the party. If combat occurs, use the wilderness road map. They attack during the surprise round before demanding payment. If the characters kill the sharpshooter or four of his band, the rest flee.

The goblins want easy money and will take anything the characters offer them—coins, equipment, or even junk. Characters can also negotiate with or intimidate the goblins (DC 15 for any checks). The ruffian leader, Kraggit, speaks with a bold swagger, but the adventurers make him nervous. Nevertheless, to let the party go unchallenged would make him look weak (DC 10 Insight to realize this fact). If the characters bribe or role-play out an agreement, the goblins let the party pass.

After this encounter, proceed to "Sundabar Song."

Sundabar Song

The orc and drow incursions threaten even the North's most well-protected fortresses.

Read:

Though the city is aboveground, Sundabar's dwarf-built walls seem as solid as Citadel Adbar's mountain fastness. Those walls surround a wide moat spanned by four bridges, beyond which a second set of stone walls protects the inner city. Even

Kraggit, Goblin Ruffian		Level 4 Soldier
Small natural humanoid		
HP 58; Bloodied 29		Initiative +7
AC 20, Fortitude 18, Reflex 16, Will 14		Perception +8
Speed 5		Low-light vision
TRAITS		
Combat Adept		
At the start of an encounter, the ruffian's attacks deal 1d10 extra damage against any enemy that has not yet acted during the encounter.		
Ruffian Tactics		
Whenever an enemy misses the ruffian with a melee attack, the ruffian gains combat advantage against that enemy until the end of its next turn.		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⚔ Spear (weapon) ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC		
Hit: 1d8 + 8 damage.		
🏹 Hand Crossbow (weapon) ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +9 vs. AC		
Hit: 1d6 + 5 damage.		
⚡ Trip Up (weapon) ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. Reflex		
Hit: 1d8 + 8 damage, and the target falls prone.		
Str 13 (+3)	Dex 17 (+5)	Wis 12 (+3)
Con 18 (+6)	Int 10 (+2)	Cha 9 (+1)
Alignment evil		Languages Common, Goblin
Equipment chainmail, light shield, hand crossbow, spear, 10 crossbow bolts		

6 Goblin Snipers		Level 1 Minion Artillery
Small natural humanoid		
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.		Initiative +3
AC 13, Fortitude 12, Reflex 14, Will 12		Perception +1
Speed 6		Low-light vision
TRAITS		
Sniper		
If the goblin misses with a ranged attack while hidden, it remains hidden.		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⚔ Short Sword (weapon) ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC		
Hit: 4 damage.		
🏹 Shortbow (weapon) ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +8 vs. AC		
Hit: 4 damage.		
TRIGGERED ACTIONS		
Goblin Tactics ♦ At-Will		
Trigger: The goblin is missed by a melee attack.		
Effect (Immediate Reaction): The goblin shifts 1 square.		
Skills Stealth +8, Thievery +8		
Str 13 (+1)	Dex 17 (+3)	Wis 12 (+1)
Con 13 (+1)	Int 8 (-1)	Cha 8 (-1)
Alignment evil		Languages Common, Goblin
Equipment leather armor, short sword, shortbow, 20 arrows		

in the ever-present darkness, Sundabar remains a redoubt of strength against the forces that threaten the North.

The city has only so much room, however, and outside the walls designed to keep enemies at bay, refugee camps grow larger by the day.

The city gates are closed, and from the battlements atop them a few guards keep watch.

"I'm sorry," says their captain, a towering human with a spear. "But there isn't any room in the city. If you can't prove your citizenship, I can't allow you to pass."

The characters can try to convince Halgan, the captain of the guard, to let them inside the walls. He feels sympathy for refugees, but he has his orders. The characters can roleplay the situation, using social interaction skill checks (DC 22) as needed. You decide which strategies are effective.

Success: If the characters succeed in gaining access to Sundabar, they find it exactly as Halgan described. No inn has room for them, but the characters can rent reasonable accommodations in a private residence for 3 gp per character. When the party moves on the next day, proceed to "Silverymoon Sales Pitch."

Failure: If the characters fail to gain access to Sundabar or choose to remain outside its walls, they stay in one of the refugee camps. The desperate refugees beg the adventurers for food, money, and supplies. Characters who give anything to the refugees must erase that equipment from their character sheets.

Afterward, a young half-elf female named Meera approaches the characters with a harp in hand. She composes a song about the adventurers' generosity and bravery, weaving in tales of their exploits thus far.

If the characters refuse to help the refugees, a song begins to circulate around the camp that pokes fun at their stinginess and indifference to the common people.

Regardless of which song is dedicated to the characters, proceed to "Silverymoon Sales Pitch."

Silverymoon Sales Pitch

In Silverymoon, the adventurers have a chance to make use of dubious magic.

Read:

Despite the pervading darkness, Silverymoon remains a beacon of hope for the people of the Silver Marches. As you make your way into the city, a thousand silver lights shine from the windows of houses, forges, bakeries, inns, and the residences of noble and commoner alike—all united in the darkness. In this terrible time, the rulers of the city have shared their magic with the people, illuminating the streets and sending forth the brave Knights in Silver to keep the roads safe.

At the end of your comfortable stay in Silverymoon, as you secure a ferry for passage up the Rauvin River, a grinning gnome in a purple vest and a pointed green hat approaches you on the river wharf.

"I am Thandias the Dabbler," says the gnome, "seller of potions wondrous and strange. Would you care to try your luck with fate?"

Thandias offers potions for sale for 50 gp each. Each potion is magical, but Thandias is reluctant to allow anyone to study a potion long enough to discern its effects. The gnome takes pleasure in creating chaos, particularly if he can see the results.

The characters can taste the potions to try to gain hints of what effect each might produce. Discerning the potions' effects otherwise requires 5 minutes and a successful DC 22 Arcana check (trained only). A character who fails can't try again until the next session.

Thandias has these potions, each identified by the name (in Common) on its vial.

"Efreet": This red, spicy-hot potion causes a character's hands to catch on fire until the end of this session. The fire does not harm the subject, but the touch of his or her hands deals 1d4 fire damage and can ignite flammable materials (including wooden weapons).

"Kraken": This thick purple liquid has the consistency and taste of sweet custard. Drinking the potion causes a character to sprout a tentacle from his or her body, which remains until the end of this session. The subject can use the tentacle as an extra appendage to hold an object, but the new appendage isn't dextrous enough to use a weapon or shield.

"Water": This blue solution is a *potion of healing*.

"Hag": After imbibing this green, salty potion, a creature is covered in warts, pustulate boils, and thick, coarse hair. The subject's flesh warps and cracks, making him or her hideous. The character takes a -5 penalty to Diplomacy, Bluff, and Streetwise checks until the end of this session. For the same duration, the character gains a +2 item bonus to Intimidate checks.

"Angel": This gold-colored liquid has no taste, though it smells distinctly of honey. The subject turns lawful good for the rest of this session, and is magically compelled to act in accordance with the tenets of that alignment.

"Demon": As soon as the clear liquid in this vial is emptied, a guardian demon abomination (see the next page) bursts forth from it and attacks. You can decide what impact the creature has on its surroundings if the characters flee.

After the characters deal with Thandias, they depart on the River Rauvin. Continue with "River Junction."

River Junction

The destruction wrought by the Darkening threatens the adventurers' river journey.

Read:

The ferry takes you downriver, past the Moonwood and the Evermoors, toward the junction where the Rauvin and Surbrin rivers meet. There, your vessel turns north toward Mithral Hall and the Fell Pass. At the junction, the river is a graveyard of dead ships, their hulls poking vertically from the surface of the water where the darkness has caused them to run aground or collide with one another. Crates of damaged cargo bob in the shallows, mingled with the bloated bodies of dead river workers floating among the cattails.

Guardian Demon Abomination		Level 8 Soldier
Large elemental humanoid (demon)		
HP 90; Bloodied 45		Initiative +10
AC 24, Fortitude 21, Reflex 20, Will 19		Perception +12
Speed 6		Darkvision
Immune sleep, stun		
TRAITS		
⚙️ Abominable Horror ♦ Aura 1		
Any enemy that ends its turn within the aura is marked by the guardian demon abomination until the end of the abomination's next turn.		
All-Around Vision		
Enemies can't gain combat advantage by flanking the abomination.		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⬆️ Tentacle ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +13 vs. AC		
Hit: 2d8 + 7 damage.		
⬇️ Tentacle Seize ♦ At-Will		
Requirement: The abomination must not have a creature grabbed.		
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +13 vs. AC		
Hit: 2d8 + 7 damage, and the abomination pulls the target 1 square. If the target ends that movement adjacent to the abomination, the abomination grabs the target. The target takes a -4 penalty to attempts to escape the grab.		
MINOR ACTIONS		
⬇️ Tentacle Drain (necrotic) ♦ At-Will 1/round		
Requirement: The abomination must be bloodied.		
Effect: The abomination sustains a grab. The grabbed creature takes 1d8 + 4 necrotic damage, and the abomination can make a saving throw against one effect that a save can end.		
TRIGGERED ACTIONS		
Variable Resistance ♦ 2/Encounter		
Trigger: The abomination takes acid, cold, fire, lightning, or thunder damage.		
Effect (Free Action): The abomination gains resist 5 to the triggering damage type until the end of the encounter or until it uses variable resistance again.		
Skills Athletics +14, Intimidate +10		
Str 20 (+9)	Dex 19 (+8)	Wis 17 (+7)
Con 18 (+8)	Int 11 (+4)	Cha 12 (+5)
Alignment chaotic evil Languages Abyssal, Common		

Have each character make a DC 15 check using Insight, Nature, or Perception as part of a group check to help the ferry crew navigate the treacherous stretch of river. After resolving the check and its effect, proceed to "Barren Lands."

If the check succeeds, read:

The ferry successfully navigates the wreckage on the river, as you help the crew safely manage the passage.

If the check fails, read:

As the ferry navigates the wreckage, something scrapes the side of the ferry, creating a grating impact. With the sound of splintering wood, the ship begins to sink, taking on water faster than the crew can bail. "Don't just stand there!" the captain barks. "The ship is going down!"

The ship sinks, and the adventurers must swim to shore and walk the rest of the way to the Fell Pass. They arrive days later, exhausted and sore. Each character loses a number of hit points equal to a healing surge.

Barren Lands

The adventurers pass into the barren lands.

Read:

When at last you near the Fell Pass, a host of ghostly beings with eyes of purple fire materialize in your path. With one voice, the spectral beings speak. "Living ones that tread our sacred ground, speak your purpose here or join the shadow."

These eight spectral shapes are the shades of orcs and dwarves. The apparitions leave if the characters tell them they are working to make peace between orcs and dwarves. Likewise, if the characters met with both King Obould and King Harbromm and mention this fact to the apparitions, the spirits take it as a sign that the characters represent both races. The spirits otherwise attack the party for trespassing on their sacred ground.

If an attack occurs, use the half of the wilderness road map that does not contain the fort. Have the players place their characters on the road, then locate the apparitions as you see fit.

When the characters have finished this encounter, proceed to "The Fell Fortress."

8 Barren Lands Apparitions		Level 8 Minion Soldier
Medium shadow humanoid (undead)		
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.		Initiative +11
AC 24, Fortitude 20, Reflex 21, Will 18		Perception +4
Speed 6, fly 6 (hover)		Darkvision
Immune disease, poison; Resist 10 necrotic		
TRAITS		
Chill of the Grave		
Any enemy that starts its turn adjacent to the apparition is slowed until the start of its next turn.		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⬆️ Shadow Blade ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. AC		
Hit: 6 damage.		
✂️ Call of the Dead (psychic) ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +11 vs. Will		
Hit: 6 psychic damage, and the apparition pulls the target up to 4 squares.		
Str 16 (+7)	Dex 20 (+9)	Wis 11 (+4)
Con 13 (+5)	Int 14 (+6)	Cha 12 (+5)
Alignment evil		Languages Common

THE FELL FORTRESS

The adventurers reach their goal. For this encounter outside the gates of the fortress, use the portion of the wilderness road map shown in the tactical map.

Read:

An ancient fortress perches atop the rocky crags of the Fell Pass. With every step, your strength and will drain into the hard ground of the old mountain road. Indistinct voices mutter in your mind, seeming to say, "It's too late . . . It doesn't matter anymore . . . Nothing matters. . ."

"We walk heavy upon the skein of the Shadowfell," Axelcrantz says. "It lies close to this place, and doubtless touches our world here and there inside the darkest patches of shadow. It will gnaw at your mind and body in an attempt to pull you through the veil. Do not let it succeed!"

The characters can use the sunlight shed by any relic they carry to shield themselves from the Shadowfell's influence. (If they are already using such an item as a light source, they are automatically shielded and realize the item's benefit in this situation.) Otherwise, each character must make a DC 15 Endurance check or Insight check to remain unaffected. Characters who fail the check take a -2 penalty to saving throws and initiative checks for the rest of this session.

When the characters reach the fortress, read:

The Fell Fortress is a grim piece of stonework fashioned in the shape of a gaping skull. Its front gates are its terrible maw, the portcullis a row of long fangs biting into the rock. Shadows flit in and out of view as you approach, like spirits hovering near a portal to the world beyond.

On a plateau in front of the gates, the darkness coalesces around two drow, who stand as if they were interrupted in the midst of performing a ritual. One is male, one female. Each is dressed in weblike shrouds and veils and wears a sigil on a neck band.

"Your futile errand comes to an end," says the female drow. "The armies of the dead are to be called to our service."

"But first, the long night shall claim your soul," the male whispers. The portcullis soundlessly begins to open, and through it rushes a storm of screeching shadows.

Dungeoneering or History DC 22: The sigil is that of House Xorlarrin, a powerful drow house.

These are the drow twins Alak (male) and Alystin (female) Xorlarrin, children of Tsabarak Xorlarrin. They are vaguely aware of the adventurers' previous exploits. Lolth's plans have worked well so far, so the twins don't consider the party to be a threat.

Development: At the start of the battle, three wraith figments emerge from the gate behind Alak and Alystin to join the drow. Each round, 1d3 additional figments join the fight. One is destroyed each time a

Xorlarrin twin becomes bloodied or dies. If both twins die, the wraiths on the battlefield disappear.

Alak Xorlarrin (A)

Level 8 Artillery

Medium fey humanoid, drow

HP 64; Bloodied 32

Initiative +6

AC 22, Fortitude 18, Reflex 21, Will 21

Perception +5

Speed 6

Darkvision

STANDARD ACTIONS

⊕ **Spellshock Rod** (implement, lightning) ♦ **At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. AC

Hit: 2d8 + 7 lightning damage, and Alak pushes the target up to 2 squares.

⊙ **Dark Bolt** (implement, lightning, necrotic) ♦ **At-Will**

Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +13 vs. Reflex

Hit: 2d8 + 2 lightning damage, and ongoing 5 necrotic damage (save ends).

⚡ **Lightning Web** (implement, lightning) ♦ **Encounter**

Attack: Close blast 5 (creatures in the blast); +11 vs. Reflex

Hit: The target is immobilized and takes ongoing 10 lightning damage (save ends both).

Miss: The target is slowed and takes ongoing 5 lightning damage (save ends both).

MOVE ACTIONS

Levitate ♦ **Encounter**

Effect: Alak flies up to 4 squares vertically and hovers there until the end of his next turn. When the levitation ends, Alak descends safely to the ground, without taking falling damage. **Sustain Move:** The levitation persists until the end of Alak's next turn, and he can fly up to 3 squares vertically and 1 square horizontally.

Skills Arcana +12, Dungeoneering +10, Stealth +11

Str 10 (+4)

Dex 15 (+6)

Wis 13 (+5)

Con 10 (+4)

Int 17 (+7)

Cha 16 (+7)

Alignment evil

Languages Common, Elven

Equipment robes, rod

Wraith Figment

Level 6 Minion Skirmisher

Medium shadow humanoid (undead)

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.

Initiative +7

AC 18, Fortitude 16, Reflex 20, Will 17

Perception +2

Immune disease, poison; Resist 10 necrotic

Darkvision

Speed fly 6 (hover); phasing

STANDARD ACTIONS

⊕ **Shadow Caress** (necrotic) ♦ **At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. Reflex

Hit: 7 necrotic damage, and the target is slowed until the end of the wraith's next turn.

MOVE ACTIONS

Shadow Glide ♦ **Encounter**

Effect: The wraith figment shifts up to 6 squares.

Skills Stealth +10

Str 3 (-2)

Dex 17 (+5)

Wis 10 (+2)

Con 13 (+3)

Int 4 (-1)

Cha 15 (+4)

Alignment chaotic evil

Languages —

Alystin Xorlarrin (A)	Level 8 Controller (Leader)
Medium fey humanoid, drow	
HP 86; Bloodied 43	Initiative +6
AC 22, Fortitude 19, Reflex 20, Will 21	Perception +9
Speed 6	Darkvision
TRAITS	
☼ Dark Favor ♦ Aura 3	
Drow allies, spider allies, and undead allies in the aura gain a +2 bonus to damage rolls against enemies in the aura.	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⚔ Mace (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d8 + 5 damage, and the target grants combat advantage while in Alystin's aura (save ends).	
☞ Pain Strand (poison) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +11 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 2d4 + 5 damage, ongoing 5 poison damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends both).	
MINOR ACTIONS	
☞ Strengthen Poison (poison) ♦ Recharge if this power misses	
Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature taking ongoing poison damage); +11 vs. Fortitude	
Hit: The ongoing poison damage increases by 10, and the target is weakened (save ends both).	
☞ Darkfire ♦ Encounter	
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +11 vs. Reflex	
Hit: Until the end of Alystin's next turn, the target grants combat advantage and cannot benefit from invisibility or concealment.	
☞ Pain Link (healing) ♦ Encounter	
Effect: Ranged 5 (one ally); the target takes 10 damage, and Alystin regains 10 hit points.	
Skills Arcana +12, Intimidate +12, Religion +12	
Str 12 (+5)	Dex 15 (+6) Wis 20 (+9)
Con 14 (+6)	Int 17 (+7) Cha 16 (+7)
Alignment evil	
Languages Common, Elven	
Equipment chainmail, mace, Amaunator's fury	

CONCLUSION

Axelcrantz uses the *Wand of Tir'Lien*.

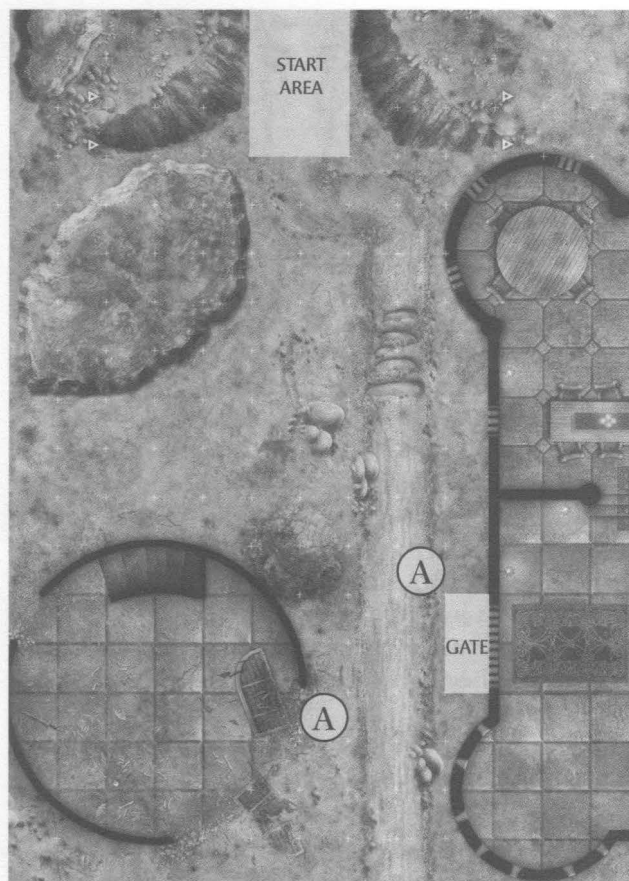
When the characters defeat the drow, read:

Axelcrantz holds forth the *Wand of Tir'Lien*, which glows a brilliant white as the portcullis to the Fell Fortress slams shut. The light of the wand streams through the gates, and a deafening screech echoes through the Spine of the World as the gloom of the Darkening is drawn down from the sky. The power of the wand channels the darkness through the gates of the Fell Fortress and into the Shadowfell.

The sky above the mountains lightens, increasing in brightness until rays of warm sunlight wash across the pass. The *Wand of Tir'Lien* shines so bright that it resembles a miniature sun. It then diminishes. In the distance, the Darkening still cloaks the rest of the Silver Marches in shadow. However, here in the Fell Pass, the wand has broken its power.

Amaunator's Fury

In Alystin's possession is a bashing shield (*Dungeon Master's Book*, page 264) that bears the visage of the sun god Amaunator etched into its face. In an area affected



by the Darkening, the item can be made (as a minor action) to shed bright sunlight to a radius of 20 squares. This light can be shut off with another minor action.

Like the other relics the adventurers have claimed, *Amaunator's fury* is needed if the characters hope to stop Lolth from spinning the Demon Weave in session 8. However, that is not all the adventurers find among the possessions of the drow twins.

Read:

Along with the shield, you discover a collection of orders, troop movements, and battle plans. The shadows you fought were only one of the weapons in the arsenal of the dark elves. According to the reports, when winter breaks, a powerful force of trolls will slink from the bogs of the Evermoors to obliterate the town of Nesmé. After that town is under the sway of darkness, Silverymoon will be next to fall. It's clear that the best way to save the city is to meet the enemy head-on in Nesmé and beat back the invasion before it can get that far.

In the next session, the characters travel to Nesmé to defend the town from the troll army that is marching from the Evermoors.

SESSION 6: TROLLS OF THE EVERMOORS

Level 6 Adventure—Spring

In session 5, the characters journeyed to the Fell Pass, where they stopped the drow from using a gate to the Shadowfell to summon an army of the dead. At the end of the session, the characters discovered battle plans indicating that an attack on Silverymoon is meant to follow the destruction of the town of Nesmé by an army of trolls allied with the drow. As winter melts away, the orcs of the north are massing for this attack, leaving only token forces to keep the weakened dwarves holed up in their citadels.

In this session, the characters defend the town of Nesmé from the troll horde amassing in the Evermoors beyond its gates.

Before starting this session, make sure that all characters have advanced to 6th level. See “Advancement,” page 6.

HOW TO RUN THIS SESSION

The characters must help defend the town of Nesmé from a troll invasion. Most of the session is focused on preparing for combat, culminating in a final battle against the trolls.

When the characters arrive in Nesmé, the First Speaker outlines the assets available to them in their defense of the town. Each of these assets is assigned a Battle Value that represents its current effectiveness.

This value can be raised if the characters work to improve the asset. Additionally, the characters can assign the asset to a place in the battle where it might have the greatest effect. The adventurers can obtain a better idea of where to assign these assets by doing a reconnaissance mission to the surrounding moors, where they can observe the troll forces.

Naturally, each task the characters undertake takes time, and time is short. The characters have nine days to spend in preparation for the troll attack. Once that much time has passed, the final battle begins. Tell the players to track the number of days their characters spend on the various tasks. It's possible that the characters will split up so that smaller groups of them can take on different tasks at the same time.

When the final battle begins, the characters' preparations help determine the town's readiness. Unless the characters improve their assets and choose well in the assignment of those assets, Nesmé will fall to the troll horde.

MISSION TO NESMÉ

When you're ready to start, read:

After your adventure in the Fell Pass, you escorted Axelcrantz around siege forces near Mithral Hall and through the ruins of Winter Edge to Silverymoon. There, you gave the drow battle plans to the city's leaders.

As winter wanes, Axelcrantz urges you to speed to Nesmé to warn and prepare the town. The eccentric dwarf places the Wand of Tir'Lien in your care as a weapon against the pervading darkness.

Nesmé is located on the edge of the Evermoors, a wilderness of deep bogs, sloping hills, and rocky crags. This land has long been infested with trolls, and the town's high walls and stout defenses show that the people of Nesmé live in constant vigilance against that threat.

Even as you approach the town, you see evidence of the imminent threat—a pair of trolls appear out of the darkness, heading straight for you, and another small group of trolls begins assaulting the town's defenses!

Starting the adventure with action in this way gives the players an opportunity to assess the town's defenses in action. First, however, they must deal with the trolls in their path.

2 Trolls		Level 9 Brute
Large natural humanoid		
HP 120; Bloodied 60		Initiative +8
AC 21, Fortitude 22, Reflex 18, Will 18		Perception +6
Speed 8		
TRAITS		
Regeneration		
The troll regains 5 hit points whenever it starts its turn and has at least 1 hit point. When the troll takes fire or acid damage, its regeneration does not function on its next turn.		
Troll Healing (healing)		
Whenever an attack that doesn't deal acid or fire damage reduces the troll to 0 hit points, the troll does not die and instead falls unconscious until the start of its next turn, when it returns to life with 15 hit points. If an attack hits the troll and deals any acid or fire damage while the troll is unconscious, it does not return to life in this way.		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⊕ Claw ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +14 vs. AC		
Hit: 3d6 + 7 damage. If the attack bloodies the target, the troll uses claw against it again.		
Str 22 (+10)	Dex 18 (+8)	Wis 14 (+6)
Con 20 (+9)	Int 5 (+1)	Cha 9 (+3)
Alignment chaotic evil Languages Common, Giant		

Use the forest map for this combat and any other combat encounter in the moors. The trolls fight fiercely, confident that their regeneration abilities will let them prevail against any foe. However, if one troll is killed and that troll was hit with fire or acid, the other one flees.

When the characters defeat the trolls, read:

Even as you were caught up in your own fight, you could see that Nesmé's defenses are not all they could be. Where were the famed Riders of Nesmé, the town's elite fighting force? Arrows fired into the darkness from the walls seldom hit their targets, and the soldiers on the battlements were poorly trained and ill-disciplined. You saw a couple balls of fire, hurled from catapults atop the wall, crash into the midst of the trolls, but more of such attacks would have brought the attack to a close much sooner. Your work is cut out for you.

Inside the town, it is clear that its people have all but given up hope. Shops and homes are boarded up and the streets practically deserted. The guards at the gate direct you to the First Speaker who governs the town, who hurries to meet you near the gate.

First Speaker Thored Sybor is a slender, nervous human male who seldom makes eye contact. He explains that local rangers have spotted a large force of trolls moving toward Nesmé—this attack was just a foreshadowing of a much greater threat to come. The full-fledged troll attack is no more than ten days away. If the trolls take the town, they will move on to Silverymoon.

As the characters saw during the initial attack, Nesmé's defenses are weaker than they've been in years. The First Speaker quickly outlines the town's four key assets in the defense against the trolls, but each of those assets is presently in a state of disorder and disruption.

- ◆ The Riders of Nesmé are in the midst of a scandal. Their leader, a once-respected hero named Varen, has been accused of treason. A younger officer named Selinus has produced compelling proof of the old ranger's wrongdoing. The riders are now divided in their loyalty between the two officers, and effectively leaderless.
- ◆ Nesmé's rangers and sharpshooters are one of the town's greatest assets. However, in a world under the pall of the Darkening, their skills are diminished, since they cannot aim at targets they cannot see.
- ◆ If the trolls break through the gates, Nesmé has only the volunteer watch force to defend the town. The watch has been significantly diminished after a recent series of attacks, and the volunteers that remain are not trained warriors.
- ◆ The fire-hurling catapults that Nesmé employs to keep the walls safe from trolls are in disrepair, leaving large gaps in the town's defenses.

If the characters are to succeed against the trolls, they must take the lead in getting Nesmé and its people ready for the fight.

Corellon's Gaze

First Speaker Sybor also tells the characters that an elf passed through Nesmé a few days before the Darkening

SKILL CHECKS

Much of this session runs like an extended skill challenge, in that each section calls for the use of skills and gauges success in accordance with how well the players roll. Skill checks can distance a roleplaying-oriented group from the game. As an alternative, you can call for skill checks only when you think it necessary. If the characters come up with a great plan or roleplay extremely well, feel free to grant them an automatic success at what they're trying to do.

Each task takes time, of course, counting against the group's budget of days (see "How to Run This Session"). If the party splits up to tackle multiple tasks in the same span of time, they can get more done, but each task will be harder because fewer characters will be aiding the relevant check.

If the characters fail a check, they can try certain tasks again, as long as they have time. Each task described here indicates how long it takes and whether the characters can try it more than once.

occurred. The elf made a donation to the town's coffers, a holy symbol of Corellon made of gold. Unsure what to do with the item, the mayor held onto it until he could get it appraised. When the Darkening hit, the symbol started glowing brightly. If the adventurers want the symbol to assist in the town's defense, the mayor gives it to them.

The adventurers recognize the holy symbol as another item like the four they have already gathered. Known as *Corellon's gaze*, it is a +1 symbol of battle (*Dungeon Master's Book*, page 259). The holy symbol sheds bright sunlight to a radius of 20 squares when in the area of the Darkening.

Like the other relics, *Corellon's gaze* will be needed in session 8 to combat Lolth's avatar and break her hold on the Demon Weave.

After the characters have learned about the situation in Nesmé from the First Speaker, they must decide what to do next. If they choose to strengthen the town's assets first, proceed to "Assets." If they choose to scout for information on the enemy, go to "Reconnaissance." The party can also work on assets, then scout, and then return to work on assets.

The possible tasks, in summary, are:

- ◆ Unite the riders (best for characters with interaction skills, such as Insight, Intimidate, and Diplomacy)
- ◆ Repair the catapults (best for characters with training in Thievery, though lore such as Dungeoneering and History can help as well)
- ◆ Unravel the Darkening so the sharpshooters can see (best for spellcasting characters, using the *Wand of Tir'Lien*)

- ◆ Train the town watch (best for characters with interaction skills—Streetwise, Diplomacy, and Bluff—and those with martial training and physical skills such as Athletics, Acrobatics, and Endurance)
- ◆ Scout the troll forces (best for characters with Stealth, but characters with strong combat skills should come along in case Stealth fails)

ASSETS

The following assets, which the characters can deal with in any order, are key to winning the coming battle. Each asset has a current limitation or complication that the characters can reduce or eliminate. Improving an asset in this way raises its Battle Value, providing a greater chance of success against the trolls. As the characters engage with the assets, track the changing Battle Values of the assets to determine the outcome of the last battle.

Riders of Nesmé

Starting Battle Value: 2

Time Required: 1 day

Retries: No

The political turmoil within the Riders of Nesmé threatens to undermine the town's best martial asset.

When the party interacts with this asset, read:

Across the fortified bridge over the River Surbrin is the barracks of the Riders of Nesmé. The painted shields of the riders hang above the entrance to the stables. Inside the barracks, riders sit in groups on opposite ends of the common room. A fire burns in the hearth but the room remains dim and cold.

On one side of the room, a number of veteran riders stand around a proud old wolf of a warrior, his face lined with the rigor of battle. On the other side of the room, the mostly younger remaining riders speak in low tones around an oak table. The most prominent of these is a blond-haired human male with cool blue eyes, his polished armor giving him the look of a leader.

A warrior with a gray beard hones a dagger by the fire. "Now whose side are you on, I wonder?" he mutters as you approach.

The graybeard is Arrak, a veteran Rider of Nesmé. If the characters ask about the dispute, he motions them outside the room. In the relative privacy of the yard, he tells them the following.

- ◆ Every member of the company formerly swore allegiance to Varen, the older warrior standing with the veterans, and would have followed him until death. He was the hero of a great many battles, and he led the company with wisdom and cunning.
- ◆ Before the darkness fell, Selinus, the young blond warrior, uncovered evidence that Varen was also

heading a ring of horse thieves who stole mounts from the riders. Varen then sold the horses to the highest bidder, including Nesmé's enemies.

- ◆ Half the riders refuse to follow Varen now, and many more are distrustful of him. The evidence is little more than hearsay, but Selinus has made a compelling case against the former leader. Divided in such a way, the riders cannot function.

The characters can talk to Selinus, Varen, or both. The horse thieves have been inactive since the darkness fell, and their whereabouts are unknown.

Selinus: Selinus is young, idealistic, and proud. A devout believer in the honor and virtue of the riders, he calls for evil to be driven from its ranks. Because half the riders support Varen despite his apparent corruption, Selinus believes himself the only person of sufficient morality to lead the group. However, he is willing to accept another leader besides Varen.

Selinus reiterates Arrak's story about Varen running a ring of horse thieves. Selinus discovered this information when he caught and questioned a thief who was hanged shortly thereafter.

Insight DC 15: *Selinus speaks with conviction, and clearly believes everything he says. He is forthright and uncompromising, and is quite confident in the veracity of the information he obtained from the thief.*

Varen: Varen is in his late middle years, but remains the most canny, powerful warrior among the riders. He has been the leader of the Riders of Nesmé for twenty years, and has risked his life countless times. He refutes Selinus's claims, accusing him of being an ambitious upstart and a traitor, plotting to destroy the riders in a time of war to satisfy his own ruthless ambition.

Insight DC 18: *Varen's pride in Nesmé and his selfless leadership of the riders are genuine. However, he glances away when he talks about Selinus's claims. He's definitely hiding something.*

Intimidate DC 23 or Diplomacy DC 15: If the characters speak to Varen in private, pressing him with questions or speaking of the impending fall of Nesmé, he eventually breaks down and admits that Selinus's accusations are true. He confesses that the prospect of the wealth he could make working with the gang of horse thieves seduced him. He begs the characters not to tell the riders, saying that he means to change his ways and needs help to do so. He refuses to confess in front of the riders, but is willing to accept new leadership as long as the new leader is not Selinus.

If the characters learn the truth, they have a choice: they can expose Varen, lie for him, or nominate a new leader. If the characters don't learn the truth, they still have an important role to play in uniting the riders. Use the following guidelines to determine the Battle Value of the riders.

- ◆ If the characters advocate for Varen (perhaps choosing to lie for him and discredit Selinus), Selinus leaves the riders, taking a handful of loyal friends with him. Those left unite behind Varen. Their confidence in their leader shaken, the riders will prepare for battle behind a much humbled Varen. The Battle Value of the Riders of Nesmé increases to 3.
- ◆ If the characters expose Varen or simply advocate for Selinus, Selinus becomes the leader of the riders and Varen leaves in disgrace. Most of the riders follow Selinus, but a few leave the riders rather than follow the self-righteous young officer. The Battle Value of the Riders of Nesmé increases to 4.
- ◆ If the characters choose to nominate a new leader for the riders or ask the riders to democratically choose a new leader (possibly by causing Varen to step down but arguing against Selinus), the riders select Arrak. Although he is not as great a warrior as Varen, all the riders trust Arrak. The Battle Value of the Riders of Nesmé increases to 5.

Catapults

Starting Battle Value: 2

Time Required: 3 days

Retries: Yes

Nesmé's catapults are a potent defense against troll incursions if they can be made fully operational.

When the party interacts with this asset, read:

Mounted on the walls surrounding the town are a series of iron catapults flanked by cauldrons of pitch. The watch guards on duty explain that the catapults are Nesmé's most effective weapon against the trolls that range out from the Evermoors. As you inspect the catapults, however, you note that many are falling apart, their joints and levers rusty. A few have been taken down altogether, creating weak spots in Nesmé's defenses that could be exploited, particularly if the worn catapults should fail.

The catapults can be repaired, but it will be difficult for the townsfolk to create new catapults to fill in the gaps. One character can lead the effort to repair the catapults by making a Thievery check. Other characters can aid the character leading the endeavor with Athletics, Dungeoneering, History, and Thievery. The check result determines the success of the repairs.

14 or Lower: Despite their efforts, the characters make minimal headway in the effort to repair the catapults. The Battle Value of the catapults increases to 3.

15-22: With the characters' help, the smiths and carpenters of Nesmé get the damaged catapults in working order. The Battle Value of the catapults increases to 4.

23 or Higher: The characters complete the repairs to the catapults on their own, giving the smiths and

carpenters of Nesmé time to construct new catapults to fill in the holes in the town's defenses. The Battle Value of the catapults increases to 6.

Sharpshooters

Starting Battle Value: 1

Time Required: 1 day

Retries: Yes

Since the Darkening, Nesmé's famed sharpshooters have lost their purpose.

When the party interacts with this asset, read:

Nesmé's sharpshooters are a squad of expert rangers who once hunted the Evermoors. Since the Darkening descended upon the land, the sharpshooters have been all but useless. Although they include a few elves and half-elves, the main force of the sharpshooters is composed of human archers who cannot hunt in the perpetual gloom.

When you visit the rangers' lodge, you find only a few present, all sullen. "You must be the ones they sent to save us," says the leader, a tall red-haired ranger in his middle years. "Well, go ahead. Produce the miracle. We're ready."

The leader of the rangers is Qualleth. Ordinarily optimistic, he is overwhelmed and believes that the coming battle might be the end of Nesmé. The characters have the *Wand of Tir'Lien*, however, which they used to break down a piece of the Darkening in the last session. The same magic can be used here.

Before (or during) the battle, one character can attempt to unravel the Darkening in one location where the sharpshooters are stationed: the bridge, the east walls, the docks, or in front of the approaching troll vanguard (see "Battle for Nesmé" for details). If the procedure is successful, the sharpshooters become a deadly asset as they cut down the enemy.

The character channeling the magic of the *Wand of Tir'Lien* makes a check using Arcana (trained, nonmagical power source), Nature (trained, primal power source), or Religion (trained, divine power source). Any other characters present can attempt to aid the character making the check, using the same skills with the same restrictions. The check result determines the strength of the wand's magic.

14 or Lower: The character cannot properly channel the power of the wand, and the attempt to banish the darkness fails.

15-22: The character unravels the darkness over one location of his or her choice. The sharpshooters can fight very effectively at the location. The Battle Value of the sharpshooters increases to 4.

23 or Higher: The character banishes a patch of the darkness so wide that the sharpshooters are uplifted. Their Battle Value increases to 5.

Town Watch

Starting Battle Value: 1

Time Required: 3 days (each task)

Retries: Yes

The town watch is Nesmé's final line of defense against attack, but the adventurers must turn this ragtag force into real warriors.

When the party interacts with this asset, read:

The First Speaker informs you that recent attacks and the flight of citizens to stronger settlements have depleted the local militia. If the trolls make it past the walls, Nesmé is likely to fall.

You go to the market square where the mayor has called for the town watch to assemble. Here among the stalls and vegetable carts stands a ragged group of old farmers and youths clutching rickety spears and looking around warily. Nearly a hundred have gathered, but only a quarter of those wear the badge of Nesmé's watch. The rest are clearly fresh volunteers frightened just to be standing here. It would take a miracle for them to defeat a force of trolls in Nesmé's streets.

Insight DC 11: When the battle comes, you can probably depend on less than half this force to maintain position. The rest will likely flee when the fighting begins. Among those who seem stout enough to stand despite the odds, a significant number look like they're unsure which end of a spear to hold. Without training, they will perish.

The leader of the watch is Barger, a plump, nervous clerk with a bald head and heavy jowls. He gained his position last week when the five militia officers ahead of him in rank were killed in the most recent troll attack. His expertise extends only to cleaning up drunks and enforcing curfew. He has never had a real fight in his life.

To help improve the readiness of the watch, the characters can undertake a number of different actions. Each action takes three days to complete, however, so the characters are best served by splitting up and handling different tasks separately.

Recruit Volunteers: Ask the characters to describe what they do to recruit volunteers. They might send out town criers, post bulletins, call for a general assembly of the town, and so on. One character takes the lead with a DC 15 Streetwise check, which other characters can aid using Bluff, Diplomacy, or Streetwise.

On a failed check, a few more citizens come forward, but most are too afraid to fight. With a successful check, the characters embolden the people, and the ranks of the watch swell to around double the initial number. The Battle Value of the town watch increases by 2.

Physical Training: The characters can teach the watch to fight like warriors, providing basic weapon training, physical conditioning, lessons in battle tactics, strategy, defense, and so on. One character takes the lead with a DC 15 Athletics check, which other characters can aid using Acrobatics, Athletics, or Endurance.

On a failed check, the characters' training methods prove unsuitable for the townsfolk, who are unable to rise to the challenge. With a successful check, the characters transform the town watch into passable warriors. The Battle Value of the town watch increases by 2.

Improve Morale: Members of the watch need to learn military order and understand how to follow orders as a unit. By demonstrating focus and leadership, the adventurers can help raise the watch to a new level of discipline. One character takes the lead with a DC 15 Diplomacy check, which other characters can aid using Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate.

On a failed check, a majority of the watch remains scattered and unfocused. With a successful check, the characters train the watch to act with something resembling military discipline. The Battle Value of the watch increases by 2.

RECONNAISSANCE

Time Required: 1 day

Retries: Yes

Gleaning insight into the trolls' attack plans might offer the best chance of undermining those plans.

If the characters scout the trolls, read:

You strike out from Nesmé into the darkened moors. This area is shrouded in thick sheets of fog that make it difficult to navigate the low bog country even by day. In this darkness, it is difficult to move at all. The sharp calls of marsh birds and the howls of beasts sound out to all sides, and each step is a gamble with unseen crags or hidden sinkholes. Occasional flashes illuminate the gloom in the distance.

Nevertheless, the troll force is not difficult to find, for the sounds of their terrible laughter and bloodlust carry far into the gloom. Isolated forge fires burn in the troll camp, giving off just enough light to observe their forces.

If the characters use light to illuminate their path, they attract troll attention. They must fight off another pair of trolls (see the statistics given earlier) and can't gain any useful information that day.

Four important factions make up the troll forces. Each of these factions provides a hint of what the trolls intend to do in the coming battle. Ask which part of the force the characters wish to investigate. The troll forces are spread out enough that scouting each part of the force requires one day. The characters can split up to scout the trolls more thoroughly.

- ◆ The main force (warriors).
- ◆ A group of thin, smaller trolls (infiltrators).
- ◆ The chieftain's pavilion (chieftain's vanguard).
- ◆ A small group of drow (drow support)

For the characters to gain information regarding one faction of the troll force, each character must make a DC 11 Stealth check. If every character in a group succeeds on the check, that group sneaks close enough to the trolls to learn about the faction of their choice. This information provides a hint of how best to assign Nesmé's assets.

If only one character in a group fails the Stealth check and at least one character succeeds on the check, that group gains information regarding the faction. However, two trolls pick up the group's trail and catch the adventurers in the moors (see the statistics given earlier). The noise of the troll camp means that the sound of combat will not be overheard. After this encounter, the characters can continue their reconnaissance attempt on a later day.

If more than one character in a group fails the Stealth check, the group alerts the troll force to their presence and the trolls arm themselves to hunt the party down. The characters gain information on the faction they are investigating, but cannot investigate any other factions and must retreat to Nesmé. With the trolls aware of them, the characters cannot attempt further reconnaissance.

Warriors

The characters investigate the main force.

Read:

Hulking warriors make up the bulk of the troll force. Dozens of troll warriors lurk in the shadows, some of them armored in leather, hide, or chainmail, suggesting that the drow have supplied these trolls. In Common and Giant, the brutish monsters laugh and gloat about how they will soon destroy the town and feast on sweet human flesh rather than marsh beasts. You learn the battle will begin at dusk on a coming day. Several trolls brag that previous assault forces have noted the locations where the catapults are at their weakest. Those sites will become the focus of the coming attack.

The characters learn exactly how much time they have left before the troll assault. If the characters assign the catapults where the trolls intend to focus the attack, Nesmé's Battle Value increases by 1.

Infiltrators

The characters investigate the thin trolls.

Read:

One section of the invading force comprises smaller gaunt trolls. You overhear their talk of swimming directly into the town and storming the streets from the docks, surprising the townsfolk who are bound to be protecting the walls.

If the characters assign at least a portion of the town watch to the docks, Nesmé's Battle Value increases by 1.

Chieftain's Vanguard

The characters investigate the chieftain's pavilion.

Read:

A pavilion made of hide stands on a hillock overlooking the rear of the camp. A host of well-armed and armored trolls gathers around the tent. The troll chieftain, a hulking brute a whole troll's head taller than any of the warriors, occasionally steps forth from the tent to walk among the champions. Only a seasoned fighting force can hope to compete with the troll chieftain's vanguard.

If the characters assign the Riders of Nesmé against the troll chieftain's vanguard, Nesmé's Battle Value increases by 1.

Drow Support

The characters investigate the barrels and wagons.

Read:

Sitting apart from the main force, a small group of drow prepares for the coming battle in complete silence. The faint glimmer of faerie fire illuminates the cowled robes of male wizards and the writhing serpent-flails of priestesses, suggesting that these drow are here to provide magical support to the trolls. That means they're likely to stay behind the main force, making them key targets for ranged attacks. They're likely concentrate their force near the River Surbrin, beyond easy reach of the walls.

If the characters assign the sharpshooters to the bridge over the River Surbrin where the drow will operate, Nesmé's Battle Value increases by 1.

BATTLE FOR NESMÉ

The characters have prepared, and the battle begins.

When the battle begins, read:

Scouts report that day of the battle has come. The trolls are on the move.

Beyond the walls of Nesmé, the Evermoors are all but lost in the darkness. Air is still. The streets are silent. You have done your best to prepare your forces for the coming attack. Now you must choose where to assign them.

The fortified bridge over the River Surbrin leads to the barracks of the Riders of Nesmé on the west side of the river. An asset stationed on the bridge can target a force concentrated at the river or bridge.

The walls of Nesmé, consisting of a series of high stone towers, encompass the bulk of the town on the east side of the river. The walls are the town's main defense, and the asset stationed here will be Nesmé's primary weapon against a force attacking from the outside.

The only places where the walls of Nesmé do not protect the town are the docks, where the River Surbrin flows. An asset stationed at Nesmé's docks protects the streets of Nesmé against an attack from the river.

In addition to those important locations, one part of the town's forces must be prepared to meet the troll chieftain's vanguard head-on wherever it strikes.

The characters must place their assets. Reiterate the information above for the players as needed. One asset must be assigned to each location or force.

When all assets have been assigned, ask the players in which of the locations they want their characters stationed.

Then read:

Far away in the hills, the dull pounding of troll drums rumbles toward Nesmé like distant thunder. Then you hear the trolls shouting in the guttural tongue of giants, calling for the taste of blood and flesh. They move through the darkness like a deeper shadow against the foggy moor, pouring forth against the town.

The troll warriors, most armed with nothing more than their own claws, hurl themselves against the walls of Nesmé. With tremendous strength they scramble up the walls, climbing swiftly toward their prey. On the battlefield outside the town, the troll chieftain rallies his vanguard.

Whenever Nesmé's defenders send fiery arrows or balls of flaming pitch against the trolls, a number of huge trolls hauling wagons laden with water barrels douse their comrades. They concentrate near the bridge over the River Surbrin.

At the same time, the most insidious of the enemy forces crawls its way from the river. Lean trolls have swum beneath the water to infiltrate the town's defenses. They are prepared to take the city from inside the walls.

Your assets obey the commands you have given them, and the people of Nesmé fight with all their strength against the invaders. Nevertheless, the battle soon finds you as well, as four of the biggest trolls you have ever seen cut their way through your allies.

When the trolls reach your position, the largest gives a savage smile. "At last, a challenge," it growls through crooked yellow teeth.

The characters must confront four trolls alone as the rest of the village's defenses perform their assigned tasks. Use the troll statistics given earlier. If the characters go out to meet the vanguard, use the forest map for the encounter. Otherwise, use the village map.

THE BEST DEFENSE

The following summarizes each facet of the troll attack and the best asset with which to respond.

Bridge: The drow spellcasters will take up a position here, out of easy reach of the walls. (sharpshooters)

Walls: The main force of the horde will attack the walls of the town. (catapults)

Docks: The troll infiltrators will swim upriver and attack the docks. (town watch)

Vanguard: The troll chieftain will lead his veteran warriors at the front of his force. (Riders of Nesmé)

CONCLUSION

When the characters finish their combat with the trolls, use the total Battle Value the players have accrued for Nesmé to determine the outcome of the assault and the end to this session.

14 or Lower: Nesmé falls to the troll horde. The defenders of Nesmé fight as hard as they can, but they do not have the strength or force of will to stand against the trolls. The warriors swarm the walls, slaughtering the militia and carving a swath of destruction wherever they go. If the characters survived the encounter with the troll unit, they can escape Nesmé with a group of other refugees. A large force of trolls reaches Silvermoon, so the battle there takes a heavy toll on the city's defenders.

15-20: Nesmé repels the invaders. After a long, vicious battle, Nesmé's defenders manage to hold off the trolls, leaving burning bodies piled before Nesmé's grim walls. The remaining trolls fall back as the horde retreats into the hills and moors to fight another day. Small groups of trolls reach Silvermoon, but the city's defenders manage to rout them eventually.

21 or Higher: Nesmé destroys the troll horde. The battle against the troll forces is an unqualified success. The characters' plans and efforts at shoring up the town's defenses have turned the tide, leaving troll bodies burning in flaming masses as the few monsters left alive retreat to the hills. The characters are hailed as Nesmé's greatest heroes, and their deeds will be recounted in song and story down through the ages. No trolls reach Silvermoon, making a decisive difference in the battle there.

SESSION 7: SHORES OF THE DARKLAKE

Level 7 Adventure—Summer

As Lolth's control over the Demon Weave nears its apex, the magic of many surface-dwelling spellcasters begins to falter. The wards protecting Silverymoon fall, and the dark elves breach the city walls. The characters must travel to Blingdenstone to help reestablish the lines of trade without which the Marches will fall.

Before starting this session, make sure that all characters have advanced to 7th level. See "Advancement," page 6.

Light: Because the Darkening affects only areas that are open to the sky, it is not present inside this portion of the Underdark—which means that the relics the characters have collected do not give off light during any of the events and encounters in this session.

TROUBLE IN BLINGDENSTONE

When you're ready to start, read:

After your exploits at Nesmé, you had most of the spring to rest and take care of other business. As the drow war encroaches farther into the North, the Marches has had need of heroes such as you.

As you make ready in the morning, a wavering image of Axelcrantz appears before you, speaking in a rush. "Heroes, I am in Silverymoon, and it has fallen. Wait! No, I am not in Silverymoon, but it has still fallen. I am . . . Where am I? Ah, yes, I am in Blingdenstone, home of the deep gnomes. I have seen things more clearly since we last spoke. You must come here immediately! Where are you again?"

Somehow, your mostly reliable oracle has found his way to the svirfneblin city of Blingdenstone. After his disappearance after your defense of Nesmé, you weren't sure what he was up to—or if even he knew what he was doing. However, he is linked to you and the war raging through the Silver Marches.

The gnome city, with its unfortunate proximity to the great drow metropolis of Menzoberranzan, has been attacked, destroyed, and rebuilt countless times. Blingdenstone is currently in one of its rebuilding periods, and although the population is only a fraction of what it once was, the city bustles with renewed activity. Newly signed trade agreements with the duergar city of Gracklstugh have made Blingdenstone an important part of the commerce of the Underdark, as goods pass through its Underdark docks before heading to the surface.

After traveling in the first week of summer, you meet Axelcrantz in a tavern known as the Singing Stones. As you enter, you spot Axelcrantz transfixed, staring off into the distance as if listening to some joyous song. A tear runs down his wrinkled face.

"Have you ever heard anything so beautiful?" he asks. You hear nothing.

When the characters ask why they came, read:

"I've seen that the web cannot be snapped by any one thing. Yet it can be snapped. By trade. The web fears trade more than anything right now. That's why the web has worked so hard to stop it. We need to start trade again. We need Master Gemen in Gracklstugh. He knows you are coming and knows what you need. Oh, that reminds me."

Axelcrantz rummages through a grimy, dirt-stained rucksack and pulls out a leather pouch. He opens the pouch to reveal shiny gold dust. "You have the whetstone and the moondrop blooms, yes? Yes? Excellent! Take this gold dust and you are set. Off you go, then!"

If you need to, remind the adventurers that many of the surface nations have signed a trade agreement with the duergar. Something has recently interfered with that trade.

If the adventurers ask around the city regarding trade or travel to the duergar city of Gracklstugh, they learn the following.

- ◆ When the trade treaty with the duergar in Gracklstugh was signed, it was agreed that goods would come through Blingdenstone on their way up to Silverymoon.
- ◆ The easiest way to ship goods from Gracklstugh to Blingdenstone is by way of the Darklake. This large underground body of water is a series of large lakes connected by water-filled passages.
- ◆ After the first crates of goods arrived from Gracklstugh, something went wrong at Blingdenstone Harbor. Harbormaster Ginnertow, a particularly wrinkled svirfneblin who wears a brightly colored bandana on her knobby head, was forced to close the docks, and they have not opened since. Depressed by the lack of trade, she spends all her time in a festhall called the Golden Hills Hearth.

The Harbormaster

By asking around Blingdenstone, the adventurers learn that they need to talk to Ginnertow.

When the party arrives at the festhall, read:

Like the famous festhalls of Waterdeep, this place is a combination of tavern, theatre, brothel, and casino. Most of the clientele are male svirfneblin, many of which are presently singing a bawdy drinking song. When you enter, the

human-sized or larger among you stooping to get through the door, the singing comes to an abrupt halt.

A deep gnome with short, spiky hair—a strange sight, given that most *svirfneblin* are bald—struts up to you. She says in a hostile, squeaky voice, “We don’t got the services ye tallies and sun-dwellers need. Ye’ll find the Foaming Mug more to yer liking. Now scram!”

This deep gnome is Mistress Splitshale.

When the adventurers state their business, read: The gnome rolls her eyes and continues. “Aye. I shoulda guessed. Over there. A free round of drink for ye if ye can get her outta here. She’s bringing the mood down.”

She nods toward the shadows of the far corner, where you see a wrinkly deep gnome slouched in a chair. She wears a red and yellow bandana on her head, a mug of ale held in both hands as her pocked face droops over the drink. She mumbles and grumbles as you approach.

Ginnertow is usually upbeat, but the loss of the harbor to the devils has made her morose and grouchy. Her left eye droops, making her look perpetually skeptical. Use the following points to guide the conversation.

- ◆ Ginnertow has been the harbormaster of Blingdenstone for more than twenty years. Aside from incidents involving monsters in the lake that occasionally get too close to shore, this is the first time the harbor has been closed for more than a few hours.
- ◆ The harbor froze a few weeks ago, and Ginnertow was present when it happened. A thick layer of ice formed almost instantly, trapping boats and sailors before they could escape. No one who got away saw anything that could have caused the sudden transformation. Dozens of good sailors and porters died, and many ships were lost in the iced-over harbor.
- ◆ The leaders of Blingdenstone sent guards and, later, adventurers to investigate. None of them returned. With all the effort needed to clear out the monsters that infest the parts of the city not yet rebuilt, Blingdenstone’s leaders cannot spare any more guards or troops at the moment.
- ◆ Ginnertow was ecstatic when the trade treaty with the *duergar* was signed, since it meant a substantial amount of goods would reach the surface world at Silverymoon by way of Blingdenstone. However, the harbor froze shortly after the first shipments were sent out, and nothing has arrived from the *duergar* city of Gracklstugh since. Silverymoon was counting on those goods in case of attack.
- ◆ The docks are not in the city proper, but are connected to Blingdenstone by way of a two-mile-long series of passageways. Goods arriving at or leaving Blingdenstone on the Darklake must come through

these tunnels first. With the recent troubles at the docks, none of the city’s porters or guides are willing to make the trip.

- ◆ Ginnertow is happy to show the adventurers the way to the harbor if they promise to seek answers to what created the ice and what is killing those who have tried to investigate. This event leads to the next encounter.

Frozen Harbor

Ginnertow guides the party part of the way, then turns back after describing the rest of the trip.

When the adventurers arrive at the harbor, read:

As you travel through the passage connecting Blingdenstone to the harbor on the Darklake, the air turns from warm and humid to bitterly cold and dry. You emerge from the tunnel and see that the small streams and larger channels that run into the Darklake here are frozen solid, as is the harbor. The ice has crushed a few boats that were caught in the freeze. Between you and the edge of the underground lake are scattered a few *svirfneblin* corpses, frozen solid and encased in a rime of blue ice.

Use the water half of the Darklake map to represent Blingdenstone Harbor on the Darklake. The devils do not appear until one of the adventurers steps onto the darker blue portion of the map. One devil then appears in the lake, while the other appears on a frozen stream, behind the party.

Cold: When the *fimbrul* devils rise up out of the ice, the air throughout the area turns bitterly cold. Any creature that ends its turn in the same square it begins its turn takes 10 cold damage.

Ice: All the water is frozen, and it is difficult terrain. A creature that charges, runs, or suffers forced movement on the ice must make a DC 16 Acrobatics check or fall prone at the end of the movement. A creature that is pushed, pulled, or slid moves 1 square farther than the forced movement states. Creatures that have the ice walk ability are immune to these effects.

While standing on an ice square, a *fimbrul* devil can use a move action to teleport to another ice square within 10 squares of it. After the first time the adventurers witness this occurrence, a character adjacent to a *fimbrul* devil who succeeds on a DC 23 Arcana check (a minor action) prevents that devil from teleporting for the rest of the battle.

Tactics: The *fimbrul* devils remain on the ice, using their special teleporting ability (see above) to stay away from whichever adventurers press them hardest in combat. They coordinate to use *icy exhalation* as much as possible, hoping to immobilize adventurers and let the cold air of the harbor kill them slowly.

2 Fimbrul Devils		Level 5 Controller
Medium immortal humanoid (devil)		
HP 66; Bloodied 33		Initiative +5
AC 19, Fortitude 17, Reflex 16, Will 16		Perception +5
Speed 6 (ice walk)		
Resist 10 cold, 10 fire		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⚔ Icy Claw (cold) ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC		
Hit: 2d6 + 6 cold damage.		
☁ Icy Exhalation (cold) ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Close blast 3 (creatures in the blast); +8 vs. Fortitude		
Hit: 2d6 + 3 cold damage, and the target is slowed until the end of the devil's next turn. If the target is already slowed, it is instead immobilized.		
🔒 Frozen Prison (cold) ♦ Encounter		
Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +8 vs. Fortitude		
Hit: 3d8 + 6 cold damage, and the target is restrained (save ends).		
Miss: Half damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends).		
Skills Stealth + 10		
Str 15 (+4)	Dex 17 (+5)	Wis 16 (+5)
Con 18 (+6)	Int 13 (+3)	Cha 12 (+3)
Alignment evil	Languages Supernal	

If the adventurers defeat the devils, the harbor area thaws in about a day, making it usable again. The adventurers are hailed as heroes. Ginnertow showers them with hugs and kisses until she is restrained.

When the party ready to go to Gracklstugh, read:

Despite the adulation you receive for your bravery, any talk of arranging passage to Gracklstugh is met with averted glances and apologies. It seems that the competent sailors have either lost their vessels or left Blingdenstone to seek employment elsewhere. Ginnertow sadly admits that it will take some time to get a vessel ready for a trip across the Darklake to Gracklstugh. You have no problem obtaining directions for the ground route to the duergar city, but this is a longer and more dangerous journey.

Suddenly, the crowd parts as a wizened and stunted deep gnome staggers forward. "I still got me boat, I do! I could take ye anywhere ye need going."

A few bystanders frown and shake their heads, and you hear someone murmur, "Daft Tooger, as I live and breathe."

The strange svirfneblin approaches and holds out his hand, which shakes violently. His eyes float around in his head, so that he seems to be talking to someone a few feet to your left. "I knows ya need me, so here's I am! I can have my Pretty Lily ready for ya in less than a day. Whatcha say?"

If the adventurers ask about Daft Tooger, they learn that the residents of Blingdenstone are surprised to see him. Many thought he had wandered into the Underdark and died. Tooger was once a respected captain. A few years ago, he got lost somewhere on the Darklake and came back changed.

If the adventurers agree to allow Daft Tooger to ferry them across the Darklake in his vessel, *Pretty Lily*, the

old svirfneblin is beside himself with joy. Proceed to "The Darklake."

If the characters decline Tooger's offer, the only alternative is to take the land passage toward Gracklstugh. Proceed to "Long Road."

In either case, Axelcrantz helps the adventurers prepare for departure, ensuring that they understand they should seek Master Gemen the bladesmith.

THE DARKLAKE

The characters can board *Pretty Lily* whenever they're ready.

When they're ready to start, read:

At the appointed time, you head to the harbor where Daft Tooger awaits you. His vessel, *Pretty Lily*, is little more than a low skiff, but it is large enough to comfortably hold your party. The deep gnome helps you stow your gear, then prepares to shove off. Many residents of Blingdenstone are on hand to give you a final send-off. More than a few look terrified on your behalf.

When the boat gets under way, read:

Despite his strange appearance and unsettling demeanor, Daft Tooger turns out to be a competent captain. The voyage, which he estimates will take six days, starts out smoothly enough. The Darklake is a combination of large underground lakes connected by water-filled passages, all of which Tooger handles expertly. If it wasn't for the importance of your journey and the dark prospects of Axelcrantz's visions, the trip might even be enjoyable.

If the adventurers make any effort to interact with Daft Tooger during the trip, they receive mostly daft responses. Eventually, you can give them a bit of valuable information.

Read:

Your attempts to talk with Daft Tooger are rewarded when he suddenly gains focus and clarity.

"Those others think me crazy or diseased. I'm neither. I just seen things. I went to the Spellcaves of Eryndlyn, I did. Thought I would find treasures. Weren't no treasures there, for sure. Unless wickedness and madness and pain be treasures. There was a darkness there, shooting right outta the pit and into the sky. I touched that darkness, more the fool me. When I did, I seen things can't be unseen. Spiders and glowing black webs and hideous things. I know that's where you be going. More the fool you. But I know you gotta go. Just don't do what I done. Don't touch the darkness."

If the adventurers try to get him to talk more, Tooger loses focus again and can give them no more coherent information. Continue with "Danger in the Dark."

Danger in the Dark

As the adventurers continue on their journey, they face a potent threat.

Read:

Three days into the voyage, Pretty Lily is cutting peacefully through the dark water, when without warning, the boat tumbles through the air like a child's toy. With no time to react, you are suddenly upended in the frigid water and the endless dark.

Each adventurer must make a DC 10 Athletics check to swim. A character who fails this check slips beneath the water and must make a DC 11 Endurance check or lose a healing surge. A character can attempt further Athletics checks until he or she is safe, but a character with no healing surges remaining drowns.

A character who succeeds on the Athletics check to swim can help lift another character above the water by making a DC 16 Athletics check. Daft Tooger must be saved as well. If he is not helped within 4 rounds of falling into the water, he drowns.

When the players are ready, read:

You see the creature that capsized your vessel—a great aquatic beast with the head and tail of a dragon and a body encased in an enormous shell. Its gravelly voice is threaded with anger and fear. “Thieves! Murderers! You will not have my last egg!”

In the water, and perhaps out of it, this foe is beyond you. Talking might be the only way out.

If any character attacks, the dragon turtle shrugs off the attack and sternly warns the characters to desist. If the characters continue to attack during a second round of combat, she uses her breath weapon, which is a close blast 5 of boiling water: +23 vs. Reflex, with a hit dealing 4d12 + 16 fire damage (half damage on a miss). If any characters survive that attack, the dragon turtle swims away into the depths.

Assurances that the party is not here to steal any eggs finally calm the creature (DC 11 Diplomacy if checks are called for). Two failed checks cause the dragon turtle to thrash, such that all the characters must make Athletics checks (and possibly Endurance checks) again, as above. After that, the creature is willing to listen.

Read:

“If you have not come to steal my egg, then why are you here?”

The adventurers can explain the situation. A character who lies to the dragon turtle must make a DC 23 Bluff check to deceive the creature. If the adventurers are caught in a lie, the dragon turtle thrashes again, and a third bout of Athletics and Endurance checks is required.

When the dragon turtle speaks, use the following points to guide the conversation.

- ◆ The dragon turtle has lived in this part of the Darklake for centuries. She has encountered other creatures on only a few occasions over that time, since she tries to keep to herself.
- ◆ Within the last month, something stole the dragon turtle's eggs while she was patrolling the lake, driving her mad with grief. A group of pointy-eared, dark-skinned humanoids came to her soon afterward, bearing one of her eggs. They told her that they found it, and that it had been stolen by creatures using the lake as a trade route.
- ◆ Since that time, the dragon turtle has been destroying every vessel that passes near her on the Darklake, searching for her remaining five eggs.

If the adventurers tell the dragon turtle that the drow who returned the egg probably stole them in the first place to provoke her into attacking vessels on the lake, she understands. She helps the characters back into Pretty Lily and allows them to continue on their way. Proceed to “Arrival in Gracklstugh.”

LONG ROAD

The party trudges into the Underdark.

When the players are ready, read:

Many svirfneblin vie for the honor of being the lucky one to guide the heroes of Blingdenstone Harbor to their destination. That honor is finally won by a young svirfneblin by the name of Juliper. Her family is full of miners, and they have been traveling back and forth between Blingdenstone and Gracklstugh for as long as she has been alive.

The group sets off, and Juliper is at first a bundle of nerves. She stutters, drops her gear, trips, and seems like she is about to cry with every misstep. If the adventurers treat her kindly, she finally regains her composure and shows herself to be a dependable guide.

Read:

Your biggest worry as you travel are the drow patrols that traverse the passages between Blingdenstone and Gracklstugh, making sure that no goods make it through between the two cities. The drow know that during this time Silvermoon in particular relies on these goods, so stopping them from arriving there strengthens the war effort.

With Juliper's guidance, you have enough warning of passing patrols to give them a wide berth. However, at about the halfway point of the journey, you come around the corner of a broad passage to see a duergar lying on the stone floor ahead. At first, the gray dwarf seems dead, but then he moans and shifts weakly.

“Help . . . Please . . .” is all he can manage to say.

The duergar is Noprum, a merchant from Gracklstugh. As he was guiding a shipment of weapons toward Blingdenstone, a drow patrol ambushed and killed his party. The drow left him for dead, but he was able to crawl this far before collapsing.

If the adventurers provide him with food and water, or healing, Noprum relates that the passages from this point onward are crawling with more drow than the merchant has ever seen. He tells the adventurers that they must be careful here on.

Ask the players for a plan to move safely through the passages to Gracklstugh. Each adventurer must make one DC 16 skill check toward carrying out the plan. Allow the use of any skill a player chooses, as long as he or she can justify how it would help to navigate the passages while avoiding the drow.

Each failed check means that the party is forced to flee a large drow patrol, causing each adventurer to lose a healing surge. An adventurer who has no healing surges remaining instead loses one-quarter of his or her hit points.

After each adventurer has attempted one skill check and the lost healing surges are tallied, continue with "Arrival in Gracklstugh."

ARRIVAL IN GRACKLSTUGH

The city of the duergar offers many strange sights to visitors from the surface world.

When the adventurers arrive, read:

Gracklstugh, known even on the surface world as the City of Blades, rests on the shore of the Darklake. From what you see of it, the city lives up to its nickname. Many shops and stalls line the streets, with armor and weapons the most common items for sale. The streets are teeming with duergar. They don't pay you any mind, since the recent trade agreements have spurred interaction with the surface-dwelling races.

More disconcerting than the duergar are the strange creatures that trail the gray dwarves around the city. They look similar to dwarves, but have blue-white skin and bulbous eyes with no iris or pupil—derros. You have heard rumors that the derros were created through foul experiments by cruel and terrible Underdark masters. You have also heard that they are quite mad, though they are apparently a significant part of Gracklstugh's population.

If the adventurers make a DC 16 History check or Streetwise check, or engage duergar passersby in conversation, they can learn one piece of information from among the following for each successful check or interaction.

- ◆ The current king of the duergar is King Horgar Steelshadow V. He is not in Gracklstugh at the moment, having undertaken an excursion to the surface world to support further trade negotiations.
- ◆ The derros are slaves and servants of the duergar. However, a council of derros advises the king and acts as a voice for their people in Gracklstugh.
- ◆ The duergar are worried that something terrible is fomenting in the ruins of the drow city of Eryndlyn. The city was destroyed over a century ago by a magical catastrophe, and since that time, earthquakes, explosions, and all manner of strange magical effects have been coming from what the duergar call the Spellcaves of Eryndlyn.
- ◆ If the characters ask about a bladesmith named Gemen, they receive directions to a forge and shop near the center of the city. Go to "The Bladesmith."

THE BLADESMITH

Gemen Bahrdlogh is the premier bladesmith in a city known for its weapon makers. He not only possesses the skill to create the finest blades, he has also learned the art of enchanting weapons. Unfortunately for him, his half-mad derro apprentices have become more crazed than usual lately, responding to the magic of the Demon Weave.

When the party arrives at Gemen's forge, read:

A thick, squat duergar stands over a forge and anvil, pounding a piece of hot metal into a keen edge. Sweat beads on his frowning forehead. Hovering around him are several of the odd derros you have seen throughout the city.

The adventurers can introduce themselves, perhaps expecting Gemen to be waiting for their arrival as promised by Axelcrantz. However, the dwarf seer was apparently confused again. Gemen is not expecting the adventurers at all, and he has no idea what they are doing here.

If the adventurers show Gemen the three objects that Axelcrantz made sure they brought with them—the Moradin-blessed whetstone, the moondrop blossoms, and the pouch of gold dust—Gemen reacts.

Read:

The duergar bladesmith's face twists into a scowl that hides a moment's fear. "I'm afraid I can't help you. But join me outside, and I'll tell you who can." With a sidelong glance at the derros, Gemen hustles you out of his forge and into the street. Once there, the duergar speaks quickly in a low whisper.

"I've been working on a method for creating a bladed weapon that holds the magic of light. But I'm having a problem." He peers back over his shoulder at his derro apprentices, who have all moved to the doorway and windows to watch your conversation.

"Something's wrong with my apprentices. I mean, there's always something wrong with derros, but this is new. I shared my new design for the light blade with them, and they started twitching. I think they were talking to each other in their minds like they do. Then the components for the weapon started going missing. I'd catch the derros trying to sabotage me. It spooked me, so I gave up. If you'd be willing to assist me, I can use those components you have to finish the blade."

If the adventurers agree, Master Gemen asks them to join him in gathering tools and supplies to fire the forge and create the blade. However, their efforts are frustrated by the derros.

Read:

As you help Master Gemen gather his materials for making the magic blade, his five derro apprentices suddenly form a circle around the forge. A low droning comes from the group, the sound resonating painfully in your head. It is impossible to move past them to access the forge.

"This is exactly what I'm talking about," Master Gemen says. "I feel like I'm going as mad as them."

The derros in Gracklstugh have sensed the emanations of the burgeoning Demon Weave, and are subconsciously doing its bidding. Since the weapon that Gemen is trying to create could be harmful to the Demon Weave, the apprentices are taking steps to keep that weapon from being finished.

Read:

Suddenly you are unable to move or do anything other than listen as your minds are filled with thoughts not your own. Then those voices coalesce into a single cackling tone.

"You must answer our questions six.

The truth and lies do not mix.

The weave of magic she did fix.

The spark of light, it always flicks.

But in the dark the mind plays tricks."

The derros are hoping to incapacitate the adventurers by focusing the power of the Demon Weave directly into their minds. They then use telepathy to ask the adventurers a series of seemingly nonsensical questions, one by one. The adventurers have a short time to answer each question before the next one is posed. (Give the players about 30 seconds for each one at most.) A wrong answer—or failing to answer—deals 10 psychic damage to each character.

The questions and answers follow.

"We are forced to speak in this?" Rhyme.

"Hearts of evil commit these sins?" Crime.

"Beings of flesh can never find enough?" Time.

"The winds can blow this to make a sound?" Chime.

"A few numbers can be called this?" Prime.

"To avoid a fall, you must successfully?" Climb.

If the characters give a variation of the correct answer, do not penalize them. If the characters get an answer wrong, they hear the correct answer whispered in multiple voices in their heads, allowing them to understand the rhyming pattern.

If the adventurers answer all the questions correctly, they are able to repel the psychic power of the derros and knock them unconscious. If the adventurers answer any question incorrectly, the derros attack after waiting for an answer to the last question.

5 Derro Thugs	Level 14 Minion Brute
Small natural humanoid	
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	Initiative +9
AC 26, Fortitude 25, Reflex 24, Will 25	Perception +5
Speed 5	Darkvision
STANDARD ACTIONS	
④ Club (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +19 vs. AC	
Hit: 14 damage.	
TRIGGERED ACTIONS	
Mad Sacrifice ♦ Encounter	
Trigger: The thug misses with an attack.	
Effect (Free Action): The attack instead hits, and the thug drops to 0 hit points.	
Str 13 (+8)	Dex 14 (+9)
Con 18 (+11)	Int 8 (+6)
	Wis 6 (+5)
	Cha 16 (+10)
Alignment chaotic evil	
Languages Common, Deep Speech	
Equipment leather armor, light shield, club	

Tactics: The derros' control over the adventurers allows the monsters to attack first. In the first round, the derros do not use *mad sacrifice* if they miss. In the second and subsequent rounds, any derro that misses on an attack uses *mad sacrifice*.

When the last derro is defeated, read:

The cackling voice in your minds briefly returns just before the last of the apprentices falls to make a final cryptic statement. "The new-woven Weave is anchored in the city that died. The one who was devoured by the Spider Queen and became the Queen returns to make magic her own."

A DC 23 History check reveals that the "city that died" is Eryndlyn, a drow city that was destroyed in the Spellplague. A DC 23 History check or Religion check recalls that Lolth devoured a drow priestess named Danifae, who was absorbed into the demon-goddess.

Finishing the Blade

When the heroes have dealt with the apprentices, Gemen needs them to help in the creation of the blade.

When Gemen begins to forge the sword, read:

The master bladesmith goes about his craft like a creature possessed. Sweat beading on his face, Master Gemen speaks. "I need assistance now. Without apprentices, I am being overwhelmed." He begins to growl instructions to each of you.



To aid Master Gemen and empower the blade with the magic of light, each adventurer must make a check using one of these skills: Arcana (help direct the magic), Athletics (use the magic whetstone on the blade), Endurance (work the bellows and provide labor help), Nature (apply the moondrop blooms), and Religion (channel astral energy). Each adventurer must make a check, and each check must be made.

For each check made, a result of 23 or higher is a total success and earns 2 points. A result of 16–22 is a partial success and earns 1 point. A result of 15 or lower is a failure and earns 0 points.

Gemen's Blade

When the sword is completed, the amount of magic it contains is determined by the number of points the characters earn with their skill checks.

Success Points	Weapon Enhancement
5 or more	+3 magic weapon
3–4	+2 magic weapon
1–2	+1 magic weapon
0	Masterwork weapon

Regardless of the amount of magic imbued into the weapon, it is one of the items needed to destroy the corrupted artifacts in the next session. Like the other items of light that the adventurers have found, in an area affected by the Darkening, the item can be made (as a minor action) to shed bright sunlight to a radius of 20 squares. This light can be shut off with another minor action. *Gemen's blade* possesses this magic even though it is only a masterwork weapon.

CONCLUSION

At this point, the adventurers have all the knowledge and weapons they need to enter the Spellcaves of Eryndlyn. There, they must stop Lolth's plans, preventing her from integrating fully into the Demon Weave and becoming the goddess of magic.

If the adventurers are still missing information, a derro approaches them in the street with a missive sent to Gracklstugh by courier months before. The letter is from Axelcrantz, and contains a summary of any points the characters are missing.

SESSION 8: THE SPELLCAVES OF ERYNDLYN

Level 8 Adventure—Autumn

Armed with the treasure, knowledge, and power they have acquired in their adventures around and beneath the Silver Marches, the characters travel to the ruined drow city of Eryndlyn to confront Tsabrak Xorlarrin—the powerful wizard responsible for the Darkening that covers the land.

The previous sessions of this season dealt with showcasing the three pillars of D&D: exploration, interaction, and combat. This final session is meant to show that sometimes the best culmination of a campaign is an epic battle. Although this session is one protracted battle, it also shows how exploration and interaction can be incorporated into combat. Even as they fight, the adventurers must investigate the battlefield, assess and deal with its hazards and challenges, and engage with possible allies if they wish to emerge victorious.

Before starting this session, make sure that all characters have advanced to 8th level. See “Advancement,” page 6.

When you're ready to start, read:

As the culmination of your fight against the evil the drow have unleashed, you are bound for the heart of the Darkening and an anchor point of the Demon Weave: the Spellcaves of Eryndlyn.

Eryndlyn was a thriving drow city until the Spellplague obliterated it. Few residents escaped the devastation, and it was rumored that nothing remained of the former city except uninhabitable caves and passages crackling violently with wild magic. It stands to reason that if even a fraction of that energy could be harnessed, the Spellcaves of Eryndlyn would make an ideal place to create and maintain a magical effect on the scale of the Darkening and the Demon Weave.

Before proceeding, review with the adventurers what they have learned up to this point and what objects they have collected to fight Tsabrak Xorlarrin.

Session 1—Tears of Helm

Session 2—Garl's poppet

Session 4—Wand of Tir'Lien

Session 5—Amaunator's fury

Session 6—Corellon's gaze

Session 7—Gemen's blade

Before starting combat, find out which adventurer possesses each item. That information is vital to the flow of events in the battle.

Use the Spellcaves map for this encounter.

Light: Near the heart of the Darkening and the Demon Weave, normal light sources and magical light created by powers fail utterly. The Darkening even diminishes the power of the six relics claimed during earlier sessions, which now shed bright light only to 10 squares.

BATTLE OF ERYNDLYN

The characters make it to the Spellcaves.

Read:

You arrive at the Spellcaves of Eryndlyn and venture inside. As you round a corner of the passageway, a large cavern spreads out before you. Your light reaches far enough to see that a ledge drops into an even vaster cavern beyond, and your eyes catch a hint of movement a hundred feet away.

Shadow pulses and flows like a stream of dark wings soaring up into the air. This is the source of the Darkening—and the place from which the Demon Weave draws its essence. You also feel the presence of an entity darker and more powerful than even the blackness that covers the sky. Shadowy webs slowly come into view around you, stretching out toward the distant darkness.

As soon as the adventurers move deeper into the chamber, corrupted artifacts that Lolth has captured fill the cavern with strange darkness.

Read:

The entire cave complex is suddenly bathed in strange light emanating from crystals that encase different items. This light clashes with the white radiance emerging from the items of light you have gathered during your adventures. Standing next to each item is a drow warrior.

A serene voice suddenly sounds out in your minds. “Cleanse the corruption from my artifacts and break the Demon Weave's hold over them. You have what you need to defeat the darkness.”

You become aware that the voice is that of Mystra, the goddess of magic, and the items in the crystals are powerful magic artifacts once dedicated to her.

Lolth's Servants

Standing adjacent to each of the white crystals that represent the corrupted artifacts is a drow stalker. Tsabrak and Danifae begin on the lowest level, near the source of the Darkening. Both of these major villains cannot be killed until the power sustaining them is broken. See the “Development” section.

When the party first sees Tsabrak, read:

This male drow wears robes of black silk with elaborately decorated shoulders and collar. He holds a tall staff whose tip looks like a gnarled claw. Tall and gaunt, he hunches forward like a deadly predator.

When the party first sees Danifae, read:

This drow is a stunningly beautiful female who watches you lazily. The uncovered patches of her skin are scribed with spider tattoos that crawl over her body. The largest tattoo marks her forehead, and it gives off the same weird darkness as the Darkening and the Demon Weave.

She speaks as if amused. "When I am done playing with your souls, I shall use them to power my new Weave—the grand web that will make me the goddess of magic!"

Danifae, Lolth's Avatar Level 9 Solo Controller (Leader)

Medium natural humanoid, drow

HP 400; Bloodied 200 Initiative +9
AC 23, Fortitude 22, Reflex 22, Will 22 Perception +14
Speed 7 Darkvision, blindsight 5
Immune dazed, dominated, poison, stunned
Saving Throws +5; Action Points 2

TRAITS**☼ Toxic Presence (poison, psychic) ♦ Aura 2**

Any enemy that ends its turn in the aura takes 10 poison and psychic damage, and Danifae can slide the target up to 3 squares.

STANDARD ACTIONS**① Venomous Touch (poison) ♦ At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. Reflex
Hit: 1d4 + 5 damage, and ongoing 10 poison damage (save ends).

② Lolth's Command (psychic) ♦ At-Will

Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +12 vs. Will
Hit: 2d8 + 9 psychic damage, and the target falls prone.
Effect: Danifae slides the target up to 3 squares.

Double Attack ♦ At-Will

Effect: Danifae makes two basic attacks.

⚡ Mind Webs (poison, psychic) ♦ Recharge when first bloodied

Attack: Close burst 3 (enemies in the burst); +12 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 3d10 + 9 poison and psychic damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).
First Failed Saving Throw: The target is restrained (save ends).
Miss: Half damage.

MOVE ACTION**Teleport (teleportation) ♦ Recharge ☼ ☼ ☼**

Effect: Danifae teleports up to 10 squares.

MINOR ACTIONS**☞ Darkfire ♦ At-Will (1/round)**

Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +12 vs. Reflex
Hit: The target grants combat advantage and cannot benefit from invisibility or concealment until the end of Danifae's next turn.

TRIGGERED ACTIONS**⚡ Avatar's Retribution ♦ At-Will**

Trigger: An enemy hits or misses Danifae with an attack.
Attack (Immediate Reaction): Close burst 20 (the triggering enemy in the burst); +12 vs. Will
Hit: 2d8 + 8 damage, the target is dazed until the start of its next turn, and it cannot make saving throws on its next turn.

Skills Arcana +14, Religion +14

Str 20 (+9) Dex 20 (+9) Wis 20 (+9)
Con 20 (+9) Int 20 (+9) Cha 20 (+9)

Alignment chaotic evil Languages Common, Elven, Supernal

Tsabrak Xorlarrin**Level 8 Artillery**

Medium fey humanoid, drow

HP 64; Bloodied 32 Initiative +6
AC 22, Fortitude 18, Reflex 21, Will 21 Perception +5
Speed 6 Darkvision

STANDARD ACTIONS**① Spellshock Rod (implement, lightning) ♦ At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 7 lightning damage, and Tsabrak pushes the target up to 2 squares.

② Dark Bolt (implement, lightning, necrotic) ♦ At-Will

Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +13 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d8 + 2 lightning damage, and ongoing 5 necrotic damage (save ends).

⚡ Lightning Web (implement, lightning) ♦ Encounter

Attack: Close blast 5 (creatures in the blast); +11 vs. Reflex
Hit: The target is immobilized and takes ongoing 10 lightning damage (save ends both).
Miss: The target is slowed and takes ongoing 5 lightning damage (save ends both).

MOVE ACTIONS**Levitate ♦ Encounter**

Effect: Tsabrak flies up to 4 squares vertically and hovers there until the end of his next turn. When the levitation ends, Tsabrak descends safely to the ground, without taking falling damage.
Sustain Move: The levitation persists until the end of Tsabrak's next turn, and he can fly up to 3 squares vertically and 1 square horizontally.

Skills Arcana +12, Dungeoneering +10, Stealth +11

Str 10 (+4) Dex 15 (+6) Wis 13 (+5)

Con 10 (+4) Int 17 (+7) Cha 16 (+7)

Alignment evil Languages Common, Elven

Equipment robes, rod

6 Drow Stalkers**Level 12 Minion Lurker**

Medium fey humanoid

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. Initiative +15
AC 26, Fortitude 22, Reflex 25, Will 25 Perception +7
Speed 6 Darkvision

TRAITS**Stalker Ambush**

When the drow hits a creature that cannot see it, the drow's attack deals 5 extra damage.

STANDARD ACTIONS**① Longsword (weapon) ♦ At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +17 vs. AC
Hit: 10 damage.

☞ Hand Crossbow (poison, weapon) ♦ Encounter

Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +17 vs. AC
Hit: 5 damage, and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).

MINOR ACTIONS**Cloud of Darkness (zone) ♦ Encounter**

Effect: Close burst 1. The burst creates a zone that lasts until the end of the drow's next turn. The cloud blocks line of sight for all creatures except the drow. While entirely within the cloud, any creature other than the drow is blinded.

Str 16 (+9) Dex 20 (+11) Wis 13 (+7)

Con 14 (+8) Int 16 (+9) Cha 11 (+6)

Alignment evil Languages Common, Elven

Tactics: The enemies here attack when the first adventurer reaches the lower cavern's floor, or when the first corrupted artifact is cleansed (see "Corrupted Artifacts" below).

Tsabrak and Danifae know of special terrain effects that don't specifically say otherwise. They use those effects to their best advantage, especially using forced movement to shove enemies into hazardous terrain and away from corrupted artifacts.

Development

Tsabrak cannot be dropped below his bloodied hit point value while Danifae lives. Use the following text to make this important information clear to the players.

When Tsabrak would be bloodied, read:

The drow wizard recoils from your attack. A web of dark light spills forth from the female drow, surrounding him.

Tsabrak laughs. "Fools. I am one with my goddess. You cannot kill me while she lives, and she is immortal. Surrender now. Your deaths need not be overly painful."

Similarly, the Demon Weave sustains Danifae's life force while she uses it to complete the Spider Queen's quest to become the goddess of magic. The Demon Weave, in turn, relies on the power of the corrupted artifacts here. Because of this connection, Danifae cannot be dropped below her bloodied hit point value until all but two of the corrupted artifacts have been cleansed. Danifae cannot be killed until all the corrupted artifacts have been cleansed. Use the following text to make this information clear.

When Danifae would be bloodied or killed, read:

Lolth's avatar shakes off your attack, and the air shudders around the corrupted artifacts. The connection between this creature, the corrupted artifacts, and the Demon Weave must be severed before she can be killed.

Significant Features

Demon Weave Source: The dark 4-by-4-square area in the center of the lowest cave is where the Demon Weave emerges from the Abyss. The Darkening erupts from the same spot. These squares contain a column of darkness that rises through a hole in the ceiling and into the sky.

A character who can see the source and who succeeds on a DC 12 Arcana, Nature, or Religion check (a free action) understands its effects and operation.

A creature cannot enter this area. If forced movement would move a creature into the area, that creature can attempt the normal saving throw to avoid entering hindering terrain. On a failed saving throw, the creature takes 10 damage.

Corrupted Artifacts: The number of corrupted artifacts in this encounter should be the same as the

number of characters in the party. If the party has fewer than six characters, reduce the number of artifacts, removing the ones closest to the entrance first. Each square filled with white crystals represents an artifact of Mystra that the drow stole and corrupted to help build the Demon Weave. To sever Danifae's connection to the Demon Weave, each of these artifacts must be cleansed.

To cleanse an artifact, an adventurer must channel the power of one of the items of light the party has collected in previous sessions. A character can cleanse an artifact as a standard action. The character must be in the same square as the artifact, and must hold forth the item of light. Once an item of light has been used to cleanse an artifact, that item of light is unable to cleanse another artifact.

Once an artifact is cleansed, the crystals glow with white light and gain a healing property. A character who succeeds on a DC 12 Arcana, Insight, Nature, or Religion check (free action) understands the healing crystals' effects and operation.

A character (but not a monster) who enters a healing crystal's square can take a standard action to spend a healing surge. Alternatively, a character can enter a crystal's square and take a standard action to make a DC 16 Endurance check. On a successful check, one ally within 10 squares of the character can spend a healing surge. Once a crystal is used in either way, the crystal cannot be used again in this encounter.

A creature in a healing crystal's square can destroy a crystal with any attack. The creature destroying the crystal takes 10 damage.

Special Terrain

Already riddled with effects born from the Spellplague, the Spellcaves have become more dangerous due to the Demon Weave and the Darkening.

Coldfire Globes: Any creature that enters a globe takes 10 fire, cold, and lightning damage, and has vulnerable 10 to all damage until the end of the session.

A creature that succeeds on a DC 16 Religion check (a minor action) becomes aware of the globes' effect.

Corpses: Others have learned of what Lolth is trying to do here, and some have been brave enough to try to stop her. So far, all have perished. Squares containing bodies are difficult terrain. In addition, the magic of the Demon Weave has corrupted the life energy remaining in these corpses. When a creature enters a square containing corpses or starts its turn there, roll a d20.

d20	Result
1-5	The creature is slowed until the start of its next turn.
6-16	No effect.
17-20	The creature gains a +4 bonus to its speed until the end of its next turn.

Dragon Corpse: A gold dragon investigating the Spellcaves died during the Demon Weave's activation. The dragon's carcass is difficult terrain, and the magic in the caves has made the corpse a hazard or a potential tool that the villains know nothing about when the encounter begins.

A DC 16 Arcana, Heal, or Nature check (a minor action) reveals that any creature that enters the corpse's space unleashes a burst of blue fire that deals 15 fire damage to any creature in the corpse's space or adjacent to it. The burst can erupt only once per round.

The first time the eruption occurs, a ghostly dragon rises from the corpse. The ghost is confused at first, but then asks, "What has happened here?"

A successful DC 12 Diplomacy check (a standard action) inspires the dragon to join the fight on the party's side. If it does so, the ghost deals 10 damage to Danifae each round just after the initiative count of the creature that caused the first burst of blue fire. If the adventurer fails the Diplomacy check, the dragon cannot hold its ghostly form together, and it dissipates.

Green Blob: The green blob on the map is all that is left of a drow wizard who was destroyed when the power of the Demon Weave overcame him. Any creature standing on or adjacent to the blob can sense the magic in it with a DC 12 Arcana check (trained only) made as a minor action. Such a creature can harness residual energy from the Demon Weave by making a DC 16 Arcana check (trained only). On a successful check, the character's next attack that hits deals 2d10 extra force damage. If the check fails by 5 or more, the attacker takes 10 force damage when its next attack is resolved.

Ledges: Each of the ledges leading down to the main section of the cave is 20 feet high (DC 15 Athletics to climb). The ledges have begun to crumble as a result of the magic coursing through the cavern (DC 12 Dungeonengineering check made as a minor action to discern). If a creature uses a standard action to strike the edge of a ledge where another creature is standing, that creature falls off the ledge (no saving throw).

Maelstrom: This eruption of flame full of contorted drow faces is represented by the 4-by-4-square area of fire on the map.

A DC 16 Arcana, Heal, or Nature check (a minor action) reveals that the maelstrom isn't harmful. A character who enters the maelstrom can make a DC 16 Insight check as a free action. If that check is successful, the adventurer enables an ally to regain the use of an encounter power. Each character can use the maelstrom only once, and a particular encounter power's use can be regained only once.

Pit: The pit is 30 feet deep (DC 15 Athletics to climb). Any creature falling into the pit is immobilized (save ends). Several corpses rest at the bottom of the pit, one still holding a *potion of healing* in its hand.

Reflecting Motes: The three 1-by-2-square motes are pieces of Mystra's essence that are trying to reform here. These features can be beneficial to the adventurers.

Any character who has line of sight to a reflecting mote sees a vague and shifting image of a female in white robes beckoning from within. A successful DC 16 History check (a minor action) allows the character to recognize the image as that of the dead goddess Mystra, former and beneficent deity of magic.

An adventurer who has gained vulnerable 10 to all damage from a coldfire globe loses that vulnerability when he or she enters a mote. The character can also make a saving throw. On a failed saving throw, the adventurer is teleported into the maelstrom. On a successful saving throw, the adventurer gains resist 5 to all damage until the end of the session and is teleported into a random square containing one of the corrupted artifacts.

If Danifae or Tsabarak is forced into a mote, that individual gains vulnerable 5 to all damage for the rest of the session.

Teleporting Maw: Near the entrance, the remnants of the Spellplague have created a roaring maw in the floor. A creature that enters a square adjacent to or within the maw is subject to an attack: +12 vs. Will; 10 force and fire damage, and the creature is randomly teleported into one of the coldfire globes.

Water: This pool is difficult terrain.

Final Cleansing

When the adventurers cleanse all the corrupted artifacts, the connection between Lolth and Danifae is broken.

After the last artifact is cleansed, read:

The final dark artifact is purified. The darkness is purged from it, but even as that shadow rises into the air, the tattoo-covered drow draws it around her like armor. She screams, "Pathetic mortals! You think this means anything!? The power is in me, and I feed on it as I shall feed on your souls!"

If a Character Dies

This battle is deadly. It is possible that an adventurer might die. If the character has, in Mystra's opinion, acted heroically during the campaign, death is temporarily denied its prize.

If an adventurer dies, read to the player:

As your soul leaves your body, a bright light appears. Within the light you see a beautiful human woman, and she speaks to you. "Although I cannot return you to the living, if you wish to assist your allies in this fight, I can help. But you must be worthy of this gift."

Give the player a chance to make an appeal to Mystra, explaining why his or her character ought to be given a chance to help in the battle.

When the player finishes that appeal, read:

"I believe you are worthy," the bright woman says. "Go with my blessing." Suddenly the world comes back into focus, and you realize that your ghostly form can see and hear everything taking place on the battlefield.

The character retains his or her place in the initiative order, but has no access to his or her normal powers and attacks. However, once per round as an immediate interrupt, the adventurer can assist an ally by granting a +2 bonus to the ally's attack roll, saving throw, or skill check. Multiple dead characters can use the bonus to boost the same attack roll, saving throw, or skill check.

Once the combat is over, any dead adventurers who lingered on the battlefield pass on.

Mystra's Assistance

If the fight is going badly, or you decide the characters deserve a break for the sake of fun, Mystra can provide assistance once and only once.

If Mystra appears, read:

The dark column rising into the sky wavers as a white light streaks through it. A female's voice, gentle but commanding, resounds through the caverns. "Do not surrender, heroes. You are closer than you think to defeating evil and bringing hope and light back to the world. You do not fight alone."

A wave of energy washes over you, leaving you invigorated and able to take the fight to your foes with newfound strength drawn from the forces of light.

All the following effects occur.

- ◆ All conditions affecting the adventurers end.
- ◆ Each adventurer can spend a healing surge.
- ◆ Each adventurer regains the use of an expended encounter power.

DANIFAE'S DEFEAT

When Danifae drops to 0 hit points and should die, what happens next depends on Tsabrak's condition.

If Tsabrak is alive, read:

As your final blow strikes the female drow, she twists and writhes. She points toward the wizard.

"Give me your life!" she commands.

Before the male can move or speak, he shudders and shrinks as if his life is draining away from the inside. In a heartbeat, his body desiccates and crumbles to dust.

Tsabrak dies.

If Tsabrak is dead, read:

The female's lower body distends as eight legs emerge from her sickeningly large abdomen. She becomes half drow and half spider—a drider.

Her transformation complete, she laughs as she shouts, "Now you have angered me!"

As she rears back to unleash her power, a noise interrupts her. The dark stream surging out of the ground sputters, crackles, and then changes. A blue-white light replaces the shadow. Strands of the Demon Weave writhe like tentacles, then go still as a silvery brightness replaces their darkness.

A voice, placid and forceful, emerges from the column of energy surging out of the ground. "Only one shall be called the goddess of magic. It shall not be you, wretched Spider Queen. Never you."

The drider hisses at the bright light coursing around it. Silvery strands of the Weave lash at her, cutting her deeply and swiftly. With a final glare and sneer, the creature disappears.

AFTERMATH

Once Danifae is slain, the world begins to return to normal, or at least to a more peaceful state. The end of the Darkening breaks the will of the orcs who have fought under its protection. As the dwarves of Mithral Hall and Citadel Adbar finally break the orc sieges, the forces of Silverymoon and Everlund manage to rout the orcs, driving them into the waiting axes of the dwarves.

Lolth's attempt to seize control of the Weave and become goddess of magic—the tale that has been told through three seasons of D&D ENCOUNTERS play and several novels over the course of this year—is foiled forever.

Mystra, long thought gone, has returned to the world with a dramatic show of power. It will be some time, however, before she has restored the full strength of the Weave. That work will require the full efforts of the goddess's Chosen.

The adventurers can rest well in the knowledge that they made a significant difference in a war that has changed the fate of the world.



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Darkness spreads across Faerûn. Under this pall of shadow, the drow fight with impunity, protected from the harsh daylight. With every passing month, they conquer more territory and further Lolth's ultimate goal of becoming the Goddess of Magic.

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