



The Cornflower Hive

What links an infamous Zhentarim mercenary with a brilliant but tormented artificer? To find out, the adventurers must break the goblinoid siege of the village of Westfir. After the bizarre goblins are defeated, the Cornflower Hive must be destroyed. Ultimately, what secrets are held in the grain mill by the Westfork river?

A Four-Hour Adventure for 1st-4th Level Characters



FarWest MiniCon

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Introduction

Welcome to *The Cornflower Hive*, a D&D Adventurers League™ adventure, part of the official D&D Adventurers League™ organized play system and the *Tomb of Annihilation*™ storyline season.

The adventure takes place in the plains near Mulmaster, and focuses on assisting the farming village of Westfir with a tribe of goblin marauders.

This adventure is designed for **three to seven 1st-4th level characters** and is optimized for **five characters with an average party level (APL) of 3**. Characters outside this level range cannot participate in this adventure.

Adjusting This Adventure

This adventure provides suggestions in making adjustments for smaller or larger groups, characters of higher or lower levels, and characters that are otherwise a bit more powerful than the adventure is optimized for. You're not bound to these adjustments; they're here for your convenience.

To figure out whether you should consider adjusting the adventure, add up the total levels of all the characters and divide the total by the number of characters (rounding .5 or greater up; .4 or less down). This is the group's APL. To approximate the **party strength** for the adventure, consult the following table.

Determining Party Strength

Party Composition	Party Strength
3-4 characters, APL less than	Very weak
3-4 characters, APL equivalent	Weak
3-4 characters, APL greater than	Average
5 characters, APL less than	Weak
5 characters, APL equivalent	Average
5 characters, APL greater than	Strong
6-7 characters, APL less than	Average
6-7 characters, APL equivalent	Strong
6-7 characters, APL greater than	Very strong

Some encounters may include a sidebar that offers suggestions for certain party strengths. If a particular recommendation is not offered or appropriate for your group, you don't have to make adjustments.

Before Play at the Table

Before you start play, consider the following:

- Read through the adventure, taking notes of anything you'd like to highlight or remind yourself of while running the adventure, such as a way you'd like to portray an NPC or a tactic you'd like to use in a combat. Familiarize yourself with the adventure's appendices and handouts.
- Gather any resources you'd like to use to aid you in running this adventure--such as notecards, a DM screen, miniatures, and battlemaps.
- Ask the players to provide you with relevant character information, such as name, race, class, and level; passive Wisdom (Perception), and anything specified as notable by the adventure (such as backgrounds, traits, flaws, etc.)

Playing the Dungeon Master

You have the most important role—facilitating the enjoyment of the game for the players. You provide the narrative and bring the words on these pages to life.

To facilitate this, keep in mind the following:

You're Empowered. Make decisions about how the group interacts with the adventure; adjusting or improvising is encouraged, so long as you maintain the adventure's spirit. This doesn't allow you to implement house rules or change those of the Adventurers League, however; they should be consistent in this regard.

Challenge Your Players. Gauge the experience level of your **players** (not the characters), try to feel out (or ask) what they like in a game, and attempt to deliver the experience they're after. Everyone should have the opportunity to shine.

Keep the Adventure Moving. When the game starts to get bogged down, feel free to provide hints and clues to your players so they can attempt to solve puzzles, engage in combat, and roleplay interactions without getting too frustrated over a lack of information. This gives players "little victories" for figuring out good choices from clues. Watch for stalling—play loses momentum when this happens. At the same time, make sure that the players don't finish too early; provide them with a full play experience.

Adventure Primer

This section provides the adventure's background, a list of prominent NPCs, an overview of the adventure in play, and hooks that you can use to introduce your players' characters to the action.

Adventure Background

The Pereghost reforged the broken Zhentarim after the fall of Zhentil Keep, shaping the organization into the band of stalwart mercenaries they're known as today. But beneath the veneer of reputable sellswords are the cunning agents secreted away behind untold faces working on countless objectives to further the Black Network's influence.

One such agent and survivor of the battle of Zhentil Keep operates from the backwater of Westfir, a small village near Mulmaster that sits half-a-day's ride from a major trade route. The proximity to this traffic presents Crucia Cromhel with a tactical location for remaining out of sight while providing access to the communication channels she needs to send forth her orders. Crucia also chose the hamlet to keep an eye on an ingenious yet tormented artificer named Veshje Bel'Erin. The arcanist and his companions were members of the Knights of the Spiral Crown, a branch of the Order of the Unicorn, and fought for Crucia during Zhentil Keep's last days, saving her life during that fateful battle.

After the Keep's fall, Crucia adventured with the Knights for a time, exploring ruins and uncharted territories until Veshje's curiosity triggered a trap that teleported several companions into another plane. The Knight's banner was soon retired out of respect and Veshje withdrew to find a way to undo his terrible mistake. He setup a lab in an abandoned watermill to create divination devices to scour the Outer Planes. As old age overtook him, his repeated failures made him desperate and he became ever more reckless in his search.

His current scrying device is an alchemically fueled planar window, a one-way portal used to peer into the planes. He uses this in conjunction with another device empowering a *locate creature* spell. However, when the device opened a window into Demogorgon's Abyssal realm, something wasn't pleased about the intrusion. An explosion of Abyssal energy breached the portal and killed Veshje. A small rupture between the planes was left in the wake, and through this rift seeped the taint of Demogorgon's realm of ravenous jungles and giant beasts, polluting the river near the mill and mutating the plants and insects along the banks. This same

waterway feeds Westfir's crops. The residents themselves drink from a central well purified by an aquifer. Even the outlying farms have their own wells. Thus, the residents remained ignorant of the pollution's full effects and only viewed the abundance of plants and unusual insects along the river as a curious novelty—neat but not dangerous. The crops fed by the river have undergone the same change as those along the river, growing larger and larger from month to month for almost two seasons. Initially, this was viewed as Chauntea's blessing, a lucky bumper crop. Then the plants continued to bloom longer, produce more, and grow bigger with each passing month until they were unnatural in scope: pumpkins the size of carts, tomatoes the size of heads, cucumbers the size of logs.

Crucia is aware of Veshje's arcane activities and uses her Network contacts to supply him with the components and schematics for his pursuits. Every six months Veshje makes the journey to Westfir to pay invoices, retrieve supplies, and leave lists of materials needed to continue his quest.

Crucia is concerned for Veshje and his probable involvement in the strangeness, but his check-in is only a few weeks away. She is hesitant to send someone to his secret lab, as he'd see this gesture as nothing but an annoyance and interruption. The discoveries and inventions Veshje has made along his journey have made Crucia wealthy and prestigious within the Black Network. She wants to keep Veshje hidden and to herself.

Further complicating matters for Crucia is the Mulmaster Diaspora moving through the area in search of shelter and food. Crucia wishes to assist them in a way that will further the Zhentarim's goals. The refugees represent an exploitable workforce who will be indebted to her for helping them. Before the abnormal growth, she had begun plans to have Westfir take in the Diaspora to expand the village's farming productivity. The upsurge in exporting goods would increase traffic around the village and provide cover for her agents and smugglers.

Crucia sensed trouble in Westfir's strange happenings and contacted the Zhentarim with requests of assistance to study the changes. Her approach has two goals: inform the Network of a potential resource to be exploited and draw support to identify potential dangers to Westfir. Her efforts have proven too late. A number of remote farms have been raided, whole families taken.

Crucia's Zhentarim scouts have informed her of giant wasps flying through the area. Even more bizarre is that the wasps appear to be obeying

goblins. Upon receiving this information, Crucia ordered the immediate evacuation of the village. However, this action had an unintended consequence—it signaled to goblins that Westfir was vulnerable. Crucia’s scouts have warned her of an impending attack before they left to report to the Network proper. She has no choice but to stay in Westfir and fortify the town to give people time to flee. She lost one home when Zhentil Keep fell, she won’t allow another to burn.

When the adventurers arrive in Westfir, Crucia asks them to help defend the village from the goblins and their wasps, investigate Veshje’s lab, and then burn the wasp’s hive, which rests in a cornflower field around Veshje’s lab.

Unbeknownst to Crucia, soon after Veshje’s death, a goblin named Skrek drank from the corrupted waters near the mill and felt Demogorgon’s power, heard Abyssal whispers promising dominance and satiation. Skrek began worshipping the demon prince and spread Demogorgon’s name to the rest of his tribe.

Through fiendish powers, Skrek magically compelled a nearby hive of wasps to imbibe the concentrated ichor of the Abyssal realm, which the goblins extract from the polluted river with crude stills. Directed by Skrek, the goblins have shown unusual patience and cunning, only killing those who wander too close to the hive and their activities.

And now, as the ravenous giant wasps emerge from their larval stage, the Wretched Knife goblins are ready to destroy Westfir and take the region.

Location and NPC Summary

The following NPCs and locations feature prominently in this adventure.

Cornflower Hive (KORN-flaawer HIEV). A hive of giant wasps near Westfir. Controlled by Skrek the goblin fanatic.

Drib (DRIB). The previous goblin chief of the Wretched Knife tribe, now second in command after Skrek.

Skrek (SK-rek). Goblin cult fanatic of Demogorgon. He usurped control of the Wretched Knife tribe from Drib.

Veshje (VESH-hay). A deceased artificer. His laboratory is tainting the Westfork river, which waters Westfir’s fields.

Westfir (WEST-fer). A farming village near Mulmaster. Cozy and simple, mostly notable for giant crops.

Westfork (WEST-fork). A magically polluted river that starts in the Earthspur Mountains and flows into the Moonsea.

Wretched Knife (RECH-id NI-ev). A goblin tribe terrorizing Westfir. The Wretched Knife warriors ride giant wasps.

This section provides the DM a bulleted overview of how the adventure is most likely to play out.

Part 1: Surprise in Westfir. The heroes arrive at Westfir as people flee and Crucia prepares to hold off the monsters to buy time. Crucia has important information to rely to the heroes.

Part 2: Preparing the Village. After hopefully recruiting the adventures to her cause, Crucia asks them to prepare the village’s defenses

Part 3: The Siege of Westfir. The goblin forces arrive from both land and air. Complicating the siege is an outbreak of blights.

Part 4: Wretched Knife’s Camp. The adventurers arrive at the goblin camp, which also guards Veshje’s arcane lab and the wasp hive. There they battle Skrek and the fiendish wasp queen.

Part 5: Veshje’s Laboratory. With the goblin camp cleared, the adventures must explore the lab and discover the arcanist’s fate while stopping the Abyssal taint from polluting the land.

Part 6: Conclusion. Return to Westfir and Crucia with the results of the investigation and hive hunt.

Adventure Hooks

The Cornflower Hive starts with a goblin/giant wasp siege. The adventurers are entering Westfir when the attack begins. Some ideas for how and why the adventurers are in Westfir include:

Refugee Encounter. The adventurers are traveling the region and need to rest. While approaching Westfir, the adventurers encounter fleeing villagers. A goblin siege starts shortly after they arrive.

Diaspora. Adventurers with ties to Mulmaster or the Diaspora could be scouting for a place friendly to refugees. Westfir has plenty of farm work, and is welcoming to settlers. While visiting, the siege starts.

Faction (Emerald Enclave). Members of the Emerald Enclave could be asked via an *animal messenger* to investigate the unusual growth of produce coming out of Westfir. Something isn’t right.

Faction (Zhentarim). The Zhentarim have sent the adventurers as reinforcements as per Crucia’s request for assistance looking into the happenings around Westfir. The adventurers arrive as the siege begins.

Adventure Overview

Part 1. Surprise in Westfir

It is morning, and the adventurers are preparing to arrive in Westfir. There is worry and unrest because of a recently slain goblin scout.

General Features

Westfir's market has the following general features.

Terrain. Farmer's market stalls fill the village square. The produce is gigantic, many times normal size.

Weather. It is springtime. The sky is overcast.

Light. Morning sunlight peeks through the clouds.

Smells and Sounds. The movement of many panicked feet and wagon wheels have left the air smelling of horse and mud, but underpinning everything is the heavy scent of produce from the abandoned market.

A. The Road to Elmwood

Estimated Duration: 10 minutes

This encounter sets the stage for the goblin siege later. If the adventurers are already in Westfir, or if there is a strict time limit, skip this encounter.

Here, the adventurers get their first taste of Westfir's situation. A family of villagers are fleeing Westfir because of the goblins. Let the adventurers prepare for a surprise, and then read the following:

You've been on the road for several days, wending around the northern shore of the Moonsea. Fellow travelers and caravans are frequent on the road, which serves as a major trade route for the region.

A farmer's wagon is trundling towards you. A half-dozen human children sit in the wagon, some appear to have been crying. A small group of adults walk alongside.

The cart is filled with sacks and chests as well as several baskets of massive produce. The cucumbers are the size of logs and the beets are bigger than melons.

The simply-dressed humans eye you cautiously but eventually relax. A tall man with a leather hat waves, "Sorry 'bout taken up all the road, friends, but you might have to get used to it 'cause there are many more behind us. We've been ordered to 'vacuate home 'cause of goblin troubles," one man shouts out. "Better head back whilst you can."

The Fleeing Villagers

The farmers are an extended family of human **commoners**. These farmers all owned fields near Westfir. The five adults are cautiously friendly and relay the following information if asked:

- The village of Westfir is a few hours travel by horse just north of the main road.

- There have been giant insect attacks over the last tenday and then raids from goblins on outlying farms started not long after that. A neighbor was slain by some creature a few days ago.
- And a goblin riding a great big wasp was shot down early this mornin', just at dawn.
- The mayor fled first, but the real leader of the village, although she won't say that, is still there handling the evacuation and defense. Her name is Crucia Cromhel. Most simply call her Cru, though. She is hard but honest.

If the adventurers ask about the unusually large produce, the farmer responds:

The vegetables and tomatoes have been growing larger over the last two seasons, or just about that. They don't taste no different and the animals seem fine, but insects along the river have gotten pretty big and a bit aggressive, but nothin' the kids and their slings haven't dealt with."

If the adventurers inspect the giant vegetables and produce either here or in Westfir itself, A DC 14 Intelligence (Nature or Arcana) check reveals the influence of weak transmutation magic with a faint, but harmless, Outer Planar aura.

The farmers consist of an older couple (the elders), their adult offspring, and the family's children. If treated with respect, the elders give the adventurers some strawberries for free, saying, "Bountiful Chauntea bless you."

Role-Play Opportunity

Fleeing Home. The farmers hide their fear behind a guise of courtesy. Even without a Wisdom (Insight) skill check, the adventurers can pick up on it.

B. A Fine Day for a Siege

Estimated Duration: 30 minutes

The adventurers arrive at Westfir's palisade after noon. Read or paraphrase the following:

You find yourself outside Westfir just after midday. The village gates are open, but hand-carts and wagons are positioned in place to barricade the road if need be. Men and women are frantically moving supplies and struggling to fortify the walls. A few families overburdened with possessions and provisions push past, fleeing the village with what they can carry.

A pair of commoners holding spears seem to be doing their best to direct another throng of people. At the center of the village stands an elderly, silver-haired half-elf shouting orders.

"No, no, don't put it there. Not there! Just stop. Let me do it," she yells at some farmers trying to setup defenses. She rolls up her sleeves and begins angling a palisade.

It's quite evident that the villagers are readying for an imminent attack.

The silver-haired woman is a half-elf named Crucia Cromhel. She is proprietor of Westfir's sole tavern and inn and shadowy leader of the settlement. While the village is supposedly led by an elected mayor, he was "evacuated" first for his protection. Crucia didn't want him in the way as she tried to handle the village exodus and defense in an organized manner. She still wears a badge of the adventuring group she traveled with, a unicorn's head signifying her connection with the old company. A DC 15 Intelligence (History) check identifies the badge and some of the major exploits of the Knights of the Spiral Crown (see the entry for this in **C. Crucia Asks for Help**).

The center of the village is often used as a market, and mounds of massive produce have been left there as the literal tons of squash, tomatoes, and melons were too much to deal with.



C. Crucia Asks for Help

Read or paraphrase the following:

A haggard looking militiaman approaches her and points you out. The elderly half-elf brushes herself off and steps forward. She has the demeanor of one who is used to being obeyed without question. There is a hardness to her that stands in quiet difference to her age and lithe form.

"I'm Crucia Cromhel. Thank you. Your arrival is," she shrugs, "connected to something or someone, probably. Excuse my presumption. So, what are you doing here?" She eyes you appraisingly, "You're armed a bit more than the farmers here. Are you looking for work by chance, maybe glory? I can offer both, at any rate. But before you say anything to that, we should talk. Privately." She shoos away the militiaman. "There are important things, things I don't care for others to learn. Morale around here is already in tatters without some jumpy farmer overhearing and exaggerating to his friends. We can talk while we walk, get the easy stuff out of the way.

"A goblin horde in control of a giant wasp swarm is gathering to destroy Westfir, or raid it. The difference isn't all that much, really. The past few months have seen a curious change in the land, specifically fast-growing plants and bugs. There had been reports of large insects, nothing bigger than a dog. Then those mean bastard wasps showed up and started hitting outlying farms, taking livestock and even villagers. People that I've known for years."

She sighs, "I am too old to lead a counter-offensive. My adventuring days are behind me. Yours are not. Good people are dead. Decent folk have been forced from their homes. When my scouts became aware of the growing threat, I ordered an evacuation, but that seemed to signal to the goblins our vulnerability. They have begun to gather to the northwest and I fear they will launch a full attack either today or tomorrow. Soon, at any rate, far too soon. There are still families packing to leave. And if the goblin scouts think you are armed reinforcements, they'll attack even sooner."

She turns to you. "Help me. Help this village." A half-smile touches her lips, "and you will find allies in places you least expect. A whole network, even. Once we get inside, I can tell you more, but first, look at this thing." Crucia takes you to a wagon covered by a tarp. Within is a strange goblin corpse.

Crucia shows the adventurers the corpse of the goblin scout. **The goblin has antenna, multi-faceted eyes, and a chitin-covered body.** On a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana or Nature)

check, these wasp-like mutations are identified as Abyssal corruption.

A DC 17 Intelligence (Religion) check identifies the source of the demonic taint and the specific Abyssal realm, The Gaping Maw, domain of Demogorgon. This realm is a filled with ravenous, out-of-control jungles and insects; it is a predatory place where even the plants will eat you.

After the adventurers have time to inspect the corpse, she motions them onwards.

Crucia tells the adventurers the following as they walk to her office:

- This morning, one of the guards shot down a goblin that was riding a giant wasp. Rumors of these creatures have been jumping from farm to farm for a tenday or so without any proof until people started going missing or turning up dead.
- Her scouts (Zhentarim agents) have located the hive up river, but the villagers lack the training and equipment to bring the fight to the goblins and wasps.
- A few months ago, the vegetables started growing larger and larger, surpassing all known records of such. During the same time, large insects began to appear, nothing too threatening until the wasps showed up.

If adventurers are willing to help, Crucia greatly thanks them for their enthusiasm, but she need to talk with them privately about a few concerns.

Characters who are Zhentarim members, and makes this known to Crucia, have advantage on all rolls involving Crucia.

Crucia leads you to the only three-story structure within the village—Westfir’s tavern and inn, the de facto center of the settlement. The structure is relatively new, a few years, and has recent expansions made to it. An elaborately carved sign hanging above the entrance reads: “Hearth Hold Keep.” The inside is plush and well furnished, especially by the standards of such a small, out-of-the-way village.

She ushers you to the upper levels, both of which hold rooms for the inn as well as quarters for permanent cooks, maids, and servers. Then she leads you to the attic. The whole of this level has been converted to a comfortable and heavily decorated office lit by bobbing orbs and large windows overlooking the village.

Along the walls are the trophies and keepsakes of her career and adventuring days. Across one wall is a great banner, burnt and stained but still glorious. Opposite that wall is another banner of a rearing white unicorn over a blue background.

Crucia makes a nod to each banner in pride, “I once stood where you stand, well, not exactly this spot but before a person about to offer me a job for a reward, offering glory to face danger. Sorry if I seem overly flippant, stress and old age, I suppose.”

Crucia’s Past and the Banners

Anyone proficient with Intelligence (Arcana) recognizes several custom, ornate *driftglobes*.

A successful DC 12 Intelligence (History) check identifies the burnt banner as belonging to the Zhentarim from a century ago, back when Zhentil Keep existed.

A successful DC 14 Intelligence (History) check identifies the unicorn banner as belonging to the Knights of the Spiral Crown, an adventuring and mercenary band who ceased operating many decades ago. Give the adventurers **Player Handout 1**, in the Appendix. Some of their most notable achievements include the recovery of a *moonblade*, the destruction of a vampire lord, and crashing and destroying a flying ship. Crucia only smiles if asked about any of these events, and has a particularly sly grin if asked about the ship.

If asked about the banners, Crucia happily tells them the above historical details. In her old age, she has become less secretive and more open. She is too old to care about playing the consummate spy all the time and adventurers hold a special place in her heart. She was one, and a group of them saved her life at Zhentil Keep. She takes pride in her history.

Crucia sits and pours herself a bit of something amber from a crystal decanter. She pours additional drinks in delicate cups and offers them to each of you. The drink is strong but flavorful. She sits, ready to speak.

“Alright, now to the hard stuff, the secret stuff. An agent of mine, a brilliant arcanist and artificer named Veshje Bel’Erin, has been operating upriver from Westfir in a hidden lab for some years. While his goal has always been the same, he has gone about pursuing it with different methods, discovering things along the way. His work has made me both wealthy and influential. But these aren’t his goals. Wealth, I mean.” She takes a sip. “This isn’t a story I am used to telling, especially to those who I do not know. However, time is short. If you’re willing to help, you need to know everything to maximize our chances of success.

"Some years ago, I joined an adventuring band called the Knights of the Spiral Crown. They were part of the Order of the Unicorn. A ridiculous name. A name for children, but the members were incredibly talented and brave individuals who saved my life on several occasions." She is silent a moment, staring at the banner of the rearing unicorn.

"We were exploring some forgotten elven ruin when Veshje discovered a sleeping mythal woven in the stones. His curiosity got the better of him and he disturbed the dormant magic. Some spell awoke and stole away half our group." She snaps her fingers, "like that, just gone. We spent months trying to undo what had been done. Eventually I moved on. Veshje never did. He borrowed some money from me and set up shop not too far from here. He began scanning our world and then other planes trying to find our friends. He sells me his arcane notes, discoveries, and inventions and I provide him with the materials and support he needs to continue his search.

"What does this have to do with our current predicament? I fear my old friend Veshje may be behind it in some way. I do not know as I have not spoken with him in several months. He isn't due to check in for at least a couple more weeks. And now, with all that is happening, I can't spare a large enough group to check in on him. Sending anything but a score or more of armed men, or a small elite group, would be far too dangerous."

Crucia has the following information and missions for the adventurers:

- She asks the adventurers to first and foremost defend Westfir, preparing the few who remain for an attack and setting up defenses.
- The heroes are then to seek out and destroy the Cornflower Hive and goblin village. Find the cause of the giant wasps and mutated goblins and end it. The source is probably at the hive itself, but there is no way to tell right now.
- Finally, the adventurers will need to go to the old watermill, which is the secret lab and home of Veshje, and see what is going on there, if the strange events are connected to the insular artificer or if he needs help. If something has happened to him, as she fears, the adventurers are tasked with retrieving what notes and devices they can carry back and destroying the rest, especially any links to the Zhentarim. If Veshje is fine, escort him back to the village, even if it is against his will, which it most likely will be.
- Technically Veshje is an agent of the Zhentarim. His research and experiments are funded by the Black Network and his discoveries, findings, and

experimental devices go to them, specifically Crucia. It is how he pays her for what he needs to continue his search. Crucia doesn't want these events linked back to her or the Zhentarim. She can't afford it—the Zhentarim isn't fond of its agents causing region-wide calamities and drawing attention to its activities.

If the adventurers ask more about the lost members of the Knights of the Spiral Crown:

- They lost three members of their party while exploring an elven ruin. Veshje, the party's curious artificer, tampered with a sleeping mythal there. The magical ward activated and teleported his companions away. He blames himself. He spent many sleepless nights at the ruins trying to reverse the spell-ward and bring his friends back.
- Soon after he left a cryptic note about seeking redemption and vanished for a time. Crucia had little trouble finding him and his secret lab, though.
- Those lost in the accident were Tora Allowyn, a human druid, Cyril Kay (aka The Key), a halfling rogue, and Bradigan Dan, a human cleric of Torm.
- Those who survived were Crucia Cromhel, half-elf spy, Lady Elsbeth de Andri, a half-elf paladin of Torm, Althorial, a wood elf ranger, and Veshje Bel'Erin. The other two live on the Sword Coast near Baldur's Gate.

If Crucia is asked about the Zhentarim, or her part in it, she responds with pride about the history of the organization starting with the fall and change of the Black Network:

- The fall of Zhentil Keep was thought to be a fatal blow. And in some ways, the Zhentarim was destroyed, never again to be what it was, never again to stand with the prominence it once held; but in other ways, it became stronger, more widespread, more cunning and influential. When the Black Network's enemies sought to break its center, to sever the serpent's head, all they did was cause a hundred heads to grow in its place.
- The Pereghost from Darkhold is given much of the credit for saving and reforging the Zhentarim into what it is now today. But in reality, it was a dozen leaders around the region that helped save it and remake it into what it is.
- If asked who the Pereghost is, she replies that the Pereghost is a suit of sentient haunted armor that chooses a new wearer when the time comes, or so she believes. There are many rumors surrounding that particular figure.

- She is but a humble member enjoying her retirement in the rural countryside, she says this with a wink.

Crucia doesn't bring up the Mulmaster Diaspora. There are already other things to deal with. If the adventurers ask, Crucia states that she is aware of them and their plight and was making arrangements for them to settle near Westfir and help with the farming and lumber work. There is, after all, an immense amount of food stock here.

Roleplaying Crucia Cromhel

Crucia is a veteran agent and ranking Zhentarim officer. She is stern and ambitious, but has a wry sense of humor. She also has a soft spot for adventurers. She was an adventurer in her youth and her daughter is one now.

Crucia herself is the child of a human warlord who was offered an elven royal bride to forge a political alliance. Technically, this makes Crucia a princess, but she abandoned home long ago. Eventually, her past would catch up with her and she would be forced to wed an elven noble. A daughter resulted from the union. She disappeared with her child and joined the Zhentarim.

After the fall of Zhentil Keep, she traveled with the Knights of the Spiral Crown. But she never ceased being a Black Network agent.

Crucia's main contact to the Zhentarim is actually her daughter, Selucia Tel'Seldarine, a high elf eldritch knight who takes after her mother both in her ambition and appearance.

Crucia's daughter took her father's noble surname,
Quote: "I am too old for this, and I have things to do. Let's just pay some glory-hungry adventurers to do it."

DM Advice

Never Split the Party. Don't let the players split the party to attempt to accomplish everything at once. The players need to defend the village before traveling upriver.

Keep NPCs in the background. Crucia is a plot device, not a combat NPC. Feel free to narrate her actions during the siege, but the players are the heroes.

A Lot or a Little. There's a lot of role-play content here. It's not expected nor necessary to use it all, but knowing the context and background can help explain plot points and NPC attitudes.

Part 2. Preparing the Village

Estimated Duration: 15 minutes

The adventurers must rally Westfir and prepare to battle Skrek and his wasp-goblins.

A. Fortifying Westfir

Read or paraphrase the following:

Crucia leads you from the inn after a brief meal. She stands straight and appears stern as she gathers a few militia sergeants at the town's square where the market was abandoned. "Okay, brave people of Westfir, you dirt scratching stalwarts. A few meddling adventurers and would-be do-gooders," she winks at you, "have shown up in fittingly heroic timeliness to save us. If I were younger, I'd be properly swooning. But I am not, so I won't. Let's tell them what we have available for equipment and defenses and see what they have to say about our situation."

Behind her, many villagers are gathered. They watch you with a combination of fear and hope.

Crucia **asks the adventurers to capture at least one goblin alive** if possible, saying "Intelligence is as deadly a weapon as any sword or spell, and we need to know what the little monsters are up to, how they are controlling the wasps."

At this point, every adventurer makes a DC 12 attribute check, using an attribute of their choice. Adventurers with a military background (city watch, soldier, mercenary, knight, etc.) have advantage on this check.

For every success, the adventurers can implement one fortification action from the list below (see **Player Handout 2** for greater detail):

Fortification Actions (see Player Handout 2)

#	Fortification Action	Description	Effect
1	Arm and Train the Villagers with Javelins	Arm villagers with make-shift javelins to make them more effective.	Reduces attackers, both on the ground and in the air.
2	Reinforce the Walls	Reinforce the palisade wall with carts.	Harder to breach palisades.
3	Evacuate Remaining Civilians to a	Evacuate the children, sick, and	Move all noncombatants

	Fortified Temple	elderly to the Temple of Chauntea.	to a stone temple.
4	Construct a Field Hospital	Set up a make-shift hospital.	Gives a healing ability.
5	Fire Proof the Village and Construct Ramparts	Fire proofs buildings and setups ladders and walkways through the village.	Protects Westfir from fires and allows adventurers to move from roof to roof with ease.
6	Construct Sniper's Nest	Several seasoned hunters are placed atop Crucia's inn.	Reduces aerial attackers and slows goblins.
7	Boost Morale	A great show of skill or inspiring speech boosts morale.	Reduces infantry attackers.
8	Prepare a Smoke Screen	Build oil pits, creating smoke. The village is lightly obscured.	Reduces aerial attackers, gives disadvantage to attacks from aerial creatures.
9	Setup Traps	Dig spiked pits.	Reduces infantry attackers.
10	Construct Watchtowers	Place scouts on watchtowers.	Grants advantage on initiative checks.

This segment simulates fortifying Westfir, and is streamlined. If debate starts, give reminders that time is limited, both in and out of game.

As DM, you're empowered to allow fortification actions outside this list. The only guidelines are:

- Actions give small, cumulative advantages
- Don't remove actions from the base list
- One adventurer can only choose one action
- Options cannot be duplicated

No Long Rest

Because of preparing the village for attack, the adventurers are only able to take a short rest.

More Actions than Adventurers

The Action List. There are more fortification actions than adventurers. This is intentional.

Role-Play Opportunity. This is a role-play opportunity. Be aware of play time and player responsiveness, but if possible take the moment to have the villagers interact with the adventurers. Have the villagers respond with “Yes, milord/milady,” or talk about fleeing their homes.

Part 3. The Siege of Westfir

Estimated Duration: 75 minutes

The goblin warband attacks at dusk, which is a few hours away. The first wave of goblin foot soldiers assails the palisades and gate. The goblins also attempt to burn Westfir down.

Immediately after the initial attack, Drib, the former goblin chief, and his wasp-mounted commandoes fly into the village.

After the siege has started, goblin wasp riders attempt to use vials of concentrated Abyssal ichor to bring blights alive from the piled produce in the markets square.

General Features

The goblin assault begins at dusk. The villagers have taken refuge in their homes, or the temple of Chauntea, if that was selected during the preparation step.

Terrain. As noted before, but just before dusk. The market and streets are empty.

Weather. The setting sun darkens the sky.

Light. It is dim light. Visibility is 60 feet. The area around the palisade is illuminated by torches.

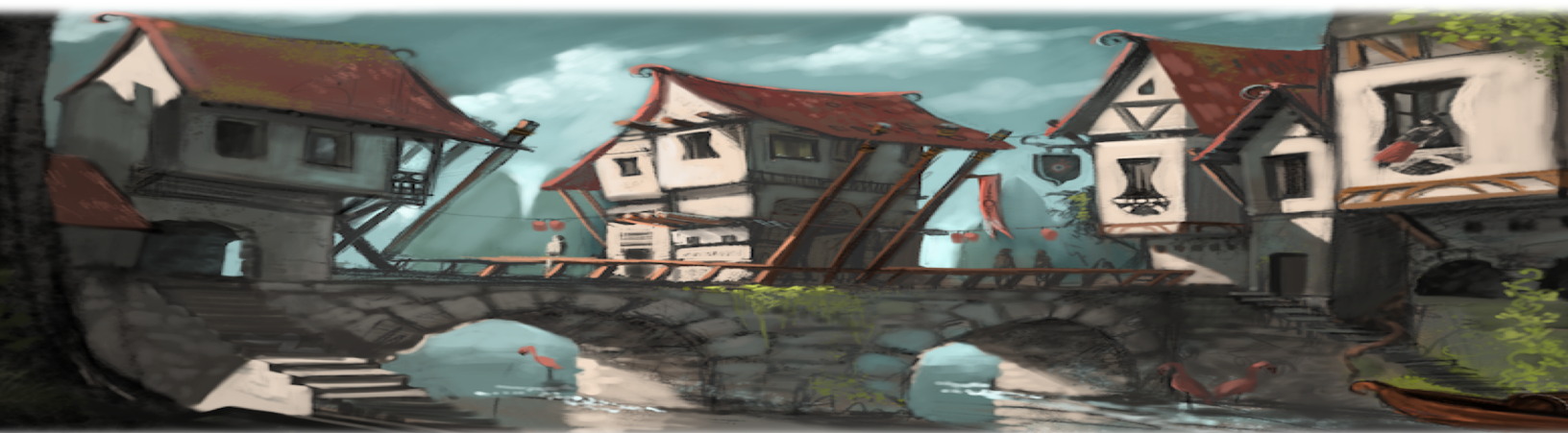
Smells and Sounds. The crying of Westfir's children fills the air, mixing with the sound of prayers to Chauntea. The smell of produce is heavy throughout the village.

A. Results of Fortification

Use the following guide to determine the effects of fortifying the village. **Allied NPCs do not play any other role in combat.** This allows you to simplify while reflecting the fortification. However, it is important to describe events in a cinematic and dramatic fashion. For example, tell how the militia archers send deadly volleys into the goblins or how the goblins struggle to set fire to houses soaked in water. Each tactical choice should have an

appropriate description for when it occurs. Short examples are provided, but describe each event in however way you feel it should be depicted.

#	Siege Effect
1	Remove two goblins from part B (halve a group), and remove one goblin boss and one giant wasp from Part C. <i>Well-timed volleys of javelins shatter a group of goblins breaching the wall. Moments later, a second volley brings down a giant wasp and its rider crashing to the street, the insects body riddled with shafts. A cheer goes up!</i>
2	Non-flying groups of attackers must make a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check to climb the palisade. <i>The goblins expected Westfir to be a soft target, defenseless and rich with easy pickings. But now they struggle to breach the reinforced walls, yelling and hissing in frustration.</i>
3	Move vulnerable villagers to the temple. Earns extra reward after the siege. <i>The militia fights with raised moral knowing their loved ones are safely held in the stone Temple of Chauntea. Now they need but focus on the threat before them.</i>
4	An NPC rushes up and tends to the wounds of a hero. Anytime a hero is wounded during the siege, he or she may call for medical aid to immediately recover 2d4+2 hit points. Usable once each.



	<i>As the battle stretches through the walled village in pockets of violence, young men and women with white cloth tied around their arms dodge through the streets to bring succor to the wounded.</i>
5	Attackers are unable to start fires, and adventurers can move up and down and across buildings with ease (no Athletics checks to climb buildings or jump from roof to roof). <i>As a large farming village, Westfir has no shortage of barrels and buckets, many of which are now tactically placed to douse any and all fires. As a group of goblins, faces contorted in devious smiles, begin to burn a house, both the goblins and the flames are soon drenched.</i>
6	Remove one goblin boss and one giant wasp from Part C. Goblins move through the village as if it were difficult terrain as sniper fire keeps them ducking for cover. <i>Seasoned hunters are given all the arrows they need. From the rooftops, their precise fire keeps goblins diving for cover and skilled shots bring a wasp and its rider to the ground, dead before they hit the earth.</i>
7	Remove four goblins from Part B. <i>Through words and actions, your heroism has rallied the villagers to defend hearth and home. Knowing you stand with them, the villager fight with great bravery. They attack with such fierceness that the goblin marauders are taken off guard, who thought they were raiding an easy target.</i>
8	Remove one goblin boss and one giant wasp from Part C. Giant wasps and wasp riders have disadvantage to attacks. <i>Prepared pits of tar and wood send out thick plumes of black, choking smoke, screening the village from the areal harassment of the wasps. An unlucky wasp blinded by the smoke smashes into a palisade, impaling itself and sending the rider tumbling into the river.</i>
9	Remove four goblins from Part B. <i>The goblins rush forward hollering high-pitched battle cries, their eyes gleaming with bloodlust, that is, until the first tumbles into a spiked pit.</i>

10	Adventurers get advantage on initiative checks. <i>A hunting horn blares through the village. Three blasts echo. You and the defenders know where the attacks are coming from and prepare yourselves to meet the threat accordingly.</i>
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B. The Goblin Attack

Read or paraphrase the following:

From your position, you hear many voices chanting in the fields outside the palisade wall. The goblin cacophony grows louder and louder.

Sixteen **goblins** move towards Westfir, split into four equal sized groups.

The assault starts at dusk before true nightfall. The giant wasps lack darkvision, but goblins are cowardly and are hesitant to attack in full light.

Adjusting this Encounter

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this encounter, according to your group. These are not cumulative.

- **Very Weak:** Remove two groups of four **goblins** (eight total)
- **Weak:** Remove one group of four **goblins**
- **Strong:** Add one group of four **goblins**
- **Very Strong:** Add two groups of four **goblins** (eight **goblins** total)

Goblin Tactics

The infantry goblins begin outside the northeast and southeast village walls, and spend their first actions climbing the palisade. Make one DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check for each group of four goblins. On a successful check, place that goblin group within the palisade wall. Rolling for goblin groups collectively is intended to help streamline combat.

A goblin group can either attack (melee or ranged), or attempt to scale the palisade as an action, but not both. If targets present themselves, the goblin foot-troops prefer to attack.

Once the goblins breach the wall, they spend their first turn within Westfir lighting buildings ablaze. This takes an entire action of a group. The temple of Chauntea is fire-proof, but all other buildings are flammable unless the adventurers fire-proofed the village. Anytime a group of goblins is left unthreatened by melee or ranged attacks, including Intimidation checks, the goblins move as a group to

set fire to a building. Goblins start the battle in groups of four (see **Adjusting this Encounter** sidebar).

If Westfir is set on fire, all ground movement within the village becomes difficult terrain because of smoke and flames. This applies to adventurers, non-aerial goblins, and the blights from **Part C**.

If the adventurers choose to, they can attempt to use their action to put out the fires. After three cumulative successful DC 12 Strength (Athletics) checks, the fires are extinguished. Alternatively, first-level or higher spells that create water or cold, or do cold damage, can extinguish fires.

C. Drib's Marauders

Two rounds after the attack begins, read or paraphrase the following:

A loud buzzing fills the twilight, and you see several giant wasps flying towards the village. Each wasp bears a goblin rider.

One wasp-mounted goblin stands out. The goblin has yellow stripes and bulbous eyes, and he is screaming orders. His wasp hovers a javelin's throw from the palisade.

The adventurers need to deal with Drib (**treat as a goblin boss**) and three **goblin bosses**, each mounted on a **giant wasp**.

The wasp-mounted goblin bosses close to melee range. The goblins then allow the wasps to act independently, only controlling them if necessary.

Wasp Leader Drib

Drib is not open to persuasion, fearing Skrek's wasps more than the adventurers. But it is possible to intimidate or deceive Drib into delaying his attack by making an opposed Charisma (Deception or Intimidation) skill check versus Drib's Wisdom (Insight). If successful, Drib delays his assault for one round, then continues his attack. In true goblin form, Drib suspects betrayal and deceit at all times.

Pyrophobia and Uncontrolled Wasps

If a rider is slain, at the beginning of its turn, the wasp must make a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw or be incapacitated and hovering (unable to take actions or reactions) until the beginning of its next turn.

The Cornflower Wasps are frightened by fire. Any Cornflower Hive wasp that takes fire damage must make a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw or else be

incapacitated and hovering until the end of its next turn.

Adjusting this Encounter

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this encounter, according to your group. These are not cumulative.

- **Very Weak:** Replace two **goblin bosses** with two normal **goblins**.
- **Weak:** Replace one **goblin boss** with one normal **goblin**.
- **Strong:** Add one **goblin boss** mounted on one **giant wasp**.
- **Very Strong:** Add one **goblin cult fanatic** mounted on a **giant wasp**.

D. Blight Surprise

Two rounds after Drib and his marauders attack (four rounds after the infantry goblins begin to storm the palisade), read or paraphrase the following:

Amidst the battle, a goblin wasp rider darts to the town center and hovers just above the abandoned market before throwing down vials of something into the piles of produce below. The heaps of giant vegetables heave and undulate and then animate into vile blights, plant creatures shaped in the twisted effigies of people that shamle towards you.

Two **needle blights** and three **twig blights** crawl from the leftover produce and attack the inside of the fortified town. If not stopped, the blights break into nearby homes and attack the villagers with abandon.

Adjusting this Encounter

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this encounter, according to your group. These are not cumulative.

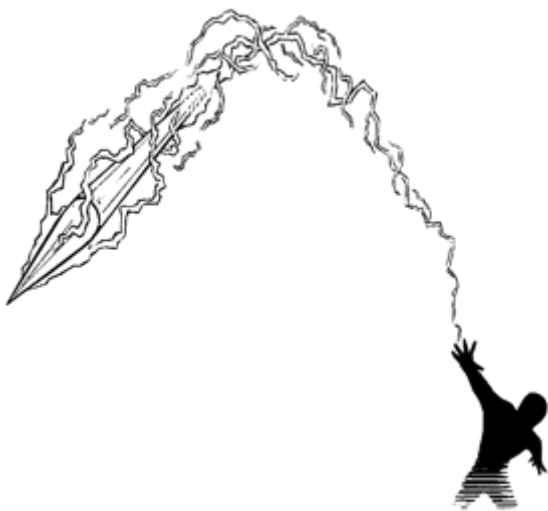
- **Very Weak or Weak:** Remove two **needle blights**.
- **Strong:** Add two **twig blights**.
- **Very Strong:** Add two **needle blights**.

Note: If the adventurers prove exceptionally effective and down all the wasps and goblin bosses before two rounds, have any infantry goblin dump the Abyssal sludge on the produce to bring the blights to life. Simply adjust the description above.

Interrogating the Goblins

If a goblin is captured alive, it can be interrogated. On a successful DC 11 Charisma (Intimidation) check, the goblin starts talking:

- The name of the tribe is the Wretched Knife, but Skrek is going to have a vision to give the tribe its destined name blessed by Demogorgon.
- Skrek, their shaman and leader, cowed Drib, the previous chief, and moved the goblins to the old mill to protect it. There Skrek erected a strange shrine and began to breed wasps, making them grow larger with each new generation using Demogorgon's ichor.
- Skrek set up a basin to distill the ichor from the river water near a human watermill. The ichor is the blood of Demogorgon (false, but it's what the goblins believe). He has been feeding this purified ichor to the wasps to make them grow big-big.
- Skrek has been giving the blessings of Demogorgon to the tribe. This bestows the wasp-like 'gifts.' He mixes wasp poison with purified ichor from the river to create a special tonic.
- Drib was sent to attack Westfir to capture more sacrifices for Demogorgon and food for the wasps and some horror in the mill. No one but Skrek enters the mill because there is something dangerous in there that kills. The goblins know nothing about a half-elf magic-user.
- Skrek is a herald of Demogorgon (this, too, is false).
- The wasps are dominated by Skrek, and without his power it'll be hard to control them.
- There is a beast of Demogorgon protecting the inside of the mill, slaying all who enter. The goblins are unsure of what is inside the mill.



Crucia turns pale and her shoulders sink when she hears about the watermill's connection to all of this. Her fears have been realized. "Veshje, you old fool, what have you done," she whispers to herself. Her eyes glitter with restrained tears.

After the Battle

If the adventurers are victorious, Crucia asks them to travel up the Westfork to Veshje's home to check on the arcanist, and stop the goblins and their wasps.

The village is silent after the battle. The militia stands bloodied and breathing heavily. Then, they erupt into cheers. One of the militia members approaches you. "By the gods, we did it! We drove them away! We could not have done this without you. Never, never did I think I would see such feats. You are heroic. That is the only word I have for what you did here."

While the farmers break out libations, Crucia makes her way over to you. She is bloody, her chain shirt torn. She waves away offers of help. "No time for that. This isn't finished. I need you to travel upriver, up the Westfork. Find Veshje. If one of his experiments isn't behind this, he might know what is. And after that, find these goblins, find this Skrek, and kill them all, burn them to the ground as they tried to do to us. No more, no more will I," she takes a deep breath, "sorry, bad memories of the siege of Zhentil Keep. Those moments still haunt me and this stirs up the past."

If the adventurers failed to protect the village in its entirety, such as allowing buildings to burn without intervention, Crucia remarks with sadness that she can't help but feel more could have been done. She had to use many of her healing potions to save those injured in the fires. **If Westfir was set ablaze or villagers were injured, reduce the reward Crucia gives the players by two potions of healing.**

However, if the option to Evacuate Remaining Civilians to a Fortified Temple was chosen, the adventurers are not penalized for the damaged village as no one was injured. The adventurers are given the full reward of potions plus a *scroll of bless* from the temple.

"Westfir will reward you as we can. In the meantime, take this. You'll need it more than I shall, my fighting days are done." Crucia hands you a copper-plated javelin and a belt pouch. "Travel with luck, and if you can't find that, travel with your wits," she says with a wry smile. "And maybe one day you will find yourself standing where I am. Not exactly this spot, but you get the idea." With a wistful gaze, she nods at you and walks away. "I have to get this place cleaned up."

Crucia gives the adventurers her copper-plated javelin (a *javelin of lightning*). In the belt pouch are three *potions of healing* and a **parchment map** marked with the grain mill. Give the adventurers **Player Handout 3 (Crucia's Map)**. **Remember to reduce the number of potions given if villagers were injured, such as from burning buildings or blight attacks.**

If the adventurers request it, the villagers will loan them a rowboat. The villagers won't accompany the adventurers because they must clear the village, repair the wall, and escort people out.

Treasure

The goblins have 100 cp, 40 sp, and 15 gp in total, and Crucia gives the adventurers three *potions of healing* and her *javelin of lightning*.

River Nereid Meeting

Estimated Duration: 15 minutes

A chaotic good **nereid** named **Umfula** dwells in the Westfork river. Umfula is dying from something in the water coming from upstream. She knows the source is the mill and that it is Abyssal in nature. The location of this encounter can either be along the river or a secluded pond depending on the travel method of the party. Simply adjust the description below accordingly.

As you follow the river, the strange happenings Crucia spoke of are becoming more evident. The plants along the riverbank grow unnaturally large and aggressive, fighting each other for every scrap of sunlight and space, enveloping one another in attempts to smother competition. Insects the size of dogs move beneath the thick underbrush, scuttling or fluttering away as you near.

As you pass by a deep, slow moving section of the river, the surface has a thick, oily sheen. You hear a splash and a woman's voice calls out to you in Common.

"Please. I beg you. Poison. In the river. I am drowning in my own water."

Gliding to the shore is a beautiful fey woman with azure skin and green hair. She looks weak and sickly, though. Her skin appears discolored in places and her eyes are sunken. She holds her hands before you in a placating gesture.

A DC 10 Knowledge (Nature or Arcane) identifies her as a **nereid**, a peaceful water fey. She wants to know if the adventurers can save her. She is dying. If Umfula is asked what the problem is, she may respond accordingly with the following:

- This poison is coming from an old mill, slowly seeping into the water. Twisting the plants, the insects, and killing the fish and other aquatic life.
- I tried to ask for help but the farmers fear me. They think I will trick them into the water to drown and eat them. Their kind has long avoided the river because of my presence, so they dig deep wells to siphon the water from the earth.
- This poison, this twisting pollution, has an Abyssal taint to it. I am terrified.

If the adventurers ask how they can help, she may respond with the following:

- Journey to the mill if you are able, stop this vile filth from strangling the waterways. Please. For all the river life.

- If you command the powers to heal, of any sort, they may strengthen me long enough for someone to deal with the source of this Abyssal poison.

If asked about Veshje, she knows this:

- Veshje would often visit with me beside the river, talking of his adventuring days and of a quest to save his friends. But as the weeks became months and the months turned to years, he came less and less and seemed ever more sorrowful and lost. I miss him, and I hope he is safe.
- I can't check on him because the water near the mill is too tainted, but I fear for him.

If she is asked about the goblins or wasps.

- For several months now, at least a season, I have seen the goblins come and go from the river's edge, collecting water and capturing insects to take up river where I can no longer go because of the poison in the water.
- I have seen the wasps flying overhead for at least a full turning of the moon.
- The creatures are unaware of my presence.

Magical healing (such as the potions Crucia awarded), restorative magic, abilities that remove the poisoned condition, or spells that purge evil temporarily relieve the symptoms of the pollution and buys Umfula more time. If healed in one of these ways, she profusely thanks the adventurers and offers a single drop of fey-enchanted water. This droplet can be captured in a flask or waterskin, and is a *potion of water breathing*.

No Experience for Combat

Zero Experience. There is no experience point reward for attacking Umfula. Injuring or killing the nereid is both uncouth and unnecessary, if not outright villainous.

Part 4. The Goblin Camp and the Cornflower Hive

Estimated Duration: 50 minutes

The adventurers follow Crucia's map upriver towards Veshje's home. Skrek moved the goblins to the area around the watermill. The goblins revere the site because it is the source of Demogorgon's taint. The ichor seeping from the Abyssal realm is the source of their power and control over the wasps, so the goblins guard and worship it. The wasp nest is also located within the fenced area of the goblin camp. The area surrounding the camp is trapped, and the goblins will fight to the death. Afterwards, the Cornflower Hive must be destroyed.

Area C on the Wretched Knife map is the abandoned mill (see **Part 5**).

General Features

The goblin camp is a day's travel by foot and provides a long rest opportunity for the adventurers. The adventurers may also travel by raft or rowboat up the river, but the current makes the travel time the same. The entire area is a field of giant cornflowers stretching for hundreds of paces. The camp is located around the laboratory. The goblins venerate the site because it is the source of Demogorgon's taint.

The Wretched Knife camp is filthy. Refuse and garbage are strewn about, and the camp's odor can be smelled before the camp is visible.

Terrain. The Cornflower Hive stands in the center of the goblin camp while the watermill is sequestered off to the side by the river shore. There are many effigies and charms decorating the stone walls of the mill. The area around the tents is muddy. All the brush has long-ago been cut down for tinder. The grass and cornflowers grow as tall as a human. Nearby is a pond. The water in the pond is tinted red from the laboratory's pollutants.

Weather. It is cold. In the morning, dew glistens in the dawn's light. At night, there is thick mist. After sundown, the mist lightly obfuscates the area, reducing visibility to 60 feet.

Light. Sunlight breaks through the clouds.

Smells and Sounds. The disgusting scent of the camp is palpable before the camp itself is visible. Rubbish and filth are strewn all around the camp's tents.

A. Approaching the Goblin Camp

Read or paraphrase the following:

Cornflowers the height of a man fill the fields before you, stretching from the riverbank to the distant edge of the forest. Nestled in the blue of the blossoms is what can only be a goblin camp. There are about a dozen crude huts. Several are built in a fashion that attempts to mimic the shape of a hive but lacks the symmetrical elegance. At the center of the camp is the true hive of the giant wasps, a large structure of chewed wood pulp. Along the river beside the camp is the stone watermill, its wheel silent. There are many effigies and charms decorating the stone walls of the structure.

High-pitched voices speaking in yips and growls carry on the wind, coming from a ramshackle structure visible in the distance. From what you can see, the goblins all carry shortbows and nervously glance at the hive.

There are three **goblins** on a loose watch at each bridge of the camp (see **Wretched Knife Camp map**), for a total of nine **goblins** guarding the camp. Use the table below for the guard's activity:

Wretched Knife Guard Activity

d4	Daytime	Nighttime
1	The goblins are sleeping under the tall grass.	The goblins are playing dice for dead mice and feathers.
2	The goblins are amusing themselves torturing vermin.	The goblins are swilling grog.
3	One goblin is awake, the others are asleep nearby.	All the goblins are awake, singing songs in Goblin.
4	The goblins are digging a pit trap.	The goblins are gnawing animal carcasses.

Unless the adventurers give themselves away, the goblins are distracted and make Perception checks with disadvantage. If alerted, the goblins will let loose a staccato series of yelps to warn the camp.

The guards could attempt to lead the adventurers into the pit traps, but are more likely to flee deeper into the camp and alert Skrek, or hide and fire their shortbows. All the goblins carry shortbows as the wasps still make them nervous.

During the day, the goblins are asleep unless alerted by the guards. At night, they are dancing and praying to either the hive or the mill, depending on the omens set down by Skrek. When not worshipping,

they are swilling grog and playing dice. Anyone watching the dice game realizes the goblins seem to be making it up as they play.

If the camp is alerted, or attacked at night, twelve more **goblins** appear from the huts to attack.

Adjusting this Encounter

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this encounter, according to your group. These are not cumulative.

- **Very Weak:** Remove three groups of four **goblins** (twelve total). No goblins appear if the alarm is sounded. How sad.
- **Weak:** Remove two group of four **goblins** (eight total)
- **Strong:** Add one group of four **goblins**
- **Very Strong:** Add two groups of four **goblins** (eight **goblins** total)

Note: The goblins can be located wherever the DM can make the most interesting or most dramatic use of them.

Pit Traps

Each bridge side is surrounded by numerous **pit traps** hidden under grass fronds.

Trap. Eh, It's a Hole!

Simple Trap (Levels 1-4 moderate threat)

The Wretched Knife tribe has been busy digging pits to catch food and interlopers. Each pit is 10-feet deep and lined with stakes.

Trigger. Stepping onto the grass covering triggers the trap.

Effect. The triggering character must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or fall into the 10-foot deep pit and takes 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage from the fall and 5 (1d10) piercing damage from the spikes on the bottom of the pit.

Countermeasures. Each 10-foot wide pit is covered with matted grass fronds. Detecting it requires a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check. If successful, the dimensions of the pit can be discerned under the grass. The pits can't be disabled, but can be avoided or jumped over. The goblins know these traps, and avoid them.

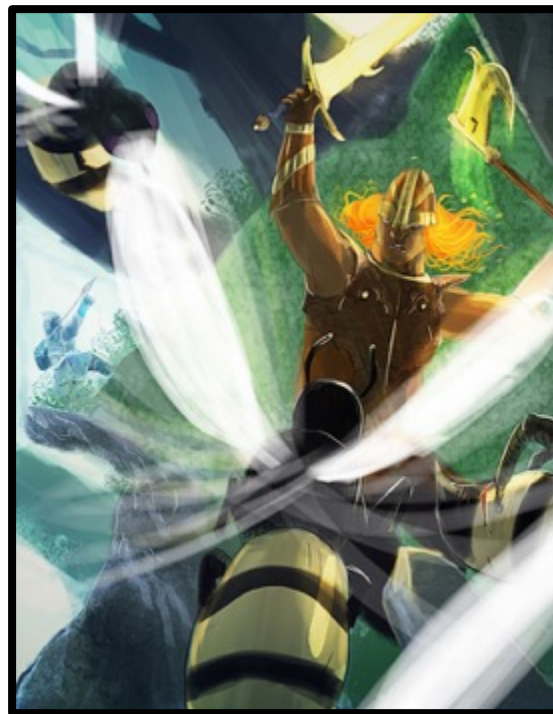
B. The Cornflower Hive

Read or paraphrase the following:

Bones and feathers litter the area around the hive, sticking out of the muddy ground.

A handful of crude shelters stand amidst the filth. A short distance beyond them is a gigantic wasp hive the size of a tavern.

The wasp queen and a few of her children are within the hive. Skrek is with the queen.



B1. Demogorgon's Shrine and the Ichor

Near the center of the village is a small wooden shrine to Demogorgon. Read the following:

You notice a wooden building that resembles a shed without a door. Inside are clay icons of mutated wasp-goblins, various trinkets and baubles, and large copper pots and alembics connected by pipes. It looks like a crude alcohol still. A tap at the base of a copper pot drips a red syrup into a basin.

The basin is filled to the brim with thick, scarlet ichor. There is strange, crude writing scratched into the edge of the basin.

The ichor is the re-condensed Abyssal pollution from the mill. The clay icons show goblins in various states of mutation. The writing is in Goblin and Abyssal, and declares the shrine sacred to 'Demogorgon, the Great Changer.'

Proficiency with alchemist's supplies or a DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) check identifies these stills as purifying the Abyssal ichor from the water for use by the goblins, to make the plant blights, grow the insects, and mutate the goblins themselves.

If nobody reads Goblin or Abyssal, the fiendish nature of the prayer is evident on a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Religion) check.

Adventurers drinking or coming into contact with the ichor must make a DC 10 Constitution save (DC 17 if it is drunk) or take 1d12 poison damage and

suffer the poisoned condition for 24 hours. They also radiate an aura of evil to those who can sense it. Demogorgon does not bless foolish heroes.

Trap. Abyssal Moonshine

Simple Trap (Levels 1-4 moderate threat)

The distilled ichor is volatile, and if the shrine or distilling equipment takes any fire damage, it explodes, flinging flaming debris.

Trigger. If the distilling equipment takes fire damage, it detonates.

Effect. All creatures within 20 feet of the shrine must succeed on a DC 11 Dexterity saving throw or take 10 (3d6) fire damage from the explosion. Creatures take half damage on a successful saving throw. The shrine and distilling equipment are destroyed by the detonation.

Countermeasures. On a successful DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) skill check, the ichor and still are identified as volatile.

Treasure

Within the shrine is a collection of brass and silver trinkets worth 30 gp total.

If the adventurers destroy the Cornflower Hive without engaging in direct combat with the goblins beforehand, **award each character 150 experience points.**

Attacking the Hive

The hive has AC 11, 60 hit points, vulnerability to fire damage, and immunity to poison and psychic damage. Every 15 hit points of damage to the hive causes one angry **giant wasp** to emerge. These wasps attack non-goblins first, but will attack Skrek and his goblins if no other creatures are within sight.

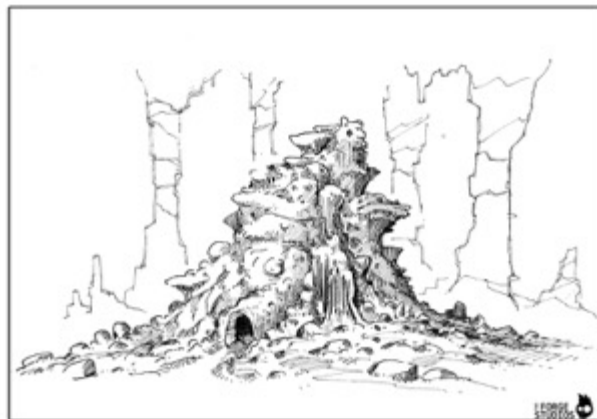
Any Cornflower Hive wasp that takes fire damage must make a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw or else be incapacitated and hovering until the end of its next turn.

Interrogating the Goblins

If a goblin is captured alive, it can be interrogated. On a successful DC 11 Charisma (Intimidation) check, the goblin starts talking:

- The name of the tribe is the Wretched Knife, but Skrek is going to have a vision to give the tribe its destined name blessed by Demogorgon.
- There is a beast of Demogorgon protecting the inside of the mill, slaying all who enter. The goblins are unsure of what is inside the mill.
- Only Skrek, Drib, and the chosen few can commune with the wasps.

- Skrek, their shaman and leader, cowed Drib, the previous chief, and moved the goblins to the old mill to protect it. There Skrek erected a strange shrine and began to breed wasps, making them grow larger with each new generation using Demogorgon's blood (false, but it is what they believe).
- Skrek set up a basin to distill the ichor from the river water near a human watermill. The ichor is the blood of Demogorgon (false, but it's what the goblins believe).
- Skrek has been giving the blessings of Demogorgon to the tribe. This bestows the wasp-like 'gifts.' Only the most loyal and strongest are selected.
- Drib was sent to attack Westfir to capture more sacrifices for Demogorgon and food for the wasps.
- Skrek is a herald of Demogorgon (this, too, is false).
- The goblins know nothing about a half-elf magic-user.



When the Hive is Destroyed

With a whoosh, the hive collapses into itself. A number of giant wasps burst from the interior, crashing to the ground outside. The goblins who remain alive come out from hiding and flee the area.

You see a massive wasp take flight. It is far larger and more savage looking than any of the other wasps. Its pulsing, red eyes focus on you. Atop the great wasp is a goblin who also possesses strangely glowing eyes throbbing in sync with the wasp's visage.

This is Skrek, a **goblin cult fanatic**, riding the **queen giant wasp** (treat as a medium-sized **spined devil** with maximum hit points) and her three surviving

giant wasps. If the queen wasp is slain, the remaining giant wasps disengage and flee.

Adjusting this Encounter

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this encounter, according to your group. These are not cumulative.

- **Very Weak:** Remove two **giant wasps**
- **Weak:** Remove one **giant wasp**
- **Strong:** Add one **giant wasp**
- **Very Strong:** Add two **giant wasps**

Resting Near the Hive

If the goblins are eliminated, it may be possible to take a short rest in the goblin camp before assaulting the hive. If the adventurers are severely weakened, allow them a short rest. Otherwise, there is a 50 percent chance that 1d4 hostile **giant wasps** exit the hive or return to the area during the short rest.

Running this Combat

Skrek, Cultist of Demogorgon. Skrek rides the mighty wasp queen and casts spell from her back. He will attempt to keep her healed (he has *cure* instead of *inflict wounds*) and cast protection spells on her (*shield of faith*) while attacking with a bonus action using *spiritual weapon*.

The Cornflower Hive. The goal is to destroy the hive, not slay every wasp. There are potentially dozens of giant wasps within the giant hive, so it's impossible to slay them all without destroying the hive.

Cunning Plans. It is possible to destroy the hive from a distance, avoiding combat. Use DM discretion, but allow plans that reduce direct conflict.

Part 5. Veshje's Laboratory

Estimated Duration: 60 minutes

Veshje is deceased, slain by the explosion that damaged his device and left the planar window cracked open.

The lab resembles a grain-mill from the outside, but the interior contains strange alchemical equipment and an arcane circle. It once contained many comfortable and expensive furnishings, gifts from Crucia to keep the artificer living well. Now, though, everything is ruined, damaged in the destruction. Veshje kept extensive gardens inside to grow rare herbs and plants for his work. Now they are overgrown and unruly.

General Features

Terrain. The interior was once richly furnished with carpets, cushioned chairs, and a fancy pot-bellied stove of dwarven make. Now the place is in disarray with everything

soaked and burnt. The interior gardens are overgrown. They provide partial cover against ranged attacks.

Light. Inside the laboratory, the alchemical fluids glow with scarlet-hued light unless destroyed. The light makes the entire laboratory dimly lit.

Smells and Sounds. Even from outside, it smells acrid. The scent burns the nostrils, and creatures with keen senses try to avoid going near the building.

C1. Outside the Laboratory

Veshje's laboratory is housed in an old grain mill that stands on the bank of the Westfork (**Area C** on the Wretched Knife map). Read or paraphrase the following when the adventurers investigate the mill:

The walls of the mill are covered in goblin graffiti and hanging charms made from bones and sticks.

If adventurers speak Goblin or have the ability to understand any language, the graffiti and symbols are praises to Demogorgon and the wasps.

The door to the laboratory is closed and piles of crudely made wards and offerings are set before it.

On a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check, adventurers notice a steady stream of pungent red ichor seeping from the mill's foundation. The ichor then drains into the Westfork. The source of the pollution is within.

C2. Veshje's Laboratory

Read or paraphrase the following upon entering the mill:

The place is in complete disarray. Shattered glass and scorch marks mar the stone floor. Several upturned tables are pushed away from the center of the room, pressed against the wall. The position of debris indicates an explosion rocked the mill from within.

In the center of the room is a circle of carefully scripted runes. Some of the runes are breached. From the circle, a scarlet ichor oozes from the ruptured symbols, seeping into cracks in the stone, seeping towards the river.

Next to the circle is a strange series of alembics and pipes damaged in the explosion.

In the east and north corners are what appears to have been interior gardens, but now they are thick and overgrown, reaching to the ceiling and climbing up the walls.

Inside the laboratory are two **vine blights** and a **bramble blight** (treat as a **scarecrow** with the plant

creature type) hidden in the interior gardens. They have a passive perception of 12. The plant-monsters are animated because of the magical pollution.

The blights wait for the heroes to start investigating or to come close before attacking.

Adjusting this Encounter

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this encounter, according to your group. These are not cumulative.

- **Very Weak:** Remove two **vine blights**. Add one **twig blight**
- **Weak:** Remove two **vine blights**. Add four **twig blights**
- **Strong:** Remove one **bramble blight** and two **vine blights**. Add one **shambling mound**
- **Very Strong:** Remove one **bramble blight**. Add one **shambling mound**



Veshje's Corpse

When the interior of the mill is searched, **Veshje's skeletal corpse is found lodged under a workbench**. The half-elf artificer's remains are badly burnt. A DC 12 Wisdom (Medicine) or Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals that massive magical energies must have caused this, and he probably died at least five months ago.

Lab Notes and Letters

If the overturned workbenches are investigated, the adventurers find **a pair of laboratory journals** written in Common, a letter, and many artificer schematics. The journals have **sketches and notes about the alchemy lab and magical circle**. There is

also **a large vellum map of the outer planes** with marks denoting searches and specific locations in fine detail.

On the workbench is a partially written letter. Only a page long, it is a will of sorts. Readers learn the following information:

- It is addressed to anyone who might find it. The letter details that Veshje was part of adventuring group called the Knights of the Spiral Crown.
- Veshje talks about how his actions caused a *plane shift* trap on a mythal to consume several of his friends. The laboratory's original purpose was to find his lost companions, who he considers family. He wasn't close to many, but he loved his adventuring band.
- Veshje mentions that the magical devices and circle have been searching the Outer Planes for signs of his lost friends for years.
- One of the journals reveals Veshje was depressed and desperate, and started to search several of the more dangerous planes.
- There is also a strange book with indecipherable script. A successful DC 15 Intelligence check reveals this to be Zhentarim code book to enable communication within the Black Network. That is all the book is by itself. Anyone who understands Thieves Cant, or who is a Zhentarim members, makes this check with advantage.
- There is a notepad with a list of needed materials, mostly rare arcane components and materials, such as mithral tubes, star sapphire dust, and obsidian spheres.

Give the adventurers **Player Handout 4**, in the Appendix.

The Alchemical Process

By spending 1 minute and making a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation or Arcana) check, an adventurer begins to understand the alchemical device beside the portal. The arcane device was intended to power portals once open and create a barrier between planes. A steady stream of Abyssal energy is pouring out of the magic circle and damaged barrier, condensing into a red ichor. *Detect magic* shows transmutation magic radiating from the viscous liquid.

Repairing the alchemical setup will stop the Abyssal condensation and stop the Westfork from being polluted. It can also trigger an unstable reaction from the unintended buildup as the device tries to deal with the unusual amount of planar energy and mend the barrier, detailed below.

Trap. Unstable Reaction

Magical Trap (Levels 1-4 dangerous threat)

Interfering with or destroying Veshje's alchemical setup causes an explosion of Abyssal energy.

Trigger. Meddling with the laboratory's setup without deactivating the Abyssal circle beforehand triggers the trap.

Effect. All creatures within the grain mill must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or take 17 (5d6) force damage from a wave of energy. On a successful saving throw, they take half damage.

Countermeasures. Disarming the trap requires 1 minute and a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation or Arcana) check. Proficiency with alchemist's supplies gives advantage on this check.

The Abyssal Circle

The magic runes are repeated in two languages, Abyssal and Draconic. The sigils create a pinhole portal into the Abyssal plane, and the planar energy streams into the alchemical laboratory. *Detect magic* shows the circle itself is woven with abjuration and divination magic while the energy radiating from the rift is transmutation energy.

By spending 1 minute and making a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana or Religion) check, an adventurer grasps the purpose of the magic circle, and identifies the rune that provides arcane stability to the circle.

There is one specific rune that safely seals the extra-planar hole and stops the energy. If the adventurers erase or modify other runes, the energy flow ceases, but the circle emits a blast of energy.

Trap. Abyssal Explosion

Magical Trap (Levels 1-4 dangerous threat)

Incorrectly altering or destroying the Abyssal circle triggers an explosive blast.

Trigger. Incorrectly erasing the runes triggers the trap.

Effect. All creatures within the grain mill must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or take 17 (5d6) force damage from a wave of energy. On a successful saving throw, they take half damage.

Countermeasures. Identifying the correct rune to erase requires 1 minute and a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana or Religion) check. Adventurers that can read and write Abyssal or Draconic have advantage on this check.

If the adventurers stop the alchemical pollution without triggering an explosion, **award each character 150 experience points.**

Treasure

Amongst the workbench papers and tools is a **healer's kit**. If the alchemical process is stopped

without activating the unstable reaction, three vials of **alchemist's fire** can be garnered from the alchemist's laboratory.

Tough Fight

Shambling Mound. The Strong and Very Strong adjustments for combat can lead to a challenging fight. Be cautious using the shambling mound's Engulf attack, as it can be lethal to lower level adventurers.

After the Battle

If the adventurers are victorious, go to Part 6, the conclusion.

Part 6. Conclusion

Estimated Duration: 10 minutes

If the Cornflower Hive and Wretched Knife goblins are successfully overcome, the adventurers are rewarded with a grand village celebration once they return to Westfir. Between dances, Crucia presents payment, a pouch of 500 sp and 200 gp.

As well, all the adventurers earn the **Goblinslayer** story award.

Read the following to the adventurers:

When you return to Westfir, you see Crucia yelling at the farmers. The repairs to the town are coming along quickly and those who fled have gotten word that it is safe to return. When you speak with her, she hides her deep sorrow at Veshje's fate behind a wry smile and a sardonic joke.

"Well, look at what the goblin dragged in." She nods at you. "You did it. Westfir is safe. The people can return home. The farmers can go back to scratching and picking at that dirt they love so much. And the Mulmaster refugees are welcome here. We can absolutely use the help. We have the food and we have been meaning to make large expansions to your humble hamlet.

"This is all thanks to you, you know." When it seems like she might become teary eyed, she laughs, "Not bad for a group of wannabe do-gooders. Not bad. But when I was younger, I would have done better." She winks at you. "Well, I need to get back to work. Please, know that you are welcome here. Always."

If the adventurers fail, Westfir is ransacked by the Wretched Knife tribe and falls under Demogorgon's control. The villagers flee, and the ruins becomes a haven for goblins and cultists.

Rewards

Make sure players note their rewards on their adventure log sheets. Give your name and DCI number (if applicable) so players can record who ran the session.

Experience

Total up all combat experience earned for defeated foes, and divide by the number of characters present in the combat. For non-combat experience, the rewards are listed per character.

Combat Awards

Name of Foe	XP Per Foe
Giant Wasp	100
Goblin	50
Goblin Boss	200
Goblin Cult Fanatic (Skrek)	450
Needle Blight	50
Nereid (Umfula)	0
Scarecrow (Bramble Blight)	200
Shambling Mound	1,800
Twig Blight	25
Vine Blight	100

Non-Combat Awards

Task or Accomplishment	XP Per Character
Destroying the Cornflower Hive	150
Stopping the pollution	150
Disarming the magical circle	150

The **minimum** total award for each character participating in this adventure is 900 **experience points**.

The **maximum** total award for each character participating in this adventure is 1,200 **experience points**.

Treasure

The characters receive the following treasure, divided up amongst the party. Treasure is divided as evenly as possible. Gold piece values listed for sellable gear are calculated at their selling price, not their purchase price.

Treasure Awards

Item Name	GP Value
Crucia's reward	250
Drib and the goblin raiders	20
Shrine to Demogorgon	30

Consumable magic items should be divided up however the group sees fit. If more than one character is interested in a specific consumable magic item, the DM can determine who gets it randomly should the group be unable to decide.

Permanent magic items are divided according to a system detailed in the *D&D Adventurers League Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Javelin of Lightning

Weapon (javelin), uncommon

This javelin is a magic weapon. When you hurl it and speak its command word, it transforms into a bolt of lightning, forming a line 5 feet wide that extends out from you to a target within 120 feet. Each creature in the line excluding you and the target must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 4d6 lightning damage on a failed save, and half as much damage on a successful one. The lightning bolt turns back into a javelin when it reaches the target. Make a ranged weapon attack against the target. On a hit, the target takes damage from the javelin plus 4d6 lightning damage.

The javelin's property can't be used again until the next dawn. In the meantime, the javelin can still be used as a magic weapon.

This item can be found in the *Dungeon Masters Guide*.

Potion of Healing

Potion, common

This item can be found in the *Player's Handbook*.

Potion of Water Breathing

Potion, uncommon

This item can be found in the *Dungeon Masters Guide*.

Scroll of Bless

Scroll, uncommon

This item can be found in the *Dungeon Masters Guide*.

Story Awards

During this adventure, the characters may earn the following story award:

Goblinslayer. You rescued the people of Westfir and stopped the goblin menace. You may stay in the village of Westfir for up to 10 days at a wealthy

lifestyle with no cost. You may also purchase non-magical adventuring gear (excluding mounts, weapons or armor) for 25% off the listed retail price in the PHB during one of these downtime days. More information can be found in **Player Handout 5**.

Renown

Each character receives **one renown** at the conclusion of this adventure.

Zhentarim faction members earn **one additional renown** for recovering Veshje's notes.

DM Reward

In exchange for running this adventure, you earn DM Rewards as described in the *D&D Adventurers League Dungeon Master's Guide* (ALDMG).

Appendix. Dramatis Personae

The following NPCs are featured prominently in this adventure:

Cornflower Hive (KORN-flaawer HIEV). A hive of giant wasps near Westfir. Controlled by Skrek the goblin fanatic. These wasps are normal cornflower wasps corrupted by Abyssal pollution.

Crucia (CREW-she-UH). An old half-elf mercenary and veteran of the Battle of Zhentil Keep. Crucia keeps a low profile and is the de facto leader of Westfir. Her full name is Crucia Cromhel.

Drib (DRIB). The previous goblin chief of the Wretched Knife, overthrown during Skrek's usurpation. now second in command after Skrek. He fears Skrek and his wasps, and now follows Skrek's orders.

Skrek (SK-rek). Goblin cult fanatic of Demogorgon. He usurped control of the Wretched Knife tribe from Drib. Skrek is wasp-like, corrupted by the Abyssal taint flowing from Veshje's laboratory.

Veshje (VESH-hay). A deceased half-elf artificer. His laboratory is tainting the Westfork river, which waters Westfir's fields. Veshje sought to rescue two of his companions from the Outer Planes, but instead died after accidentally opening a portal to the Abyss.

Westfir (WEST-fer). A farming village near Mulmaster. Cozy and simple, mostly notable for giant crops. Westfir's crops are due to the taint flowing from Veshje's laboratory.

Westfork (WEST-fork). A magically polluted river that starts in the Earthspur Mountains and flows into the Moonsea. The Westfork River passes by an old lumber mill. This mill discharges Abyssal pollution into the water, where it feeds the crops downstream.

Wretched Knife (RECH-id NI-ev). A goblin tribe terrorizing Westfir. The Wretched Knife warriors ride giant wasps. Many of the goblins bear the mark of Demogorgon, and have wasp-like traits, including chitin, bulging/compound eyes, or antennae.

Appendix. Monster/NPC Statistics

Giant Wasp

Medium beast, unaligned

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 13 (3d8)

Speed 10 ft., fly 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	1 (-5)	10 (+0)	3 (-4)

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages —

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Actions

Sting. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 11 Constitution saving throw, taking 10 (3d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. If the poison damage reduces the target to 0 hit points, the target is stable but poisoned for 1 hour, even after regaining hit points, and is paralyzed while poisoned in this way.

Giant Wasp Queen (Spined Devil)

Medium fiend, lawful evil

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 35 (5d6+5)

Speed 20 ft., fly 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	8 (-1)

Damage Resistances cold; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't silvered

Damage Immunities fire, poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 12 feet, passive Perception 12

Languages Infernal, Telepathy 120 feet

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Devil's Sight. Magical darkness doesn't impede the devil's darkvision.

Flyby. The devil doesn't provoke an opportunity attack when it flies out of an enemy's reach.

Limited Spines. The devil has twelve tail spines. Used spines regrow by the time the devil finishes a long rest.

Magic Resistance. The devil has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Actions

Multiattack. The devil makes two attacks: one with its bite and one with its stinger or two with its tail spines.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (2d4) slashing damage.

Stinger. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d6) piercing damage.

Tail Spine. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 20/80 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage plus 3 (1d6) fire damage.

The giant wasp queen is treated as a medium-sized spined devil with maximum hit points. The spined devil's fork is treated as a non-poisonous stinger.

Goblin

Small humanoid (goblinoid), neutral evil

Armor Class 15 (leather armor, shield)

Hit Points 7 (2d6)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)	8 (-1)

Skills Stealth +6

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages Common, Goblin

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Nimble Escape. The goblin can take the Disengage or Hide action as a bonus action on each of its turns.

Actions

Scimitar. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) slashing damage.

Shortbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Goblin Boss

Small humanoid (goblinoid), neutral evil

Armor Class 17 (chain shirt, shield)

Hit Points 21 (6d6)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)	10 (+0)

Skills Stealth +6

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages Common, Goblin

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Nimble Escape. The goblin boss can take the Disengage or Hide action as a bonus action on each of his turns.

Actions

Multiattack. The goblin boss makes two attacks with his scimitar. The second attack has disadvantage.

Scimitar. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) slashing damage.

Shortbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Reactions

Redirect Attack: When a creature the goblin boss can see targets it with an attack, the goblin boss chooses another goblin within 5 feet of it. The two goblins swap places, and the chosen goblin becomes the target instead.

Goblin Cult Fanatic (Skrek)

Small humanoid (goblinoid), neutral evil

Armor Class 13/15 (leather armor/shield of faith)

Hit Points 33 (6d8 + 6)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)

Skills Deception +4, Persuasion +4, Religion +2

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Common, Goblin

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Dark Devotion. Skrek has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened.

Nimble Escape. Skrek can take the Disengage or Hide action as a bonus action on each of his turns.

Spellcasting. Skrek is a 4th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 11, +3 to hit with spell attacks). Skrek has the following cleric spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *light, sacred flame, thaumaturgy*

1st level (4 slots): *command, inflict wounds, shield of faith*

2nd level (3 slots): *hold person, spiritual weapon*

Actions

Multiattack. Skrek makes two melee attacks.

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

Needle Blight

Medium plant, neutral evil

Armor Class 12 (natural armor)

Hit Points 11 (2d8 + 2)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	4 (-4)	8 (-1)	3 (-4)

Condition Immunities blinded, deafened

Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 9

Languages understands Common but can't speak

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (2d4 + 1) piercing damage.

Needles. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 30/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (2d6 + 1) piercing damage.

Scarecrow (Bramble Blight)

Medium plant, neutral evil

Armor Class 11 (natural armor)

Hit Points 36 (8d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Vulnerabilities fire

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities blinded, deafened, exhaustion

Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 10

Languages understands Common but can't speak

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

False Appearance. While the bramble blight remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a normal plant.

Actions

Multiattack. The bramble blight makes two melee attacks.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (2d4 + 1) slashing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 11 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened until the end of the bramble blight's next turn.

Terrifying Glare: The bramble blight targets one creature it can see within 30 feet of it. If the target can see the bramble blight, the target must succeed on a DC 11 Wisdom saving throw or be magically frightened until the end of the bramble blight's next turn. The frightened target is paralyzed.

Adjusting this Creature

The bramble blight is a scarecrow with a **plant** creature type.

Shambling Mound

Large plant, unaligned

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 136 (16d10 + 48)

Speed 20 ft., swim 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	8 (-1)	16 (+3)	5 (-2)	10 (+0)	5 (-3)

Damage Resistances cold, fire

Damage Immunities lightning

Condition Immunities blinded, deafened, exhaustion

Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 10

Languages --

Challenge 5 (1800 XP)

Lightning Absorption. Whenever the shambling mound is subjected to lightning damage, it takes no damage and regains a number of hit points equal to the lightning damage dealt.

Actions

Multiattack. The shambling mound makes two slam attacks. If both attacks hit a Medium or smaller target, the target is grappled (escape DC 14), and the shambling mound uses its Engulf on it.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

Engulf. The shambling mound engulfs a Medium or smaller creature grappled by it. The engulfed target is blinded, restrained, and unable to breathe, and it must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw at the start of each of the mound's turns or take 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage. If the mound moves, the engulfed target moves with it. The mound can have only one creature engulfed at a time.

Twig Blight

Small plant, neutral evil

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 4 (1d6 + 1)

Speed 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (-2)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)	4 (-3)	8 (-1)	3 (-4)

Skills Stealth +3

Damage Vulnerabilities fire

Condition Immunities blinded, deafened

Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius),
passive Perception 9

Languages understands Common but can't speak

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

False Appearance. While the twig blight remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a dead shrub.

Actions

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d4 + 1) piercing damage

Vine Blight

Medium plant, neutral evil

Armor Class 12 (natural armor)

Hit Points 26 (4d8 + 8)

Speed 10 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	8 (-1)	14 (+2)	5 (-3)	10 (+0)	3 (-4)

Skills Stealth +1

Condition Immunities blinded, deafened

Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius),
passive Perception 10

Languages Common

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

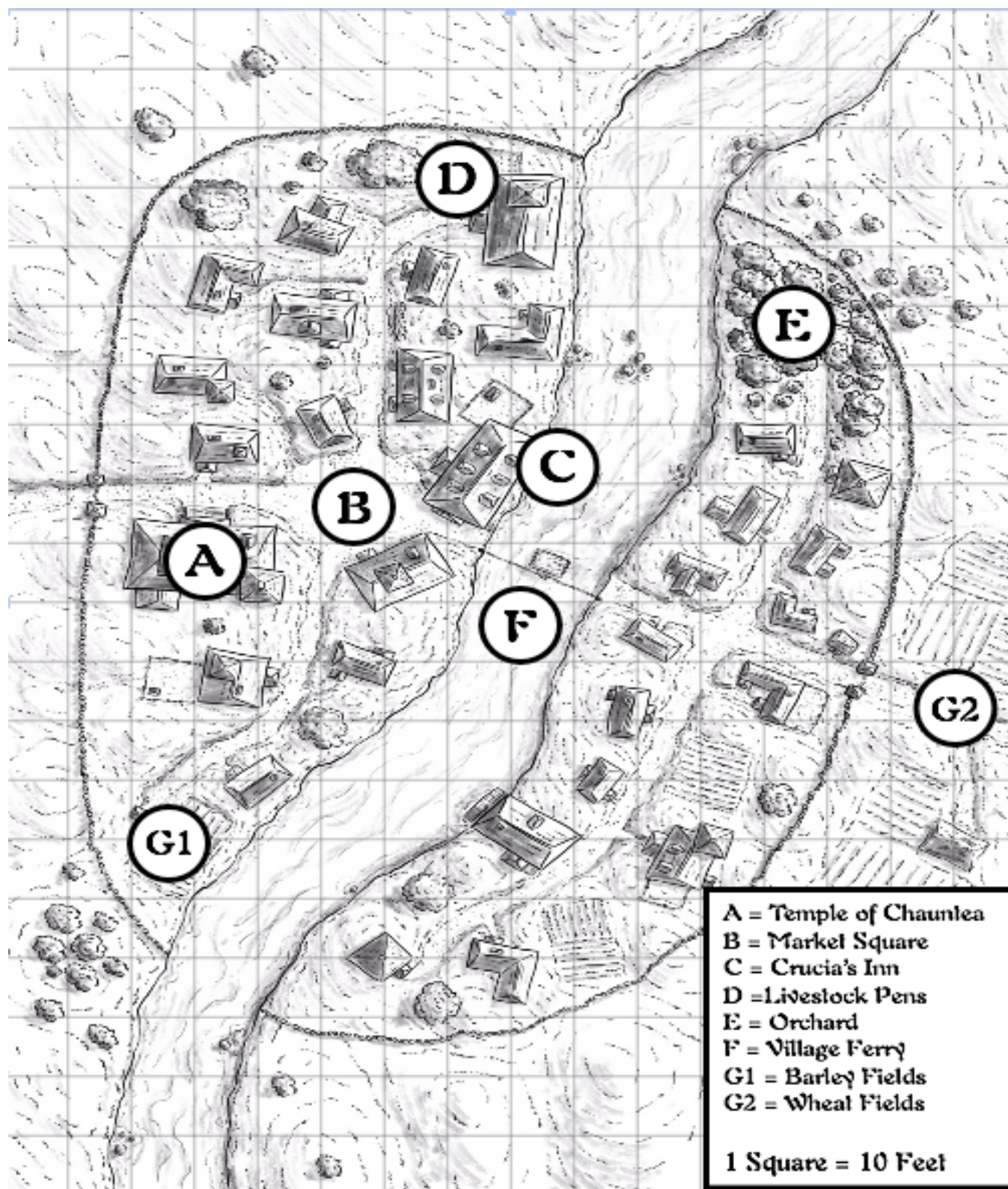
False Appearance. While the vine blight remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a normal plant.

Actions

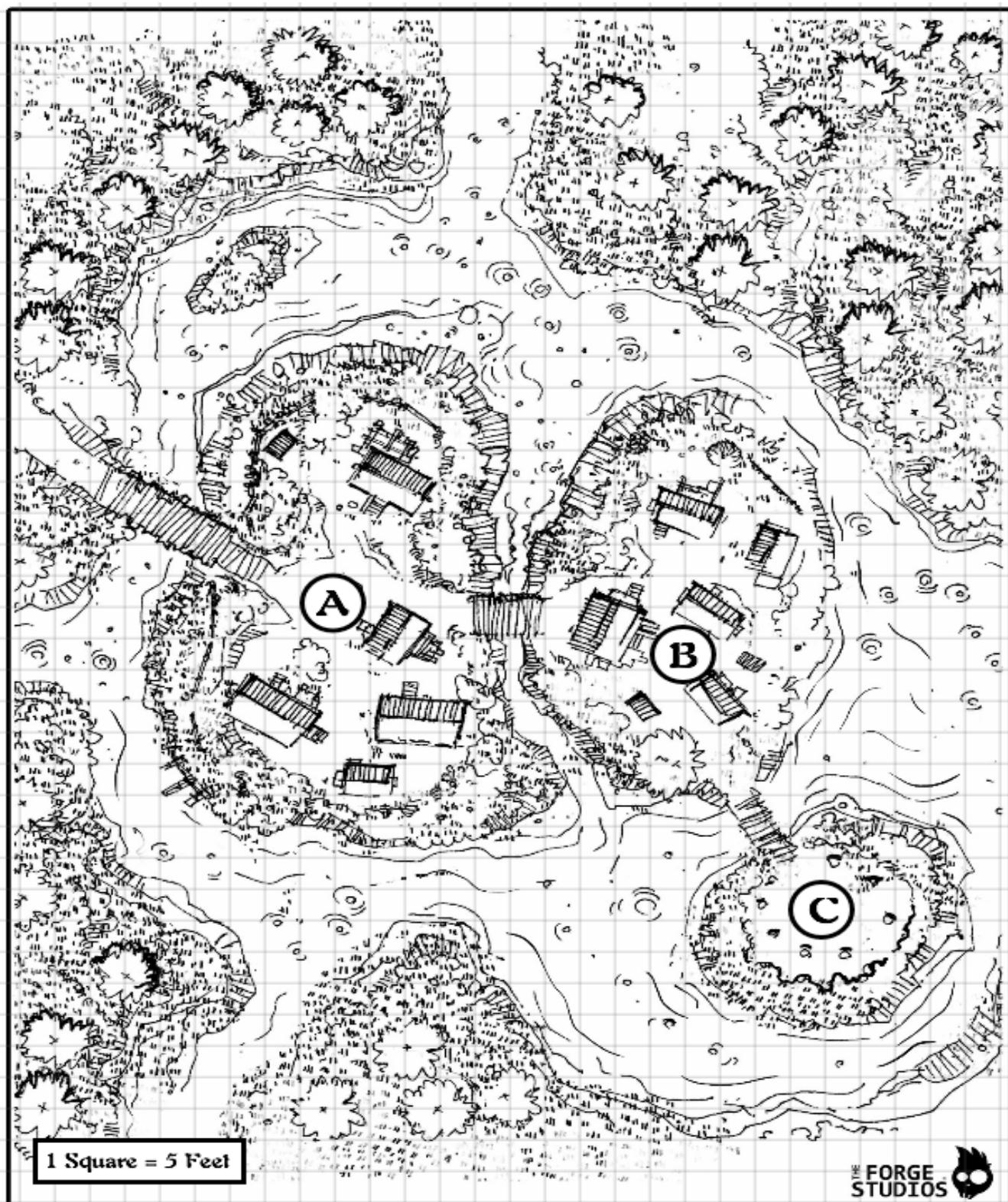
Constrict. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage, and a Large or smaller target is grappled, escape DC 12. Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the vine blight can't constrict another target.

Entangling Plants (Recharge 5–6): Grasping roots and vines sprout in a 15-foot radius centered on the vine blight, withering away after 1 minute. For the duration, that area is difficult terrain for non-plant creatures. In addition, each creature of the vine blight's choice in that area when the plants appear must succeed on a DC 12 Strength saving throw or become Restrained. A creature can use its action to make a DC 12 Strength check, freeing itself or another entangled creature within reach on a success.

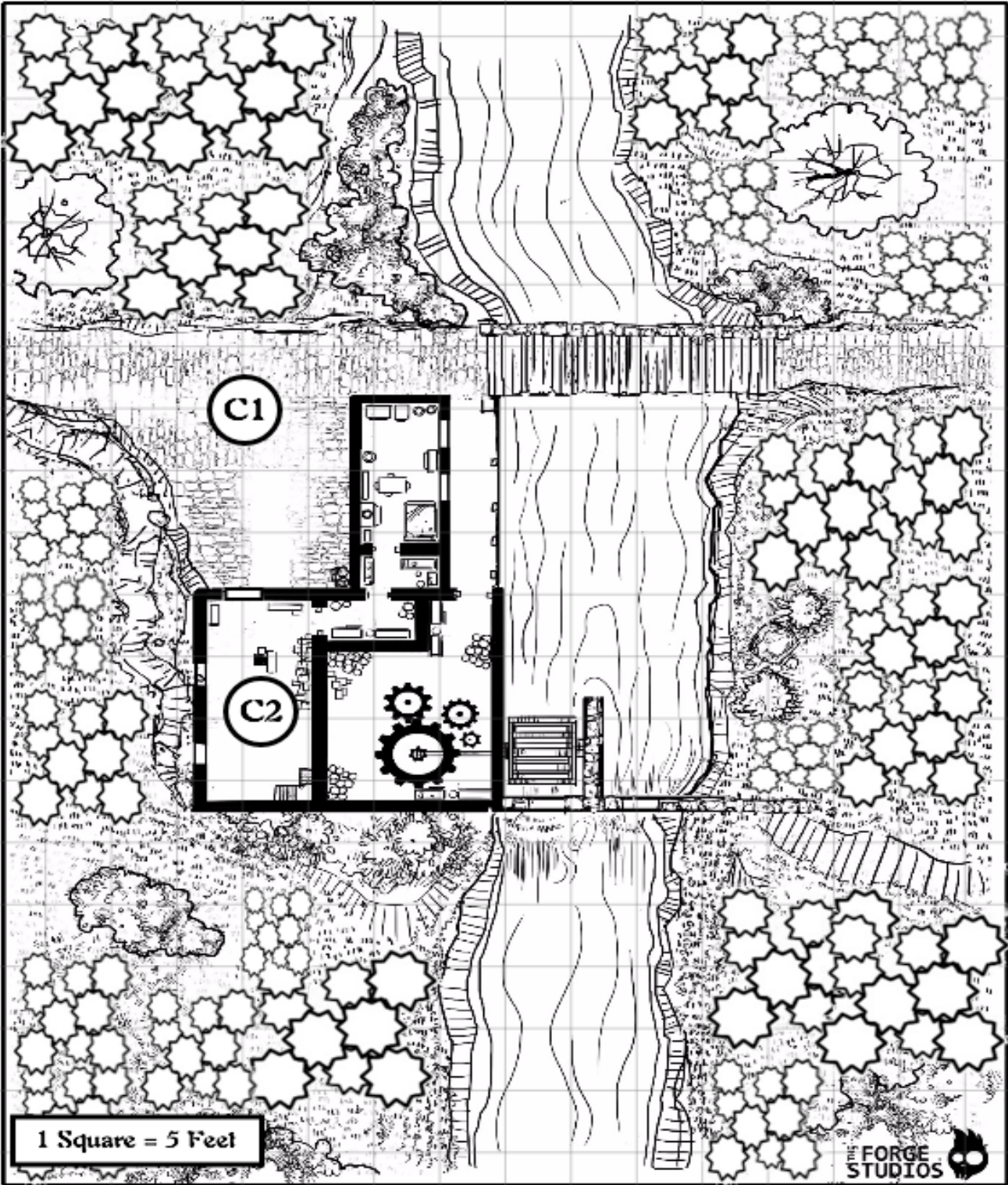
Map. Westfir



Map. Wretched Knife Camp



Map. The Mill



Player Handout 1. Coat of Arms



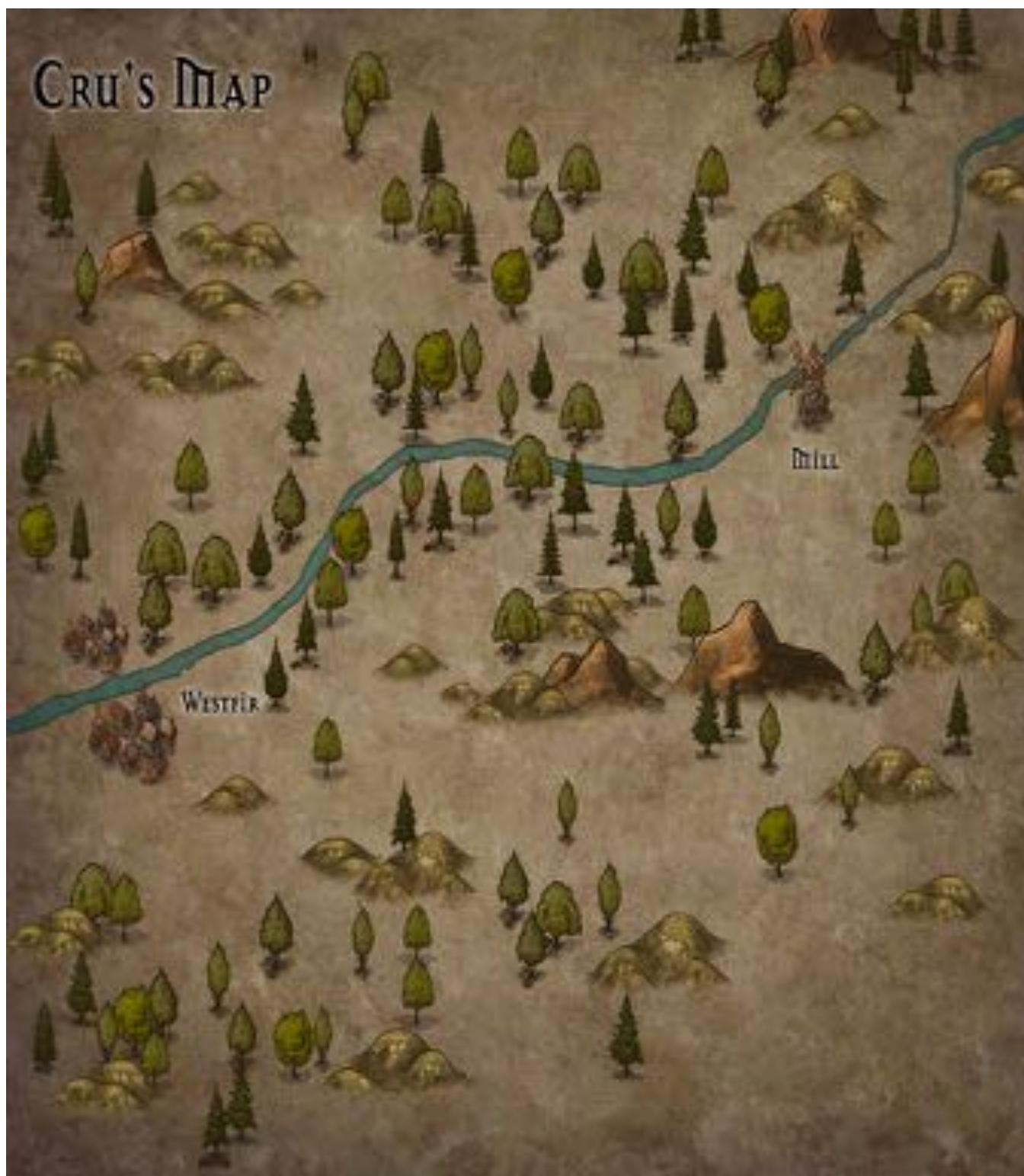
Player Handout 2. Fortification

For every success during Westfir's siege, the adventurers can implement one fortification action from the list below:

Fortification Actions (Player Handout 2)

#	Fortification Action	Description	Effect
1	Arm and Train the Villagers with Javelins	Arm villagers with make-shift javelins to make them more effective.	Reduces attackers, both on the ground and in the air.
2	Reinforce the Walls	Reinforce the palisade wall with carts.	Harder to breach palisades.
3	Evacuate Remaining Civilians to a Fortified Temple	Evacuate the children, sick, and elderly to the Temple of Chauntea.	Move all noncombatants to a stone temple.
4	Construct a Field Hospital	Set up a make-shift hospital.	Gives a healing ability.
5	Fire Proof the Village and Construct Ramparts	Fire proofs buildings and setups ladders and walkways through the village.	Protects Westfir from fires and allows adventurers to move from roof to roof with ease.
6	Construct Sniper's Nest	Several seasoned hunters are placed atop Crucia's inn.	Reduces aerial attackers and slows goblins.
7	Boost Morale	A great show of skill or inspiring speech boosts morale.	Reduces infantry attackers.
8	Prepare a Smoke Screen	Build oil pits, creating smoke. The village is lightly obscured.	Reduces aerial attackers, gives disadvantage to attacks from aerial creatures.
9	Setup Traps	Dig spiked pits.	Reduces infantry attackers.
10	Construct Watchtowers	Place scouts on watchtowers.	Grants advantage on initiative checks.

Player Handout 3. Crucia's Map



Player Handout 4. Veshje's Letter

Many years I have been looking. I thought to give up. I can't. I won't.
How can I? They're lost because of what I did.
The others will never forgive me. She will never forgive.
I must look.

I don't have the courage to face them.
But, if something should happen to me during my search, I hope this, one day,
will be found and brought to them, to the Knights of the Spiral Crown in Suzail.
My name is Veshje Bel'Erin and I was part of an adventuring group,
friends with some of the most incredible and brave people I have ever,
or will ever, meet.

Three of them vanished—four of them died—because of me,
because of what I did.

I watched them get swallowed by a portal conjured by an
old and dying mythal I tampered with in that cursed elven ruin.

I killed them.

Tora Allowyn
Cyril Kay
Bradigan Dan
They're dead because of me.
And I search.
For them. For my salvation.

V

Player Handout 5. Story Award

During this adventure, the characters may earn the following story award. If you are printing these out for your characters, print as many as you may need to ensure that any eligible character receives a copy:

Goblinslayer

You rescued the people of Westfir and stopped the goblin menace. You may stay in the village of Westfir for up to 10 days at a wealthy lifestyle with no cost. You may also purchase non-magical adventuring gear (excluding mounts, weapons or armor) for 25% off the listed retail price in the PHB during one of those downtime days.

Player Handout 6. Magic Item

During this adventure, the characters may find the following permanent magic item:

Javelin of Lightning

Weapon (javelin), uncommon

This javelin is a magic weapon. When you hurl it and speak its command word, it transforms into a bolt of lightning, forming a line 5 feet wide that extends out from you to a target within 120 feet. Each creature in the line excluding you and the target must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 4d6 lightning damage on a failed save, and half as much damage on a successful one. The lightning bolt turns back into a javelin when it reaches the target. Make a ranged weapon attack against the target. On a hit, the target takes damage from the javelin plus 4d6 lightning damage.

The javelin's property can't be used again until the next dawn. In the meantime, the javelin can still be used as a magic weapon.

This item can be found in the *Dungeon Masters Guide*.