

# CRUCIBLE

AN EPIC MONTHLY MAGAZINE FOR FIFTH EDITION

## DRAKORN DELVE

Death, Despair and  
a Sparkling Lair

## LUKE GYGAX

We talk with *Dungeons  
& Dragons* Second Son

## THE FORGOTTEN WARRIOR

The journey begins in our  
monthly four page comic!

FREE LAUNCH ISSUE





# CRUCIBLE

AN EPIC MONTHLY MAGAZINE FOR FIFTH EDITION

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MAGAZINE

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# And So We Begin...

You currently hold in your hands a magazine born from the imaginations of two life-long devotees to the World's Greatest Role-Playing Game and brought to life with the help of a diverse team of creators spanning the entire globe!

We have all struggled through the world-wide events of the last two years, but the one thing that brought us together is a shared passion of crafting exciting adventures, unique worlds, and fantastical creatures. As we battled a world-wide pandemic, we also made heroes that fought against the dark tides of evil, delved deep under mountains, and sailed the seas against deadly corsairs. And these are the adventures that we want to share with all of you!

All of the content you'll find here is built to be plug-and-play and easily dropped into your personal campaign with little to no prepwork. For this launch issue we chose the theme of "Lairs" to showcase four unique BBEG's and highlight their personal lairs and stories. We also packed in tons of additional content that ties into the theme, as we will continue to do for each monthly issue! Join us next month where we will be searching for treasure and exploring the horrors of the deep in the "Rising Tides"!

Thank you for giving us a chance to share our passion with you!

*Ready for an adventure?*  
**TJ & Alex**

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Our dear friends, those powerful baddies the Direlords, have taken time out of their villainous plans to answer a few letters from our readers. Make sure to submit your own letters at [deardirelords@cruciblemag.com](mailto:deardirelords@cruciblemag.com)!

### COMIC



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The introduction to our ongoing comic series kicks off this issue with a full four pages! We enter the world of the Freelands through the eyes of one of its greatest—and forgotten—legendary heroes.

# HOW TO USE THIS MAGAZINE

To get the most out of the adventures and other content provided within the pages of this magazine, you will need the Fifth Edition core rulebooks abbreviated as *PHB*, *DMG*, and *MM*. You can also use the Basic Rules and the Fifth Edition System Reference Document (SRD) which can be downloaded for free online. Every adventure provided in this magazine uses the fifth edition SRD and OGL.

### FORMATTING

In the provided adventures' text you will come across references that point to information that can be found in the Fifth Edition core rulebooks.

*Magic Items* and *Spells* are italicized and **creature names** are bolded when their statistics are potentially needed. If the adventure introduces new creatures, items, or spells, the relevant information will be provided in the corresponding text.

Text that is presented in a box like this is meant to be read aloud or paraphrased.

### DOWNLOADABLE DIGITAL ASSETS

Throughout the magazine are QR codes/links for downloading digital assets to be used at the table or in your preferred Virtual Tabletop\*, ranging from player handouts, maps, magic items cards and more.

You can download the content piecemeal when you need it, or if you want to flex your download speeds then you can download the entire issues' digital content from this QR code by using your camera on the code, or using the clickable url.



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# SEA GIANT'S COVE





## BACKSTORY

Bonsag was not like other sea giants, those reclusive beings who live in coral villages at the bottom of the ocean and shun the rest of civilization. He had dreams and ambitions greater than the rough, simple life that his tribe offered—he wanted to see the land and travel like the ships he watched regularly pass by his small village. Bonsag believed the sea giant tribe should move closer to the coast and engage with the land folk more often. The other giants were not pleased with his grandiose ideas, and when the hot-tempered youth pushed for changes, the tribe felt it best if they parted ways. The young giant was exiled from his tribe and forced out into the world alone, where he quickly found that life outside the tribe was far more complicated than he imagined, and his dreams of greatness were quickly dashed.

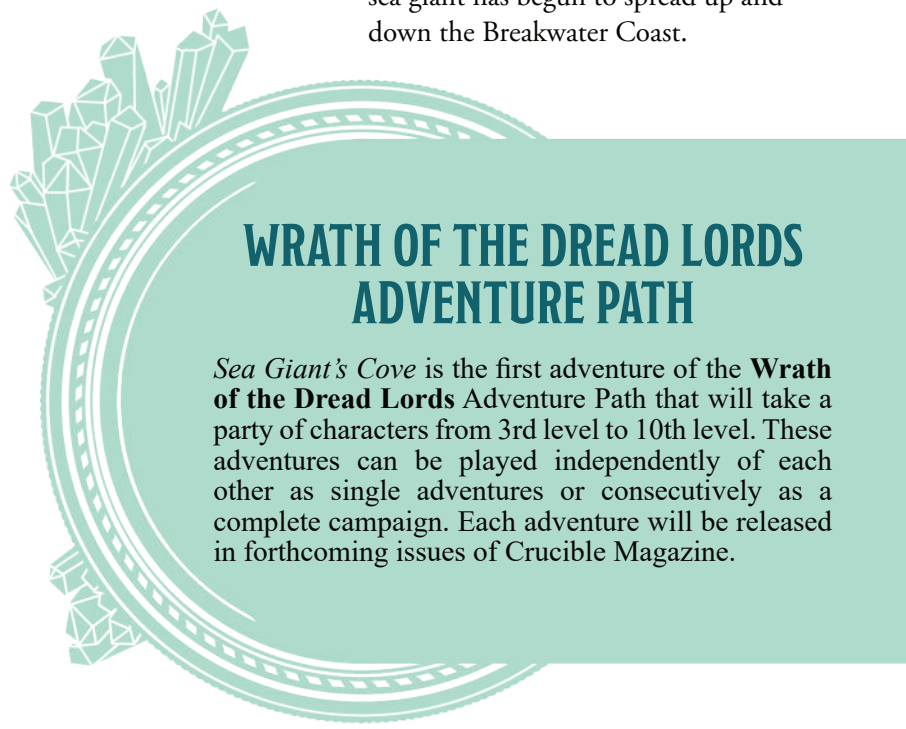
The pirate lord Captain Holden “Rough Dog” Hayden found the half-starved giant in this despondent state. The infamous corsair and captain of the *Night Rover* had been terrorizing the Breakwater Coast for years. With the authorities growing closer to capturing his ship, Captain Hayden saw an opportunity in recruiting the naive young giant to his side. The shrewd pirate filled Bonsag’s head with promises of wealth and glory as a pirate and convinced him to join his crew.

The pirate lord tasked Bonsag with attacking trading vessels traveling between the Holy Ignis Empire to the east and the port city of Hopewell Harbor in the Freelands. After sinking a ship, the giant hands over the goods to the pirates before retreating to a hidden sea cave to enjoy his share of the spoils. This arrangement has proven effective in distracting the authorities away from pursuing the *Night Rover* as fear of the sea giant has begun to spread up and down the Breakwater Coast.

APL  
3

*Sea Giant’s Cove* is a Fifth Edition adventure intended for **three to five characters of 2nd to 4th level** and optimized for **four characters with an average party level (APL) of 3**. A young sea giant has taken residence in a hidden cove on the Breakwater Coast and is sinking merchant vessels at the behest of a fearsome pirate lord. The attacks have made the nearby port city of Hopewell Harbor panic, and calls have gone out to stop the rampaging giant before the sea trade the port depends on ceases entirely.

This adventure takes place in the Freelands campaign setting but can be placed into any existing campaign with a small port city and sea cave with only a few modifications and name changes.



## WRATH OF THE DREAD LORDS ADVENTURE PATH

*Sea Giant’s Cove* is the first adventure of the **Wrath of the Dread Lords** Adventure Path that will take a party of characters from 3rd level to 10th level. These adventures can be played independently of each other as single adventures or consecutively as a complete campaign. Each adventure will be released in forthcoming issues of *Crucible Magazine*.



# ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The characters learn about a creature terrorizing the coast and sinking trading vessels. They visit Hopewell Harbor and are tasked with ending the threat. The party teams up with an old pirate captain to find the underwater village of Ocelona, home to nixies who may know more information. After convincing the nixies to help, the characters learn the location of the sea giant's hidden cave. They confront the young giant and determine his ultimate fate after battling through the cave and against the rising tides that threaten to drown them.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

Here are a few ways to get the characters hooked into this adventure:

### ◆ NO SAIL ZONE

Sailing is the fastest and relatively safest mode of travel along the Breakwater Coast. As the characters travel along the coast, their ship unexpectedly docks in Hopewell Harbor. The captain is adamant that they will sail no further due to reports of a strange giant attacking vessels along the coast. She recommends the Eager Gopher as a place to stay and suggests they gather information about the ongoing situation from the local merchants' guild if they're interested in helping.

### ◆ MISSING SUPPLIES

A local temple priest has reached out to one of the more religious characters and requested their assistance. The temple expected a shipment of much-needed medical supplies to be delivered to Hopewell Harbor from *The Mastiff*, a trading vessel coming from the Holy Ignis Empire. The giant attacked the ship and stole the supplies. The priest received a divine vision, and it told him that the character would be the one to retrieve the supplies.

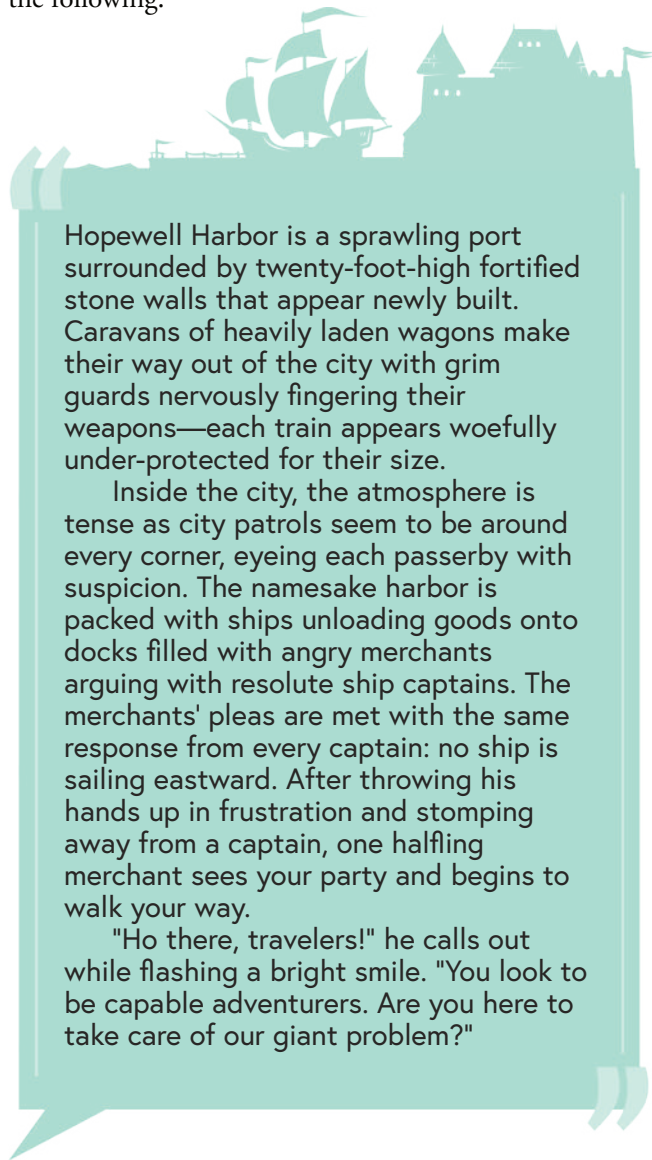
### ◆ TREASURE HUNTERS

Reports and rumors have been circling the taverns up and down the Breakwater Coast. Everyone is talking about a strange giant attacking merchant vessels traveling to Hopewell Harbor and stealing literal tons of valuable goods. There's even a bounty of 1,000 gp for the giant's head by the merchant's guild. Anyone brave enough to find the giant's hideaway could claim the goods and become very wealthy.

# HOPWELL HARBOR

Hopewell Harbor is a busy port city on the very southeastern tip of the Freelands. Little more than a fishing village before the end of the Great War, the port has grown into a central hub of commerce with the nearby Holy Ignis Empire since the peace treaty was signed twenty years ago. It stands now as one of the most diverse and growing populations outside of the capital city of Haven.

When the characters arrive in the city, read aloud the following:



Hopewell Harbor is a sprawling port surrounded by twenty-foot-high fortified stone walls that appear newly built. Caravans of heavily laden wagons make their way out of the city with grim guards nervously fingering their weapons—each train appears woefully under-protected for their size.

Inside the city, the atmosphere is tense as city patrols seem to be around every corner, eyeing each passerby with suspicion. The namesake harbor is packed with ships unloading goods onto docks filled with angry merchants arguing with resolute ship captains. The merchants' pleas are met with the same response from every captain: no ship is sailing eastward. After throwing his hands up in frustration and stomping away from a captain, one halfling merchant sees your party and begins to walk your way.

"Ho there, travelers!" he calls out while flashing a bright smile. "You look to be capable adventurers. Are you here to take care of our giant problem?"

The merchant's name is Korder Moonbarrel (LN halfling **spy**), and when he is not gathering intelligence for the Holy Ignis Empire, he trades in silks that are popular in the primarily desert eastern empire. He is a plump halfling with curly brown hair, mischievous



green eyes, and a garishly bright orange silk vest. Korder is frustrated that no captain will take his goods down the coast, and he does not want to risk the bandits that plague the overland routes. The halfling downplays the danger of the giant the captains are concerned about (“Cowards, all of ’em!”) and tells the characters that the merchant’s guild has a reward for “those who have the guts” to find and take on the giant. He recommends asking around the docks, the city guard, or in the tavern room of the Eager Gopher, a popular Inn where he is also staying.

## EXPLORING THE HARBOR

The characters are free to explore the city to gather supplies and any information they can on their own. Many Harbor citizens are eager to gossip and discuss the current talk of the town, and their conversations are easily overheard. As the characters make their way around the city, roll a d6 and consult the Hopewell Harbor Rumors table, or pick a rumor the characters haven’t heard yet. These rumors have varying degrees of truthfulness, as noted at the end of each.

## IMPORTANT NPCs & LOCATIONS

The characters should eventually be pointed towards visiting some or all of the following NPCs and places during the course of their information gathering. While they can learn a lot of information, all roads lead to Captain Renegade.

If the characters have difficulty determining their next step, Kordan Moonbarrel finds them once more and tells them he’s heard of a captain who may help them. His name is Captain Renegade, and he can be located at the Tippy Rhino tavern near the docks.

## CITY GUARDS

Guard Captain Jon Garland is a war veteran that embodies everything a paladin should be. He is a broad-shouldered man in his early forties with a dusting of grey at the temples of his short-cropped black hair. As captain of the city guard, he can be found in the city’s town hall organizing extra patrols of the docks. His men are overworked and on edge as tensions in the city rise. While he keeps an open-door policy, the only advice Captain Garland or any city guards have is to recommend the characters speak to Captain Foambeard at the Eager Gopher.



### HOPEWELL HARBOR RUMORS

d6 Rumor

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 | “I saw it take down a whole ship as we were passing! It had dozens of tentacles and a maw full of razor-sharp teeth. I’ll never forget that day, it haunts my dreams still.” <b>(False)</b>  |
| 2 | “Between you and me, I think it’s that pirate lord, Rough Dog Hayden! He’s been terrorizing these waters for years, and now all of a sudden this “giant” appears, and he’s nowhere to be found? It’s not just the harbor that smells a bit fishy to me.” <b>(Partially True)</b> |
| 3 | “I hear that Jon Garland, captain of the city guard, sent the dwarven schooner <i>The Surprise</i> to take on the giant, but they came back empty-handed. Those dwarves are masters of the sea, so Captain Foambeard must be fuming down at the Eager Gopher.” <b>(True)</b>     |
| 4 | “Ol’ Captain Renegade is spinning his tales again. He says that he knows how to find the sea monster. Get this, he says “the pixies” will know the way! I tell ya, that old sea dog has had too many cups of that swill the Tippy Rhino calls rum.” <b>(True)</b>                |
| 5 | “Captain Garland should do something! With all of these goods sitting here at port, it’s just asking for thieves to come and take it! The guards are overworked, and there’s just not enough of them to protect the docks all day and night.” <b>(True)</b>                      |
| 6 | “This is just the beginning of an invasion of the Ignasians! They’re cutting off our supplies from the east before they attack. They’re going to break the peace treaty and restart the Great War!” <b>(False)</b>   |



## THE DOCKS

The crowded city docks are a hotbed of high tension and frustrations. If the characters ask around, they learn that none of the ships are willing to risk taking them down the coast to investigate the giant. One name mentioned is Captain Renegade at the Tippy Rhino as the only captain crazy enough to help them.

## CAPTAIN FOAMBEARD

Brennan Foambeard is captain of *The Surprise*, a dwarven light war cruiser. A stocky oceanic dwarf, his braided black beard is decorated with silver and blue glass beads, and his bald head is tattooed with the blue stylized wolf symbol of his clan. Captain Foambeard was a privateer during the Great War, but his ship and crew now hunt pirates and protect the trade lanes. Like most oceanic dwarves in the Freelands, he spends most of his life at sea and rarely stays on land. He's currently drowning his frustrations in ale at the Eager Gopher after his ship failed to find the giant, and he returned empty-handed. If the characters strike up a conversation with him, he can impart the following information:

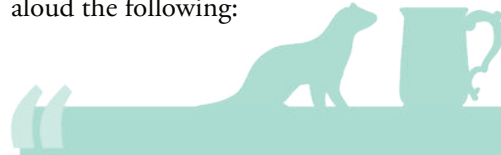
- ◆ “Aye, tis a giant, not some other beastie like some are saying.”
- ◆ “We’ve managed to find some survivors, and they all say th’ same thing: the sea be calm, nothing in sight for miles, and then they’re struck from below. The giant tears a hole in their hull, and they’re dead in the water.”
- ◆ “The giant never strikes in th’ same place twice and disappears beneath th’ waves right after. There’s no way to track th’ damn thing!”
- ◆ “Me crew is full and *The Surprise* docked ‘til further orders. If ye be wanting to hunt the giant, ye’ll need to find a ship at the docks willin’ to take ye’.”

## CAPTAIN RENEGADE

Many years ago, Captain Reginald “Renegade” Merton was a feared corsair and captain of *The Howling King*. Through a string of bad luck—and a minor mutiny—he lost his ship years ago and now spends what is left of his treasure on ale and a flea-ridden cot above the Tippy Rhino, a seedy dockside tavern. Reginald is a thin man in his sixties with long white hair and a low opinion of “modern” pirates. The cranky but kindly old captain shares whimsical tales of his travels that no one believes. His only friend is his weasel companion named Flit, and

when he’s not fishing from his ship, the *Periwinkle*, he drinks away his nights at the Rhino.

When the characters reach the Tippy Rhino, read aloud the following:



Raucous laughter and the sound of a hurdy-gurdy drift through the open door of the seedy tavern just before a drunken sailor stumbles his way out to empty his stomach in the street gutter. He wipes his mouth and smiles, showing what few teeth he has left before passing out cold next to the newly formed puddle.

Inside the smoke-filled tavern are sailors and dockhands enjoying their time off with a bit of ale and a voluptuous bard singing bawdy songs with music from her hurdy-gurdy. Not everyone is enjoying the show—one old sailor sits hunched in a darkened corner with a mug held in one gnarled hand and a scowl on his scarred and wrinkled face. His tricorne hat is pulled low, and his battered leather overcoat looks like it once fit a man with a larger frame. After a moment, he breaks off a piece of bread and feeds it to a weasel sitting in an inside pocket, and a small smile creases his weathered face before returning to a scowl.

Characters with a passive Wisdom (Perception) of 13 or higher or who succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check notice that while the rest of the tavern is packed, no one else seems eager to share a table with the old sailor

The captain’s looks are far grimmer than his actual attitude, and he welcomes characters who attempt to strike up a conversation—especially if they bring him more ale. Most locals have dismissed his odd stories as the ramblings of an old crackpot, but there are grains of truth to his tales. He imparts the following information when asked about the giant and how to track it down:

- ◆ “Aye, I’ve heard the stories just like everyone else. This ain’t yer ordinary monster, though. I’ve heard tale o’ sea giants that live out in the oceans, away from us land folk. I’m thinkin’ it’s one of those types.”



- ◆ “Do I know where t’is? Nay, not I. But I know who does! The nixies know everything that happens in this sea. The fish tell it to them, ye see.” “The nixies are creatures that make their home ’neath the sea. A peaceful folk—until ye cross’em! They don’t like bein’ bothered, like most who make the sea their home.”

Characters attempting to convince Reginald to take them to the nixie village can do so with a successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check or a payment of 10 gp per character. If the characters are short on funds or fail to convince him, Reginald will accept their help with repairs on his ship in lieu of payment. He tells the party to meet him at the far northern pier where his ship, the *Periwinkle*, is docked.

## THE PERIWINKLE

Captain Renegade’s ship, the *Periwinkle*, is a 30-foot-long leaky old cutter that has seen better days. Characters with sailing backgrounds or who are proficient in water vehicles recognize that the ship is in a poor state and will be in danger in rough waters. The characters can spend 1 hour before casting off to improve the ship’s condition from level 2 to 3, as outlined in the Periwinkle Condition table. If a character repairing the ship is proficient in carpenter’s tools, it increases to level 4 instead. During the course of the trip to the nixie village, the ship’s condition will determine the difficulty rating of the ability checks the characters face in keeping it afloat.

## TRAVEL TO OCELONA

The trip to the nixie village takes 3 hours of sailing from Hopewell Harbor and out into the Cerulean Sea. For each hour of travel, roll a d6 and consult the Ocelona Travel table to determine what happens during the voyage and to the battered ship; reroll on events that have already occurred. The ship no longer functions if its condition drops to 0, and it takes 2 hours of repairs to bring it back up 1 level.

### PERIWINKLE CONDITION

Level	Difficulty Rating
1	DC 16
2	DC 14
3	DC 13
4	DC 10

Once the ship reaches the general location of the nixie village, read aloud the following:

After a brief but eventful voyage, Captain Renegade calls for the sails to be furled. “We’ve reached the spot!” he declares, locking the helm in place and placing his weasel on his shoulder. This section of the sea looks no different than any other, but the captain claps his hands together and grins. “Now you’ll see that ol’ Captain Renegade be tellin’ ye the truth. Now, I’ve been saving these for a special occasion, but now is as good a time as any other,” he says before handing each of you a small vial filled with a thick, foul-smelling green liquid.

A creature that drinks the potion suddenly has gills form on its neck along with translucent webbing between its fingers and toes. The creature gains the ability to breathe underwater for 1 hour and a swim speed of 30 ft. However, the creature cannot breathe air until the effect ends and begins to suffocate while out of the water.

## OCELONA TRAVEL

d6 Event

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 | The <i>Periwinkle</i> starts to leak in multiple places, and the characters must succeed on three group Dexterity checks with the DC determined by the <i>Periwinkle</i> ’s condition level. Two failed checks result in the ship’s condition dropping by 1 level. |
| 2 | A sudden storm rips through across the water, and waves batter the ship around. The characters must succeed on a group Strength check to steady the ship’s wheel and support the mast, or its condition drops by 1 level.  |
| 3 | The ship encounters choppy waters, and each character must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or gain 1 level of exhaustion from seasickness.  |
| 4 | The boat’s gentle rocking has lulled the characters to sleep, and they find Captain Renegade snoring at the helm. The nap has caused the ship to veer off course and adds an additional 2 hours to the voyage.   |
| 5 | Just off the starboard bow, the characters notice a bit of floating debris amidst ship wreckage. A barrel of fine rum worth 100 gp is caught in a bit of rigging and ripped.   |
| 6 | This hour of travel is peaceful, and the party enjoys one of Captain Renegade’s whimsical tales of his former life as a pirate during the Great War.   |

## OCELONA

Once the characters dive into the ocean, they quickly find a coral reef filled with colorful plants and algae. A small village of homes shaped from the coral is visible, and a delegation of a dozen **nixies** riding **seahorses** come out to meet with the party. Read aloud the following:

A colorful coral reef filled with exotic plants swaying in the current lies splayed across the ocean floor. Nestled into the reef and almost completely hidden from view is a small village of homes shaped from the natural formation. Tiny blue and green humanoids—the largest only a foot tall—dressed in seaweed and shells for clothing swim effortlessly around the village. Suddenly, seahorses bearing a group of the tiny creatures burst from behind the reef and straight towards you. They are armed with small seashell shields, spears, and fierce expressions. The rest of the villagers quickly swim into their coral homes and close their seashell doors tight.

The **nixies** do not attack; instead, they quickly surrounding the party with spears leveled. An elderly nixie wearing a coral crown and riding a purple seahorse approaches the group and introduces themselves as Rydlon, leader of the nixie village. They demand to know the reason for the “breather” intrusion into their territory. Rydlon is a patient and shrewd leader, but the safety of their village is paramount to any discussion.

While Rydlon confirms they know the location and story of the giant troubling the coast, the nixies typically do not give information for free. There are a few ways the characters can get them to share what they know:

**A Charismatic Plea.** A character that succeeds on a DC 17 Charisma (Persuasion) check can convince Rydlon to share the giant’s location with a convincing argument. The nixie gives the details of the cove only and asks the party to leave them in peace.

**A Helping Hand.** Rydlon offers information in exchange for the party’s assistance retrieving pearls from a



nearby field filled with toxic anemones. The toxin is enough to kill a nixie outright, but the characters “should be fine” because of their size. They require five pearls, and each requires a successful DC 12 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check to retrieve the oyster safely, while a failed check results in recovering the oyster and taking 4 (1d8) poison damage. The nixies give the party an additional reward of a *pearl of power* for their efforts and explain the whole story of the exiled giant except for his affiliation with the pirate lord, of which they are unaware.

**A Show of Force.** The nixies defend themselves from hostilities but surrender if half of their delegation is defeated or Rydlon drops below half their hit points. The nixies only give up the giant’s location to appease the characters’ hostility. The characters have earned the nixie’s enmity and may find themselves targeted by their allies in the future, of which there are many.

### TRAVEL TO THE COVE

The giant’s hidden cove can only be accessed by sea, and the voyage takes 3 hours of sailing. Captain Renegade is hesitant to bring the party directly to the entrance but can be convinced by a character who succeeds on a DC 17 Charisma (Persuasion) check. Otherwise, he lets the party use his dinghy to get to the cove while he anchors just up the coast to wait for them. When the characters reach the cove, read aloud the following:

The nixies' directions prove accurate as a small cove set in a tall cliff face comes into view off the *Periwinkle's* bow. A cave entrance sits well below the tide line, and it's clear why it has been so challenging to find—it is completely underwater at high tide. Captain Renegade turns to you, giving Flit a scratch under the chin as he thoughtfully says, “Ye'll have to be quick about it if ye don't want to be caught by the tides. They come in fast in these parts.”



## NIXIE

Tiny fey, neutral good

CR 1/8  
25 XP

Armor Class 15 (coral armor)  
Hit Points 5 (2d4)  
Speed 20 ft., swim 30 ft.

Proficiency Bonus: +2

STR 4 (-3)	DEX 14 (+2)	CON 10 (+0)	INT 12 (+1)	WIS 13 (+1)	CHA 16 (+3)
---------------	----------------	----------------	----------------	----------------	----------------

Saving Throws Cha +5  
Skills Animal Handling +3, Nature +3  
Damage Immunities cold  
Condition Immunities charmed  
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11  
Languages Aquan, Common, Sylvan

**Amphibious.** The nixie can breathe air and water.

**Innate Spellcasting.** The nixie's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *druidcraft*, *guidance*  
3/day each: *speak with animals*  
1/day each: *animal messenger*

## ACTIONS

**Poisoned Spear.** *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1 piercing damage, 2 (1d4) poison damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned for 1 minute. If its saving throw result is 5 or lower, the poisoned target falls unconscious for the same duration, or until it takes damage or another creature takes an action to shake it awake.

# BONSAG'S CAVE

The hidden sea cave in which Bonsag has made his lair was once the home of a sahuagin tribe long ago. During low tide, the cave is partially open, but at high tide, it floods, hiding it from sight completely. The greedy giant found it to be a perfect home to store his ill-gotten goods and conduct his attacks on merchant ships traveling along the coast. A few remnants of the previous owners can still be found among the flotsam and jetsam Bonsag has left in his wake and a vibrant sea life—including a pet shark—keeps the giant company.

## GENERAL FEATURES

These general features are prominent throughout the sea cave unless otherwise noted in the area descriptions.

**Ceilings, Floors, and Walls.** The sea cave is formed from the basalt of the surrounding cliff, and Mollusks and sea plant life cover almost every surface. The stalactite-covered ceiling height ranges from 15 feet high in the tunnels up to 40 feet tall in the larger caverns.

**Lights.** Bioluminescent plants cover the walls and ceiling and fill the caves with dim light.

**Flooded Caves.** The cave is partially filled with seawater, every exposed surface is slick with water and wet plants, and climbing reduces a character's movement to one-quarter speed. Each of the flooded areas marked on the provided map with dark blue water is 10 feet deep. The rest of the cave is partially underwater and is considered difficult terrain. Small fish, seaweed, and other harmless creatures and plants are found living in the water. Make sure to review the underwater combat rules as some encounters may force the characters to fight while submerged. The rising tide floods the entire cave in 2 hours, completely submerging areas 1 through 7 after the first hour.

**Singing Coral.** The coral in area 5 emits an ethereal song-like sound out to 60 feet that can only be heard while submerged underwater. The coral is not magical or harmful and has no other effect other than the sound it emits.

**Shark Patrol.** Bonsag has befriended a hunter shark that guards the entrance to his lair in area 7. If any of the characters are in the water and are wounded, the shark smells their blood and begins to make its way towards them, leaving area 7 to hunt them.

**A Tight Squeeze.** There are a few areas, as noted in the area descriptions, that are only navigable by creatures of size Small or smaller. Medium-sized creatures moving through the tight spaces must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity check for every 5 feet of movement or become restrained. A creature can spend its action to make a DC 15 Strength check to pull a restrained creature into an available open space that they can fit into, ending the restrained condition.







## KEYED LOCATIONS

The following descriptions correspond to the keyed locations on the provided map of the sea cave on page 13.

### 1. ENTRANCE

Pieces of wood bob with each ebb and flow of the waves floating in and out of the jagged mouth of the sea cave. Seaweed-covered whale rib bones are strapped to either side of the rough stone walls, creating a tunnel leading deeper into the cliffside. Each one is carved with scrimshaw and decorated with humanoid skulls hanging from braided rope.

When the characters make their way to the sea cave's entrance, read aloud the following:

A character who succeeds on a DC 17 Strength check or multiple characters with a combined Strength score of 25 or higher can carry the *Periwinkle's* dinghy into the cave. Characters who understand Giant or succeed on a DC 15 Intelligence (History) check can determine that the scrimshaw carvings on the whale bones declare this cave the home of "The mighty pirate king Bonsag."

### 2. SPRING TRAP

The floor of this area begins to descend into deeper water filled with bits of ship wreckage, and the walls are covered in long strips of wood decorated with fish bones.

**Trap: Bone Scythe.** A tripwire made from a whale tendon is hidden beneath the water and stretches across the entire tunnel. A character with a passive Wisdom (Perception) of 15 or higher or who succeeds on a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check notices the wire. A successful DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools breaks the trip wire harmlessly. A character without

thieves' tools can attempt this check with disadvantage using any edged weapon or tool. On a failed attempt, the trap triggers. When the trap is triggered, it releases a spring-loaded pole with sharpened bones strapped along the length that scythes through the tunnel in the area marked on the provided map. Each creature in the path must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 5 (1d10) piercing damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one.

### 3. FISH FOOD

This cave is completely flooded and dimly lit by various plants emitting a soft green glow that reflects off the water and casts shimmering waves of light along the ceiling. A small tunnel leads to the north, and a larger passage continues to the northeast.

This flooded area is filled with bits of wreckage that fell off the various odds and ends Bonsag dragged through here on his way to area 10. The debris makes this difficult terrain to swim or row through if the characters brought the dinghy. If submerged underwater, the characters can hear the singing coral from area 5 coming through the small entrance to the north.

**Encounter: The Fish Bite Back.** Once a character enters the water, two hungry **swarms of quippers** appear out of the northeastern tunnel to investigate the intrusion.

### 4. JELLYFISH FLOTSAM

A tattered ship's sail floats under the water in the center of this large cave, surrounded by rotting planks, barrels, and other ship debris floating around. Two tunnels—one small, one large—lead due west while another small one exits to the north.

The debris in the water makes this room difficult terrain to swim or row through. The water in this cavern is 20 feet deep and filled with parts of various destroyed ships. Characters with sailing backgrounds or proficiency in water vehicles can identify at least a dozen different ships.

The tunnel leading into area 8 can only be navigated by creatures who are size Small or smaller; Medium-sized creatures who attempt to squeeze into the tunnel will find themselves stuck (see General Features).

**Hazard: Jellyfish Swarm.** A character with a passive Wisdom (Perception) of 13 or higher or who succeeds on a DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check notices tiny baby jellyfish floating in the dark water. Characters proficient in Nature or who succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom (Nature) check know that jellyfish have a paralyzing sting. Creatures swimming through the marked area on the map must make a DC 15 Dexterity check for every 10 feet of movement. For each failed check, the creature takes 1 poison damage and must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute.

**Treasure.** Bonsag accidentally dropped a small wooden chest while moving his loot through the center of this area. A character who succeeds on a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check notices a glint of gold peeking through the broken side of the chest. Inside are 100 gp and a dagger with a serrated and curved silver blade worth 50 gp.

## 5. SINGING CORAL

The coral in this flooded room emits a soft, song-like ethereal sound that can only be heard underwater. When the characters reach this chamber, read aloud the following:

Glittering plantlife dots the ceiling and walls of this small cave, giving the impression you are swimming beneath a star-filled night sky. A strange coral with shifting colors grows along the cave floor, shimmering in the soft glow of bioluminescent algae. The coral reaches up into small underwater towers covered in red, bulbous plants.

A character proficient in Nature or who succeeds on a DC 13 Wisdom (Nature) check recognizes that the red plants have healing properties. A creature that spends an action to eat one restores 2 hit points. Ten plants can be harvested from the coral, but they lose their potency after 12 hours.

Breaking off a piece of the coral causes the broken part to stop singing, and it withers away within 1 hour.

## 6. SEA SNAKE PIT

The pile of debris clogging the tunnel between this cave and area 7 can be broken apart with a successful DC 12 Strength check.

The ceiling of this rancid-smelling cave is filled with salt-covered stalactites. There is a noticeable lack of plant life here compared to the rest of the sea cave.

This pitch-black cave descends into a 30-foot-deep pit. A character that spends 10 minutes scraping the stalactites can gather 1 pound of salt worth 1 gp.

**Encounter: Sea Snake.** Inside the pit is a sea snake that uses the **giant constrictor snake** statistics and can breathe air and water. The giant sea snake pulls grappled characters down to the bottom of the pit to drown them.

**Treasure.** A sahuagin skeleton holding a spear made from carved whalebone (functions as a *spear +1*), and 36 gp scattered around it lies at the bottom of the pit.

## 7. PET HUNTER

The pile of debris clogging the tunnel between this cave and area 6 can be broken apart with a successful DC 12 Strength check.

Shafts of sunlight pierce through small cracks in the ceiling of this broad cavern. The floor slopes up to the northwest, and torchlight dances on the walls of a wide tunnel entrance leading in that direction.



**Encounter: Pet Shark.** Bonsag used his sea animal friendship ability to befriend a **hunter shark** that patrols this area (see General Features). If injured characters are in the water, it smells their blood and focuses its attacks on them. A pair of **violet fungus** cling to the walls of the causeway and attack any characters that come near them.

## 8. SAHUAGIN SHRINE

The tunnel leading into this chamber from area 4 can only be navigated by creatures who are size Small or smaller. Medium-sized creatures who attempt to squeeze into the southern tunnels may find themselves stuck (see General Features) but can navigate the northern tunnel with two successful DC 15 Dexterity checks.

The walls of this chamber are covered in spiky plants of all shapes and colors. Rough steps carved into the cave floor lead up to a cleared space against the eastern wall. A shark skull hangs haphazardly from a frayed rope above a large chunk of pink quartz, on top of which sits a conch shell.

The sahuagin that once lived here used this chamber as a shrine to their shark god. It's now in disrepair, and Bonsag does not even know it exists due to the narrow tunnels leading here. The top of the shrine sits just above the tide line in this room, leaving the conch untouched by the seawater.

**Hazard: Toxic Plants.** The plants on the walls are toxic. Whenever a creature steps within 5 feet of a wall, roll a d20. A plant shoots a poisonous spine on a roll of 18 or higher, and the creature must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw or take 1 piercing damage and 2 (1d4) poison damage.

**Treasure.** The conch shell on the shrine is a magical item that has the same properties as a *circlet of blasting* when a creature spends an action to blow into it.

## 9. STORAGE ROOM

This cave is packed with rows of rough shelves stuffed with various goods and items on top of makeshift platforms built from broken ship decks. Crates and barrels are stacked haphazardly, each one bearing a different merchant's seal.

This storage room is where Bonsag stores the stolen goods before he hands them off to Captain Hayden. There are five tons of various trade goods spread among the crates, including bales of cotton, unrefined ore, animal skins, and spices worth a total of 5,000 gp.

If the characters are searching for the temple's missing supplies (see Adventure Hooks: Missing Supplies), they are found here among the other goods.

## 10. BONSAG'S LAIR

This colossal cavern resembles a shipwreck graveyard with bits and pieces of sailing vessels pushed together in an odd display. Nests of rigging stretch like webbing between masts that almost touch the ceiling. Knotted and Seaweed-covered ropes prop the masts upright and span the space like a tightrope. Rubble floats around in the shin-high water, giving the illusion of wreckage floating in the sea.

Suddenly a roar echoes throughout the cave, and a green-skinned giant gripping a broken mast in one barnacle-covered fist steps from behind a half-submerged hull. His patchwork armor is made from various ship parts and covered by a seaweed tunic. "What do ye landlubbers be doing in me shipyard? Trying to steal the great Pirate Bonsag's booty, are ye?"

**Trap: Rigging.** Two 30-foot-tall masts are central supports for a 15-foot-square section of rigging that hangs in the center of the ceiling, as noted on the provided map. Each mast has an AC of 17, 10 hit points, and immunity to psychic and poison damage. If either mast is damaged to the point it collapses, the rigging drops. Those in the marked area are trapped under the rigging and restrained. Creatures caught by the rigging must also succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone. A creature can use its action to make a DC 13 Strength check, freeing itself or another creature within its reach on a success. The net has AC 10 and 20 Hit Points. Dealing 5 slashing damage to the rigging (AC 10) destroys a 5-foot-square section of it, freeing any creature trapped in that section.

**Hazard: Shipwrecks.** Each of the shipwrecked hulls, as noted on the provided map, are 20 feet high. The debris and water in the cave are difficult terrain.

**Encounter: The Sea Giant Pirate.** Bonsag the **sea giant** (see Appendix at end of adventure) Bonsag wields a mast with a crow's nest as a great club instead of a spear with a +7 attack bonus that has a reach of 10 ft. and deals 17 (3d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage on a hit) is defensive of his home and his loot. However, he is not the brightest of individuals and will listen to characters attempting to persuade him to abandon his alliance with Captain Hayden and stop his attacks on the trading vessels. A character with a persuasive argument must first succeed on a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion), or Strength (Intimidation) check to get the sea giant's attention. Depending on the character's argument, they must then succeed on an additional DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) or Charisma (Deception) check to get him to consider their words. Bonsag will not want to give up the loot he already has but will consider aligning himself with Hopewell Harbor to safeguard the trading route in exchange for a more lucrative arrangement than he has with Captain Hayden. He confesses the deal he has with the pirate lord when he accepts the character's offer. He also gives them the strange sphere in his chest (see Treasure below) to symbolize his trust. Bonsag does not know what the sphere is, only that Captain Hayden was looking for similar items, and he kept it for himself.

If negotiations fail, the sea giant engages the characters in combat to remove them as threats. His size limits his movements around the shipwrecks, and he moves carefully not to damage them. However, if he is reduced to less than half his hit points, he becomes enraged and becomes less careful, smashing through them to reach the characters.

**Treasure.** Bonsag keeps a golden sarcophagus next to a pile of molding silk he uses for bedding. Scattered around and inside the sarcophagus are 500 gp, 200 sp, an ornate gold necklace with an emerald beetle worth 100 gp, and a wrinkled black flag with a blood-red raven's skull. A character that succeeds on a DC 12 Intelligence (History) check recognizes the flag as that of the *Night Rover*, the infamous pirate ship of the pirate lord Captain Rough Dog Hayden. Any merchant or guard in Hopewell Harbor will also recognize the flag and the history of the pirate lord.

Nestled into a recess on the chest of the sarcophagus is a gold clockwork sphere made of twisted rings. A detect magic spell or similar effect cast on the clockwork sphere reveals an aura of conjuration magic. A character proficient in Arcana or who succeeds on a DC 18 Intelligence (Arcana) check determines that the sphere is part of a larger machine but cannot determine its purpose. At the GM's discretion, this sphere may be replaced by another item that leads to future adventures (see Conclusion for further information).

## CONCLUSION

If the characters manage to recruit the sea giant to assist Hopewell Harbor in securing the trade routes or defeat him in battle, they are hailed as heroes in the port city. The merchant vessels eagerly cast off and sail east to unload their goods. Captain Garland of the city guard thanks each character personally and tells them he may call on them in the future.

If the characters are unable to defeat the sea giant, he continues his attacks on the routes under the direction of Captain Hayden while the pirate lord gathers his strength. Eventually, a pirate armada attacks Hopewell Harbor, and the port city is captured. Captain Hayden becomes Lord Hayden and continues his scourge of the Breakwater coast.

## THE CLOCKWORK SPHERE

This sphere is part of an ancient arcane machine capable of tapping into the energies of other planes of existence. Captain Hayden is seeking the pieces to the device to gain this power for himself. This adventure continues in the next issue of *Crucible* on the high seas, where the characters come into direct conflict with the pirate lord.

If the characters fail to recover the sphere, it eventually makes its way into Captain Hayden's possession,



and the characters will have another chance to recover it in a future adventure in the Wrath of the Dread Lords adventure path.

## ADVENTURE HOOK RESOLUTIONS

Depending on how the characters were hooked into this adventure, they are rewarded as follows:

### MISSING SUPPLIES

If the characters manage to return the missing supplies to the temple, the priests reward them with the promise of future services. The characters may return to the temple at any time and receive a single resurrection spell free of charge. They have gained the temple's trust, and may find themselves called upon in times of need.

### TREASURE HUNTERS

The merchant guild is not thrilled to pay off the giant to keep their routes safe but honors any agreement made between the characters and Bonsag. However, they pay only half of the promised reward because they wanted the threat to end entirely and not to negotiate. If Bonsag was eliminated, they are pleased to pay the full amount.

# APPENDIX

## SEA GIANT

Sea giants are a recluse race that live deep beneath the ocean and far away from dry land. Most have sea-green or blue skin and hair, and emerald or sapphire colored eyes. They grow homes in deep coral reefs, sometimes under the rule of a storm giant that they hold in high regard, but more often in small tribes with chosen chieftains. Sea giants are at one with the oceans and form close bonds with other sea creatures to defend their homes from foreign invaders. While fierce protectors of the sea, they are also kind and helpful to those in need, often helping shipwrecked sailors find their way home.

**Ocean Guardians.** Sea giants see themselves as guardians of the ocean and protectors of sea life habitats. They sometimes ally with merfolk tribes and help build their underwater cities. This sometimes puts them at odds with merrow tribes looking to attack the merfolk.

**Reclusive Tribes.** While they sometimes give aid to shipwrecked sailors, sea giants do not involve themselves

with the affairs or wars of the "dry landers." The occasional sea giant tribe enjoys the protection of a powerful storm giant, though most lead quiet lives in the furthest depths of the sea and rarely travel from their village.

**Traditionalists.** Sea giant traditions are passed orally through song and they learn to sing at a young age. Their history speaks of the time before the humans and elves, of when the dragons stretched their wings on the winds, and the giants took their first steps upon the world. The All-Father gave them the seas as their domain and they have remained since the dawn of time, following his teachings. While other giants raised mighty empires on the lands that would eventually crumble, the peaceful sea giants remained under the waves, ever watchful and as patient as their ocean home.

**CR 5**  
1,800 XP

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## SEA GIANT

*Huge giant, chaotic good*

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<b>Armor Class</b> 14 (scrap armor) <b>Hit Points</b> 136 (13d12 + 52) <b>Speed</b> 40 ft., swim 40 ft.	<b>Proficiency Bonus:</b> +3
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<b>STR</b> 19 (+4)	<b>DEX</b> 10 (+0)	<b>CON</b> 18 (+4)	<b>INT</b> 14 (+2)	<b>WIS</b> 12 (+1)	<b>CHA</b> 18 (+4)
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**Saving Throws** Str +7, Con +7  
**Skills** Athletics +7, Perception +4  
**Damage Resistances** cold  
**Damage Immunities** poison  
**Condition Immunities** poisoned  
**Senses** darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 14  
**Languages** Aquan, Common, Giant

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**Amphibious.** The giant can breathe air and water.

**Innate Spellcasting.** The giant's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 15). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *create or destroy water, detect magic*  
3/day each: *animal friendship (sea creatures), control water, water breathing*

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### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The giant makes two spear attacks.

**Spear.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (3d8 + 4) piercing damage.

**Rock.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 60/240 ft., one target. *Hit:* 20 (3d10 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

**Water Blast (Recharge 5-6).** The giant exhales a blast of water in a 30-foot line that is 5 feet wide. Each creature in that line must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 36 (8d8) bludgeoning damage on a failed save and being knocked prone, or half as much damage and not being knocked prone on a successful one.

# DRAXORN DELVE

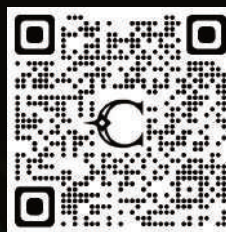
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**HEADER ART BY**  
**INTERIOR ART BY**

**TJ PHOENIX**  
**MARTIN KIRBY-JACKSON**  
**PAVEL KUNC**

## BACKSTORY

Local legends speak of the devastation that ensued when the appropriately named Mount Temper erupted and laid waste to the surrounding countryside. Centuries passed, and civilization was rebuilt, but the memory lives on in tales passed from generation to generation. When the village living in the shadow of the dormant volcano was approached by a wealthy mining company seeking to excavate the mountain, the villagers were less than thrilled at the prospect. But their greed soon outpaced their fears after the company put gold into the right pockets. The miners found rich deposits of rare gemstones of all types and some never seen before. They were amazed at their luck and quickly began to dig further, disregarding the risks of the sulfur and methane gas pockets prominent in the mine. They eventually opened a tunnel leading to even deeper caverns below but found elemental creatures raging within.

The creatures quickly overran the mine and forced the mining company to cease operations until they cleared the infestation. With miners still trapped inside, the company reached out to the widely famous—and expensive—Bloodbound adventuring guild. The guild sent a team led by one of their best, but even they were not prepared for the draxorn they found asleep within the mountain's belly, and their bodies are still lying where they fell. Now awake, the draxorn's rumblings have stirred the volcano even further, and cracks have appeared on the mountaintop, releasing ash into the air. It's now only a matter of time before it causes the volcano to erupt and unleash its wrath once more upon thousands of innocent people living in the region.



**GRAB THE DIGITAL  
ASSETS FOR THIS  
ADVENTURE**



# RN

APL  
13

*Draxorn Delve* is a Fifth Edition adventure intended for **three to five characters of 12th to 14th level** and optimized for **four characters with an average party level (APL) of 13**. A mining operation on the long-dormant volcano Mount Temper has dug too deep, unleashing a host of elementals into their mine and trapping some miners inside. After sending an adventuring party that mysteriously vanished, something was awakened deep within the mountain and rumbled the volcano awake. An eruption of ash now lies thick on the surrounding region, with the threat of even further destruction teetering ever closer with each passing moment.

This adventure fits into any existing campaign with a mountain range that includes a dormant volcano and a nearby village.



# ADVENTURE HOOKS

Here are a few ways to get your characters hooked into this adventure:

## ◆ AN ERUPTING TEMPER

Word has spread that something is going on with Mount Temper and it's looking like the long-dormant volcano is about to erupt after centuries of slumber. Earthquakes have caused landslides that have wiped an entire village off the map. Rumors have circulated that a new mine was recently excavated in the mountainside, and creatures were released from deep within. The local population has turned to their leadership and begged them to send someone into the mine and find out what is causing the problem. This leadership has, in turn, asked the characters to help stop the volcano from erupting and save the region.

## ◆ A FRIEND IN NEED

The Bloodbound adventuring guild is widely respected across the Freelands as highly competent and expensive mercenaries for hire; the characters may have run into the red-cloaked members as allies or even foes in their travels. A close friend of the party reaches out, begging for their assistance in locating their cousin, Teragon. He is a member of the Bloodbound guild who disappeared while on a mission to investigate an infested mine on Mount Temper. Whatever caused their cousin's disappearance might also be behind the recent spate of earthquakes in the region.

## ◆ AN OFFER OF PARTNERSHIP

The Doralli Mining Company reaches out to the characters to offer a mutually beneficial partnership. They recently began operations on a highly lucrative mine on Mount Temper that came under attack by creatures from below. The company provides a substantial reward and a small percentile partnership in the mine to the characters in exchange for their assistance in clearing the nuisance currently infesting it. The creatures are too strong for less powerful adventurers to defeat, and the mining company is willing to fund their entire expedition in the hopes they prove to be more competent than the last team sent into the mine. The company also offers a bonus if they manage to return the missing accounting books in the mine. The characters are directed to Azmar village to speak with their representative, Kalyre Faith.

# ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The characters enter the gemstone mine to determine what is causing the earthquakes that threaten to wake up the volcano. The mine is filled with precarious caves, natural hazards, and elemental creatures that escaped from below. The characters find miners trapped within the caves and the remains of the Bloodbound adventuring party deep beneath the mountain. The trail leads them to a massive gem-studded cavern where a massive draxorn made its lair, and they discover it is causing the earthquakes to rile up the mountain.

## DORALLI MINING COMPANY

The Doralli Mining Company operates mines and quarries throughout the Freelands. They specialize in digging in the most dangerous locations, whether at the bottom of the sea, in monster-infested locales, or even active volcanoes like Mount Temper. The company headquarters is located in Haven, the Freelands capital city, and has close ties to the Council of Seven. Their political relations and bribes have made them a powerful group that uses scrupulous tactics to achieve its goals. The company's reputation and profits matter more than their employees' lives, and they are concerned that the collateral damage caused by the Mount Temper eruption will affect them politically.

## ABOUT THE DRAXORN

A massive, single-eyed creature with a maw filled with rows of razor-sharp teeth, a draxorn is a unique breed of dragon that burrows through the earth as easily as others soar through the air. They are attracted to gemstones as a bed and food source, making the gem-rich Mount Temper an ideal lair. You can find more information on draxorns in the Appendix at the end of the adventure.

The draxorn beneath Mount Temper is named Orgeileos, and he has slept peacefully for the last few decades until the recent digging exposed the caverns leading to his lair. After Higgin Stormcloak brought his team of Bloodbound adventurers in the caves, they disturbed Orgeileos' rest and became the draxorn's meal. In frustration at being awoken, Orgeileos shifted through the mountain, causing minor earthquakes and started pushing the volcano to erupt.



# AZMAR VILLAGE

The village of Azmar is best known for the nearby salt quarry that employs the majority of the villagers along with those from a dozen other nearby settlements. The village is nestled between the Black Hills and the base of Mount Temper, directly in the shadow of the volcano and 20 miles away from the Doralli company mine. The roughly two-hundred villagers living here come from hard-working and sturdy stock who appreciate their simple and quiet lives. While most of the population is human, almost any player character race can be found here.

Along with the nearby forest and hills, the village sits covered in a thin layer of ash that recently burst out of the mountain. The villagers are frantic, torn between abandoning their homes and trusting the mining company to fix the problem. They blame the miners for disturbing the mountain, and the miners are holed up in the village inn, trying to stay out of sight while they wait for assistance.

## IMPORTANT NPCs

Azmar is the closest village to the mine and a useful place for the characters to stock up on supplies and gather information before heading to the mountain. The following NPCs are located at the Singing Fire Inn and have information the characters may want to hear:

**The Mayor.** The mayor, Karcsi Bladetarren (LG human noble), is also the owner of the Singing Fire, the only inn in the village. The middle child—and black sheep—of the noble Bladetarren family, she has led a simple life with her family in Azmar for the past thirty years, away from the politics of the big city of Haven. She is sensitive about the pale, genetic birthmarks covering her dusky skin but is quick to use her sharp tongue to keep rowdy folks in line. As mayor, she is highly respected, and even the roughest villager withers under her disappointed glare. Karcsi's strength has been holding the village together during this crisis—and the villagers away from the miners' throats. She can share the following information about the mine:

- ◆ Local legends speak of the mountain as a demon trying to escape from the fiery bowels below. The last eruption hundreds of years ago almost released it from its prison.
- ◆ She has asked the villagers to wait two more days before they completely abandon the village.
- ◆ The miners brought wealth to the area, but Karcsi is afraid they went beyond the boundaries that they agreed with the village. She asks the characters to find proof of any wrongdoing at the mine and bring it back to her.
- ◆ The last party that went into the mine was a group of powerful adventurers who wore distinctive red cloaks.

**The Miners.** Kalyre Faith (CN tiefling commoner) is the Overseer of the Mount Temper mining operation and represents the Doralli Mining Company. Formerly loyal to the company, she has grown disillusioned and wary of the repercussions of the failed mine. She was in charge of the fifty tiefling miners excavating the gemstones from the volcano and is currently staying at the Singing Fire Inn with the dozen that escaped. Kalyre knows the following additional information when asked about the mine:

- ◆ The tieflings' natural resistance to fire made them the perfect choice for enduring the extreme heat within the mine, but they were no match for the elementals that escaped when they dug too deep.
- ◆ She does not know where the new tunnel leads but can sketch the mine as she knew it before they escaped the elementals. She provides the characters with a sketch of areas 1 through 4 (see provided map of war camp) and directions on reaching the mine.
- ◆ The mine is extremely hot and filled with pockets of toxic and flammable gas. There should be some protective gear left in the mine that may help the characters.
- ◆ Kalyre kept detailed records in the mining headquarters, and she wants the characters to retrieve them for her.



IN THE SHADOW OF MOUNT TEMPER

## TRAVELING TO THE MINE

Once the characters leave Azmar, they must travel 20 miles through mountainous difficult terrain to reach the mine entrance. The path there winds through scattered forest and up rocky trails, all in the shadow of the brooding volcano. Earthquakes have disturbed the area,

## MOUNTAIN ENCOUNTERS

d6 Encounter

- |     |  |
|-----|--|
| 1   | A landslide has blocked the path, and the party must make a group DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check to climb over. A failure results in adding an hour to their total travel time. Characters that fly or can employ similar movement effects automatically succeed this check. |
| 2   | A group of 2d4 trolls is hunting the area and catches the party's scent.   |
| 3   | A pack of 1d4 manticores was disturbed from their cave and charge towards the characters.  |
| 4   | An adult red dragon is seen flying through the clouds above the mountain range in the far distance.  |
| 5-6 | Small fissures in the mountain vent steam and sulfur. Each character must make a DC 15 Dexterity check to cross the area, taking 9 (2d8) fire damage on a failure.   |

and the characters may encounter some of the more aggressive creatures and dangerous hazards along the way. For every 2 hours of travel, roll a d20. On a roll of 18 or higher, roll a d6 and consult the Mountain Encounters table to see what the characters come across.

Once the characters reach the mine entrance, read aloud the following:

After ascending the mountainside, the rocky path ends on a tent-filled shelf overlooking the valley below. The remaining pieces of a wooden cart, shattered by a fall, are scattered throughout the empty tents, as well as abandoned shovels and pickaxes. Massive wooden scaffolding hugs the cliff face, towering thirty feet above, leading to the mine entrance. In the dense humidity, there is quite a bit of dust. The only way to the mine is a platform held up by a broken pulley system located in the middle of the scaffolding.

The miners took everything of value from their encampment. If the characters attempt to fix the pulley system to repair the lift, a character proficient in carpenter's tools or who succeeds on a DC 15 Strength check can bring it to working order. Otherwise, the characters must climb, fly, or use other methods to reach the mine's entrance.

Once the characters enter the mine, read aloud the following:

As you stand before the dark portal leading into the mine, you are greeted by a blast of humid air. To one side of the entrance sit crates and barrels of mining equipment. The posts and beams that reinforce the tunnel walls appear to have been erected recently. A minecart sits on its side, knocked off the tracks that lead further into the darkness.



# GEMSTONE MINE

Mount Temper is a small but ancient volcano that sits on the southeastern edge of the Motionless Mountains range. Natural caverns and cave systems honeycomb the mountain and are home to various elemental creatures, but the true terror has lain dormant beneath the mountain for centuries. Deep within gem-studded caverns, the draxorn Orgeileos has made his lair, wishing for nothing more than peace from the topside world. The recent intrusions from the Dorelli gem mine have angered the draxorn, and he has decided to rouse the volcano once more to rid himself of the pests above so he can return to his slumber.

## GENERAL FEATURES

These general features are prominent throughout the mine unless otherwise noted in the area descriptions.

### MOUNT TEMPER EARTHQUAKE

d6 Event

- |     |   |
|-----|---|
| 1   | Rocks fall from the ceiling, and each creature in the area must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 21 (6d6) bludgeoning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.   |
| 2   | Part of the draxorn moves through an open space near the wall of the area the characters are currently within. They see only a flash of massive pebbled hide as the creature dives effortlessly through the stone.  |
| 3   | A total of 1d4 fissures that are 1d4 x 5-foot-long and 10-foot-deep appear in random locations chosen by the GM in the area the characters are currently within. Characters standing on a space a fissure appears must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or fall 10 feet down into the crack. |
| 4   | A small fissure appears in a random unoccupied space chosen by the GM that releases 1d4 swarms of fire bugs (see "Firebug Swarm" sidebar) that assault the party.   |
| 5-6 | The ground shifts beneath the party's feet, and each character must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or be knocked prone. Characters that are concentrating on spells must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or lose concentration.   |

**Ceilings, Floors, and Walls.** The mine is carved into the basalt that forms mount temper. The miners shored up the rough walls and smoothed the floor in their working areas, but much of the caverns are still rough natural stone. The tunnel ceilings are 8 feet high, and the caves range from 15 to 40 feet tall.

**Lights.** The miners use wands charged with *light* spells on their helmets and lanterns to avoid open flames in the mine. In the deeper caverns, lava peaks through cracks, shedding dim light throughout that area. The mine is otherwise pitch black, and the location descriptions assume the characters have light sources or assisted vision.

**Extreme Heat.** The interior of the mine and subsequent deeper caverns are under the effects of extreme heat, and this heat makes it impossible to gain the benefits of a short or long rest while inside the mine. A creature exposed to the heat and without access to drinkable water must succeed on a Constitution saving throw at the end of each hour or gain one level of exhaustion. The DC is 8 for the first hour and increases by 1 for each additional hour.

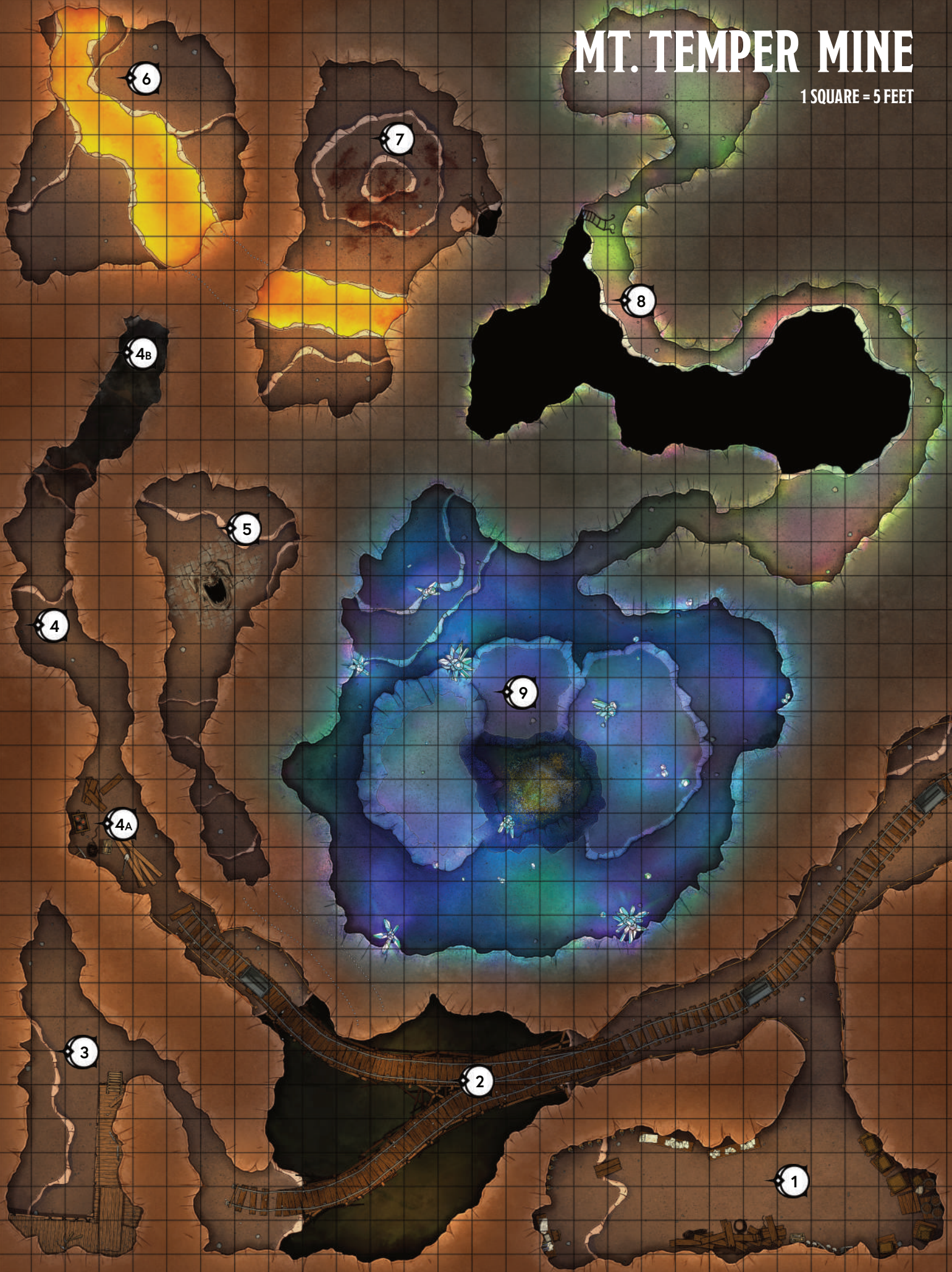
**Gas Pockets.** There are pockets of toxic and flammable gas throughout the mine, as noted in the adventure text. Creatures breathing the gas must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 18 (4d8) poison damage and becoming poisoned for 1 hour on a failed save, or half as much damage and not becoming poisoned on a successful save. Characters resistant or immune to poison automatically succeed this throw. If a flame is ignited in a gas pocket, it erupts in a 10-foot-wide explosion centered on that point. Creatures caught in the blast must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, 14 (4d6) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

**Earthquakes.** The draxorn is causing earthquakes to awaken the volcano. Every half hour of game time, the mountain rumbles and generates a random event to occur. Roll a d6 and consult the Mount Temper Earthquake table to determine what happens each time.



# MT. TEMPER MINE

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET





## KEYED LOCATIONS

The following descriptions correspond to the keyed locations on the provided map of the mine.

### 1. MINING HEADQUARTERS

In this cavern, crates and barrels are situated on wooden pallets against the eastern wall, and rows of tables covered in papers and strange masks hang from pegs along the north and west walls. The air appears to be circulating here, and glowing insects float on a light breeze. Suddenly, the insects swarm together with an angry buzz, and the current begins to form three vaguely humanoid shapes made out of the wind.

This cave is where the miners made their headquarters while delving into the rest of the mine. The mining gear is still in excellent and usable condition. A search of the papers on the tables uncovers schematics for plans to dig further into the mountain through area 4. Among the documents is a ledger detailing the mining operation as written by the mine's Overseer Kalyre Faith. This ledger is a false record; the actual record detailing cut corners, covered-up accidents, and a survey report showing the area as unstable is hidden behind a loose rock near Kalyre's desk on the far western wall. The loose rock can be found by a character with a passive Wisdom (Perception) of 15 or higher or who succeeds on a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check.

The gas masks hanging on pegs and sitting on the tables are made of tightly stitched leather fitted with glass goggles, fitting straps, and a tin cylinder filled with charcoal. These masks negate the effects of breathing toxic gasses (see General Features) but limit the field of view to the point the wearer has disadvantage on melee attack rolls and all Perception ability checks and saving throws.

**Encounter: Elemental Firebugs.** This room has three **air elementals** and a **swarm of firebugs** (see "Firebug Swarms" sidebar). The elementals are not happy with other living creatures in their domain and defend the cave against intrusion but do not leave the area.

### FIREBUG SWARMS

These insects live in magma and resemble large fireflies with glowing red and orange abdomens. They use the **swarm of insects** stat block with the following changes:

- Their creature type is elemental.
- They have immunity to fire damage.
- Their Bite attack deals fire damage instead of piercing.
- If a creature ends its turn in the same space as a swarm, it takes 7 (2d6) fire damage.

When these swarms are hit with a successful attack that deals damage, the dying insects burst into small sparks of flame that are strong enough to ignite the flammable gas in some sections of the mine (see General Features).

**Treasure.** A character who searches the mining equipment and succeeds on a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check uncovers a *light stick* among a pile of mining helmets. This wand has 1d8 charges remaining and regains 1d3+2 charges at dawn. A character holding the *light stick* can use their action to spend a charge to cast a *light* spell.

### 2. GAS BRIDGES



The tunnel suddenly drops into a massive open cavern sixty feet deep. Wooden scaffolding forms bridges spanning the expanse, forking in the center of the cave. Mining cart tracks span across to the northwest and southwest. Fissures in the rock floor below release sporadic bursts of hot air that smells like rotten eggs.

**Hazard: Toxic Gas.** This entire area is filled with toxic and flammable gas (see General Features). Igniting the gas here sets off a chain reaction that collapses the pathway leading to area 3. The resulting rockslide can be tunneled through by characters spending 8 hours digging with mining tools. However, the oxygen will have run out for the miners trapped in area 3, and they do not survive.

**Encounter: Dragon Mephits.** Lounging in the toxic steam throughout the cavern are eight **steam mephits** and two **swarms of firebugs** (see “Firebug Swarms” sidebar). The steam mephits Steam Breath attack is amplified by the gas in the room, extending the reach to a 20-foot cone, increasing the Dexterity saving throw DC to 13, and increasing the damage to 18 (4d8) fire damage on a failed saving throw or half as much on a successful save. The Steam Breath attack does not ignite the gas as described in the General Features.

The sounds of battle alert the trapped miners in area 3 to the characters’ presence. On the second round of combat, a gas-masked miner with pickaxe in hand (Arxus Trust, see area 3) steps into the cave entrance to see what is happening before ducking back inside the following round.

**Hidden Tunnel.** The secret tunnel (as shown on the provided map) connecting this area with area 5 can only be seen by creatures that have reached the bottom of the cavern. Just inside the tunnel entrance lies the charred remains of one of the Bloodbound party members, their bright red cloak instantly giving away the tunnel’s location. There is a steel chain necklace around the corpse’s neck with a tag engraved with the name “Teragon” on one side and a blood drop emblem from the Bloodbound guild on the other.

### 3. TRAPPED MINERS

There are half a dozen tiefling miners (they use the **commoner** stat block) of various genders trapped in this section of the mine. Most of them were injured during the initial elemental infestation, and they’ve been running low on supplies while hiding from the mephits in area 2.

Arxus Trust (NG tiefling **commoner**) is a disgruntled elderly miner the characters find standing guard with a pickaxe in his hand. If the characters clear the path for their escape, the miners quickly leave the mine and head towards Azmar. Arxus also shares the following information if asked:

- ◆ Since it opened, there have been many accidents in the mine due to the company pushing for quicker expansion. The survey team warned the area was unstable, but the report went missing.
- ◆ Arxus does not know about the Bloodbound team, but the miners did hear explosions in area 2 recently, along with a scream as if someone had fallen off the bridge.
- ◆ The miners came across large amethyst crystals that distorted the air around them. The Doralli Mining Company was especially interested in these crystals.

## 4. NEW TUNNEL

This tunnel connects the mine to the lower caverns and was the entry point for the elementals living below.

The cart tracks end at the beginning of what appears to be a recently excavated tunnel. Shovels and other digging equipment lay haphazardly across the path that angles sharply downwards. Smoke billows from the tunnel’s northern end and past barrels adorned with red skulls lining the western wall.

### 4A. EXPLOSIVE BARRELS

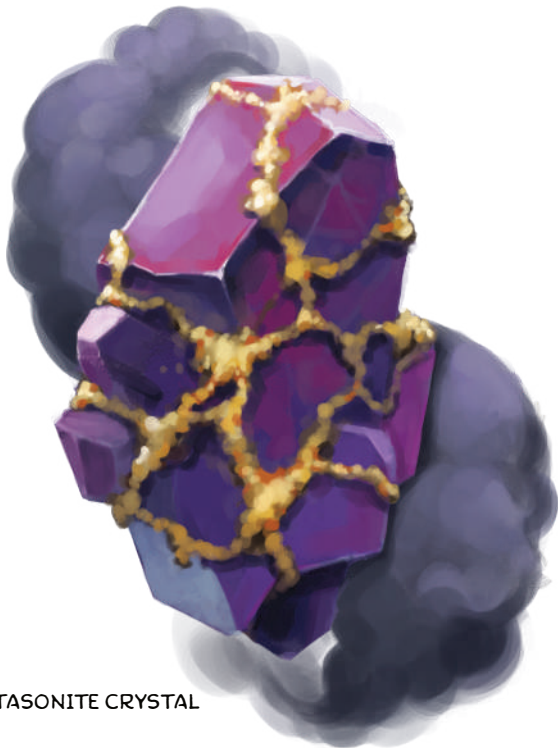
Sitting in a small crate filled with sand are three 6-inch-tall kegs marked with red skulls and full of an alchemical substance that is highly explosive and corrosive. The miners used this substance to eat away at the rocks around the larger gemstones to protect them from damage while digging the tunnel. Sitting in the mine’s heat for an extended period of time has made the substance highly volatile, and a character with a passive Wisdom (Perception) of 15 or higher, or who succeeds on a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check notices the kegs are malformed from the pressure building inside. A character who attempts to take a barrel from the sand must succeed on a DC 20 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check to handle it properly, repeating the check for every 10 feet of movement while holding the barrel. Failing the handling check or attempting to open the barrel triggers an explosive blast in a 10-foot-wide sphere. Creatures caught in the blast must make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw, taking 27 (6d8) fire damage on a failed save or



half as much damage on a successful one. An exploding barrel does not cause a chain reaction with the other barrels, but they are destroyed in the blast. The tunnel floor (as outlined on the provided map) collapses into a 20-foot-deep pit that drops into area 5 if a barrel explodes within 10 feet of the outlined section.

#### 4B. CHIMNEY

A 10-foot-wide and 160-foot-deep natural chimney leads directly down into area 6. Smoke from the lava below billows up into the chimney and heavily obscures the chimney. A *gust of wind* spell or similar effect clears the area for 1 minute.



NATASONITE CRYSTAL

Embedded halfway down in the wall is a five-pound amethyst-colored rough crystal with gold veins that creates an effect similar to an *anti-magic field* in a 10-foot-wide sphere. The first time a magical effect from an item or spell is dispelled by entering this space, the crystal loses its anti-magic effect and becomes inert. A character proficient in Arcana or who succeeds on a DC 17 Intelligence (Arcana) check recognizes the crystal as natasonite, an extremely rare spell negating gemstone. These gems are worth 5,000 gp if the effect is still active and 1,000 gp if inert. Placing a natasonite—either active or inert—into an extradimensional space such as a *bag of holding* creates the same destructive effect as if placing another extradimensional space inside the bag.

## 5. ANCIENT STATUE

This location is accessible through the hidden tunnel in area 2 or the pit created by the collapsing floor in area 4a. Once the characters enter this room, read aloud the following:

The walls of this cave have partially collapsed, and rubble covers the floor. In the center of the cave is a section of worked flagstone surrounding a six-foot-wide stone face shaped like a snarling demon. It is twisted with anger, and its fanged mouth gapes into a three-foot-wide pitch-black hole.



**Trap: Demon's Mouth.** The stone demon's mouth acts as a *portable hole* that cannot be removed from the statue. A creature attempting to enter the hole must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw to avoid the fanged mouth that snaps closed, taking 22 (4d10) piercing damage on a failed save and being restrained in the closed mouth, or half as much on a successful one and not being restrained. The demon's mouth remains closed for 1 minute before reopening, dropping a restrained creature into the 10-foot-hole. A character who succeeds on a DC 20 Strength check can hold the mouth open or casting a *dispel magic* spell cast on the stone face also disables the trap. Smashing through the closed mouth (AC 17, 18 hit points, and immunity to poison and psychic damage) from either side destroys the *portable hole*, sending anything—or anyone—trapped inside to a random plane of existence.



## HIGGIN STORMCLOAK

Medium humanoid (human), lawful neutral

CR 10  
5,900 XP

Armor Class 18 (plate)  
Hit Points 187 (22d8 + 88)  
Speed 30 ft.

Proficiency Bonus: +4

STR  
18 (+4)

DEX  
16 (+3)

CON  
18 (+4)

INT  
16 (+2)

WIS  
13 (+1)

CHA  
16 (+3)

Saving Throws Str +8, Dex +7, Con +8  
Skills Athletics +8, Intimidation +7, Perception +5  
Damage Resistances fire  
Senses passive Perception 15  
Languages Common, Elvish

**Indomitable (3/Day).** Higgin can reroll a saving throw he fails. He must use the new roll.

**Brave.** Higgin has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.

**Spellcasting.** Higgin is a 3rd-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). Higgin has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *fire bolt, light, ray of frost*  
1st level (4 slots): *burning hands, magic missile*  
2nd level (2 slots): *mirror image, misty step*

**Equipment: Frost Brand Longsword.** Higgin's longsword attacks are magical and he has a +1 bonus to attack rolls and damage rolls made with this weapon. When Higgin hits with an attack using this magic sword, the target takes an extra 1d6 cold damage. In addition, while holding the sword, Higgin has resistance to fire damage. In freezing temperatures, the blade sheds bright light in a 10-foot radius and dim light for an additional 10 feet. When Higgin draws this weapon, he can extinguish all nonmagical flames within 30 feet of him. This property can be used no more than once per hour. The bonuses and additional damage are included in the attack.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** Higgin makes three longsword attacks.

**Longsword.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d8 + 5) slashing damage, or 10 (1d10 + 5) slashing damage if used with two hands, and 3 (1d6) cold damage.

**Heavy Crossbow.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 100/400 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d10 + 3) piercing damage.

### REACTIONS

**Parry.** Higgin adds 2 to his AC against one melee attack that would hit him. To do so, Higgin must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

**Treasure.** A human skeleton wearing rusted plate armor lays at the bottom of the extradimensional hole. Next to it sits a cracked leather satchel containing 500 gp and a *gem of seeing* (command word "sight").

## 6. LAVA CAVE

The lava-filled crevasses range from 5 to 10 feet across and intersect throughout the entire cavern. Any creature that falls into the lava or starts its turn there takes 55 (10d10) fire damage. Any object that falls into the lava takes damage on initial contact and once per round thereafter until it is removed from the lava or destroyed.

The chimney drops into a forty-foot-deep cavern filled with ash and smoke. The dull glow of magma peeks through large cracks in the floor, and a blast of heat hotter than any forge rolls through the hazy air. A tunnel exits to the south with a slender ledge running along the northern edge of the stream of lava.

**Encounter: Lava Guardians.** Four **salamanders** are lounging in the lava-filled crevasses and out of sight after escaping their battle with the Bloodbound party that killed their companions (see area 7). Many of them still have healing wounds on display. Once the characters attempt to cross a ravine, they try to ambush the party. The salamanders focus on disarming their opponents and use their tail attacks to throw grappled creatures or weapons into the nearby lava.

**Treasure.** An unhatched salamander egg—a two-foot-wide obsidian stone sphere—can be spotted in a small niche with a successful DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check. The egg will hatch into a fire snake in 2d6 weeks.

## 7. BATTLEGROUND

An improvised rope ladder hangs from pitons and descends a 5-foot-wide and 50-foot-deep shaft into area 8.

Half a dozen salamander bodies litter the ground of this cave. A mangled body partially covered by a crimson cloak lays next to a hole in the floor to the east—multi-colored shards of crystals embedded in the body glitter in the lava's glow.



Laying next to the shaft's mouth is the collapsed body of Higgin Stormcloak, leader of the failed Bloodbound party.

**Higgin.** Higgin Stormcloak is a gruff and proud man and a true mercenary to his core. His mission was to clear out the mine of all elementals and silence anyone who learned of the covered-up accidents and mismanagement. He managed to get this far before collapsing after his party was attacked by the draxorn as they entered into area 8. The mercenary was injured in the draxorn's breath attack and is unconscious and bleeding from his wounds. If healed, he shares what he knows about the creature below but will not assist them further while recovering from his injuries. He shares the following information:

- ◆ He led the Bloodbound party down into these caverns in search of what was causing the earthquakes.
- ◆ One of his party, Teragon, was killed while attempting to clear the elementals in the gas-filled cavern (area 2), falling to the cavern below.
- ◆ His team went through the chimney below and was attacked by a creature he's never seen before.
- ◆ The attack happened too fast, and he did not see what attacked them, only the blast of razor-sharp crystals that hit him as he stepped off the rope ladder.
- ◆ He gives the characters his two potions of resistance (fire) to aid them.

**Treasure.** Higgin has two *potions of resistance (fire)* and a *frost brand longsword* (command word "hielos") on his person. He also wears a steel chain necklace with an iron tag engraved with his name on one side and the blood drop emblem of the Bloodbound guild on the other.

**Encounter: Last Stand.** After the characters leave Higgin and move on to the next area, he moves a large boulder next to the hole. As they are ascending the shaft after their encounter with Orgeileos, he calls out to ask them if they successfully defeated the creature before pushing the boulder over the opening to block the way. The boulder weighs 200 pounds, is 4 feet in diameter, and can be moved with a successful DC 17 Strength check. This check is done with disadvantage unless the characters find a way to position themselves in a way to leverage the boulder while beneath it. Higgin proceeds to make his way out of the mine, fighting to the death if the characters manage to catch him.

## 8. DEATH LEDGE

The rope ladder ends on a rocky shelf hugging a cliff face that descends into a massive bottomless expanse. A slender path leads down the side of the cliff and deeper into the mountain. Shards of glittering crystal are embedded in the rock, and a crimson-cloaked body lays on the path with one arm and leg hanging over the edge.

A character with a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 12 or higher notices that the crystals embedded in the rock wall are the same crystals embedded in Higgin Stormcloak. The body on the pathway is precariously balanced, and a single touch sends it over the edge. The noise of the falling body echoes across the empty space as it bangs against the cliff face, but no one hears it land—the pit is over 300 feet deep. If the body falls into the hole, the noise attracts the attention of **Orgeileos** (see Appendix: New Creature), and he uses his Earth Glide ability to come through the wall from area 9 to the western wall directly across from the ledge.

When Orgeileos arrives, read aloud the following:

The wall across the bottomless pit starts to shift and ripple like water right before an enormous horned head slips through the rock with a single gleaming eye burning with a fiery light. Spiraling rows of shark-like teeth fill the creature's maw, and its skin resembles recently cooled molten rock. The beast pulls its gargantuan body halfway through the stone, flanked by massive claws that crack into the stone. Its jaw opens and a blast of crystals spews out.

**Encounter: Draxorn's Breath.** The **adult draxorn** (see Appendix: New Creature) Orgeileos is furious at the further intrusion into his domain. He roars at the characters in Draconic, "More of you pests?" before unleashing his Crystal Breath at the party. Orgeileos does not fight in this location and uses his Earth Glide ability to retreat through the rock wall and into area 9.

## 8A. THE CRYSTAL TUNNEL

The ledge leading across the cliff descends into a crystal-encrusted tunnel ending in the Orgeileos's lair. The sharp crystals crunch underfoot, and the tunnel is considered difficult terrain. In the center of the tunnel is an active natastonite crystal (see area 4b for its effects).

## 9. ORGEILEOS' LAIR

The draxorn Orgeileos has made this enormous crystal-filled cavern into his lair. He cannot be surprised by the characters as he already knows of their presence and waits for them to make their way to him.

**Crystals.** The lair is filled with jagged crystals that impede movement, and the entire area is considered difficult terrain. Creatures that are knocked prone or fall onto the crystals take 3 (1d6) piercing damage for every 10 feet of height fallen. Orgeileos is not affected by the crystals.

**Platforms.** Three natural rocky platforms ring around a 30-foot-deep pit in the center of the cave. The northernmost platform is 30 feet high and each subsequent platform moving clockwise decreases in height by 10 feet.

## ORGEILEOS

The **adult draxorn** (see Appendix: New Creature) Orgeileos is a recluse who mainly wants to be left alone. He has little regard for the aboveground civilizations and views humanoids as little more than pests. However, his appetite for rare stones—why he chose this mountain to make his lair—opens him to possible negotiations with the characters. In order to do this, the characters must offer him rare gemstones and succeed on three separate ability checks to convince him (see below). If they fail more than one check, Orgeileos is unconvinced of the characters' ability to negotiate and decides to eat them instead.

## NEGOTIATIONS

As an action, the characters can attempt to negotiate with Orgeileos by giving him various rare stones they may have found throughout the mine, including whatever the party may already have on their persons:

- ◆ Any ordinary gemstone worth 5,000 gp or higher, or a magical gem of rare quality or higher.
- ◆ The gem of seeing in area 5.
- ◆ The unhatched salamander egg in area 6.
- ◆ A natastonite crystals in areas 4b and 8a.

After giving a stone to Orgeileos, the characters must convince him that an arrangement can be made between the draxorn and the Doralli Mining Company and succeed on a DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check. One check can be done at advantage if the characters offer both natastonite crystals at the same time. The draxorn eats the offered stone on a successful check, and his posture becomes visibly more relaxed and thoughtful at the characters' words. He also eats the offered stone but grows more agitated on a failed check, not believing the characters can offer him any more than what they have.

After three successful checks, Orgeileos agrees to meet with a representative of the Doralli Mining Company to come up with a mutually beneficial arrangement and agrees to stop building up the volcano's wrath. As a sign of good faith, he allows the characters to choose two items from his hoard (see below). If the characters fail to convince him, Orgeileos ends the conversation angrily and proceeds to remove the pests from his lair.

## DRAXORN HOARD

Orgeileos keeps his hoard at the bottom of the pit in the center of his lair. The totality of the hoard is as follows: 9,000 gp worth of gemstones of all types, 22,000 gp, an ornate set of full-plate armor edged in gold and platinum (2,000 gp), an *ioun stone* (*insight*), a *manual of quickness of action*, and a *rod of alertness*.

You can modify this hoard to include additional items that can lead to further adventures such as treasure maps, ancient journals, or other clues to point your players towards their next destination. Alternatively, you can use the Draxorn Hoard Art Objects table to add interesting objects of art the characters may enjoy, or to use as inspiration for your own additions.



# CONCLUSION

Depending on how the characters ended their encounter with Orgeileos and who hired them, they must decide on the future of the mine on Mount Temper. With the draxorn appeased or defeated as the case may be, Mount Temper begins to settle down quickly, and the region is safe from the threat of its eruption. Azmar and the surrounding villages are grateful for the characters' assistance, and songs of the brave heroes who put the mountain back to sleep soon circulate the region.

## THE DORALLI MINING COMPANY

The Doralli family is not pleased to be forced into a deal with the draxorn to keep their mine open and pay only half of the promised reward to the party. If the characters made a deal that closes the mine in order to keep the draxorn appeased, the Dorallis are less than pleased, paying them nothing and putting a target on their back with their underworld connections. Otherwise, if the characters defeat the draxorn, they are paid handsomely, and the Dorallis plan on resuming mining operations as before.

If the characters manage to find the hidden reports and give them to Mayor Karcsi Bladetarren, she uses her connections through her noble family to spread the word that the Doralli operation knew of the dangers and put the entire region at risk. This effectively ends the mine, and the area returns to the traditions of leaving Mount Temper and its hidden treasures—and dangers—alone.

The characters have now made an ally or an enemy out of one of the most powerful factions in the Free-lands. They may begin to run into some of the Doralli's enemies seeking to harm the powerful family. They may seek to hinder the party if they are friends of the Doralli's or recruit them in a plot against the shady company and welcome them as allies.

## HOOK RESOLUTION: THE MISSING COUSIN

If the characters manage to discover the fate of Teragon, his cousin is grateful, if saddened, by the news. They plan to recover the body (if the characters do not bring it with them) to provide a proper burial. The Bloodbound guild is sure to visit the party at some point—to either determine the fate of Higgin Stormcloak or at his behest to eliminate the party and complete the contract given to them by the Doralli Mining Company.

The Bloodbound guild are mercenaries through and through, respecting only a more powerful force or those who pay them the most. It is up to you to determine how the Bloodbound guild decides to interact with the characters. They are a highly competent collective of powerful war wizards who see that every contract is completed and finished—no matter what it takes.

## DRAXORN HOARD ART OBJECTS

### d10 Object

- 1 An etched crystal pitcher with orichalcum inlaid elven script and broken handle
- 2 An ancient longsword with a pommel in the shape of a skeletal clenched fist, its blade dulled with age
- 3 The broken golden circlet of a dwarf lord, its gems missing from their sockets
- 4 An ornately carved pickaxe with gold inlaid dwarven script on the iron head, praising the long time work of a master miner
- 5 A series of matching marble statues decorated with glass and depicting the figures of the four main elementals of earth, wind, fire, and water
- 6 A staff of ebony topped with a raw chunk of obsidian wrapped in a lattice of silver wire and adorned with brightly colored feathers
- 7 An iron armband decorated with gemstones that represent each month of the year and silver etching of constellations connecting them
- 8 A crystal orb embedded with tiny pieces of silver within it that projects a night sky when held close to a light source
- 9 A series of dusty tapastries that depict the rise of an ancient dwarf kingdom deep under the mountains and its subsequent fall at the hands of a horde of orcs and giants
- 10 A working grandfather clock with a face showing undecipherable symbols instead of numbers and three hands moving at different speeds, two moving clockwise and the third counterclockwise

## ADULT DRAXORN

Huge dragon, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 243 (18d12 + 126)

Speed 40 ft., burrow 80 ft., climb 40 ft.

Proficiency  
Bonus: +6

<b>STR</b> 26 (+8)	<b>DEX</b> 12 (+1)	<b>CON</b> 25 (+7)	<b>INT</b> 14 (+2)	<b>WIS</b> 16 (+3)	<b>CHA</b> 21 (+5)
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Saving Throws Dex +7, Con +13, Wis +9, Cha +11

Skills Perception +15, Stealth +7

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't adamantine

Damage Immunities acid, poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., tremorsense 60 ft., passive Perception 25

Languages Common, Draconic, Terran

**Legendary Resistance (3/Day).** If the dragon fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

**Earth Glide.** The draxorn can burrow through nonmagical, unworked earth and stone. While doing so, the draxorn doesn't disturb the material it moves through.

**Stone Camouflage.** The draxorn has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide in rocky terrain.

### ACTIONS

**Multiaction.** The draxorn can use its Frightful Presence. It then makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

**Bite.** Melee Weapon Attack: +14 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 19 (2d10 + 8) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) acid damage.

**Claw.** Melee Weapon Attack: +14 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 15 (2d6 + 8) slashing damage.

**Tail.** Melee Weapon Attack: +14 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. Hit: 17 (2d8 + 8) bludgeoning damage.

**Frightful Presence.** Each creature of the draxorn's choice that is within 120 ft. of the draxorn and aware of it must succeed on a DC 19 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to the draxorn's Frightful Presence for the next 24 hours.

**Crystal Breath (Recharge 5-6).** The draxorn exhales razor-sharp crystal shards in a 60-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 21 Dexterity saving throw, taking 63 (18d6) piercing damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

### LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The draxorn can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The draxorn regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

**Detect.** The draxorn makes a Wisdom (Perception) check.

**Tail Attack.** The draxorn makes a tail attack.

**Earthquake (Costs 2 Actions).** The draxorn rears back and slams down into the ground with all its weight, sending shockwaves outwards. Each creature within 10 feet of the draxorn must succeed on a DC 22 Dexterity saving throw or take 15 (2d6 + 8) bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone. The draxorn can then move up to half its burrow speed.

# APPENDIX

## ADULT DRAXORN

Among the more rare and powerful dragons are the draxorns, interplanar travellers from the plane of earth that occasionally make their way to the material plane. Solitary and proud, they avoid contact with living creatures they consider inferior. They spend most of their time underground, burrowing through mountains, searching for rare minerals and gemstones that they consume.

Draxorns have front-facing curved horns that flank a solitary eye glaring above a maw filled with row upon row of jagged fangs. Their pebbled stone-like hide makes them seem like a living part of the mountains

and earth they prefer to live within. Some sport a pair of vestigial wings that hint to a time when they flew through the air as effortlessly as they now dive through solid stone.

Unlike most dragons that build their hoard out of greed—believing that all the world's treasures rightfully belong to them—draxorn's stockpile theirs more like a squirrel saving up nuts for winter, building both a bed and larder at the same time.

Draxorns rarely ally themselves with other creatures, preferring their solitude, and generally allow only elementals to live in proximity to their lairs. They feel a bond to them as they remind them of the elemental plane of earth the draxorns come from.



**Masters of Earth.** A draxorn is one with the earth and flows through stone like a bird in flight, leaving no trace of its passing. Their constant movement through the underground often brings them into conflict with other dragons who make their home under the earth, such as red dragons and copper dragons. Draxorns often move into a lair that has been abandoned, moving in when other dragons leave by choice or when defeated by adventurers.

**Miners of the Deep.** Draxorns seek precious stones and minerals for food, often finding deep mines to gorge themselves. Once sated, they find secluded places to sleep and dream of their homes on the elemental plane of earth where they were never hungry or had to roam in search of food.

**Solitary Kings.** Draxorns value their seclusion above anything else and fiercely defend their feeding grounds. While they do not purposefully seek to dominate others and can peacefully coincide with other creatures, they will not tolerate any attempts to disturb their peace.

## THE DRAXORN'S LAIR

Draxorns are reclusive beings that prefer to make their lairs deep underground, and they typically burrow under mountain ranges rich in minerals and gemstones. The creatures rarely form alliances with others and choose to live in solitude, and any agreements they make are often to the extent of a mutual understanding to leave each other alone.

All dragons collect a hoard of various precious metals and magic items, and a draxorn is no different in that regard. They enjoy the feel of the soft metals of gold and silver, often sleeping on their hoards. Because they consume gemstones as food, they do not usually keep them as part of their hoard, eating them whenever they come across them instead.

**Lair Actions.** The draxorn can invoke the ambient magic to take lair actions when fighting inside its lair. On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), the draxorn can take one lair action to cause one of the following effects.

- ◆ The earth erupts from a point on the ground the draxorn can see within 120 feet of it, in a 20-foot-high, 5-foot-radius eruption. Each creature in the blast area must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 21 (6d6) bludgeoning damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one.

- ◆ Part of the ceiling collapses above one creature that the draxorn can see within 120 feet of it. The creature must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or take 10 (3d6) bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone and buried. The buried target is restrained, has total cover, and cannot breathe or stand up. A creature can take an action to make a DC 10 Strength check, ending the buried state on a success.
- ◆ A tremor shakes the lair in a 60-foot radius around the dragon. Each creature other than the draxorn on the ground in that area must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or be knocked prone.

The draxorn can't repeat an effect until they have all been used, and it can't use the same effect two rounds in a row.

**Regional Effects.** The region containing a legendary draxorn's lair is warped by the draxorn's magic, which creates one or more of the following effects:

- ◆ Deposits of rare minerals are more common within 6 miles of the dragon's lair.
- ◆ The soil within 1 mile of the draxorn's lair is extremely fertile, and crops grown here are more resilient to disease due to the rich minerals.
- ◆ Underground fissures and caverns form within 1 mile of the draxorn's lair, reaching deep enough for creatures and beings from the Deepshade to reach and threaten the above-ground civilizations.

If the draxorn dies, these effects fade over the course of 1d10 days.



GRAB THE DIGITAL  
ASSETS FOR THIS  
ADVENTURE

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6

*Prison of the Arachlex* is a Fifth Edition adventure intended for **three to five characters of 5th to 7th level** and optimized for **four characters with an average party level (APL) of 6**. An interplanar ship full of telepathic beings crashed centuries ago on the material plane, killing all but a few of its crew members. The survivors built a laboratory in the remnants of their ship, seeking a way back to the plane of madness. The resulting experiments created an abomination imprisoned in the laboratory until the fateful day some village children stumbled upon the entrance to its prison. Transforming them into monstrous creatures under its mental control, it now threatens to spread its corruption to the outside world.

This adventure occurs in the Freelands campaign setting but easily fits into any existing campaign with a small village near a dark wood with only a few modifications and name changes.

## BACKSTORY

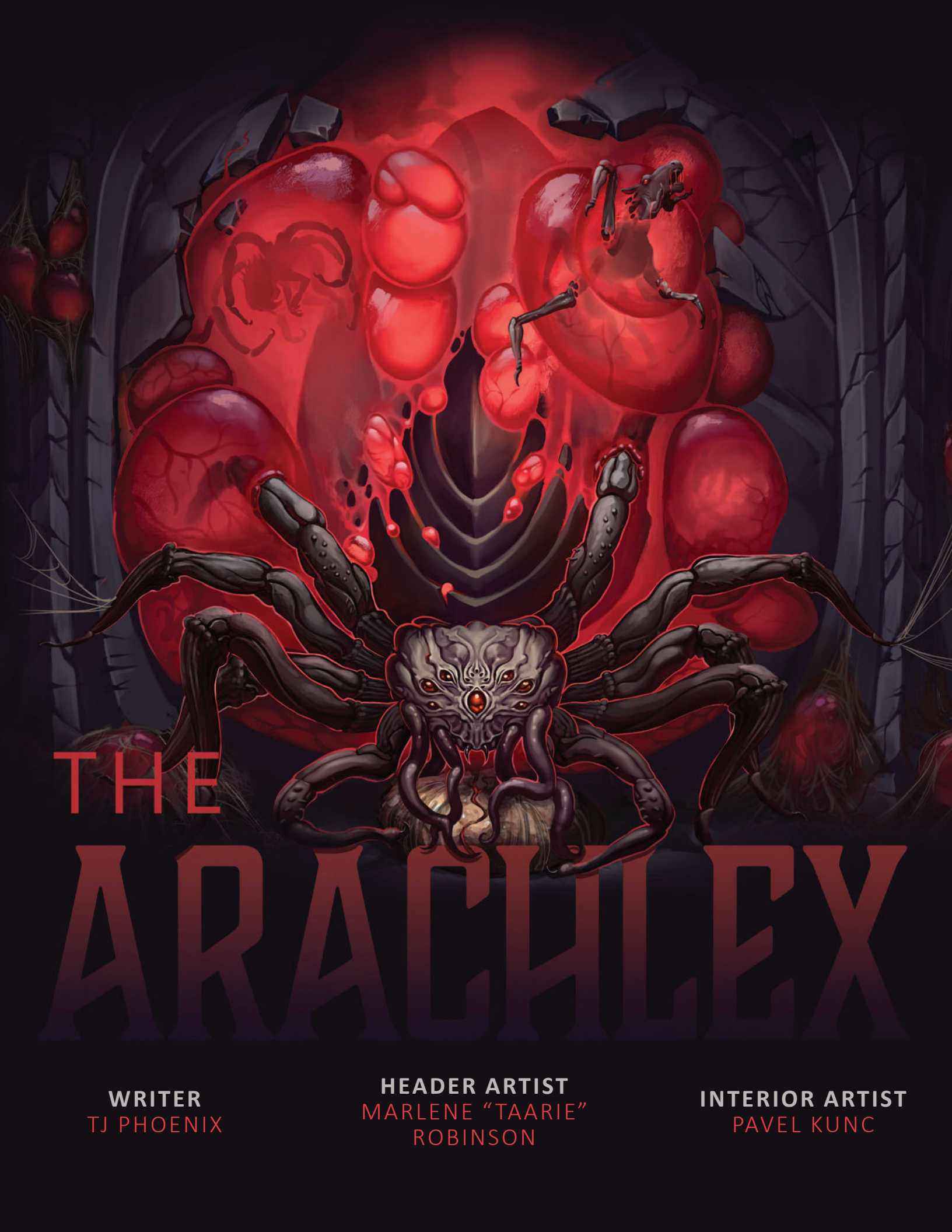
Long ago, a race of highly intelligent beings from the plane of madness crashed their interplanar traveling ship in the area of the Freelands now known as the Verdant Hills. With their ship severely damaged and most of the crew killed in the crash, the survivors found themselves in an unknown and hostile world. To survive, they built an underground laboratory in the remains of their ship to attempt to find a way back to their home plane. Unfortunately for them—but fortunately for the rest of the material plane—they failed, slowly dying off one by one until only the last remained.

Unwilling to admit defeat, this sole survivor poured herself into her work to find a way to stay alive and escape. In the course of her experimentations, she discovered a new kind of ooze that could mimic and recreate the physical form of her species. She intended to transfer her consciousness into this ooze and gain immortality—but something went wrong. A spider somehow managed to make its way into the transfer fluid during the process, and the result was disastrous. The ooze began to partially take on the form of the spider, growing to an enormous size and becoming trapped within the wall containing the vat the ooze was stored within. The transfer of the survivor's consciousness was a success, but she found herself in the body of an abomination made of part spider and part corrosive ooze, trapped and unable to escape.

The creature—calling herself the Arachlex—survived for centuries by feeding on the rodents and insects that managed to creep into the underground laboratory. Driven insane long ago, the Arachlex futilely raged against her imprisonment, forgetting everything from her past life and yearning only for her freedom. That freedom seemed like it would never come until the fateful day when a group of curious children found a hatch leading into her lair.

# PRISON OF





# THE ARACHNELEX

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# ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The characters investigate reports of monsters and the disappearance of local children near a forest ruin. The party finds the ruin covered in strange webbing and guarded by mutated spider-like creatures. After fighting off the creatures, the adventurers find an underground complex covered in webbing and strange machinery, and they discover the children turned into monstrosities controlled by a telepathic creature trapped below. The characters must confront the creature to end the threat.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

Here are a few ways to get your characters hooked into this adventure:

### ◆ HUNTERS IN THE WOOD

The Shimmering Forest lies along the western edge of the Freelands. It is home to druids, fae creatures, and mystical phenomena. During their travels, the characters find themselves walking a road through the forest, where they stumble upon an injured man lying by the wayside. He cries for help, begging them to stop and aid him. The wounded hunter's name is Brom, and he is from a nearby village called Silverton. Monsters attacked him and his hunting party in the woods, and he must warn the other villagers of the danger.

### ◆ PROTECTORS OF THE GREEN

The Circle of the Silver Star is a druidic collective known for aiding local communities with the more wild residents of the Shimmering Forest. Cosgrach the Elder has alerted other circles that an evil presence has blossomed in the forest beyond the druids' capabilities to handle. He has called upon those heroes dedicated to preserving the balance of nature to seek out the town of Silverton to find this evil and end its spread.

### ◆ HEROES FOR HIRE

The local adventuring guild near the characters' home base is stretched thin and reached out to the party for assistance. Monsters have attacked local hunters from the village of Silverton, and children playing in the nearby forest have mysteriously vanished. The village scraped together a reward of 500 gp to end the threat to the village's safety and rescue the missing children.

# SILVERTON

The village of Silverton lies near the edge of the Shimmering Forest and just inside the Shadowmist Vale in the Verdant Hills region of the Freelands. It's a quiet farming village that enjoys a nearby druid circle's protection and is known mainly for its sleepy atmosphere and the residents' easy-going personalities. These days, the nervous farmers have taken to arming themselves while going about their work and huddle with their families when night falls.

## IMPORTANT NPCs

Significant locations in and around Silverton and the essential people found there include the following:

**Village Elders.** Kerry Montgomery (LG human **acolyte**) is the village midwife, healer, and head of the village elders. The village blacksmith Eric Kilsinger and the farmer Lester Holt are the other elders. When a decision affects the entire village, they are responsible for leading the community. Both Eric and Lester's children are among the missing group, making them particularly anxious for the characters to begin their search right away.

**Inn & Tavern.** The Lion's Tooth is owned and operated by Lian Yun (NG elf **commoner**) with the help of her daughters Tan and Lai. After her husband died in the Great War decades ago, Lian found love again with her wife, Kerry Montgomery, the village elder and healer. The inn typically caters to hunters on longer treks and the occasional traveling merchant. The tavern is the only one in Silverton and is often used for village meetings when needed.

**General Store.** Petyr's Provisions provides the area with dry goods and equipment. Petyr Pavlovich (CN human **spy**) is a retired thief named Gregory "Blue Eyes" Jeffery who is wanted in the capital city of Haven for the theft of a rare and expensive jewel from a powerful nobleman. Unable to sell the unique gem, he is hiding in Silverton under the guise of a shop owner while he quietly looks for a buyer.



**Druid Circle.** The Circle of the Silver Star is a small group of druids that live in the nearby Shimmering Forest and often work with the Silverton farmers. When needed, they help with crops and act as intermediaries with the forest's denizens in exchange for goods and other comfort items. A green-robed **druid** can often be found around town or at the Lion's Tooth tavern sharing a cup of mead with a farmer they are assisting. These druids are adept alchemists and can help characters with balms, cures for disease, and other healing needs.

## RUMORS IN SILVERTON

The characters can learn the following information by spending time in the tavern or conversing with the locals.

- ◆ The missing children are named Elsa, Maurice, Petal, Edgar, and Lori. The missing hunters are called Brom, Jax, Erlich, and Kang.
- ◆ The farmers are terrified and don't let their herds graze too far afield and huddle with their families in the safety of their homes. Every so often, cattle and travelers who went out at night are reported missing.
- ◆ A group of five children from nearby farms went missing while playing in the nearby forest a few nights ago. Local hunters searched for them, but only a few returned gravely wounded and reported that strange creatures attacked them.
- ◆ The creatures were many-legged monstrosities that ambushed them from the treetops near the old ruins on Broketooth Hill. They attacked too fast for the surviving hunters to see them clearly before the survivors fled for their lives.
- ◆ No one knows for sure where the stones came from that gave Broketooth Hill its name. The jagged monoliths are made from black stone and covered in strange carvings. Grandparents told stories that they learned from their grandparents of spirits haunting the ruin at night and monsters that would eat little children who did not finish their supper.
- ◆ The Old Path heads west from the village and through the Shimmering Forest to Broketooth Hill.

## GETTING THE QUEST

Once the characters head towards the town, read aloud or paraphrase the following:

Your travels bring you through the namesake rolling green hills of the Verdant Hills leading towards Shadowmist Vale. Open fields and farms line the road, and the farmers appear nervous, fingering their pitchforks as they watch you pass. A few awkwardly wear swords at their hips, and the fear on their faces is unmistakable.

The village of Silverton appears like many others, with simple plaster and thatch homes circling a village green. Smoke curls from every chimney, but each door is tightly closed without a villager in sight. The sound of raised voices comes from the largest building in the village. A wooden sign bearing the profile of a lion with a single tooth swings above its front door.

The characters find the village elders in the Lion's Tooth tavern loudly discussing the missing children and hunters. Kerry Montgomery (see "Roleplaying Kerry") attempts to keep the others calm, but the fear over their lost children drives the other elders to near panic. The villagers are relieved at the party's arrival, explaining the situation as they know it and answering any questions the characters may have (refer to the Silverton rumors table).

## ROLEPLAYING KERRY

In her youth, Kerry Montgomery studied to be a **priest** of Sylvania, goddess of life. In her fifties now, she has pursued a simpler life in the quiet town with her wife and step-children. Her patience and steady hand have helped guide the community, but the missing children have the entire village on edge. Kerry was the midwife for each of the missing children and has a personal attachment to them. She appeals to the characters' better natures to influence them to seek the children out. If that fails, she offers 100 gp that the villagers scraped together as a reward.

## TO BROKETOOTH HILL

The journey through the Shimmering Forest takes two hours of travel by foot. The forest is named for the multi-colored and translucent leaves of the unique trees that grow here. Sunlight filters through the leaves, casting a shimmering kaleidoscope of colors throughout the forest. Characters proficient in Nature notice the forest is unnaturally quiet the closer they get to the hill. Characters with a passive Wisdom (Perception) of 15 or higher notice thick strands of orange-tinged webbing among the tree branches as they approach the ruins.

Once the characters arrive at Broketooth Hill, as shown on the provided map, read aloud the following:

The trees begin to thin as the winding path leads to a rocky hill jutting from the forest floor. Atop the mound is a cluster of dark stone monoliths made from a different stone than the others that dot the landscape. They appear like a massive claw reaching from beneath the earth with thick strands of webbing stretching between them, swaying in the light breeze.

The hilltop is covered in sticky webbing similar to a *web* spell (save DC 12), except they are not flammable. A character can clear a 5-foot section of these webs on their turn by using an action to attack using weapons that deal slashing damage. This webbing is corrosive to the touch, and a restrained creature takes 2 (1d4) acid damage at the start of its turn.

**Encounter: Hilltop Guardians.** There are four **spiderkith** hiding among the rocks on the hill. Two spiderkith were mutated from deer, and the other two were once wolves. They attempt to ambush the characters as they approach the hill and fight to the death.

**Treasure.** A search of the area uncovers five bedrolls and backpacks, each containing a water skin and one day's worth of rations. These belonged to the children who intended on spending the night here before they stumbled on the hidden hatch to the lair below. A character actively searching the hilltop who succeeds on a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check finds the cocooned

corpse of Jax, the hunter. A pouch containing 20 gp is on his belt, and he wears a gold wedding band worth 5 gp. If the characters return this band to his pregnant wife Marilyn in Silverton, she breaks down in tears and thanks them for its return.

## MONOLITHS

These black stone-like monoliths are part of the ancient ship that crashed here centuries ago, and they are the exposed tips of the ship's massive frame; the rest of the vessel was buried underground from the force of the impact. Runes cover the monoliths, but they have been rubbed smooth from centuries of exposure to the elements. A character who understands Deep Speech recognizes the language, but none of the phrases are legible.

Over the years, various villagers carved their names into the monoliths as a way to prove their bravery for spending the night here. Characters who learned the names of the missing children (see Rumors in Silverton) and actively search the stones who succeed on a DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check find all five of the missing children's names carved into a monolith. The very last name is only half-finished as the child's knife pressed a hidden button that opened a hatch in the stone, revealing a ladder leading down a chute within the hollow monolith. This hatch still stands open with thick webbing climbing out.

ODD MONOLITHS ON BROKETOOTH HILL







## THE ARACHLEX

The monstrosity trapped in the crashed ship went insane centuries ago and does not remember who she once was or whence she came. She lost her name to her madness and now refers to herself in the third person as the Arachlex. While her current physical form is trapped within the ship's walls, she retains her power of telepathy through her corrosive webbing. This webbing is thick and tinged with a sickly orange color, hinting at its corrosive nature. She mutates creatures within her ooze abdomen, turning them into spider-like monsters called spiderkith that she can control and—if the host has enough intelligence to do so—can speak telepathically through them. With the help of the transformed hunters and children she turned into her spiderkith minions, the Arachlex has begun to spread webs from her lair and out into the forest above, trapping and mutating whatever creature they come across.

## SPIDERKITH

Spiderkith are created from living creatures transformed into monstrosities by an arachlex. While each spiderkith's appearance is different, the end result is the same—a hybridization of the host and a giant spider. These creatures have little intelligent thought and are entirely under the control of the arachlex that created them. Each one is telepathically linked through the corrosive webs of their creator and used to bring food and new hosts back to the nest.

Due to the unstable nature of the process that created them, spiderkith have extremely short life spans, often collapsing within a month of their "birth" into an acidic goo. This necessitates the arachlex to push her spiderkith to constantly hunt for hosts to turn into new puppets to control.



**CR 1**  
200 XP

### SPIDERKITH

Medium monstrosity, unaligned

**Armor Class** 13 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 39 (6d8 + 12)

**Speed** 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

**Proficiency Bonus:** +2

**STR**

12 (+1)

**DEX**

16 (+3)

**CON**

14 (+2)

**INT**

4 (-3)

**WIS**

10 (+0)

**CHA**

8 (-1)

**Skills** Perception +2, Stealth +7

**Damage Resistances** psychic

**Damage Immunities** acid

**Condition Immunities** frightened

**Senses** blindsight 10 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive

Perception 12

**Languages** —

**Spider Climb.** The spiderkith can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

**Web Sense.** While in contact with a web, the spiderkith knows the exact location of any other creature in contact with the same web.

**Web Walker.** The spiderkith ignores movement restrictions caused by webbing.

### ACTIONS

**Acidic Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage and 3 (1d6) acid damage.

**Corrosive Web (Recharge 5-6).** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 30/60 ft., one creature. *Hit:* The target is restrained by webbing. A restrained creature takes 4 (1d8) acid damage at the start of its turn. As an action, the restrained target can make a DC 13 Strength check, bursting the webbing on a success. The webbing can also be attacked and destroyed (AC 10; hp 5; immunity to bludgeoning, fire, poison, and psychic damage).

# THE CRASHED SHIP

The ship from the plane of madness barely survived the crash, and most of the crew were killed instantly. The handful that survived did so while living in the only section that managed not to be crushed by the impact. The survivors turned the upper level into living space while they worked in the laboratory below. They constructed an elevator from scavenged parts of the ship to connect the two floors and lived this way for years. After contracting a local disease that their immune systems could not counteract, the surviving crew soon joined their companions—all except one. The sole survivor of the telepathic plane-traveling race attempted to cheat death and gain immortality through her experiments. She now exists in a mutant spider form, trapped within the walls of the laboratory below.

## GENERAL FEATURES

These general features are prominent throughout the crashed ship unless otherwise noted in the area descriptions.

**Ceilings, Floors, and Walls.** The ship's walls are made of a seamless, black, organic-looking substance similar to an insect's carapace. They are smooth to the touch and as strong as 1-inch thick steel plating. Stone-like columns stand interspersed along the smooth walls and create the impression of a rib cage around each room. The floors are made of smooth stone, and each location has 30-foot-high domed ceilings.

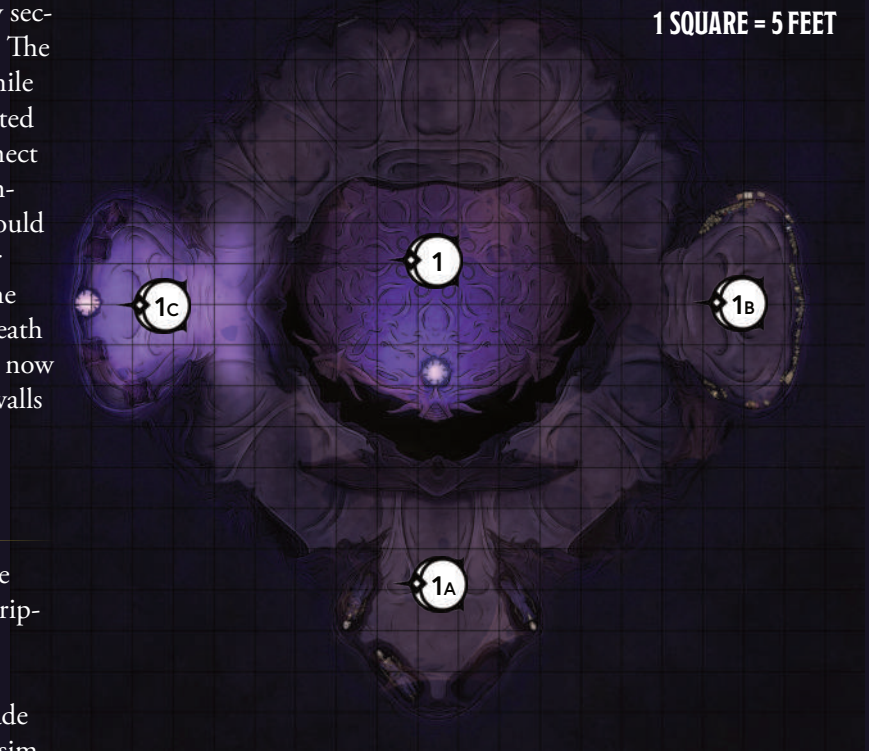
**Lights.** There are no light sources in the ship, and the descriptions provided for each area assume the characters have their own light source or assisted vision.

**Climate.** The air in the ship is cool and damp, with droplets of oily moisture covering almost every surface. The stench of sulfur permeates every floor and is heaviest in the Arachlex's lair.

**Corrosive Webbing.** Thick strands of webbing stretch throughout the entire structure. These webs are similar to a *web* spell (save DC 12), except they are not flammable. The webs have AC 10, 5 hit points, and immunity to bludgeoning, fire, poison, and psychic damage. The webs are corrosive to the touch, and a restrained creature takes 4 (2d4) acid damage at the start of its turn.

## LIVING QUARTERS

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



## ELEVATOR SHAFT

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET





## KEYED LOCATIONS

The following descriptions correspond to the keyed locations on the provided map of the crashed ship.

### 1. LIVING QUARTERS

The web-covered ladder leads down into a massive 60-foot-wide circular room chamber. The smooth dark walls of the circular room are ridged and resemble the shell of a beetle, and are etched with tentacle-like patterns. Ornate black arches along the walls rise to meet in the center of the domed ceiling. These arches appear to be the same material as the monoliths above.

Thick strands of webbing stretch across the room, filling it except for a large, round platform in the center. Curved onyx spikes rise from the edges of the platform, and a short pedestal holding an ornately carved bowl stands to one side.

Short ramps lead up through flowing arches opening to chambers to the east, south, and west.

The former occupants used this chamber as a makeshift living quarters after the crash. They built an elevator in the center of the room to connect this room and the laboratory (area 3). When the Silverton youths stumbled into the chamber, they activated the dormant magic in the elevator's gems and found themselves at the mercy of the Arachlex (see "The Arachlex" sidebar).

The room is covered in corrosive webbing (see General Features). The Arachlex is alerted to the characters' presence once they touch the webbing and sends six **spiderkith** (see "Spiderkith" stat block) in the area to attack the intruders. The spiderkith group consists of two of the missing Silverton youths, two hunters, and two rabbits (their size is Tiny, they have 17 (2d4 + 12) hit points, their bite deals 2 (1d4) piercing damage and 3 (1d6) acid damage, and their CR is 1/2 (100 XP)). The spiderkith uses the webs to quickly traverse the room above melee characters to reach the characters in the back. They attempt to restrain the characters in webs to bring them to the Arachlex below.

Once any two spiderkith are defeated, the Arachlex speaks to the characters telepathically through the remaining spiderkith. Once this happens, read aloud the following:

Suddenly, the creatures stop their assault and pull back slightly just as a blend of voices pierces through your mind and your ears as they begin to speak in unison. "Why do you kill the Arachlex's children?" the voices ask. The echoing voices yell together, "Why do you fight us? Help us free the Arachlex!"

The characters can converse with the Arachlex, but she only knows anger and fear at being trapped here so long and grows frustrated quickly. She demands the characters submit to her "children" so they can "become one." If the characters refuse or attack, the voices scream, "You will submit willingly or by force!" before resuming the spiderkith attempt to restrain the characters in their webs.

**Elevator.** Characters stepping onto the elevator platform feel it shift beneath their feet, clearly indicating that the platform is designed to move. The pedestal on the south end of the elevator holds a bowl filled with a

## LABORATORY

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET

wet, black sludge used to control its ascent and descent. The sludge is motionless until a creature with an Intelligence score higher than 3 comes within a foot of it. The surface will ripple and reach out to engulf the hand of a character that touches it. Once in physical contact with the sludge, the character senses the connection in their mind and can order the elevator to move with a mental command. The character must remain in physical contact with the sludge to operate the elevator. Once activated, the elevator descends through the shaft (area 2) by an unseen force at a rate of 5 feet

## 1A. SOUTH PLATFORM

This platform was once the sleeping quarters of the surviving crew members. Bunks set in the walls hold the crumbling skeletons of the crew that died here centuries ago. Each wears the tatters of ancient purple robes. While the skeletons are humanoid, the skulls and elongated fingers indicate that the beings were of an unknown race. Characters proficient in Nature who succeed on a DC 18 Wisdom (Nature) check recognize the shape of the skulls as being similar to a cephalopod.

**Treasure.** A character actively searching through the skeletons who succeeds on a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check finds a *ring of mind shielding* etched with a cephalopod pattern along the outer edge.

## 1B. EAST PLATFORM

The walls of this chamber are covered in bookshelves filled with scrolls and books. Unfortunately, time and the ever-present moisture within the ship have ruined these tomes, and they are illegible. A character searching the room who succeeds on a DC 17 Intelligence (Investigation) check finds a hidden panel in the back of one bookshelf. The panel is trapped with a poison needle, and a creature attempting to open it takes 1 piercing damage and 11 (2d10) poison damage, and must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or be Poisoned for 1 hour. A successful DC 15 Dexterity check with thieves' tools disarms the trap, removing the needle from the panel. An unsuccessful disarm attempt triggers the trap. In the hidden compartment is a thin steel box containing ten diamonds worth 50 gp each.

## 1C. WEST PLATFORM

This chamber was severely damaged in the crash and was used only as storage for the surviving crew members. Old containers made from the same substance as the

walls (see General Features) lie empty, their contents having perished long ago. A pedestal similar to the elevator control sits against one wall; the former crew used it to mind-meld with the ship. Any creature attempting to interact with the sludge in this bowl feels a blinding pain in their mind and must make a DC 15 Intelligence saving throw, taking 14 (4d6) Psychic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

## 2. ELEVATOR SHAFT

The circular elevator shaft is 80 feet wide, 80 feet deep, and the walls are covered in corrosive webbing (see General Features). The walls are made from the same braced smooth black substance as the rest of the ship. Characters with a passive Wisdom (Perception) of 15 or higher notice that the shaft walls are cracked and appear to be cobbled together from bits and pieces—this area was not originally an elevator shaft.

As the platform descends to the halfway point, it reaches four **spiderkith** (see “Spiderkith” sidebar), hiding in the webbing and preparing to ambush the characters. The spiderkith group consists of two goats, a wolf, and a deer. Make a Dexterity (Stealth) check for the spiderkith against the characters' passive Wisdom (Perception) scores to determine if they surprise the party.

## SECRET ROOM

The door to another room sits hidden behind a cluster of webbing halfway down the shaft. A character with a passive Wisdom (Perception) of 17 or higher or actively searching the walls during the descent who succeeds on a DC 17 Wisdom (Perception) check notices the entryway. There is a 10-foot-wide gap filled with corrosive webbing between the edge of the platform and the doorway. The door is stuck and can be opened with a successful DC 17 Strength check.

Inside is a small room that partially collapsed when the ship first crashed. Rubble fills most of the room, but a long-fingered skeleton hand is seen sticking out from among the rocks and dirt. It takes 10 minutes of digging to uncover the skeleton, which is wearing a belt made of steel links in the shapes of spiderwebs. This belt is a *belt of web walking* which grants its attuned wearer the ability to ignore movement restrictions caused by webbing.

## 3. LABORATORY

The lowest level of the crashed ship served as the laboratory for the surviving crew members. Here they worked on ways to use the ship's interplanar traveling capabilit-



ies to open a portal back to their home in the plane of madness. When that failed and the crew began to die off, the last remaining survivor attempted to infuse her consciousness with an intelligent ooze with shapeshifting capabilities. Her experiment went horribly wrong, transforming her into the Arachlex monstrosity trapped in the wall of this chamber.

When the characters descend on the elevator into this room, read aloud the following:

The platform descends through the webbed shaft and into a massive chamber. Like the rest of the complex, thick strands of webbing stretch across the room and between the ribbed arches along the carapace-like walls. However, they do little to hide the horror of what you now face. A massive spider with tentacles for mandibles and an immense glowing orange ooze abdomen appears embedded in the partially crumbled and cracked northern wall. Its strange eyes glisten in the pulsing light given off by its abdomen as it watches your descent.

As the platform touches down, a powerful feminine voice crashes through your mind. "The Arachlex's prison will now become your tomb! The spiderkith will feast upon your merrow!"

The **Arachlex** (see Appendix, her speed is 0 ft. while trapped in the wall) is trapped within the northern wall. If the characters attempt to engage with her in conversation and a character succeeds on a DC 17 Charisma (Persuasion) check, she will angrily speak telepathically with them and halt her attack. The Arachlex remembers little of her past or the experiment that made her into the creature she is today, and escape—both from this chamber and the material plane—dominates her thoughts. If the characters offer to assist with removing her from the wall and succeed on a DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check, she will cautiously allow them to try (see Freeing the Arachlex below), promising them whatever they want to hear to earn her freedom. She uses her Psychic Strike and Corrosive Web abilities to reach characters at range, specifically targeting spellcasters. In the second and fourth rounds of combat, a **spiderkith** (see "Spiderkith" sidebar) mutated from a missing child crawls out from her ooze abdomen.

## FREEING THE ARACHLEX

Freeing the monstrosity requires the characters to succeed on a group DC 25 Strength check to break through enough of the wall for her to escape. Characters proficient in smith's tools can add their proficiency bonus to their roll. The Arachlex betrays her saviors the moment she is free, promising to make their deaths swift.

## DEFEATING THE ARACHLEX

Once the characters defeat the monstrosity, read aloud the following:

The creature's massive legs crash against the walls during her death throes, cracking them further and crushing a supporting pillar. Pieces of the ceiling begin to fall as the chamber starts collapsing in on itself. The light of the creature's ooze abdomen dims as it bursts apart, revealing an unconscious female child covered in wet slime.

The unconscious child weighs 100 pounds, and the characters have 2 minutes to escape the complex before being buried in rubble. As the characters enter the elevator shaft (area 2) and the living quarters (area 1), each character must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw to dodge falling debris, taking 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage on a failed save.

If the characters escape the collapsing complex, read aloud the following:

The earth rumbles beneath your feet as the hill begins to collapse in on itself. The surrounding forest groans as ancient trees shift and their roots pop from the strain. Within seconds, the monoliths sink beneath the earth's surface, leaving a slight divot that quickly fills with rock and dirt. There is no trace of the hill that once stood here for hundreds of years, and the forest begins to settle in just a moment. For the first time, you hear a birdcall in the distance.

# CONCLUSION

When the characters arrive back in Silverton, the news they bring is bittersweet. While the villagers can rest easy now that the threat of the Arachlex has been defeated, they mourn the loss of their children and loved ones. The rescued child is Lori, daughter of the blacksmith and village elder Eric Kilsinger. She appears physically unharmed and mostly in shock from her experience. There is no telling what influence the Arachlex has had on her mind, however, and only time will tell if she recovers completely from the ordeal. Perhaps there is a small piece of the Arachlex's consciousness melded with the child's mind that will manifest later.

The villagers pay any promised rewards (see Adventure Hooks). If the characters were brought to the village by the Circle of the Silver Star, Cosgrach the Elder thanks them for their assistance and promises to keep an eye on Lori. If the local adventuring guild hired the characters, their contact is saddened by the somber news but glad they managed to end the threat to the village.

# APPENDIX

## THE ARACHLEX

An unnamed researcher of a telepathic, plane-traveling race of beings from the plane of madness became trapped on the material plane when their ship crashed. The sole survivor after decades of attempts to return home, the researcher attempted to infuse her consciousness with a sentient ooze in order to gain immortality. The result was an arachnid-ooze monstrosity created by accident when an innocent spider interfered with the experiment, becoming trapped within the laboratory walls. Her mind was shattered once combined with the ooze, with fragments of a thousand memories of other creatures pouring through her like a river. She now sits in the physical prison of her lair and the mental prison of her broken mind, spreading her corrosive webbing as far as she can, frantically attempting to escape.

The Arachlex appears as a massive spider with a pulsing, orange ooze-like abdomen. Instead of mandibles, she has a host of tentacles in her maw reminiscent

of the telepathic race she was before her transformation. The center of her head is dominated by a single eye that glistens like an oily rainbow.

Although physically trapped within her lair, the Arachlex extends her reach through her telepathic control over her spiderkith "children". They spread her webbing from her prison into the world beyond, trapping food and future hosts for more hybrids. While in her web, she uses the former intelligent hosts to broadcast her telepathy and whisper into her victims' minds to draw them to her lair.

## THE ARACHLEX'S LAIR

The Arachlex is trapped within the laboratory wall that housed the container for the ooze that now makes up her abdomen. She has been trapped in the remains of her crashed ship for centuries, slowly going mad from the fragments of memories that are added to her mind from each new spiderkith created. Corrosive webbing is strung across the entirety of the lair and up into the world above. This webbing is acidic to organic tissue and quickly eats through flesh and bone. Her children slowly pull her webs out to blanket the region and trap new victims.

**Lair Actions.** On initiative count 20 (losing initiatives), the Arachlex can take a lair action to cause one of the following effects. She can't use the same effect two rounds in a row.

- ◆ The Arachlex weaves her webs tighter around a creature restrained in her webbing, increasing the escape DC by 1 and the web's hit points by 5.
- ◆ The Arachlex shakes her webbing, making it whip back and forth. Any creature within 5 feet of a webbed area must make a DC 10 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.
- ◆ A clutch of tiny red spider eggs bursts and a **swarm of spiders** with 11 hit points appears in a random unoccupied space near the Arachlex, sharing its initiative and taking their turn after the Arachlex.

**Regional Effects.** The region containing the Arachlex's lair is warped by her presence, which creates one or more of the following effects:

- ◆ There is a noticeable increase in the spider population in the region within 1 mile of the Arachlex's lair.



# ARACHLEX

Huge monstrosity, chaotic evil

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 85 (10d12 + 20)

Speed 30 ft., climb 60 ft.

Proficiency Bonus: +3

STR

17 (+3)

DEX

12 (+1)

CON

14 (+2)

INT

20 (+5)

WIS

12 (+1)

CHA

16 (+3)

Saving Throws Int +8, Cha +6

Skills Arcana +8, Deception +6, Insight +4, Perception +4, Persuasion +6

Damage Resistances psychic

Damage Immunities acid, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft., passive

Perception 14

Languages Common, Deep Speech, telepathy 60 ft.

**Legendary Resistance (3/day).** If the arachlex fails a saving throw, she can choose to succeed instead.

**Keen Hearing and Sight.** The arachlex has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or sight.

**Shielded Mind.** The arachlex is immune to scrying and to any effect that would sense her emotions, read her thoughts, or detect her location.

**Spider Climb.** The arachlex can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

**Web Sense.** While in contact with a web, the arachlex knows the exact location of any other creature in contact with the same web.

**Web Walker.** The arachlex ignores movement restrictions caused by webbing.

## ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The arachlex uses her Corrosive Web attack when available and makes two Slam attacks and a Mind Spike attack.

**Slam.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (3d8 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

**Tentacles.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 14 (2d8 + 5) psychic damage. If the target is Medium or smaller, it is grappled (escape DC 15) and must succeed on a DC 15 Intelligence saving throw or be stunned until this grapple ends.

**Mind Spike.** The arachlex drives a spike of psychic energy into the mind of one creature she can see within 30 feet. The target must succeed on a DC 15 Intelligence saving throw or take 7 (2d6) psychic damage and subtract 1d4 from the next saving throw it makes before the end of her next turn.

**Corrosive Web (Recharge 6).** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 30/60 ft., one creature. *Hit:* The target is restrained by corrosive webbing. As an action, the restrained target can make a DC 12 Strength check, bursting the webbing on a success. The webs are corrosive to the touch and a restrained creature takes 4 (2d4) acid damage at the start of its turn. The webbing can also be attacked and destroyed (AC 10; hp 5; immunity to bludgeoning, poison, fire, and psychic damage).

## LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The arachlex can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The arachlex regains spent legendary actions at the start of her turn.

**Engulfing Ooze.** The arachlex places a target she is grappling into her ooze abdomen, completely engulfing them. The engulfed target is blinded and restrained, it has total cover against attacks and other effects outside the arachlex, and it takes 10 (3d6) acid damage at the start of each of the arachlex's turns. The arachlex can have only one target engulfed at a time. If the arachlex takes 20 damage or more on a single turn from the engulfed creature, the arachlex must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw at the end of that turn or the creature is expelled, which falls prone in a space within 10 feet of the arachlex. If the arachlex dies, an engulfed creature is no longer restrained by her and can escape from the corpse using 5 feet of movement, exiting prone.

**Puppeteer (Costs 2 Actions).** The arachlex takes mental control of a spiderkith within 30 feet of her that she can see. The spiderkith can move up to half her maximum speed and make one melee weapon attack.

**Sense Prey.** The arachlex uses her keen hearing and sight to make a Wisdom (Perception) check.

- ◆ An ominous silence sits heavy within 1 mile of the Arachlex's lair, as if the local wildlife is collectively holding their breath. Carcasses are often found trapped in corrosive webbing, partially melted from the acidic nature of the webs.
- ◆ Within 1 mile of the Arachlex's lair, corrosive webbing is strung between all 10-foot cubes of open space, so long as the webs can be anchored between two solid masses (such as walls or trees). These webs are stronger than typ-

ical webs and are considered difficult terrain. They have an AC of 10, 5 hit points, and immunity to bludgeoning, fire, poison, and psychic damage. The webs are corrosive to the touch, and a restrained creature takes 4 (2d4) acid damage at the start of its turn. Any destroyed webs are magically repaired at the next dawn.



# THE HEAVENLY HORDE

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## BACKSTORY

A thousand years have passed since the Great Horde swept through the Motionless Mountains and crushed the dwarf kingdoms. The combined might of orcs and giants swept the dwarves into the seas, where they took to their ships and still remain to this day. Reveling in their victory, the horde set their roots deep into the captured underground cities and strongholds, cementing their hold on the mountain range. After being defeated by the human and elven kingdoms, the orcs began to look inward to build a mighty civilization rooted in their traditions and tempered with the knowledge left behind by the dwarves.

Over time, their passion for war evolved into a dedication to the pursuit of crafting and spiritual perfection, tempering both steel and spirit in the ever-burning forges. The warriors test their courage against the creatures of the Deepshade, the endless network of caverns stretching leagues beneath the mountains, filled with nightmarish horrors.

Tradition and a shared history now bind the twelve orc *dakhs* (clans) of the Karzak Alliance, the modern descendants of the savage Great Horde. Yet not all are content with this way of life, and some seek a return to the old ways. Among them is Raon, daughter of Hurlgun, lord of the Krolgord Dakh. Raon excelled in battle, leading successful raids into the Deepshade and earning the title of Champion at the youngest age in centuries. Surrounded by a devoted following of elite fighters and *ukhathsi* (shaman) dedicated to the old ways, the eager warrior pleaded with her father to lead the dakh into the fertile lands above but was refused. Determined, Raon took her band of warriors on secret raids into the Black Hills, rekindling fears of an orcish invasion in the region.

The Greywatch knights, dedicated to keeping a vigil on the orc nation, responded swiftly and drove Raon back into the mountains. While huddled with her warriors around the campfire, the skies above erupted in an explosion of thunder and lightning. A blazing figure with golden feathered wings descended from the heavens and crashed into the earth: an angel had fallen.

A golden glaive crackling with crackling divine power fell with him, landing at Raon's feet. She used that power to first burn away the Greywatch knights and then to challenge her father, taking his crown in combat. The dakh has rallied beneath Raon's battle standard—the angel's torn wings. The drums of war now thrum as campfires light the mountainside like so many stars in the night sky. The Heavenly Horde rises, and with it, war has come to the Freelands once more.

APL  
8

*The Heavenly Horde* is a Fifth Edition adventure intended for **three to five characters of 7th to 9th level** and optimized for **four characters with an average party level (APL) of 8**. The divine weapon of a fallen angel falls into the hands of a bloodthirsty young warrior. A horde of orcs eager for battle has formed under a new warlord's banner and risen from their underground city to threaten the lands above. The battle horns have sounded, and war is on the horizon.

This adventure occurs in the Freelands campaign setting but easily fits into any existing campaign with only a few modifications and name changes.



GRAB THE DIGITAL  
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## ADVENTURE HOOKS

Here are a few ways to get your players hooked into this adventure:

### ◆ A KNIGHT IN NEED

The characters come upon a wounded Greywatch knight while traveling near the Motionless Mountains. The blood-spattered warrior is in bad shape, barely clinging to life as he calls out to the characters for aid. His name is Sir Laris, and he needs their help in returning to the Greywatch encampment to relay important information about the horde of orcs camped in the nearby mountains.

### ◆ A DIVINE QUEST

Characters with religious backgrounds all receive the same dream: a divine presence appears to them and tells them of an artifact in the hands of one who would use it to wage war on the Freelands. The presence beseeches them in the name of their deity to seek out the “Watchers of the Mountains” and aid the other seekers they find there to reclaim the artifact. The character awakens with an innate sense of direction that pulls them directly towards the Greywatch encampment.

### ◆ HEROES FOR HIRE

A representative of the Greywatch Knights named Sir Barolyn reaches out to the characters and requests a meeting. He explains that the knights are stretched thin as they set up defenses against a building army of orcs set to invade the Freelands. The knight has been sent to hire the party—known for their heroics throughout the region—to assist the Greywatch with a highly classified rescue mission. He’s been authorized to offer them 5,000 gp if they accept the quest and directs them to meet with Commander Erik von Schozen at their forward encampment.

## ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The characters are pulled into the rising conflict between a newly formed orcish horde looking to sweep the Freelands and the Greywatch forces scrambling to stop them. The knights were unprepared for the ferocity of the orcs, and their commander, General Serina Shadowbane, was captured and imprisoned within the orc’s war camp. With their forces stretched thin as they wait for support from the capital, the knights ask the characters to conduct a rescue mission to retrieve the general and learn more about the power the orc commander wields. They believe a small, capable team can infiltrate the camp undetected where their larger forces would fail.

The characters are accompanied by Darius Sunstorm, a wizardly cleric who received a vision from his god, who sent him to assist the knights. While making their way through the camp, the characters find the general imprisoned with the former orc lord of the Krolgord Dakh, who explains the truth behind the rise of his daughter’s power. Together, the party makes their way to the warlord’s tent, where they find the divine warlord Rain. They must defeat her to end the threat she poses to the Freelands and restore peace to the region once more.

### † THE KROLGORD DAKH

One of the twelve dakh (clans) that make up the orc nation known as the Karzak Alliance, the Krolgord Dakh is known for its elite warriors and high-end arms smithing. Based in the underground city Thag Boramm (known as Ker Tora to the ancient dwarves), the dakh was counted among the strongest leaders of the Great Horde long ago, and many Nalt Kri-krisurs (High Chiefs) have been elected from the Krolgords ranks.

Like all orcs, the Krolgords have high respect—tinged with more than a bit of fear—for their gods, especially the Watcher, head of the orc pantheon. The dakh’s ukhathsi (shaman) hold positions of great authority in their communities, and their commands are obeyed instantly by orcs seeking spiritual perfection. While only a minority of the Krolgord ukhathsi believe in returning to the old ways of constant war and conquest, their voices are loud, and they have been critical in Raon’s ascension to becoming warlord. The ukhathsi Zutrak the Spiteful has become Raon’s right hand and aids her in learning to use the power of the angel’s glaive.

The traditional battle standard of the dakh has been



## OATH OF THE GREYWATCH

The Greywatch knights were once respected as noble heroes who dedicated their lives in service to standing guard against the return of the Great Horde of the orc nation. Centuries later, they are now reduced to filling their ranks with less savory volunteers. A Greywatch knight's training is severe and challenging, but the oath of the watch binds together even those who joined one step ahead of the executioner's axe:

*"My sword is sworn to the land, not to king or queen. My life is not my own; it belongs to the people. I am the mountain that stands forever vigilant against the coming horde. I am the stone that stands defiant against the darkness. I stand my watch with faith, courage, and honor above all."*



a boar's head because their orc ancestors rode giant boars into battle, and many of their ranks are wereboars. Raon has replaced this standard with a pair of wings and dubbed her new army the Heavenly Horde in honor of the Great Horde of the past. To emphasize their return to tradition, some warriors—calling themselves the doram (hand) of Raon—have also taken to wearing the fur-lined armor styled from their ancestors. While not all have answered her call, a thousand Krolgord orcs now stand ready for war under Raon's standard.

## THE GREYWATCH KNIGHTS

After the Great Horde swept through the dwarven kingdoms and took control of the Motionless Mountains, they attempted to expand south into the area now called the Freelands. The ancient kingdoms of the elves, humans and other peoples rose together to force them back, where they have remained ever since. To ensure that they are never taken by surprise again, King Timirund the Resolute built Greywatch Keep on the eponymous mountain and formed an independent order of knights dedicated to standing watch for when the orcs would return. Champions from all kingdoms and lands came to kneel and dedicate themselves to the noble cause.

As kingdoms rose and fell and the 500 years long Great War divided the rest of the continent in half, Greywatch remained vigilant in their sacred duty and stayed out of the conflict. However, after the Freelands were formed, many knights felt it was time for their watch to end, and their numbers began to dwindle as fewer champions took up the mantle. They have since become an order filled with former brigands and thieves who barely escaped the hangman's noose by swearing the Oath of the Watch. Patrols along the mountain borders lessened over the years, and the remaining few hundred knights are no match for the strength of the Heavenly Horde.

While leading her Greywatch knights into battle against the horde, General Serina Shadowbane's forces were overrun, and Raon's forces took her prisoner. Without her leadership, the mantle has fallen to Commander Erik von Schozen, who has sent word to the capital city Haven for reinforcements. At the same time, he rushes to establish a defense with the remaining Greywatch knights, knowing full well that he may be overrun at any moment.

## GREYWATCH CAMP

However the characters are drawn to the encampment, the adventure kicks off once they arrive and are introduced to Commander Erik von Shozen. The encampment is a hastily prepared forward operating base the Greywatch knights have set up near the southern tip of the Motionless Mountains and just a few miles from the Heavenly Horde's war camp.

Once the characters arrive, read aloud the following:

Perched atop a hill stands a newly constructed palisade overlooking neat rows of hundreds of canvas tents. Soldiers in the grey and black livery of the Greywatch soldiers are busy digging a stake-lined ditch around the camp and building platforms for defensive towers. Overhead a squad of griffon riders practices maneuvers, wheeling and diving in synchronized battle patterns. The staccato smack of hammer on heated metal rings out from blacksmiths forging blades and armor. A pair of armored soldiers bearing a black tower crest on their breastplates stand guard at the gate leading into the busy camp.

A character with a military background with a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 12 or higher or who succeeds on a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check can tell these soldiers are competent but rough around the edges. Characters with a passive Wisdom (Insight) score of 15 or higher sense that the soldiers are very nervous and tense, although they hide it well.

If Sir Laris accompanies the characters (see Adventure Hook: A Knight in Need), the guards allow the party to pass on his word. Otherwise, they must explain their business to the guards before being escorted through the camp and into the command tent.

Once they enter, read aloud the following:

In the center of the busy camp sits a large tent flying a grey banner with a black tower crest. The atmosphere in the lantern-lit interior is calmer but no less intense than the soldiers outside. A scarred oak table sits in the tent's center, covered in maps and reports being poured over by officers. A short, broad-shouldered knight with a crooked nose and piercing blue eyes stands calmly, listening to a tall elf with flowing blond hair and crystal sapphire eyes. The elf gestures insistently with his hands as he says, "These are not the orcs of old, Sir Erik. They are not the savage brutes that your history remembers. We must..." The knight looks up as you enter and holds a hand up to cut off the elf. "What's this? Is there something to report?" he asks in a measured tone.

Sir Erik (LG human **knight**) is the acting commander of the Greywatch forces in General Shadowbane's absence. A stern and capable leader, he has personally led the training of the Greywatch soldiers for the past twenty years and is highly respected. Darius Sunstorm (see "Fallen Angel" sidebar) recently arrived at the camp and has been advising Sir Erik of what he knows of the oncoming orc threat.

If Sir Laris is with the characters, he hands over a map he drew of the orc war camp and introduces the commander to the characters as heroes who helped him. Sir Erik's trained eye quickly discerns the party's abilities and asks them if they'd be willing to continue

their help for the good of the Freelands, outlining the rescue mission as described below. If the characters need further encouragement, he grudgingly offers them a reward of 5,000 gp if they complete the task. Sir Erik is a man who respects honor and duty and finds mercenaries distasteful, but he knows he has no other option than to recruit the characters by any means.

## RESCUE MISSION

"For the last thousand years, we have watched for the next coming of the Great Horde, and it's finally arrived. A few miles north of here is an orc war camp led by a warlord wielding a power that we've never seen before. Our leader, General Serina Shadowbane, was taken captive and is now held prisoner in that camp. We do not have the forces to take them head-on but can provide a distraction to pull their attention away. This distraction will allow a smaller force to infiltrate their camp under cover of night—with the help of a little illusion magic."

Sir Erik explains the characters will be accompanied by Darius, who knows more about the orcs than anyone else, and griffons will fly them to infiltrate the war camp from the rear. The party will be placed under a *seeming* spell to disguise them as orc warriors as they search for the captive general and sabotage the camp in any way they can along the way. The rest of the Greywatch forces will draw out the enemy to give the party less chance of being discovered.

A character who attempts to ask Sir Erik for further assistance and succeeds on a DC 17 Charisma (Persuasion) check convinces him to part with a *potion of healing* for each character. Otherwise, he directs them to the camp's armory, where they can borrow Greywatch weapons and armor, all of which are mundane and must be returned once the mission is completed.



## FLYING TO THE WAR CAMP

When the characters have agreed to the mission and have prepared, Sir Erik hands them a map of the Krolgord War Camp drawn by Sir Laris and gathers the Greywatch forces to lead them on the distractionary maneuver. Darius and the party must wait for nightfall with the squad of griffon riders assigned to carry them to their infiltration point.

While waiting, the characters have an opportunity to chat with Darius to learn more about what he knows. He avoids answering questions about his personal life and prefers to share what he knows about the orcs and the upcoming mission. He shares the following information if asked:

- ◆ He is a follower of Arvian, a minor and mostly unknown god of dreams, illusions, and magic. As such, he is both a cleric and wizard and will be providing the seeming spell that hides their identities while in the war camp.
- ◆ He received a vision from his god about an artifact the orcs are using as a weapon and was directed to help the Greywatch defeat them to retrieve the artifact. He does not say what the artifact is precisely, only that it is powerful and must be returned to his god.
- ◆ These orcs are not the savage brutes told of in the history books; they are knowledgeable and cultured. While this war camp may look like the ancient Great Horde, they must be wary of underestimating them.
- ◆ The seeming spell he will cast on them will give them the illusion of being orcs, but they must be wary of being discovered and avoid unnecessary interactions.
- ◆ They do not know exactly where the general is being held, so the group must carefully search through the war camp without being unmasked.

A successful DC 20 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals that Darius is being earnest and honest, but seems to be holding something back.

Once night has fallen and the characters are ready, read aloud the following:



The sun has set, and the griffon riders have prepared their mounts. The griffons kneel as the riders assist you in the saddle behind them, and within moments the great eagle wings raise, and the ground suddenly drops as they soar into the night sky. The countryside spreads like a living map beneath you. In the distance, you can see the torches from Sir Erik's soldiers engaged with a much larger force, drawing them away from the mountain that looms to the north. The terraced cliff faces twinkle like stars with the torches and campfires of the orc warriors. The griffons begin to glide around the mountainside, fearful that even the slightest flap will draw attention. But within moments, the majestic creatures dive to land with barely a whisper at the top of a waterfall overlooking the camp.

The griffon riders duck their mounts behind a copse of trees as Darius uses a spell scroll to cast a *seeming* spell (save DC 15) on himself and the party. Each character and their gear take on the illusory appearance of Krolgord warriors. Darius warns the party that it is only a visual illusion, and they must avoid physical contact that may give up the ruse. The riders provide the party with rope to rappel down the waterfall and begin their mission, starting at the waterfall's splash pool (area 1) in the Krolgord War Camp.



DARIUS  
SUNSTORM

## FALLEN ANGEL

Darius Sunstorm is a **deva** that has taken the form of an elven **mage** with his Change Shape ability. He has lost his ability to fly through the loss of his wings and his Angelic Weapons trait due to the loss of his glaive. Darius is a reserved individual and humbled by his current situation. He is a warrior angel in the astral plane who was defeated in battle with another celestial and banished to the material plane. Darius hides his angelic nature by using his Healing Touch ability as if it were a *cure wounds* spell.

## WAR CAMP

The Heavenly Horde has made their war camp on the triple terraced face of a mountain on the southern edge of the range. Defensive walls and towers have been erected to create deadly choke points along the route leading up to the main terrace where Raon has set up her command post. While Sir Erik's distraction has drawn out many orcs, there are still a significant number of warriors left in the camp going about their business. While most of them are eager for a return to the glorious days of the Great Horde, a good number of the orcs fear Raon and the power she wields. These orcs whisper in the corners about their predicament and worry that Raon will lead the dakh to destruction.

## INFILTRATION

As the characters search through the lower tiers of the camp to find General Shadowbane, they must refrain from drawing attention to themselves before time runs out on their illusion spell. They have opportunities to learn information at each location leading them to the prisoner pit (area 6), where the general is being held captive. In general, the orc grunavs (grunts) do not know where the prisoner pit (area 6) is located in the camp and will react with suspicion if asked. If a character asks any orc about the prisoner, they will point out the ukhathsi shrine (area 5) and suggest talking to the shamans there.

Until they reach the upper tier (areas 7 and 8), the characters must make a group DC 13 Dexterity (Stealth) check to avoid confrontations as they move between keyed locations. On a failure, roll a d10 and consult the War Camp Encounters table to see what they encounter or choose one from the list the characters have yet to come across. These encounters are designed as skill challenges where failure is meant to eat away at the characters' time and put pressure on them to complete their mission.

Orcs begin returning from the skirmish with the Greywatch knights (along with other complications) as the characters spend more time in the encampment. Use the following timeline to add an increased sense of urgency:

**After 1 Hour:** An orc passes by the group stating that spies were reported near the camp. For the next hour, Stealth checks are made with disadvantage.





1. SPLASH POOL
2. WEREBOAR DEN
3. WAR HEARTH
4. FIGHTING PIT
5. UKHATHSI SHRINE

6. PRISONER PIT
7. UPPER GATE
8. THE WATCHER'S ALTAR
9. WARLORD'S YURT

## ORC WAR CAMP



**After 3 Hours:** Injured orcs begin to return from the skirmish, and the encampment is riled up. The DC of the group Stealth check increases to 17.

**After 5 Hours:** The ukhathsi arrive in the area the characters are located and begin a prayer with the other orcs as they declare a “great sacrifice” will be made soon. This comment is about the sacrifice of General Shadowbane (see area 8).

## YOU SMELL FUNNY

A passing party of orcs, including an orc **wereboar**, walks by the characters when the wereboar stops suddenly with a puzzled expression on his face and sniffing the air. He points to a character that failed their Stealth check and says, “You smell... odd.” The character in question must come up with a reason for their scent being off and succeed on a DC 15 Charisma (Deception) check to appease the wereboar. On a failure, the group spends the next 20 minutes listening to a lecture on hygiene and cleanliness being essential for a warrior’s health and strength.

## MESSENGER

An orc officer steps out of his tent as the characters pass by, and he points to a character that failed their Stealth check and says, “You! Grunav (grunt)! Take this to Balak, the cook. And fix your armor, you look slovenly. You others stay here until he returns with my answer.” He hands the character a sealed parchment and waits expectantly. The character must run to the war hearth (area 3) to deliver the message, to which the cook simply replies, “Tell the captain I understand.” If the character peeks at the note before handing it over, it reads, “Dinner was adequate. Use a bit less salt next time.” The trip there and back takes 20 minutes unless the character succeeds on a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check, in which case it takes 10 minutes.

## WAR CAMP ENCOUNTERS

d10 Encounter

1-2 You Smell Funny

3-4 Messenger

5-6 Assistance Required

7-8 Overheard Conversations

9-10 Drunken Revelers

## ASSISTANCE REQUIRED

The party passes by a group of carts being loaded with crates and barrels by a group of soldiers. The orc officer overseeing the loading notices the characters trying to sneak past and calls them over to “Stop sneaking about and help” with the loading. The party must make a group DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check, completing the task in 10 minutes on a success or 20 minutes on a failure.

## OVERHEARD CONVERSATIONS

While walking past a tent, the characters overhear orcs talking in low voices about the ongoing situation with the new warlord. Darius pauses and motions for the party to stop and listen to gain possible new information. The characters can persuade him to continue with a successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check. Otherwise, Darius will covertly listen to the conversation for 20 minutes before moving onward. You may choose to reward the characters with information (roll once on the Krolgord Rumors table) or have this simply be a waste of their time.

## DRUNKEN REVELERS

A group of drunken orcs is making their way through the camp, celebrating the horde by singing battle songs. They see the party and attempt to get them to sing with them. The characters must succeed on a group DC 15 Charisma (Performance) check to continue on their way. A failure results in the drunken orcs spending 10 minutes teaching them the song, forcing another group DC 12 Charisma (Performance) until they succeed, with 10 additional minutes spent on each failure.

## GENERAL FEATURES

These general features are prominent throughout the war camp unless otherwise noted in the area descriptions.

**Tents.** Hundreds of tents of all sizes fill the camp, each made of a thick red canvas and decorated with painted runes along the borders of the door flaps and carved into the tent poles. Characters that speak dwarvish and orcish recognize the runes as a blend between the two languages. The runes are prayers for The Watcher’s guidance and protection.

**Lights.** In most places, the camp is well lit by torches atop poles bearing the Heavenly Horde’s banner: ash-colored angel wings dripping black blood on a crimson background. Some areas—such as the war hearths—hold bonfires that light the entire location.



**Sounds, Sights, & Smells.** The camp is actively preparing for a prolonged military campaign. Open-air blacksmiths repair weapons and armor, fletchers prepare arrows, and quartermasters load carts of supplies even at night. The sounds and sights of workers are everywhere, along with the banter and training of soldiers preparing for war. The air is full of the smell of smoke, food from cooking fires, and thick animal scents. Characters that succeed on a DC 12 Intelligence (Nature) check recognize the heavy scent of boar permeating the entire camp.

**Krolgord Orcs.** The Krolgord orcs speak Common with the occasional breakdown into Orc, and Darius quietly translates for those who do not understand Orc. The orc warriors are well-spoken and dutiful soldiers with impeccably tidy armor and high standards of cleanliness. Unless otherwise noted in the adventure text, Krolgord orcs use the **orc** stat block with an Intelligence score of 10. If the adventure text calls for an orc to use an NPC stat block, they also have the following orc trait: **Aggressive**. As a bonus action, the orc can move up to its speed toward a hostile creature that it can see.

## KEYED LOCATIONS

The following descriptions correspond to the keyed locations on the provided map of the orc war camp.

### I. SPLASH POOL

The roar of the waterfall crashing down the mountainside masks any noises made during the descent. The pool of crystal-clear water in which you stand continues cascading down the mountainside and past a pair of watchtowers to the west. To the east is a cave mouth with firelight dancing on the walls within. The sound of animal grunts and squealing can faintly be heard above the noise of the waterfall. Darius nods in the cave's direction before saying, "We'll need to secure our escape and make sure nothing is waiting to surprise us on the way out."

At this point, the characters must decide on a course of action as the giant boars in area 2 have caught their scent. If they have not made a decision within 1 minute, a wereboar steps out from the cave and calls for them to assist with the boars. If this happens, read aloud the following:

An orc dressed in leather armor trimmed with fur steps out from the cave entrance and is surprised to see you standing there. With a grunt, the orc motions you over and shouts, "You there! Grunavs! The boars are acting up, and we need some help. Get in here and lend a hand." before reentering the cave.

If the characters do not follow, the giant boars escape their pens in 1 minute and rush to attack them with the wereboars close behind (see "The Pig Pen," area 2).

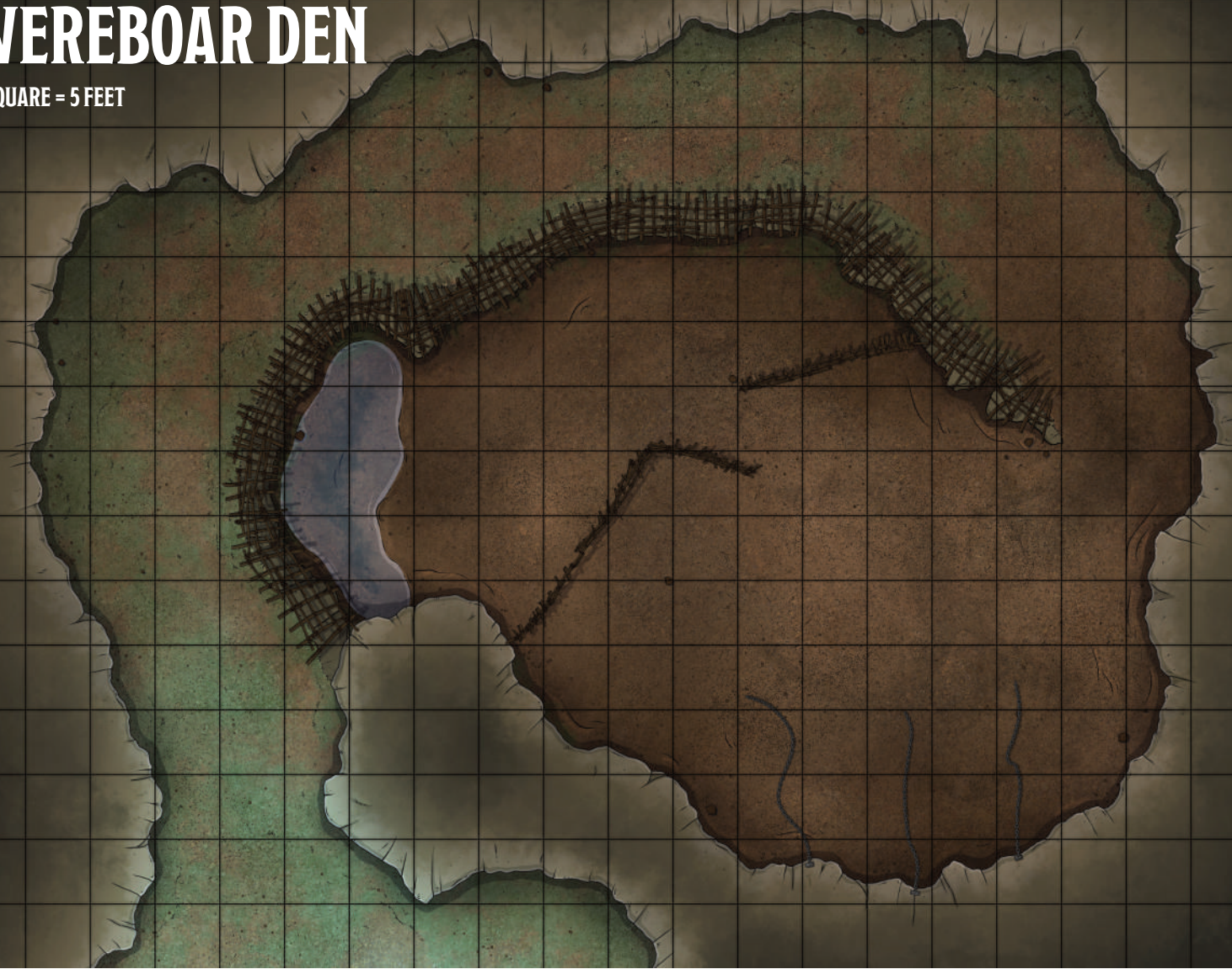
## 2. WEREBOAR DEN

A strong scent of animals is the first thing you notice upon entering the cave. The ear-splitting grunts and squeals of three massive boars are the next. Two orcs are trying to calm the beasts in an enclosure that takes up most of the cave. Each boar is straining against collars chained to a metal rod attached to the wall. The rod breaks with a piercing screech of twisting metal, and the giant boars begin to charge up the ramp!

**Encounter: The Pig Pen.** There are two orc **wereboars** (armed with thick oversized war bows with +2 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (2d6) piercing damage) in their humanoid forms attempting to calm three **giant boars** that have caught the characters' scent. The giant boars smell that the characters are not orcs and charge towards them, while the wereboars change into hybrid form once they catch the characters' scent. The wereboars attack from range while the giant boars charge towards the party.

# WEREBOAR DEN

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



## 3. WAR HEARTH

This area is where the horde warriors eat, drink, and socialize. If the characters wish to gather information in

A crackling bonfire sits in the center of a dirt clearing filled with orc warriors eating and drinking at wooden tables. On the eastern side of the clearing, cooks prepare and serve food to an organized line waiting patiently for their turn. The mouth-watering smell of well-seasoned meat wafts from the grills.

this location, they can either attempt to chat with orcs in the area or listen to conversations in hopes of overhearing something relevant. For every 30 minutes they spend listening to overheard conversations, roll a d6 and consult the Krolgord Rumors table, or pick a rumor the characters have not yet heard. A character must succeed on a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check to get an orc to converse with them. A success reveals two rumors from the table before the orc leaves.

If the characters decide to get food and a table, it takes 20 minutes to wait in line. They will be served a nicely cooked steak of indeterminate meat and given a mug of ale with a foul taste. A character drinking the ale must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or take 3 (1d6) poison damage and be poisoned for 1 hour.



## 4. FIGHTING PIT

Roars of triumph mix with groans of defeat from a crowd of orcs surrounding a circular, muddy pit. Two orcs stripped bare to the waist are wrestling in the hole, slipping in the mud and throwing each other to the ground until one yields and the other stands victorious. An unsavory bookie with a heavily scarred face and a broken tusk walks through the crowd taking bets. He walks over with a toothy grin and says, "How about a little wager, friends? Ready to win some coin?"

The bookie is named Shakh, and he is more than happy to chat with characters willing to bet on the fights. The other orcs are too focused on the battles to talk. There are four fights left before the orcs disperse. As each pair of fighters enter the pit, the characters must bet at least

### KROLGORD RUMORS

d8 Rumor

- 1 "What are we even doing here? We've had peace with the above ground for a thousand years. We should be fighting in the Deepshade, not here. Our homes are already under threat!"
- 2 "Lord Hurlgun was wrong to stop Raon from taking the crown. She is the leader we need to return to the old ways! That old fool should have lost more than his hand for his cowardice."
- 3 "I hear that ukhathsi Zurtak is preparing the human prisoner for a sacrifice to the Watcher, and he keeps bringing her to the lower shrine for preparation. He Who Watches will be pleased with such a sacrifice and bless us!"
- 4 "Have you been to the fighting pits lately? That greedy aukuk Shakh is running bets on the fights. I'm surprised he's still got his head attached after all his sneaking around."
- 5 "I can't believe those humans were so foolish to attack in the middle of the night. I wish I could be out there to bloody my blade, but I'm stuck here loading carts."
- 6 "It is amazing that the Watcher blessed Raon with such a magnificent weapon. We're truly blessed to have such a leader divinely chosen; she is the light that will lead us to glory!"

10 gp, and they have a 50% chance of winning. This chance increases to 100% if the characters succeed on a group DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check to choose which fighter will win their bout. For each win, Shakh will answer a question the characters have. He knows the following helpful information:

- ◆ "The Watcher blessed Raon with a divine weapon! She will lead the horde to glory once more."
- ◆ "We threw that human in with the old chief, Hurlgun. Old Zutrak has taken a special interest in her, I hear. He keeps bringing her to the lower shrine for 'cleansing.'"
- ◆ "Can you believe that the Raon's doram closed the upper tier off? They think they're better than the rest of us!"
- ◆ "I believe in the return to the old traditions, but even I'm not sure about the sacrifices the ukhathsi are making at the stone altar. My tent is not too far, and the screams keep me awake at night."

## 5. UKHATHSI SHRINE

A dark stone monolith carved with lidless eyes stands in the center of a ring of stones holding small iron braziers. Orcs in dark robes edged in gold surround the monolith and lead a group of kneeling warriors in a chant. One of the robed figures notices your arrival and nods in greeting.

Characters proficient in Religion recognize the markings of He Who Watches, head god of the orc pantheon. The ceremony is a prayer to the god for protection in battle. Characters who succeed on a DC 12 Wisdom (Religion) check can join in the chant and be blessed by the ukhathsi with a *death ward* spell.

After the ceremony is complete, an ukhathsi named Vakmu approaches the characters. He is a young and ambitious shaman who is eager to spread the word of his god. He openly talks with the characters and answers their questions. He knows the following helpful information:

- ◆ “The human prisoner? Yes, she is being kept in a pit where she belongs. Ukhathi Zurtak will be sacrificing her to the Watcher soon to gain his blessing for tomorrow’s battle.” (Vakmu indicates the location of the pit to the characters)
- ◆ “Our young warlord is as ambitious as she is powerful. He Who Watches blessed her with a divine weapon fit for our leader— she is god-touched now!”
- ◆ “We have hidden underground for far too long. No more! It is our destiny—and The Watcher’s will!—that the Heavenly Horde rises!”
- ◆ “Zurtak is a great and powerful leader. I hope to one day achieve his spiritual connection. With his guidance, Raon will lead the Heavenly Horde to victory!”

## 6. PRISONER PIT

A small, muddy clearing well-lit by torches sits nestled at the base of a thirty-foot-high cliff. In the center is a large pit covered by a lattice of wooden poles strapped together to form a cage. Standing guard over the hole is a group of six well-armed orcs wearing skull masks with a red hand painted across their dark plate armor.

There are six orc **knights** standing guard in this location. These are members of Raon’s doram (hands), her personal guard. They order the characters to leave the area immediately if they are seen. If the characters seem like they want to attack these guards, Darius warns them that these orcs seem much stronger than the others in the horde and suggests they come up with a distraction to lessen their numbers.

### DISTRACTION

The characters must determine how to pull the guards away from their posts. The guards are suspicious of any attempts to convince them to leave without a written order from Raon or Zutrak. If the characters devise a way to distract the guards and pull them away, two orcs remain to stand guard while the others rush towards the distraction.

## THE PRISONER

Once the guards are taken care of and the characters can reach the pit, read aloud the following:

A mud-covered orc in rags stands quietly with a straight back as he looks up through the cage bars with defiance burning in his eyes. He is well-muscled and wears a stained bandage wrapped around the stump where his left hand should be. He squints slightly and growls, “You are no orcs. What is this? Who are you?”

Hurlgun (LN orc **gladiator**) is the former lord of the Krolgord dakh and the father of Raon. He has spent the last few days imprisoned in this pit with General Serina Shadowbane, who is now with the ukhathi Zurtak at the watcher’s altar (area 8) to be sacrificed. The orc lord offers to guide the characters to their general in exchange for their help stopping his daughter from starting this war. He takes the armor, weapons, and mask of one of the fallen doram guards and leads the characters through the upper gate (area 7) towards the watcher’s altar.

## ROLEPLAYING HURLGUN

Hurlgun the Wise has earned his moniker many times throughout his life. As lord of the Krolgord, he led his people through a long period of prosperity and believes that war is unnecessary for the advancement of their people. While known for his intellect, Hurlgun is a talented warrior and willing to fight to regain control of the dakh. He believes the divine glaive to have corrupted his daughter and—while he does not wish her death—will aid the characters in any way he can to stop her.

## 7. UPPER GATE

A heavy wooden gate flanked by watchtowers blocks the path leading to the upper terrace. The guards wear skull masks and plate armor bearing a painted red hand across the breastplate.





GATE LEADING TO UPPER TIER OF WAR CAMP

A dozen of Raon's doram (orc **knights**) guard this gate and refuse entry to anyone not accompanied by another doram or an ukhathsi. If the disguised Hurlgun accompanies the characters (see area 6), the guards open the gate and allow them entry.

## 8. THE WATCHER'S ALTAR

A rocky path leads up towards a secluded clearing on the western edge of the terrace. In the center of a ring of standing stones sits a bare stone slab stained with old blood and carved with lidless eyes. Torchlight casts dancing shadows against the looming cliffside and across the unconscious body of a human woman strapped to the altar. Surrounding the altar are three robed and hooded orcs chanting with arms raised as a golden mist forms between them and into the altar. The largest figure holds a carved ebony staff topped with a crystal that glows with power.

**Encounter: Zurtak the Spiteful.** Zurtak and two orc **ukhathsi** (they use the **priest** stat block) are conducting a ritual to sacrifice Serina Shadowbane to their

**CR 5**  
1,800 XP

### ZURTAK THE SPITEFUL

Medium humanoid (orc), lawful evil

Armor Class 17 (half plate)

Hit Points 55 (10d8 + 10)

Speed 30 ft.

Proficiency Bonus: +3

STR  
14 (+2)

DEX  
15 (+2)

CON  
13 (+1)

INT  
15 (+2)

WIS  
16 (+2)

CHA  
11 (+0)

Skills Intimidation +6, Religion +5

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Common, Orc

**Aggressive.** As a bonus action, Zurtak can move up to his speed toward a hostile creature that he can see.

**Spellcasting.** Zurtak is a 10th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). Zurtak has the following druid spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *mage hand, mending, shillelagh, shocking grasp*  
 1st level (4 slots): *cure wounds, entangle, inflict wounds*  
 2nd level (3 slots): *hold person, lesser restoration, silence*  
 3rd level (3 slots): *call lightning, bestow curse, spirit guardians*  
 4th level (3 slots): *banishment, freedom of movement*  
 5th level (2 slots): *mass cure wounds*

### ACTIONS

**Quarterstaff.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit (+7 to hit with *shillelagh*), reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage, or 7 (1d8 + 3) bludgeoning damage with *shillelagh*.

### REACTIONS

**Healing Light (Recharge 5-6).** Zurtak or one creature of his choice within 60 feet of him that he can see regains 12 (2d8 + 3) hit points.



# THE WATCHER'S ALTAR

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET

god. Zurtak, as his moniker implies, is a cruel and angry individual who wishes to see the orcs rise to power under his god's banner. Zurtak and Hurlgun exchange heated insults during the battle as the former lord blames the ukhathsi's influence over his daughter for the current situation.

## SERINA SHADOWBAPE

Serina (LG human **knight**, her AC is 10 without her armor, and she has 26 remaining hit points) is a brawny woman with short brown hair cut in a military fashion. The general is in bad shape after unsuccessfully trying to escape Zurtak. Once released from her bindings, she thanks the characters and agrees with Hurlgun that they cannot leave until they confront Raon and neutralize the threat of her divine weapon. If the characters do not have an extra weapon to share with her, Serina takes a mace off of a fallen ukhathsi along with a robe to disguise herself.

## 9. WARLORD'S YURT

The largest yurt in the encampment sits perched on a small hill overlooking the valley below. Ornately carved posts that curve into arches hold crimson-stained canvas tightly in place. Three short wooden steps lead up to the entryway, and a stream of black smoke rises from an opening in the center of the roof.

Dwarven characters or those who succeed on a DC 15 Intelligence (History) check recognize the carvings on the posts as partially ancient dwarven mixed with a more modern orcish design.



Before the characters enter the yurt, Hurlgun asks for them to allow him one last chance to convince his daughter to abandon this war. He does not wish to have her death on his hands but understands the danger she presents if she does not surrender. Once the characters are ready to enter, read aloud the following:

The massive open space inside the yurt is brightly lit by a bonfire blazing in the center. A wooden platform sits at the far end with ornate posts carved with battle scenes. Suspended from hooks above the platform rests a giant pair of white-feathered wings stained red with dried blood. They hang directly behind a stone throne, giving the orc warrior sitting there a winged appearance. A battered iron crown rests on her brow, and her eyes glow with the same golden light as a blazing glaive held across her lap. Her mouth curls into a smirk as she leans forward and says, "Now what do we have here? You are fools to come within my sight. I see what you are. And father, must I take your other hand now?"

Hurlgun attempts to speak, but Raon, who wants to hear from the characters, cuts him off. She allows the characters to try and convince her to abandon her plans for amusement; she has no intention of stepping off her destined path. She believes herself to be chosen by He Who Watches, who gifted her the very weapon she will use to destroy them.

**Encounter: The Divine Warlord. Raon the Chosen** has two doram guards (orc **knights**) flanking her on the platform. She uses her Divine Glaive to cast *bless* on the guards. When appropriate, she casts *heroism* on them next. Raon casts *fly* on herself to navigate the area to target casters with melee attacks. Unless she is disarmed and cannot regain possession of her weapon or is restrained, Raon fights to the death.

The first time that Darius uses an ability or attack that affects Raon, read aloud the following:

The orc warlord's face twists with rage as she glares at Darius. "You were supposed to be dead!" she growls with a blast of spittle. "This time, I'll make sure of it!"

**CR 8**  
3,900 XP

## RAON THE CHOSEN

Medium humanoid (orc), lawful neutral

Armor Class 17 (half plate)  
Hit Points 112 (15d8 + 45)  
Speed 30 ft.

Proficiency Bonus: +3

<b>STR</b> 18 (+4)	<b>DEX</b> 15 (+2)	<b>CON</b> 16 (+3)	<b>INT</b> 12 (+1)	<b>WIS</b> 12 (+1)	<b>CHA</b> 16 (+3)
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Saving Throws Str +7, Dex +5, Con +6  
Skills Athletics +7, Intimidation +6  
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11  
Languages Common, Orc

**Aggressive.** As a bonus action, Raon can move up to her speed toward a hostile creature that she can see.

**Brave.** Raon has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.

**Tight Grip.** Raon has advantage on ability checks made against being disarmed.

**Brute.** A melee weapon deals one extra die of its damage when Raon hits with it (included in the attack).

**Equipment: Divine Glaive.** Raon wields a glaive imbued with divine power. She has the following abilities while in possession of the weapon (bonuses and extra damage are included in attack):

- **Magic Resistance.** The wielder has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.
- The glaive deals an additional 1d8 radiant damage on a successful hit and an additional 1d10 radiant damage to undead and fiends.
- The wielder gains a +3 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with the glaive.
- The wielder can use their bonus action to cast the following spells through the glaive without the need for components:

At will: *sacred flame*, *spare the dying*  
3/Day: *bless*, *heroism*, *protection from evil and good*  
1/Day: *branding smite*

## ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** Raon makes two melee attacks.

**Divine Glaive. Melee Weapon Attack:** +10 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. **Hit:** 18 (2d10 + 7) slashing damage and 4 (1d8) radiant damage. If the target is an undead or fiend, the glaive deals an additional 5 (1d10) radiant damage.

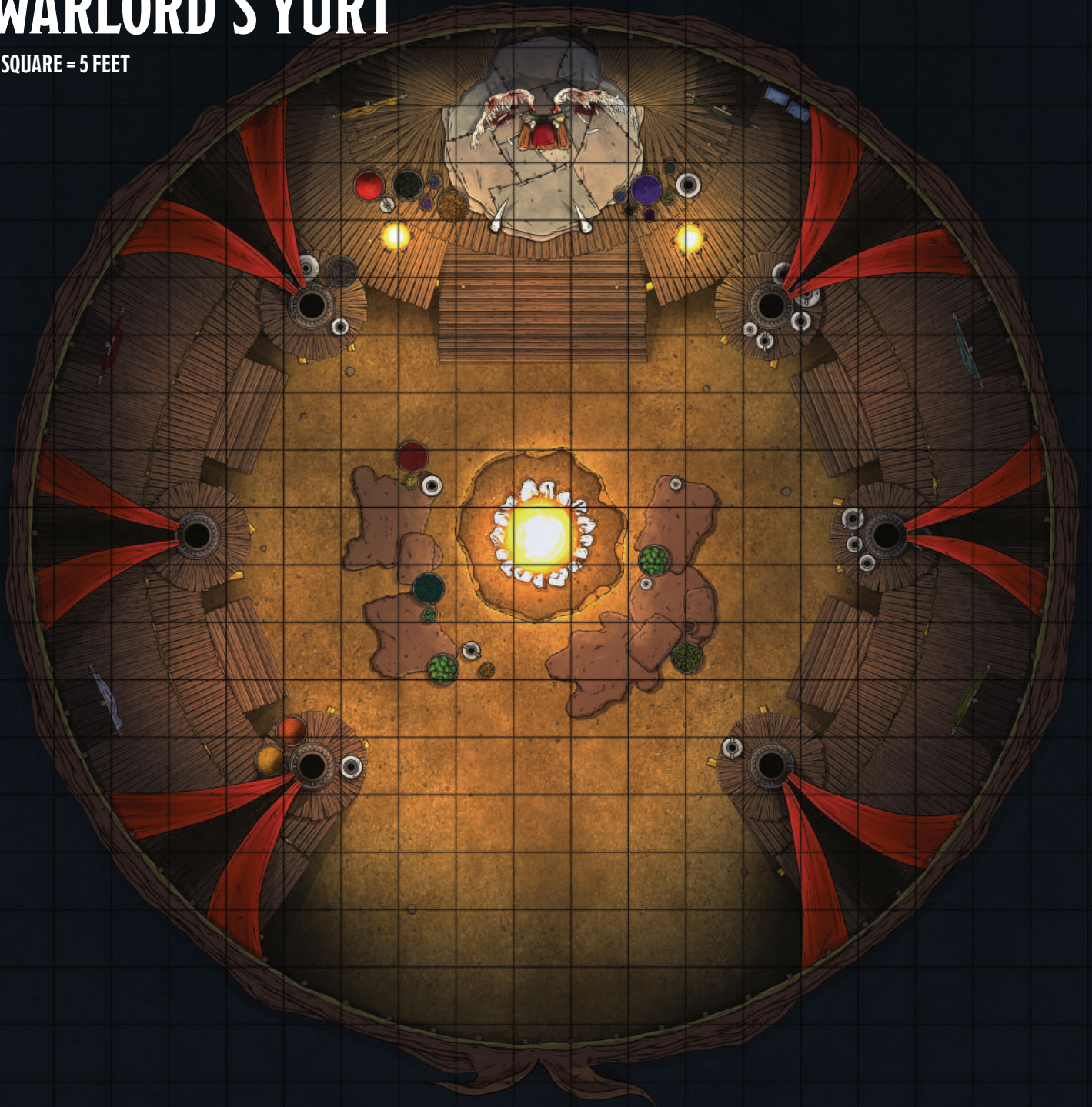
## REACTIONS

**Parry.** Raon adds 3 to her AC against one melee attack that would hit her. To do so, Raon must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.



# WARLORD'S YURT

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET





## PPC'S ACTIONS DURING EPCOUPTEP

Both Burlgun and Darius have different motivations for battling Raon and separating her from the divine glaive. Hurlgun wishes to see his daughter taken into custody so he can regain control of the dakh (clan), while Darius wishes to recover his glaive to restore himself to his angelic self. General Shadowbane has been weakened from her ordeal and works with Hurlgun to defend the back of ranged characters.

## DEFEATING RAON

Once Raon is defeated, Darius moves to take possession of the glaive while Hurlgun attempts to restrain Raon. When Darius takes hold of the divine glaive, read aloud the following:

As the slender elf takes hold of the glaive, a blast of light blinds you. Blinking away your blurred vision, you see that Darius has been transformed—a pair of giant snow-white wings have grown from his back, and his skin has taken on the same golden hue of the weapon he now holds contemplatively in his hands. His eyes are now sapphire orbs, and he is covered in golden armor with white robes. The angel smiles at you all, and you feel an inner peace fill you.

"Thank you, my friends," he says softly in a melodic voice. "This was a test of my faith after my great failure. I apologize for the deception, for I could not have done this without your help. While I cannot give you thanks enough, perhaps this will help." A shimmering pearl appears in the angel's hand, and he continues, "When you have a great need of help, hold this and call my name, and I will come. But be warned, I cannot stay long in this realm in this form, and it will only work once."

Darius hands the party a shimmering pearl that radiates an aura of calm. Anyone holding this pearl finds themselves under the effects of a *calm emotions* spell. If the command word "Darius" is spoken while holding it, the

pearl crumbles to dust, and Darius (using *deva* statistics) appears in the material realm for 1 minute before vanishing back to the astral plane.

The angel explains that a war is brewing in the astral plane that he must return to fight alongside his brethren. If Hurlgun survives the battle, Darius offers to restore his missing hand before leaving, but the stoic orc states that he wishes it to remain lost as a reminder of his failure. The angel disappears back to the astral plane with another blinding flash of light.

## CONCLUSION

This adventure ends according to whether or not the characters spared Raon's life and if Hurlgun survived the battle.

**If Raon was spared** and Hurlgun survived, the elder orc takes back control of the dakh as their lord. He dissolves the warband, and the orcs retreat to Thag Boramm, their underground city, with a vow to keep the peace. He allows the Greywatch knights an embassy in the city and thus begins a new era of prosperity with open trade between the nations. Raon, however, vows vengeance upon the characters and becomes a dangerous rival that they may encounter in the future.

**If Raon was not spared** and Hurlgun survived, the orc lord takes back control of the dakh and retreats to their city, closing the doors on the aboveground civilizations once more. The orcs resume their policy of isolation from the rest of the world, focusing inward and downward. When the denizens of the Deepshade eventually rise against the Karzak Alliance, they quickly overpower the orc nation and soon begin to threaten the Freelands above.

**If Hurlgun did not survive** the battle, the orc encampment quickly falls into chaos without proper leadership. The Greywatch knights take advantage of the confusion, driving the orcs back to their underground city, where the dakh eventually crumbles due to infighting. The other members of the Karzak Alliance begin to question their isolation policy, and tensions begin to rise between the orc nation and the Freelands.


# ADVENTURING DAYS


# ADVENTURING DAYS





## WHAT ARE ADVENTURING DAYS?


A typical adventuring day is broken up into 6 to 8 encounters that can provide a challenge for a party, taxing their time and resources. We have designed a selection of pre-made Adventuring Days with some random encounters (combat, skill checks and points of interest) that can make traveling from point A to point B a lot more interesting over the course of a full day of travel! Use these as they are written, mix and match them, or come up with your own. The provided Adventure Hooks in each adventure also work as perfect encounters for an Adventuring Day.


 The group wake to the smell of bacon cooking. With a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check they discover a camp; food is cooking but empty of people.


 A stone bridge crossing over a small river is guarded by a **troll**. To pass it demands 10 gp for its master and any food the group is carrying for itself. With a sniff it can smell any food being held in a mundane container.

 A fork in the road has no signpost and isn't on any map in the players possession. Taking the left fork the group travel for 6 hours on a straight road until they reach the same fork and signpost ahead of them.


 A black-clad rider on a dark horse approaches the group at sunset, they are a messenger and have either been seeking the group with a message for them, or simply wish to camp with them for the night.


 Traveling under a canopy of trees which stretch over the road, fireflies above make the scene look like the night sky. If the group stop the fireflies gather around and travel with them for 10 minutes.


 The group find a clearing covered in purple flowers that smell faintly of lavender. With a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Nature) check they know that these wild groves help travelers recover quicker and a long rest can be taken in 4 hours. Resting for a full 8 hours and the group get the benefits of a long rest, but also 1 point of exhaustion as they become lethargic.


 [2nd Watch] DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check to spot. A wild creature approaches the camp, they are attracted by the scent the flowers give off when they are disturbed, alerting the creature that something may be fatigued and easier to hunt.





 As the sun rises, the loud croak of a raven rouses the party. It cocks its head once before taking wing, and in its beak is an object of meaning to one of the characters. A successful DC 14 Wisdom (Survival) check leads to its nest full of odds and ends worth 2d10 gp.


 The party finds an old well near the roadside and hears the sound of crying coming from the bottom. The crying is from the **ghost** of a young boy that misses his dog Sparky. A successful DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check of the area uncovers the bones of a small dog. After dropping them into the well, the characters hear happy barks and a joyful thank you before the ghosts fade away.


 A green flash of light surrounds the setting sun as it dips below the horizon. All the birds and insects in the area instantly go silent for the next hour. A successful DC 14 Intelligence (History) check reveals a local legend that the green flash means the dead have returned from the grave.


 A cozy roadside inn sits on the road ahead, and the sound of music drifts out the open door. The people inside are enjoying hot food and a lively bard. Ale is 1 sp and rooms cost 2 sp each for the night. The party awakens in the middle of the night, and they find the inn transformed into an empty decrepit building with no signs of life.


 After leaving the inn, the party comes across a friendly farmer with a lantern-lit wagon carrying goods to the next town. If asked about the inn, the blood drains from her face before she snaps her horse's reigns and gallops away. No one in the region will say more than to avoid that place.


 [3rd Watch] A pack of wild boars stampedes through the campsite. Other than the one on watch, each character must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw made with disadvantage or take 2d6 bludgeoning damage.


 A bird, a red cardinal, curiously watches the camp from atop one of the tents. The bird is under an *Awaken* spell as performed by a **druid** that dwells in the forest, and introduces itself as Tomas.


 Storm clouds gather accompanied by a strong smell of sulphur as it closes in. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Knowledge) check reveals it as a burning rain cloud, and any creatures not in full cover take 2d8 fire damage from the scalding rain.


 A wagon appears to have broken down at the side of the road, and an elderly gentleman flags the party down for help. If they stop to help, **bandits** (or an enemy of the group) attack!


 As they approach a stack of blue rocks with pink veins the party is struck deaf. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Knowledge) check identifies them as "Silencing Stones" which cast magical silence on an area in a 100 foot radius. If the formation is disturbed the effect is broken.


 A landslide covers the road for half a mile, forcing the group into the overgrown forest. To get back on the road requires a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) check. On a success, the group navigate the forest and gets back on the road. On a failure, the group gets lost and can repeat the check every hour.


 A **bulette**, the creature that initially caused the landslide that covered the road, hunts this area. It attacks the group when they are back on the road.


 [3rd Watch] Strange shadows drift through the camp, slipping past light sources and the person on watch. They head into the tents of the sleeping characters, and each wakes up with a start after experiencing the same dream! When the guard is next on watch alone, the dream comes true!

 The party awakens to the smell of smoke in the air. A successful DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check leads them to the charred remains of a nearby farmhouse. A successful DC 14 Wisdom (Survival) check finds strange claw marks leading away and dragging something. Following them leads to a **red dragon wymrling's** cave.

 The shrill sound of swearing is heard coming from a copse of trees in the countryside. Inside is a dirt-covered young **goblin** named Turnip caught in a snare trap and dangling upside-down from a branch. He has a pouch with 1d10 gp hidden on his person and pleads with the party to let him down in exchange for the "location of a vast treasure." Turnip attempts to dash away the moment he is free.

 A dozen goblins with makeshift weapons and armor made of pots and pans rattle their way down the road. Their leader is slathered in red paint and introduces himself as Apple. They are looking for a young goblin named Turnip, who stole the clan's treasure. They can be convinced to leave the party alone with a successful DC 14 Charisma (Persuasion) or Strength (Intimidation) check.

 The party finds a young man and woman digging a grave next to a linen-wrapped body under an old oak tree. They explain that their father died in his sleep, and they are burying him under his favorite tree. A successful DC 14 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals the pair are lying **bandits**—they murdered the man for his money and still have the 50 gp on them.

 [2nd Watch] The character on watch hears the sound of trickling water nearby. They can follow the sound with a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check, finding a stream of water dripping into a pond from a crack in a boulder. Under the water is a skeletal hand with a gold wedding ring worth 5 gp on one bony finger.

### HONOR RESTORED

◆ Themes: urban, cultists intrigue, religion

An elderly knight dressed little better than a vagabond travels the region offering his services in exchange for food and a place to sleep, never asking for more than a pittance in return. He is a polite man with a cheerful disposition, and his speech and bearing hint at a noble upbringing, but he is rebuffed by everyone he speaks to and driven away by even the lowliest peasant.

The knight is the last surviving member of an order dedicated to a good deity that was excommunicated by their temple after the high priest was murdered by members of the order a year ago. The knight has traveled the lands seeking redemption, but he is treated like an outcast as the deeds of the disgraced order are common knowledge. However, the truth is that the knights caught the temple high priest and other clerics conducting unholy rituals to an evil god, but were killed trying to stop them. The cultists quickly covered up the evidence and framed the order as heretics and murderers. Over the last year, the knights have suspiciously and quietly disappeared without anyone noticing or caring.

***"The knight has traveled the lands seeking redemption"***

Religious characters of the good deity may receive a vision leading them to the knight or come across him in their travels where he offers them assistance. The characters encounter him being harassed by young priests of the temple—secret cultists—and observe him take the abuse with head bowed in shame until it gets physical. By defending the knight, the characters find themselves treated as outcasts by the local populace as well.

Soon afterward, the party find themselves attacked in the night by a group of assassins. They bear the mark of the evil god, and one is recognized from the group that were harassing the knight. This leads the characters to investigate the temple, where they must find clues as to their connection to the cult, eventually leading to a hidden temple to the evil god. They must fight through the evil cultists and stop a horrifying ritual the cultists are performing. Along the way, they find evidence that vindicates the knight's order and restores him to grace. Once the truth spreads, other knights who were in hiding return, and the order is restored to respectability.

### A PROFITABLE WAR

◆ Themes: politics, war, intrigue

A long-standing peace has reigned between the ruler of a human kingdom and his elven neighbors. Steady trade between the nations has made them both very wealthy. However, over the past few months, organized bandit attacks along the shared border have tensions rising. The bandits attack indiscriminately, and each nation is pressuring the other for a solution, and tempers are flaring.

***"The merchants guild has been supplying weapons... to incite a war"***

After the human ambassador to the elven kingdom disappeared, the human ruler sent his soldiers to the border and demanded his return. The elven queen denied any knowledge of the ambassador's whereabouts and sent her warriors in response. The border towns now live in fear of a possible war on the horizon, and the characters find themselves in the middle of a powderkeg situation, ready to explode at any moment.

A local noble hires the characters to look into the cause of the tensions—the bandit attacks along the border. The noble sets the characters as escorts for a caravan as a trojan horse filled with guards. Once the bandits ambush the caravan, the characters must interrogate captives or track escaping bandits to find one of their camps. There, the characters face extremely well-armed and organized mercenaries along with crates of weapons bearing the mark of a merchants guild. The noble that hired the characters knows that this guild has been pushing for years to increase taxes on imported goods from the elven kingdom.

The merchants guild has been supplying weapons and supplies to the bandits to incite a war and increase profits by selling arms to the kingdom. The characters must infiltrate the guild headquarters to gain the needed proof of their connection to the bandits, namely letters between the guild and the bandits.

Despite this evidence, the armies refuse to back down until the missing ambassador returns. The characters must find the bandits' base of operations and rescue the ambassador to ease the tensions between the two nations before war erupts.





## A CURE FOR MAGIC

◆ Themes: dungeon crawl, low magic, war

A mountain city has long fostered a fear of magic and those who wield it for their own power. Their history tells of magical creatures that terrorized the region long ago and used their magic to enslave the people and bend them to their will. The creatures were eventually defeated and imprisoned in the ancient ruins deep beneath the city built over them. The citizens erected monoliths to create an anti-magic field to cripple their power and seal them away forever. The city has lived under the protection of this field since that day and never forgot the reasons for the monoliths. When they visit the city, the characters find magic items and spells fail. The guards inform them the use of magic is outlawed and explain the anti-magic field. Characters who are magic users are shunned by locals and treated with fear and disdain.

Something has recently begun to weaken the monoliths power and a plague has struck the city. The city council discovered the disease could be cured outside of the city, but it quickly returns upon reentering the anti-magic field. It seems to affect those people with magical aptitude—magic-wielding characters may find themselves feeling the effects of the plague, growing sicker the longer they stay in the city.

The ruling council has decided to end the anti-magic field to save their citizens, but it the threat of the imprisoned creatures looms. The characters must enter the ruins beneath the city. They encounter various denizens and traps leftover from ages past, uncovering the ancient city the current one is built upon. They also come across a tribe of people living in the caverns, cut off from the rest of the world. The characters learn the truth behind the monoliths—they were a defense the tribe's ancestors used against the sorcerer invaders whose descendants now live in the city above. The invaders used the monoliths to seal the tribe's ancestors away and buried the truth under years of lies until the descendants believed the lies to be their true history.

***"cripple their power and seal them away forever"***

With the weakening of the monoliths, the tribe's magical powers are returning, and they are eager to reclaim their ancestral home above. Will the characters lead the tribe to win back the city above, or will they warn the current residents of the increasing danger below? Or will they broker peace between the peoples in the name of saving thousands of lives from the plague?



# ARCANE TRADITION: SCHOOL OF SUMMONING

By T.J. Phoenix

At 2nd level, a Wizard gains the Arcane Tradition feature that reflects their chosen path of magic specialty. The following School of Summoning option is available to you when you make that choice, in addition to the standard options offered. This choice grants you features at 2nd level and again at 6th, 10th, and 14th level.

## School of Summoning

Many wizards dabble in the conjuration and summoning of powerful creatures, but devotees of the School of Summoning are the only ones who have truly mastered the art. Known as summoners, they are experts in the mystical binding of elemental powers and fiendish pacts between demons and devils. While other wizards struggle with controlling their minions, summoners have an indomitable will that bends even the most obstinate to their wishes.

Summoners are powerhouse casters that bring reinforcements to turn the tide of any battle. Through extensive training and years of study, practitioners of the School of Summoning learn techniques that strengthen their familiars to become powerful allies. While other types of wizards—especially conjurers who focus on teleportation—often scoff at the summoner’s devotion to this specific art, they cannot deny the impact made when the cavalry arrives.

### SCHOOL OF SUMMONING FEATURES

Wizard Level	Feature
2nd	Summoner’s Devotion, Empowered Familiar
6th	Transfer Damage, Advanced Familiar
10th	Strengthen Familiar, Advanced Spellbook
14th	Summon Archon Familiar



### SUMMONER'S DEVOTION

*2nd-level School of Summoning feature*

Your training has fortified your body against the disruptions of the world around you, and you no longer flinch in even the most heated of battles. You gain advantage on Constitution saving throws made against your concentration to maintain conjuration spells.

### EMPOWERED FAMILIAR

*2nd-level School of Summoning feature*

You add the *Find Familiar* spell to your spellbook without it counting towards your total spells prepared, and you can cast it without the need for material components. You have learned to channel your arcane powers into this ritual to empower your familiar beyond those typically summoned.

When summoned, an empowered familiar's hit points equal the familiar’s Constitution modifier + your Intelligence modifier + 3 times your wizard level (the familiar has a number of Hit Dice equal to your wizard level). Unlike typical familiars, empowered familiars can take an Attack action in combat. The familiar can move on its own, but the only action it takes on its turn is the Dodge action, unless you take a bonus action on your turn to command it to take another action. If you are incapacitated, the empowered familiar can take any action of its choice, not just Dodge.



## TRANSFER DAMAGE

6th-level School of Summoning feature

Your connection with your empowered familiar has deepened. When you or your familiar are hit by damage other than slashing, piercing, or bludgeoning, you can spend your reaction to redirect the damage dealt, taking half (rounded down) and having the other half dealt to your familiar. This damage ignores resistances and immunities.

## ADVANCED FAMILIAR

6th-level School of Summoning feature

Your empowered familiar ritual casting has dramatically improved, and additional animal forms are available to be chosen: blood hawk, boar, panther, pony, giant badger, giant rat, giant weasel, or wolf. Choose a familiar attribute from the Advanced Familiar table. When next summoned, your familiar's physical appearance changes to outwardly reflect the attribute chosen, and its stat block has the following additional modifications:

- ◆ **Damage Resistances:** poison and familiar attribute damage type.
- ◆ **New Trait: Magic Weapons.** The familiar's weapon attacks are considered magical.
- ◆ **Updated Attack Action:** The familiar uses your spell attack modifier to hit, and a hit deals additional damage of the familiar attribute damage type equal to your proficiency bonus.

### ADVANCED FAMILIAR

Attribute	Damage Type
Astral	Psychic
Celestial	Radiant
Construct	Force
Elemental	Choose one: Fire (fire), Lightning (air), Acid (earth), or Cold (water)
Undead	Necrotic

## STRENGTHEN FAMILIAR

10th-level School of Summoning feature

You have learned to strengthen your familiar further with your arcane energy. As a bonus action, you can expend a spell slot to give your familiar a bonus to attack and damage rolls or ability checks and saving throws equal to half the level of the spell slot expended (rounded up). This effect lasts for 10 minutes times the level of the spell slot expended. You can use this feature a number of times equal to your Intelligence modifier (minimum of once) per long rest.

## EXPANDED SPELLBOOK

10th-level School of Summoning feature

Your studies have shattered the boundaries that have halted lesser wizards. You add the *Conjure Woodland Beings* and *Conjure Animals* spells to your spellbook, and they are considered wizard spells for you and do not count towards your total spells prepared.

## SUMMON ARCHON FAMILIAR

14th-level School of Summoning feature

Your ability to empower your summoned familiar reaches the pinnacle of its evolution, and your familiar transforms into a powerful creature of raw magic called an archon. Your familiar can now take the physical appearance of any creature you have seen; your choice has no effect on its game statistics. Your familiar uses the archon stat block which uses your proficiency bonus (PB) in several places along with your familiar attribute damage type.

### ARCHON

Large Celestial, Fey, or Fiend, unaligned

**CR** —  
— XP

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**Armor Class** 17 (natural armor)  
**Hit Points** 3 + your Intelligence modifier + 5 times your wizard level (the archon has a number of Hit Dice [d8s] equal to your wizard level)  
**Speed** 30 ft., fly 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

**STR**  
14 (+2)

**DEX**  
15 (+2)

**CON**  
13 (+1)

**INT**  
15 (+2)

**WIS**  
16 (+2)

**CHA**  
11 (+0)

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**Damage Resistances** bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks  
**Damage Immunities** poison; familiar damage type  
**Condition Immunities** charmed, exhaustion, poisoned  
**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10  
**Languages** understands the language of its summoner but does not speak  
**Proficiency Bonus:** equals your PB

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**Magic Weapons.** The archon's weapon attacks are magical.

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**Immutable Form.** The archon is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

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### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The archon makes two Strike attacks.

**Strike.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* your spell attack modifier to hit, reach 5 ft., one target you can see. *Hit:* 9 (2d8 + PB) familiar damage type.

**Archon Breath (Recharge 6).** The archon exhales a blast of magical energy in a 30-foot line that is 5 feet wide. Each creature in that area must make a DC (8 + your Intelligence modifier + PB) Dexterity saving throw, taking 56 (16d6) familiar damage type on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

# RANGER ARCHETYPE: DUNGEON STRIDER

By Jess Pendley & Keith Pendley

At 3rd level, a Ranger chooses a Ranger Archetype that defines their chosen path as a wilderness defender. The following Dungeon Strider option is available to all Rangers along with the usual archetypes offered. This choice grants features at 3rd level and again at 7th, 11th, and 15th level.

## DUNGEON STRIDER

Fortresses rise and fall, transforming from safeguards of humanity to piles of crumbling stone and fallen towers in a civilization's heartbeat. Nature, as immutable as time, rises and consumes the remains of these once-grand behemoths, leaving behind scattered ruins and decaying fortifications like the discarded bones of a kill. It's in the carcasses of these half-buried monuments that Dungeon Striders work.

### DUNGEON STRIDER FEATURES

Ranger Level	Feature
2nd	Practiced Trapper, Ruin Walker
7th	Underworld Guardian
10th	Oubliette-Honed Instincts
14th	Tireless Delver



Dungeon Striders are rangers who dedicate themselves to traversing the dungeons and catacombs that are left behind in the wilderness. Whether hired by remote villages to ensure that ancient ruins are cleared of dangerous creatures or by adventuring parties seeking treasure and glory within underground corridors, Dungeon Striders spend a majority of their lives braving precarious structures and clearing deadly hazards that other rangers will never have to face.

Dungeon Striders gain the skills necessary to pursue their trade through shadowing a more experienced mentor in the wild, practicing the arming and disarming of traps, studying the structural integrity of various ruins, and learning about the flora and fauna that they're likely to encounter on their journeys. These connections are considered invaluable by Dungeon Striders and they'll maintain a relationship, however distant it might be, with their mentor for the remainder of their careers.

### PRACTICED TRAPPER

*3rd-level Dungeon Strider feature*

Your time disarming and setting traps has given you an edge in your field. You gain proficiency with Thieves' Tools if you do not already have it. Additionally, as a bonus action, you may give yourself advantage on your next check made to disarm, find, or set a trap. You can use this feature a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus, and you regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

### RUIN WALKER

*3rd-level Dungeon Strider feature*

Through practice and study, you are as in tune with your unique hunting ground as the rest of the wilderness. When you use Primeval Awareness, you may add oozes and monstrosities to the list of creatures that you can sense. Additionally, when you use this feature, you are aware of the location of any molds, slimes, or creature-based hazards within 60 feet of you.



## UNDERWORLD GUARDIAN

*7th-level Dungeon Strider feature*

Your reflexes have sharpened to protect those around you from the threats of the dungeon. If a trap or hazard within 15 feet of you would deal damage, you may expend a spell slot as a reaction to reduce that damage. The damage is reduced by 2d6 for a 1st-level spell slot, plus 1d6 for each slot level higher than 1st. The damage is reduced before any resistance or vulnerability is applied.

Your range for this feature increases from 15 feet to 30 feet at 18th level.

## OUBLIETTE-HONED INSTINCTS

*11th-level Dungeon Strider feature*

When you focus your energy, the corridors reveal their secrets to you. As an action, you may expend a spell slot. For the next 1 minute, you can discern the location of any secret doors, dangerous structural flaws (like weakness in the floor, unstable ceilings, hidden sinkholes, etc.), or objects bearing magic within 30 feet of you. This feature penetrates all nonmagical barriers within range.

The duration for this feature is increased by 1 minute and the range is increased by 10 feet for each spell slot level expended higher than 1st.

## TIRELESS DELVER

*15th-level Dungeon Strider feature*

You have been hardened by a life spent roaming the underworld and it's changed you in more ways than one. You gain the following benefits:

- ◆ You have resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage dealt by traps, hazards, and from falling.
- ◆ You have advantage on all saving throws made to resist exhaustion. Additionally, when an effect or completing a long rest would remove 1 level of exhaustion from you, you can remove 2 levels instead.
- ◆ You only need to sleep for 4 hours to gain the benefits of a long rest.

# BACKGROUNDS

*By Jess Pendley & Keith Pendley*

Heroes all have stories about where they came from and what shaped them into who they are today. The following backgrounds can be used to create your character's background in the Freelands or any setting of your choosing. These backgrounds are for those heroes who were raised in the underground known as the Deepshade, played as a child among ancient ruins, or studied the secrets of deadly dungeons plundered in the past.

## DEEP BORN

You grew up under twisting constellations of glowing fungus and among chambers dotted with spires of quartz. You may be from a people who have their origins down in the Deepshade, living and thriving far beyond the reach of the sun and the sky above. Or you could have been raised among refugees who fled from the surface, making your life within the cave systems and caverns that the authorities of your area were too afraid to explore.

In either case, you have since set out on your own and now find yourself traveling through a bright and strange new realm. With an endless sky above your head and a wide-open world set before you, will you balk in the face of a life without boundaries or will you embrace your new life and rush headlong into the unknown?

**Skill Proficiencies:** Perception, Survival

**Tool Proficiencies:** One type of artisan's tools and a gaming set of your choice

**Languages:** One of your choice of Deep Speech, Primordial, or Undercommon

**Equipment:** One set of commoner's clothes, any one artisan's tool or gaming set you are proficient with, two trinkets you've brought from your home, a necklace with a crystal pendant worth 10 gp, and a purse containing 5 gp

**Feature: Underdweller's Instincts**

Your time spent living without a view of the sun or stars has left you with certain innate abilities. Unless your mind is being clouded by magic, you are always able to discern true north.

**Suggested Characteristics**

Whether from the depths of the Deepshade or from a reclusive band of cavern runners, deep born individuals are forced to find their place and purpose among the (often confusing) cultures and peoples of the surface world. Some strive to blend perfectly with their newfound surroundings while others embrace their differences and carry them proudly as a reminder of their home.

**DUNGEON DELVER**

Before ever setting foot outside of your home, you dreamt of exploring ruins and walking through dungeon corridors. Braving traps, avoiding pitfalls, and discovering what lies where others fear to tread captured your imagination from a young age and since then, you've devoted every moment to learning the ins and outs of the dungeons you crawl.

You may have learned your trade in the books and journals on the shelves of your local academy or library, memorizing diagrams and the dusty histories of places others have long forgotten. Or you may have studied under the direct tutelage of a dungeoneer of renown, picking up tips and tricks that others could only dream of gleaning. However you learned, you're now ready to make your own mark on the field that you love.

**Skill Proficiencies:** Athletics, History

**Tool Proficiencies:** Cartographer's tools, Thieves' tools

**Equipment:** One set of traveler's clothes, cartographer's tools or thieves' tools, 5 pieces of chalk, a steel mirror, a leather journal, and a belt pouch containing 15 gp

**Feature: Studied Dungeoneer**

You have spent ample time in the field and the library, learning to hone your craft. You may double your proficiency bonus on checks made to determine the history, age, or recover any general knowledge regarding dungeons or ruins or to remember their layout if you have previously seen a map of the specific dungeon or ruin in question.

**Suggested Characteristics**

Dungeon delvers are typically rugged and well-studied individuals who have no problems thinking under pressure or in less than ideal circumstances. Whether they are pursuing their craft purely for knowledge or leading groups through the darkest areas of civilization for profit, there's no arguing their value to a team of adventurers.

**RUIN SCRAPPER**

During your life, you've spent more time wandering through ruins and picking through catacombs than window shopping in the city square, and you've learned to use the materials you find in the field to keep your gear up to snuff.

You may have been raised far from the trappings of conventional society where your practice of reclamation was a necessity of life, or you may have served as the apprentice of a Dungeon Strider or other dungeoneering adventurer whose gear was your responsibility to repair and upkeep. However you may have come by your unique skills and waste not, want not philosophy, you now find that you're well-equipped to face extended periods of time away from the cities and services that others depend on.

**Skill Proficiencies:** History, Survival

**Tool Proficiencies:** Tinker's Tools

**Languages:** One exotic language of your choice

**Equipment:** One set of traveler's clothes, tinker's tools, 10 gp worth of materials you have previously scavenged, a trinket you have kept from the first ruin you explored, and a pouch containing 3 gp.

**Feature: Practiced Scrapper**

You know how to find usable materials to cobble together your gear. After completing a long rest, you can scavenge the area you're in to find 5 gp worth of materials that can be used to make repairs with your tinker's tools. These materials can only be used to make repairs and have no monetary value outside of that purpose.

**Suggested Characteristics**

Ruin scrappers are accustomed to leading fairly unconventional lives on their own, spending extended periods of time away from the trappings of civilization. That, combined with their habit of reclaiming any found materials they deem useful can be offputting to those outside of their close circles, but ruin scrappers don't typically let the opinions of others influence their behavior.



# CHARACTER TRAITS

The following tables can be used to flesh out the personality traits, ideals, bonds, and flaws for any character that can connect their background to extensive time spent in the Deepshade, underworld, or dungeons and ruins, but is specifically tailored for players that choose the deep born, dungeon delver, or ruin scrapper backgrounds.

**d8 Personality Trait**

1	I am fiercely independent and really revel in that fact.
2	I'll take crawling through tunnels over walking crowded city streets any day.
3	I live to explore the great unknown.
4	The night sky still astounds me.
5	I document everything in my trusty journal.
6	I have no respect for wasteful people.
7	I'm drawn toward strong earthy flavors and scents.
8	There's no greater rush than disarming a trap.

**d8 Bond**

1	I wouldn't be the person I am today without my mentor's guidance.
2	My heart belongs to the hidden places of the world.
3	My pet rat comes with me everywhere I go.
4	There's nothing more important than the people you call family.
5	Once I say I'm going to do something, I do it.
6	There's a basic code that all adventurers follow and I stick to it.
7	There's a legendary treasure hidden out there and I plan to be the one who finds it.
8	I'm dedicated to finishing the memoir full of my adventures and discoveries.

**d8 Ideal**

1	Knowledge. I'll learn every secret that the ruins are keeping.
2	Found Family. My campfire is my hearth and my traveling companions are my family.
3	Independence. I don't need anything or anyone.
4	Legacy. People will read about me and my travels long after I'm gone.
5	Reciprocity. One good turn deserves another.
6	Power. There are artifacts of untold power hidden in the dark corners of the world and I plan to find them.
7	Reclamation. One man's trash is my treasure.
8	Adaptability. You have to be quick on your feet to handle what the world throws at you.

**d8 Flaw**

1	I can't stand it when people are too dependent on others for things they could do themselves.
2	I feel incredibly vulnerable when I'm in wide open spaces.
3	I refuse to spend good coin on something I could fix or make myself.
4	I have a one-track mind and am not easily pulled away from what I'm focusing on.
5	I get angry when people question my expertise.
6	I don't eat anything I didn't catch or make myself.
7	Something interrupting my routine can ruin my entire day.
8	I am easily overwhelmed when meeting groups of new people.



# Minzeeep's Market of Minor Magics



## TURNCOAT OF ARMS



## TURNCOAT OF ARMS

Wondrous item, common

This large silver brooch is engraved with a blank crest. When worn on a sash or as a cloak clasp, you can use an action to touch the brooch and speak its command word. The brooch shimmers and instantly changes to display a house sigil or coat of arms that you have personally seen. You gain advantage on Deception checks made to convince others that you are a member of the house or organization a brooch is displaying. The brooch reverts to its blank state after 1 hour and cannot be used again for 24 hours.

"You will question your authority while wearing this magnificent brooch!"



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## ORNATE PEACOCK HAIR COMB

Wondrous item, common

"Oh, looking for a mate? This will help you catch their eye!"

This gold and apatite comb is formed as a stylized peacock replete with shimmering feathers. While wearing this comb, your clothing appears neatly pressed and as fresh as if they were just newly made; the colors of the cloth even seem brighter than possible. You also find yourself walking with an elegant gait as if you are dancing with each stride.





# HARP OF THORNS

*Wondrous item, common*

*"It is said that great music is born from great pain."*

The frame of this small wooden lap harp is carved with beautiful enameled roses, and the delicate silver strings are twisted to resemble stems with red-tipped thorns. You must be proficient in stringed instruments to use this harp. When you play this harp as part of a Performance check, you take 1d4+1 piercing damage and add that result to your roll.







## ACIDIC SLUG IN A JAR

*Adventuring Gear, common*

*"Be careful when opening the jar; I assume you want to keep your hands."*

This glass jar contains a glowing green slug that secretes a highly acidic slime trail that can melt through metal. This slug is extremely rare, found only in the deepest caverns of the Motionless Mountains. It produces enough corrosive acid in a 1-foot-long trail to melt through 2-inch-thick iron over 1 minute. The slug has a lifespan of one year if cared for properly by feeding it a semi-precious gemstone at least once per week. The slug dies after two weeks of not being fed.

If the jar is thrown at a target as an improvised thrown weapon, a hit deals 1 piercing damage and 1d4+2 acid damage, killing the slug inside.

## SHIMMERING SNAIL SHELL GOBLET

*Wondrous item, common*

*"Just a small sip, and you'll turn heads wherever you go!"*

The large mother-of-pearl spiral shell that makes up this goblet shimmers with ever-changing swirls of scintillating colors. The goblet fills each dawn with a clear liquid that smells like strawberries. The skin (or fur) of a creature who drinks this liquid begins to shift and swirl in the same colors as the shell for 1 hour. The fluid has no effect outside of the shell and can only affect an imbiber once per day.





# TURNCOAT OF ARMS

Wondrous item, common

*"No one will question your authority while wearing this magnificent brooch!"*

This large silver brooch is engraved with a blank crest. When worn on a sash or as a cloak clasp, you can use an action to touch the brooch and speak its command word. The brooch shimmers and instantly changes to display a house sigil or coat of arms that you have personally seen. You gain advantage on Deception checks made to convince others that you are a member of the house or organization the brooch is displaying. The brooch reverts to its blank state after 1 hour and cannot be used again for 24 hours.



# TRUE HEART'S LETTER

Wondrous item, common

*"The power of love is sometimes greater than even the most potent of magics."*

This carefully folded parchment is cut into the shape of a heart with frilled patterned edges. An indecipherable yet delightful scent wafts from the letter when opened. The owner of this letter can spend 1 hour thinking of the individual they wish to give the letter to express their true feelings. This can be done over the course of a short or long rest. The wording then changes to a letter addressed to that individual from the owner that elegantly details their true feelings towards them, whatever they may be.





THE HOT SEAT

# LUKE GYGAX

*"An old soldier, father of three princesses, son of the Gygax" the Twitter bio of Luke Gygax; founder of Gary Con and son of Gary Gygax, the co-creator of Dungeons & Dragons.*

Written By Alex Hitchen  
Art By Martin Kirby-Jackson





## AN OLD SOLDIER

**You joined the army when you were 18, in 1989, then a year later was the Gulf War, and you got thrown into Desert Storm. People don't necessarily sign up thinking I'm going to go to war straight away as I've signed up.**

That's true; that was a surprise. It's certainly something you train up for and when you go into an organization like the military, you kinda become inculcated, and you embrace the idea of being a warrior. I was scared at times, it was nerve-racking getting artillery fire coming in, and you don't know exactly where it's coming from or where it's going to hit. I was scared, [but] you don't show that as a 19 year old.

**D&D has always been big in the U.S. When you enlisted, did you let people know, "Oh, my dad invented D&D?"**

No, quite the opposite. Growing up as the son of somebody famous, you have to struggle to make your own identity. And that was something that I, like so many other people, wanted to differentiate myself from who my parents were. Certainly, I'm proud of everything my father has done. I'm so happy to be able to carry on his legacy in any way that I can. But at that time—especially as a teenage person—man, it was hard, and I wanted to have a chance just to be me. Not just "Oh, let's talk about your dad."

I really wanted to be known for who I was, and I think the army helped me to be comfortable with my own identity. But, certainly, people recognized the name, and when I found out they were fellow nerds, we would hang out and play all sorts of games.

**What's had the bigger impact: D&D on your army training or your army training on your D&D?**

There is a crossover there. I'd say playing D&D and roleplaying, in general, gives you skills that will help you in life, and you don't really realize that you're training yourself, but you are. Certainly,

you're learning small group dynamics, problem-solving techniques, speaking persuasively, probably expanding your vocabulary. Those things gave me a leg up in my military career. I've always ranked highly in any of my officers' schools. I attribute a lot of that to having had a few more extra reps by roleplaying throughout my life in assuming the leadership spot.

My experiences in the army I'm able to bring to the table as well. Boy, if you've ever had to put on 40 lbs of body armor and then put a 60 lb rucksack on you and walk around in the heat. When I got back from my last deployment back to Iraq, it was 129 degrees sometimes (...) it made me appreciate the consequences of the environment!

If you want to play a system that's very realistic, they're actually not nearly as fun. Basically, one good hit from a sword and you were done, no matter who you were. My heroic personas are to be Errol Flynn and dance around, and to me, that's more fun. I prefer leaving most of the realism behind and just adding little elements of flavor.

**Your desert setting [The Blightlands], you ran in your Founders & Legends game for Extra Life [2020]; and who did you run it for?**

It was the first time I'd run Fifth Edition. It was very easy, really no stress whatsoever! For this guy I can't remember his name.. he DMs a few times on this show; Matt Mercer? [Also] Matt Colville, Deborah Ann Woll, TJ Storm who just does a great job of DMing too, Eric Jordan who does Idle Champions [of the Forgotten Realms] and Kyle Newman.

**Was that a stressful situation? Do you still get those at-the-table jitters when you're just about to start a game?**

Of course. I think that just shows that you care, that you're invested. And you just want it to go well. You feel the pressure of "Oh my gosh.." I imagine it's kinda like being the quarterback on a football team, you have to orchestrate this thing, and you are vital. You're not doing it alone, but you're vital to that role and people having fun and enjoying it. And you've probably invested the most amount of time prepping, so you want it to go well. Or you haven't, and then you're extra nervous.

## FATHER OF THREE PRINCESSES

**You have three princesses [daughters Miriam, Amira and Sabrina] who are presumably well familiar with who Gary Gygax is in the industry. Do they know who dad is? Do they know how big you are and your legacy?**

[Laughing] No, no, they're like anyone else's children. They will keep you humble, right? But they do think it's kinda cool. Kids are proud of you. I think kids want to love their parents; they want to be proud of their parents. And then there's a struggle we go through as teenagers where we want to identify as our own, as a separate entity, until you kind of get that distance from your parents like, "Oh, you're not cool anymore."

**And that's your eldest, Miriam, who is 14 now?**

Yeah, but she's such a good kid. She really hasn't hit those terrible teenage years. She's still my buddy. She's the biggest gamer out of all of them so she'll like to play games with me. The other ones, I'll have to rope in and be like, "Alright, come on.." and then once we start, they're having a great time.

**You've established that you learned a lot through playing D&D. Do you feel like you try to teach them through it?**

I have. I said, "Okay, let's play fifth edition," and just opened up D&D Beyond. "Pick whatever. What race do you want to be?" And so I ended up with a minotaur paladin, an elven sorcerer, and a bugbear ranger. So she's [the bugbear] like a friendly bugbear raised by elves, so they're buddies in the game. And then Miriam plays a male minotaur paladin because she's always been a hack n' slasher; she wants to be the biggest, toughest, strongest. When they go around to various towns, it's an elf with a giant minotaur and a

giant bugbear. So if they're in a smaller place, sometimes people will run away from them, or people don't usually allow their kind in the bar, so I use that as a teaching mechanism for a "See what happens when you see people as one thing, but you're really nice, but people treat you differently." So I guess there's that lesson in there.

You do have a pretty good influence, particularly in the younger years, I would say, in how they form connections, instilling a sense of value in who you are. I think that's a big one if you have a solid core of who you are, your place in the world, your importance in perspective. Then I think it's a lot harder to be free to fall in a lot of pitfalls.

There's a really great book, Dr. Seuss's "Oh, the Places You'll Go!". I've read all of my girls that one, and I refer to it and I say, hey, you know, there's ups there's downs, sometimes you're ahead, sometimes you're in the dumps, but you know what, be resilient, because you'll get through this period.



*Luke holding a picture of his father, Gary Gygax*

## SON OF THE GYGAX

**[Gary Gygax] died in 2008, friends and family got together shortly after to celebrate him, and someone said you should do this more often. You did, and Gary Con was born.**

Losing a parent is very difficult for most people; everyone reacts to it differently. I found it a challenge—very, very hard. It was a horrible thing. I feel [Gary Con is] one of my finest accomplishments. What I was the most happy with: I had

to give the eulogy and thought the sentiment that came out was very powerful, but very natural. It allowed me to express a lot of things about my dad, and who he was to me and who he was to others. Being able to share that with other people and realize that he was important either directly or indirectly to other people, and they shared in that loss. It was very comforting. For us being able to get together and honor him by playing games—which was such an important facet of his life—was cathartic. It was a great way to remember him with his friends and family.



*"I realized he may be forgotten if I don't get out there and start talking about it"*

I really realized after my father passed away [that] I knew he created a wonderful game. What I didn't really fully understand is the way he changed popular culture and the impact Dungeons and Dragons had on many people's lives. A very important impact in how those folks felt a connection to my father even if they never met him.

As I saw D&D growing, and his name isn't on the front of any books these days, it made me go "wow, there's this whole next generation of people playing dungeons and dragons and that's wonderful, and they're experiencing these benefits of gaming," I realized he may be forgotten if I don't get out there and start talking about it and say "hey, look at these things he did."

**You've talked before about how work-focused your dad was, how he'd come home from the office and carry on working at home and D&D. Was he a workaholic?**

Yeah, he worked a lot, that's true. I have never thought about this, but he did get up early and start working. So a lot of times, he'd have his coffee, it's 6 o'clock in the morning, and he'd go down and start typing because people might not be up yet. Or he just woke up with an idea and wanted to capture it. I think he enjoyed the creative aspect; I don't believe he enjoyed the business aspect that was a necessary evil. When D&D took off very unexpectedly and became this phenomenon, he had to assume more business responsibilities, so when did he have time to create? Well, it was after he was back from the office and he'd go to his den, and he would write before dinner and potentially after dinner as well. There were times we watched movies, we watched series like *Shogun* together as a family, we watched football. He was a Chicago Bears fan so we'd watch football on Sundays often times which weren't that great as the bears were always losing.

He was pretty busy, so I think he came to one or two of my music recitals when I was in

elementary and junior high. Then for sporting events, I think he came to two of sixteen football games; it's funny the things you remember as a kid. Then he would make it to some of my [military high school] parades. But he didn't spend a lot of time doing all of the family stuff; he wasn't there at every game or those sorts of things. So the way I chose to connect with him, or that I had time with him, was embracing gaming. And so I did that, and I gamed with my dad when I got out of the army, in the reserves and college, I would play in his weekly game. I would run some D&D games, and occasionally my dad would join later in life.

**He died way before the resurgence of D&D. What do you think he would have made of it?**

Yeah, I think he would have been very humbled. I think he'd be blown away, personally. I can't see him saying, "well yeah, I'm such a genius for doing it" (...) he thought D&D might sell 10,000 copies... a mind-blowing amount, right?!

**He was right—it did. It just sold a few more...**



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# Dear DIRELORDS...

BAD PEOPLE. GOOD ADVICE.



**Dear Direlords,**  
The local ADVENTURERS keep trashing my lairs - do you have any advice for making a more devious dungeon?

I'm relatively new to all of this, I've been terrorising the local region for the last year or so, time and time again these coin-hungry questboard jockeys keep coming into my home and razing it, all for a couple of gold. Don't they realise how expensive it is to set these things up, especially in this economy? I'm at the end of my terrible tether and was seeking some advice on how to make a dungeon lair that will test even the most seasoned of gold mongers.

**Trevor the Terrible,**  
THE FOREST OF RECENT RUINS, CHESTER

**LORD DASTARD:** In my day adventurers had a lot more respect... and honor... an'a *\*hic\** code... didn' jus go roun- *\*hic\** burning lairs down willy nilly.

I'd recommend a few minions moving around to keep these *\*hic\** questboard jockeys on their sneaky toes. Whether a monster that moves freely, or an... an... actshual patrol, having moving minions can stop adventurers from always resting, rooms that *\*hic\** were once full might not be nex' time they go there, and it's easy to back up a fight where your forces get taken out too *\*hic\** quickly!



Secondly, consider good dungeon architecture. Multiple empty rooms are not *\*hic\** only boring to design, but they lack any utility for your minions. A room with an upper ledge accessed by mini- *\*hic\** minions gives them the drop on the fools below. Hidden corridors behind secret doors might allow your forces to flank the adventure party *\*hic\**. Paths that loop back on 'emselves mean these would-be-assassins never know what is coming up... behind them *\*hic\** and blocking their escape. Splendid!

Finally, consider using traps! Bad traps are one's that'll jus' kill intruders without them seeing it coming, good traps will soften them up, make them use their reso- *\*hic\** resources so that when they reach your final room they're so much easier to kill and then you can take their... take their loot and gear and add it to your *\*hic\** horde. Trying to recover loot from a... lava pit... isa pain in the ass- *\*hic\** .. a pain in the ass- *\*hic\** a pain in the assortment process when trying to document your spoils, on account of all the melting. Fun traps are when the enemy can see them, but aren't so sure how... they're triggered. A big hanging blade from the *\*hic\** roof will pause them in their tracks an' force them to stop and deal with it... combine this with them bein' inarush *\*hic\** or being chased, then they might be forced to rush headlong into a trap fully aware that it's there! Very splendid indeed... *\*hic\**



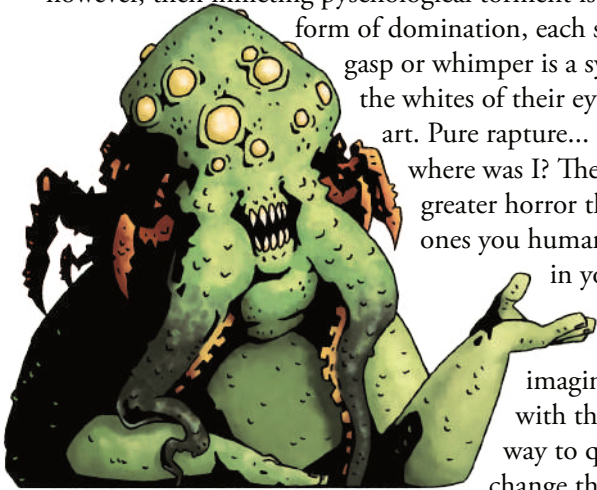


**Dear Dark Ones,**  
How do I make my players poop themselves?

I'm preparing to run a horror campaign and I really want to try and make my players scared about what's following them or hidden in the dark. How do?

**John S,**  
*DUNGEON OF DEADLY DANGERS, WYOMING*

**"JODIE":** There's many ways to introduce frightening elements into your campaign, but first, make sure it's something your players desire. Not everyone at the table signs on to be made to feel anxious and scared. If they do however, then inflicting psychological torment is the purest form of domination, each shocked gasp or whimper is a symphony, the whites of their eyes a work of art. Pure rapture... *\*Ahem\**, where was I? There is no greater horror than the ones you humans build up in your heads, you are quite imaginative. So with that, the best way to quickly change the color of your players' underpants is to build tension over time. You can do this by using ambiance to your advantage and adding a sense of urgency. Give them a time limit to complete their goal. Then make their flesh crawl with creepy sounds with no obvious source. Watch their panic rise as they stumble across gruesome remains and ritualistic fetishes. Change the environment when they look away (Was that always there? Was that a real person or a ghost?) and make them question their sanity. Once they're on the edge, and that sweet, delicious fear is at its peak—release the true horror upon the poor fools to feast upon their flesh, their minds, their souls... *\*Ahem\**. So! Tension and release are the foundations of good horror. Use them wisely and enjoy!



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souls... *\*Ahem\**. So! Tension and release are the foundations of good horror. Use them wisely and enjoy!



**Dear Masters of Darkness,**  
My minions are bored, how do I keep them engaged?

I've put together a tidy crew of thugs and goons who have been running together for a while now; we used to have a grand old time killin' stuff. Lately they're less inspired about hearing the laments of their enemies, how do I reignite the blood lust and make combat as exciting as when they killed their first shopkeeper?

**Dangerous Dave,**  
*THE BAND OF BROWN NOSERS, B.C.*

**HELLMET:** There is no thadder thight than a minion who hath loht their pathion for thlaughter. There are many wayth to challenge your minionth and reignite that fire in their heartth. The thimplestht way would be to change the typeth of battlegroundth to thomething more exthotic than your uthual duthty tombthor crumbling ruinth. Take them on a trip to an elemental plane, deep dive under the thea, or introduthe them to fighting on the backth of flying creatureth. Uthe environment hazardth to your advantage and create new challengeth. Conthider pitting them againtht foeth that work together with complimenting abilitieth or intelligent beingth that uthe conthumbleth like potionth and magic thcrollth! Remember that not every creature will fight to the death; they may run away to draw your minionth into trapth or reinforthementh. Thtronger enemieth are not always more exthciting, but thmarter and more tactical oneth will keep them on their tooth. And do not be afraid to keep them on tathk! If they are finding combat to be too eathy, they may no longer fear death and that jutht will not do! Put them up againtht foe ththat will not pull their puncheth—make them remember that they can die at any moment! Do not forget: their liveth are ultimately yourth to do with ath you will. If need be, remind them who ith the true mathter and cruth them!



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# THE FORGOTTEN WARRIOR



"DEATH IS NOT THE END."



THESE WORDS HAVE BEEN CARRIED ACROSS THE WORLD AND BACK...



BEEN THE FOUNDATION FOR ATTEMPTING THE IMPOSSIBLE...



A SOURCE OF ENDLESS HOPE...



SPOKEN SO LONG AGO.





I HEARD THE CRIMSON CARAVAN ARRIVED! I'M DYING TO SEE WHAT THEY'RE SELLING THIS TIME!

MEH. PROBABLY JUST A BUNCH OF STOLEN MOHURIAN JUNK.

SHUSH! I HAPPEN TO ENJOY THEIR STOLEN "JUNK".



WELL, WHAT ABOUT THE CIRCUS? LOOK, THERE'S EVEN A FORTUNE TELLER THIS TIME!

AH GOOD! ONE MORE DISTRACTION WHILE THEY PICK YOUR POCKETS!



YOU DONT HAVE TO BE SO CYNICAL ALL THE TIME.

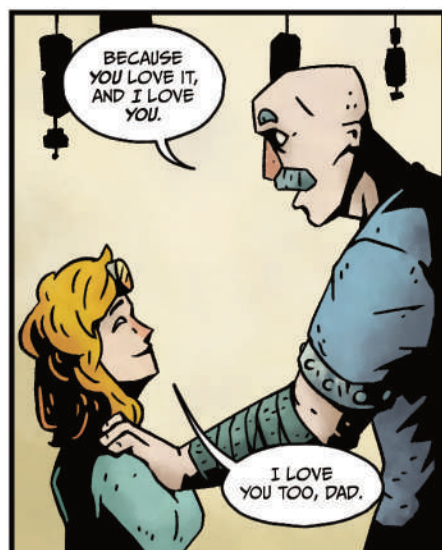
SOME PEOPLE LIKE HAVING A GOOD TIME, YOU KNOW.



I LIKE TO KEEP MY COIN. UNFORTUNATELY, I'VE KNOWN TOO MANY PEOPLE... BEEN TOO MANY PLACES. WHEN I WAS-



IN THE WAR, I KNOW, I KNOW. IF YOU HATE IT HERE SO MUCH WHY DO WE KEEP COMING?



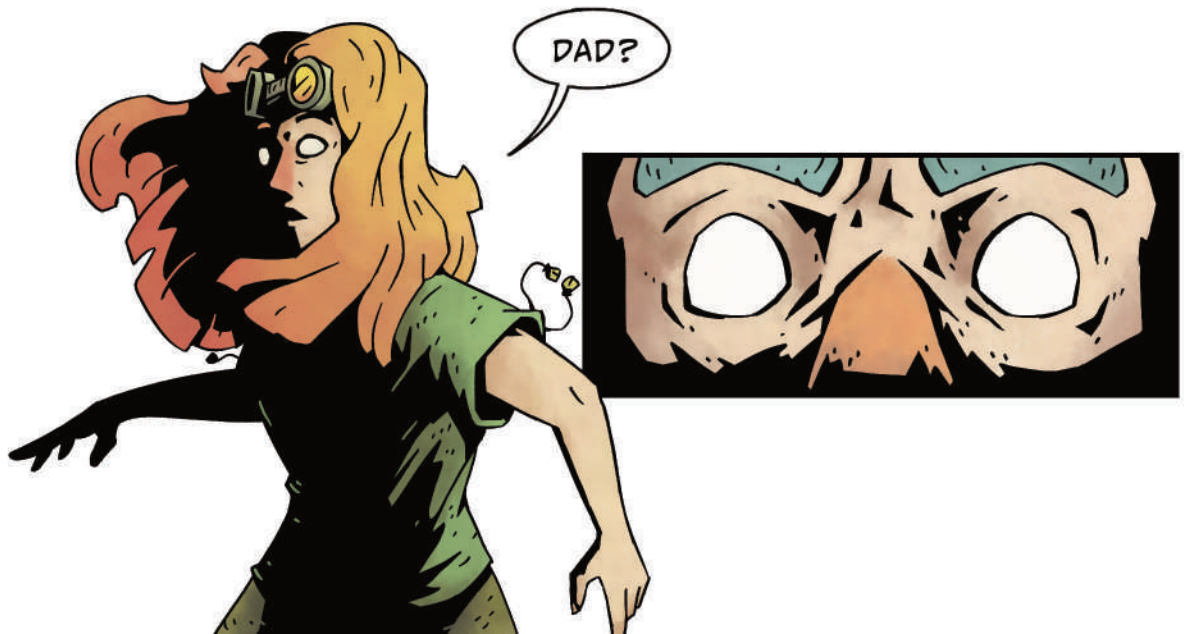
BECAUSE YOU LOVE IT, AND I LOVE YOU.

I LOVE YOU TOO, DAD.



OH LOOK- BRAETH BEAST PERFORMERS! I'LL BE BACK! HOLD THIS FOR ME- THANKS!









TO BE CONTINUED...



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