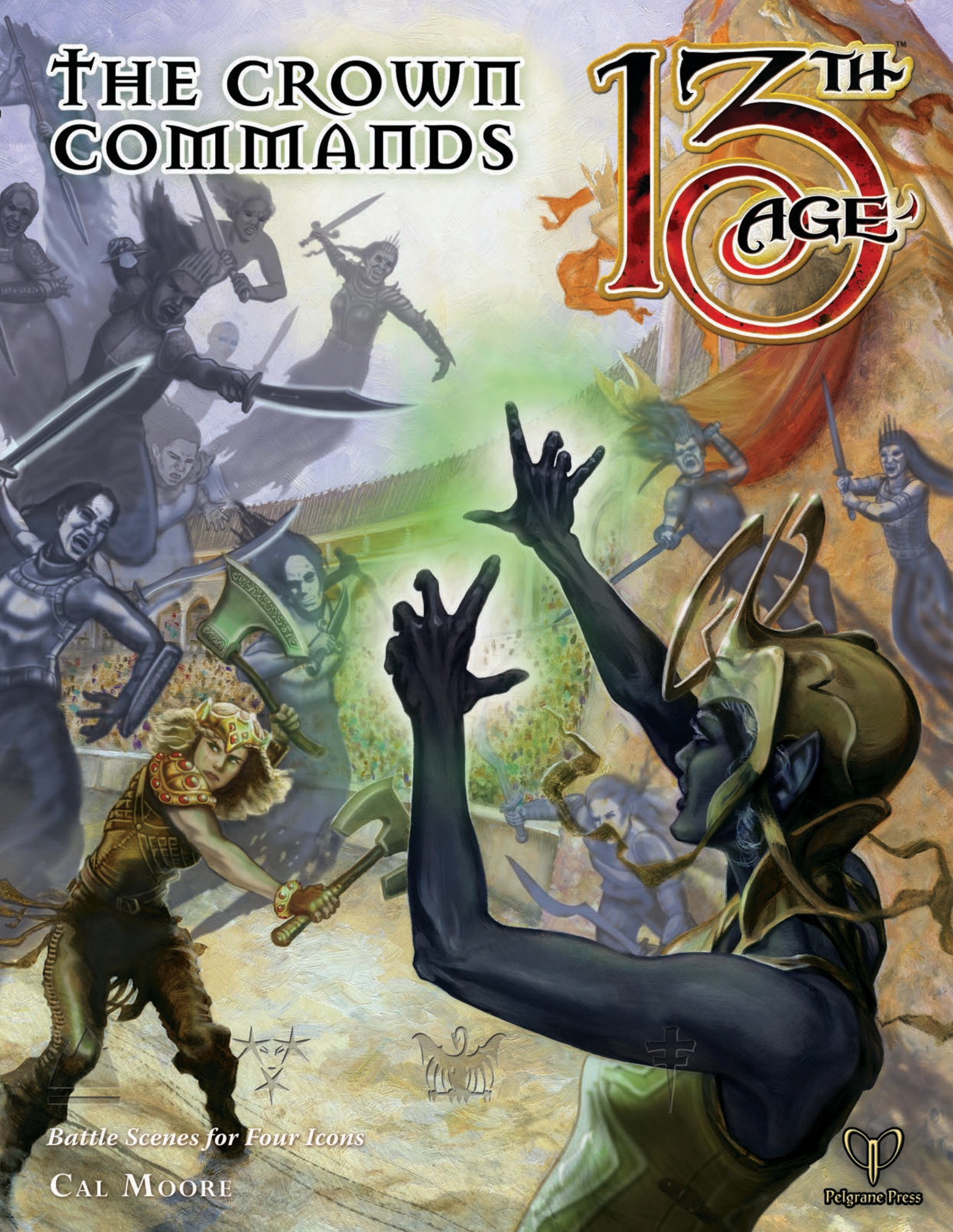


# THE CROWN COMMANDS

# 13<sup>TH</sup> AGE<sup>2</sup>



*Battle Scenes for Four Icons*

CAL MOORE



Pelgrane Press



# 13<sup>TH</sup> AGE<sup>TM</sup>

## THE CROWN COMMANDS: BATTLE SCENES FOR FOUR ICONS

A 13<sup>TH</sup> AGE ADVENTURE

BY CAL MOORE



13<sup>TH</sup> AGE IS A FANTASY ROLEPLAYING GAME BY  
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# INTRODUCTION

Like the first volume in the Battle Scenes series, *High Magic and Low Cunning*, this book contains battles for 13<sup>th</sup> Age GMs looking for inspiration or for something solid to run in a hurry. The battle scenes work well when you don't have anything prepared for a session, when story-guide dice indicate a specific icon is in play and you're not sure where to go with it, or when you need to fulfill a complication (or an advantage in some cases) from icon relationships. Each set of battles is keyed to a particular icon, pitting the PCs against NPCs and enemies that are linked to that icon, or fall under that icon's influence.

This book covers the four icons who act as the Dragon Empires' 'crowned heads': the Dwarf King, Elf Queen, Emperor, and Lich King. We designed a set of battles for each icon in each tier, giving you three total sets of battles to work with per icon. Since these are iconic battles, each one is designed to be **more challenging than a normal battle** (about 25% more difficult) so be warned. Some are double-strength battles, making them very difficult. If your players and their PCs are less battle-focused, you might need to reduce the enemies they face or give them larger benefits for icon advantages.

Each scene in a set of battles has a storyline that links it to the battles that come after, with the intent that a GM could take the PCs from one full heal-up to the next using only the battles in the set, but with room for GMs to expand upon the stories to fill multiple sessions of gameplay as needed. Or a GM can use only a battle or two that works with their current storyline, spreading them out as needed.

Each adventure includes multiple ideas on how to get the PCs into the battle scene's story, and possible outcomes that result from their actions, but we expect GMs and players to have more creative and personal solutions to form the "connective tissue" between battle scenes and group-created adventures.

The battle scenes contain a mix of existing enemies from the core rulebook, *13<sup>th</sup> Age Bestiary*, and *13 True Ways*, as well as new monsters to challenge the PCs. The monster stats you'll need are all included. There's also a scattering of magic items inside, some new and some from the core books or the *Book of Loot*.

When you decide to use one of these battle scenes, we suggest giving it at least one read-through so you get the basic premise of the story and don't miss any of the fun details, especially the various terrain challenges that pop up in many battles. A read-through will help whether you play it straight or adapt the scenes to fit your group and current storylines.

## STRUCTURE OF THE SCENES

Each set of battle scenes contains the following sections.

### LEVEL RANGE

The suggested level range for PCs facing the battle scene to have a challenging and fun battle. If the PCs' level is higher or lower, you'll need to adjust the enemy stats accordingly. Generally the scenes are keyed to groups of between 4 and 6 PCs.

### INTRODUCTION

This is the setup for the battle scenes to give you a sense of the story.

### STORY OPENINGS

We provide a handful of possible ways the PCs get involved with the battle scenes. We fully expect GMs and players to be more creative and use connections that fit what's going on in their current campaign, but these are some default options using the icons.

### ALTERNATE ICONS

Just because the battle scenes are keyed to a specific icon doesn't mean you can't rekey them to another icon to fit better into your campaign. This short section gives tips for possible conversions.

### OVERVIEW

This section outlines the framework of the battle scenes to help you understand the plot. It's no substitute for reading the full scene, but it gets you started figuring out how to work the scene into your game.

### BATTLES (2 TO 4)

Each set of battle scenes contains between two and four battles (some will be double-strength fights). Each battle has the following sections.

**Map:** The map labels show the rough position of monsters and some terrain features. Monster positions are often approximate because battles use different numbers of monsters based on the number and level of the PCs.



**Flavor Text:** This text describes the scene for the PCs and can either be read aloud to set the stage or used as extra detail to describe the setting as you like.

**Location Description:** This section provides more detail on the scene location and general setup of the battle, including notes about detecting enemies, ambushes, and NPC motivations.

**Terrain & Traps:** Every battle scene contains terrain that the PCs and their enemies will interact with. Some also include obstacles, challenges, and traps that will test them as well. Note that not all DCs conform to the standard 15/20/25 etc. suggestion in the core book; we adjust those DCs up or down at times to fit a scene. Whenever text asks for checks, assume it's a skill check that can apply backgrounds, even if we've only referred to it as a check that involves a particular ability score. It's always fun to work backgrounds into the game, and the math of the skill checks assumes it.

**Monsters & Monster Chart:** A description of the enemies in the battle, additional motivations, and starting locations. The monster chart outlines how many enemies to throw at PCs depending on their level and their number (assuming between four and six). There's also a subheading that lists "Additional Reinforcements" you can add to make the battle even more difficult if your group is full of pros or everyone is rolling crits. It's up to you how those forces fit into the story.

**Tactics:** What basic tactics the monsters will employ against the PCs. We assume you'll run them how you want, and they'll react to the PCs' actions, but we provide the monsters' default options for you to play off of.

**Loot:** The main valuables the monsters have, including magic items. We chose not to provide lists of mundane but interesting items the monsters might also have, leaving that to you to flesh out (and often create new adventures out of).

**Icons:** Most of the time we're positive that the GM and players will come up with amazing, creative uses for the PCs' icon advantages before and during the battle that are way better than anything we can provide. But we did want to leave some suggestions just in case; use or adapt them as you will. The advantages we list are connected to subsets of icons, but that's only a guideline since not every game will use all of the icons. Really, an advantage with any icon could be used to change the story and help the PCs out if the GM is okay with it.

**Stats:** Monster stat blocks.

**Next Steps:** When the battle is over, this section helps set up the next battle, or describes some outcomes after the final battle in the set. Again, we expect you and your players to come up with their own interesting possibilities, but these are defaults.

## STORY ENDINGS

This section offers possible outcomes from the battle scenes based on the story opening used in the setup. It accounts for both successes and failures (such as when the PCs are forced to flee or fail in some way to resolve the story). When you create your own story openings, you probably won't be able to use our suggestions except as inspiration.

**True magic item rewards:** A fair number of the rewards for success provide more favorable icon relationship rolls in upcoming sessions. If you're OK with awarding true magic items when characters have done good work for their icon patrons, you might want to skip ahead and replace one or two of the icon relationship advantage bonuses with a magic item reward. A magic item for every PC is too much, but an item for one or two characters who are most connected to the icon may be more satisfying, particularly if you already sometimes use icon relationship advantages as cues for magic item rewards.

## BATTLE SCENE CONNECTIONS

Some people might want to go directly from one battle scene to another instead of letting the game wander off into fully GM-created territory. This section helps with that, offering suggestions for battle scenes the current set of battles could link to, in addition to slight changes to the story that might help set up those connections.

Battle scenes for the four icons in this book are no problem, but the text also refers to battle scenes for the five icons featured in *High Magic and Low Cunning* and the four icons whose battles will appear soon in *Fire & Faith*.

## BATTLE SCENE LEVELS

The following table includes level ranges for the battle scenes in this book and in *High Magic & Low Cunning*. The *High Magic & Low Cunning* battles are in italics. The third book in the sequence, *Fire & Faith*, isn't out yet. When *Fire & Faith* hits the shelves it will include a table listing the battle scenes from all three books.



## CROWN COMMANDS BATTLE SCENES BY LEVEL

Name	Level Range	Icon	Page
<i>Back-Alley Politics</i>	1–2	<i>Prince of Shadows</i>	<i>HM &amp; LC: 114</i>
<i>Rafting Razoredge Gorge</i>	1–2	<i>Orc Lord</i>	<i>HM &amp; LC: 78</i>
The King's Tribute	2–3	Dwarf King	9
<i>Moz's Magnificent Mess</i>	2–3	<i>Archmage</i>	<i>HM &amp; LC: 8</i>
The Secret Crypt	2–3	Lich King	128
A Pixie Problem	3–4	Elf Queen	49
<i>Conquer &amp; Defend</i>	4–5	<i>Orc Lord</i>	<i>HM &amp; LC: 91</i>
The Gearwork Dungeon	4–5	Dwarf King	22
Imperial Politics	4–5	Emperor	90
<i>A Pit of Vipers</i>	4–5	<i>The Three</i>	<i>HM &amp; LC: 153</i>
<i>The Wild Sacrifice</i>	4–5	<i>High Druid</i>	<i>HM &amp; LC: 40</i>
Arena Games	5–6	Emperor	104
<i>Corrupted Nature</i>	5–6	<i>High Druid</i>	<i>HM &amp; LC: 54</i>
The Lich's Spire	5–6	Lich King	143
<i>The Lightning Station</i>	5–6	<i>Archmage</i>	<i>HM &amp; LC: 21</i>
<i>Mad Wizard's Loot</i>	5–6	<i>Prince of Shadows</i>	<i>HM &amp; LC: 129</i>
Danger in Darkwood	6–7	Elf Queen	66
<i>The Blue Sorcerer's Bargain</i>	7–8	<i>The Three</i>	<i>HM &amp; LC: 166</i>
<i>Old Injuries Repaid</i>	7–8	<i>Orc Lord</i>	<i>HM &amp; LC: 101</i>
<i>The Ritual of Taking</i>	7–8	<i>High Druid</i>	<i>HM &amp; LC: 67</i>
Stonecutter's Axe	7–8	Dwarf King	35
Night Hunters	8–9	Lich King	158
Games of Power	9–10	Emperor	116
<i>The Overworld Vault</i>	9–10	<i>Archmage</i>	<i>HM &amp; LC: 29</i>
<i>Thief of Dreams</i>	9–10	<i>Prince of Shadows</i>	<i>HM &amp; LC: 141</i>
<i>Into the Furnace</i>	10	<i>The Three</i>	<i>HM &amp; LC: 180</i>
The Library of Galwyn	10	Elf Queen	79



# DWARF KING: THE KING'S TRIBUTE

LEVEL RANGE: 2-3



The themes of this set of battles are urban skirmishers, dwarven greed, and forces that support or oppose the Dwarf King. This set of battle scenes works best in densely populated environments (whether city or town) where people will notice the PCs and their exceptional adventurer-style gear and be able to connect the dots between a couple powerful rumors.

Eskar Silveraxe, dwarf lord of Urdhill, swears fealty to the Dwarf King. As such, he is expected to pay his yearly tribute to his sovereign. Usually this is an allotment of silver from his mines and other trade goods. Occasionally, the Dwarf King demands a different sort of payment: a magic item. Hearing about a particular magic item that Lord Silveraxe possessed, this year the King asked for it as his allotment.

While this caused Lord Silveraxe some consternation and a few sleepless nights, he wasn't in a position to deny the King and acquiesced to the demand. The only problem was that while he was getting over his resistance to letting go of the item, someone stole it.

His people tracked the thief, but then lost the trail a few weeks back. Lord Silveraxe didn't know what to do, because failure to meet the King's demand could ruin him, and maybe even put his head on the chopping block. So he sent out spies to search for the item, and eventually put up a sizeable reward for its return to various mercenary groups, no questions asked (whoever had it would be a thief or someone who dealt with thieves, in his mind).

Mercenaries and spies all over the region were keeping an eye out for the item with no luck, until recently. The item has been spotted in the possession of one of the PCs! Word is out and various groups are now on the hunt, each hoping to cash in on the reward, or to increase their status within Lord Silveraxe's service, or to thwart the dwarf in hopes of disgracing him.

Note that the PCs are assumed to be outside the mercenary-reward information loop. They're going to learn about the magic item the hard way!

Obviously the original thief either sold it or was killed for it, and the item passed to someone else before the PCs acquired it (not that the mercenaries and dwarven underlings care). As for the PC with the item, the GM needs to decide if it came to them from a defeated enemy, as a find in an adventure locale, or if it was given to them by the agent of an icon—which could hold its own political implications.

GM, pick a magic item that one of the characters owns. If you decide you want it to come from an icon, set it up a couple sessions earlier, either through play or as a result of an icon relationship advantage.

You have a choice about the importance of the magic item in question. The first option is to pick an item the PC won't want to give up easily, such as a weapon, implement, or armor. That way they will probably fight for it to the end. For example, you're probably not getting the shiny new *sword of protection* out of the fighter's hand until that hand is cold and dead.

The other option, if you're feeling oddly merciful, is to choose an item that fills a less important slot. Maybe you know the player in question well and suspect that the PC might be willing to hand the item over at some point and don't want them to take too tough a hit to their capabilities because of the loss. A *dwarven mug* would be a perfect choice. If you're *this* soft-hearted you can always replace the lost item with something better in the near future for a PC who eventually chooses to make the sacrifice.

Now the heroes have to deal with various mercenary groups who want the item, one way or another. A different group will find the PCs (or draw the PCs to them) over the course of a few hours or days, depending on which story opening you end up using.

## THE KING'S TRIBUTE STORY OPENINGS

- **Looking for Answers:** The PCs are looking for information about something that's part of their larger storyline, preferably for one of them with a Dwarf King relationship. An anonymous



contact has been instructing them to go to specific locations to get the information they need. There weren't too many issues with the first few stops, but they'll have company at the next three. It's all very cryptic, but the PCs need to find what they are seeking so they're willing to go along.

- **I Think We're Supposed To Go There:** The item in question can sense the Dwarf King's desire, and part of it wants to be united with such a powerful personality. Its last owner was a bad fit, and it's still not fully sure about the PC who owns it. If the item can speak, it will lead the PC to each location, saying only that it's important. If it communicates through empathy or other vague means, its owner is following hunches that lead to each locale.
- **Wrong Time, Wrong Place:** While going about their normal hero business, the PCs just happen to keep walking into the wrong places. Mercenaries looking for the item either spot it and take action, or the PCs are drawn to the groups for other reasons and the opposition lucks out.
- **The Icon's Game:** Representatives of another icon (your choice...) are sending the PCs to different locations for a joint purpose, supposedly for the benefit of both parties. In addition to the reason the PCs are there, each location seems to hold mercenaries or others connected to the Dwarf King, and they keep demanding an item one of the PCs owns. Are the other icon's people behind it, or is it just bad luck?
- **Interrupted Job Interviews:** The PCs heard tale of someone who needs their type of help and is willing to pay well for it. The job is legit and fairly easy, and it pays decently. Word gets out about their prowess, and more folk seek to hire them. The only problem is that mercenaries linked to the Dwarf King waylay the PCs each time they go to meet a new employer. The mercenaries want the PC's item, and they're persistent.

## ALTERNATE ICONS



**Prince of Shadows:** The Prince also has a tribute (some say payoff, others blackmail) system in place, and he was expecting the item to come to him before the owner fled with it. Now there's a bounty waiting for anyone who can bring it to one of his lieutenants. Or he just fancies the item and puts out the word that he wants it. Either way, re-flavor the mercenaries as bandits, thugs, and guild enforcers.



**The Three (Black or Blue):** Similar to the Prince option, members of the Black's organization of assassins, or the Blue's imperial spies and mercenaries want the item for their mistress, who has sent out missives to that effect. Replace dwarf-themed enemies as draconic or other appropriately themed creatures. You may find yourself introducing new elements into the story when you get to the adventure that pits the PCs against constructs. Dragon-themed constructs should be interesting.

## THE KING'S TRIBUTE OVERVIEW

No matter which opening you used, the PCs will be visiting various locales in an urban setting. At three different points, they will be accosted by those seeking the item.

## ICONS IN PLAY

Characters that have relationships (and story-guide advantages) with the Dwarf King, Prince of Shadows, Emperor, and maybe even the Three (the Blue or Black) should be able to shine in these battle scenes. More so than PCs with other icon relationships, feel free to give such PCs extra knowledge about the opposition, make checks to pull off fun actions the players might suggest, and use their advantages to particularly good effect, such as negating or bypassing some of the advantages or abilities of the enemies.

Assuming the PC wants to hold onto the item, the pestering won't stop until word gets out about a few failures by other groups (and casualties). Before that happens, the PCs will face three possible battles with those who seek the coin promised by Lord Silveraxe, those who oppose the Dwarf King and his people, and those have ties to one of his nobles.

Of course, the PC could just hand over the item to one of the groups and expect the problem to go away. But a GM should feel free to continue with the battle scenes: other groups will have heard about the reward but are fuzzy on the details of which item Lord Silveraxe is paying for and will continue to harass the PC, asking for a different item each time.

GM, feel free to expand upon these battles by including battles with other groups seeking the item, enemies of the Dwarf King who would see the icon thwarted in his desire, or other urban dangers.

The battles outlined here can take place over a few hours or days, depending on the setting (you want them all to happen in a night in a town the PCs are in, or perhaps in different districts of a city over a few days, for example). Since the Dwarf King is in play, the enemies presented here are dwarves and humanoids who might be connected to the icon, and the PCs should get a feeling that everyone is watching them.

See story endings after the final battle for options on what happens after the PCs finish the last battle.

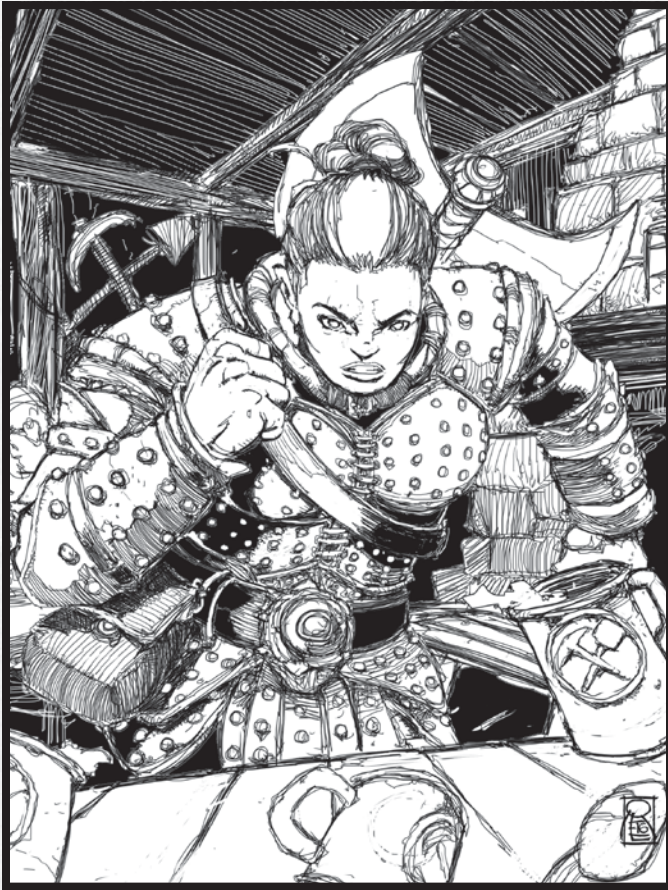
## BATTLE I: THE RUSTY PICK

*You enter the Rusty Pick tavern—an establishment with décor leaning toward the seedy side. A mix of patrons are inside, busy at gambling, drinking, talking, plotting, and more. The group grabs a booth and takes in the scene. After getting drinks and food, you settle in for your business. That's when a steely-eyed dwarf woman in well-worn studded leather armor walks up to the table. She faces [the PC] and says, "Ye've got something' that don't belong to ye. Hand it over unless ye want more trouble than ye can handle!"*

### LOCATION DESCRIPTION

A group of dwarven mercenaries have recognized the PC as the one bearing the item that Lord Silveraxe is paying to recover. They are either already in the tavern, or follow the PCs in shortly





after they enter. These dwarves consider themselves subjects of the Dwarf King, so there may be opportunities for PCs with relationships with that icon to talk them into another path. But they are also mercenaries, and good coin is good coin, so they won't easily give up a chance to get rich. (To make it tough for the PCs to buy them off, you could put the reward price at 1000 gp or more, depending on whether that's going to sound like an outrageous price to your PCs.)

Alternatively, if one or more of the PCs have a negative or conflicted relationship with the Dwarf King, play off their issues with the icon to start the scene with definite hostilities instead of a slim chance to talk things through!

The Rusty Pick is a good-sized tavern with high ceilings. It has a rectangular layout being 70 feet wide and nearly 120 feet long, with the kitchen and a short bar at the far back of the room. Booths that can hold 4 to 8 people fill one wall, with a scattering of tables and chairs in the middle. There's a small stage in the corner near the entrance, though no one is currently playing. Besides the main entrance, there's a back door out the kitchen into a delivery alley. Two other doors in the wall opposite the booths lead to an office and private drinking room.

Various mining gear adorns the walls; the owner struck gold literally and used his find to open the tavern. The centerpiece is a large central pillar supporting the roof that was designed to look like a mining pick (the ends that extend out are made of 3-foot thick painted wood not metal, however). Each "blade" extends 8 feet away from the column and is 12 feet off the ground.

The tavern is run by a dwarf man named Ian Gunderson. His brother, Lorne acts as muscle when needed, though he's used to dealing with the local riffraff using fisticuffs and will stay out of the way if weapons come out. There are two waiters: Wendell, a half-elven man in his early 20s, and Kilra, an old halfling woman. If a fight breaks out, Ian will order some of the patrons to summon the local constable, but the battle will most likely be over long before anyone returns, one way or another.

### TERRAIN & TRAPS

**Patrons:** When a fight breaks out, some of the patrons will flee, but others will watch or start betting on a side. If the action spills over into a group of bystanders, it may bring difficulties depending on the action.

If a PC or enemy takes an action that puts a patron in harm's way or makes a patron scared or angry, such as throwing a patron in front of an attack, stealing someone's drink, hurting a waiter, or similar actions, have that combatant roll a save. On a failure, the patron punches or kicks the person triggering the roll (dazed until start of next turn), or thwarts their maneuver in some way (DC increases by +5).

**Pick Column:** The handle that makes up the column of the pick is relatively smooth, making climbing more difficult (DC 13 Strength or Dexterity). Two ends extend away from the supports that hold the ceiling, providing enough space on each end for one person. Once standing on one of the pick ends, a creature has a good view of the action from above and can't be easily engaged. But any attack that hits that creature requires a successful DC 12 Dexterity check, or the creature falls, taking 2d6 damage.

Two lanterns hang from the pick ends as well. If broken, they spill flaming oil below that will deal 1d6 ongoing fire damage to 1d3 nearby creatures.

**Booths, tables, and bar:** If a PC is trying to pull off a dicey move of some sort, such as flipping a table for cover, running along a booth top, throwing a tray of beer in someone's face, or whatever, they must succeed on a DC 10 skill check.

If the PCs choose to use improvised weapons, use their normal basic attack stats but reduce the damage die by one or two sizes depending on the item.

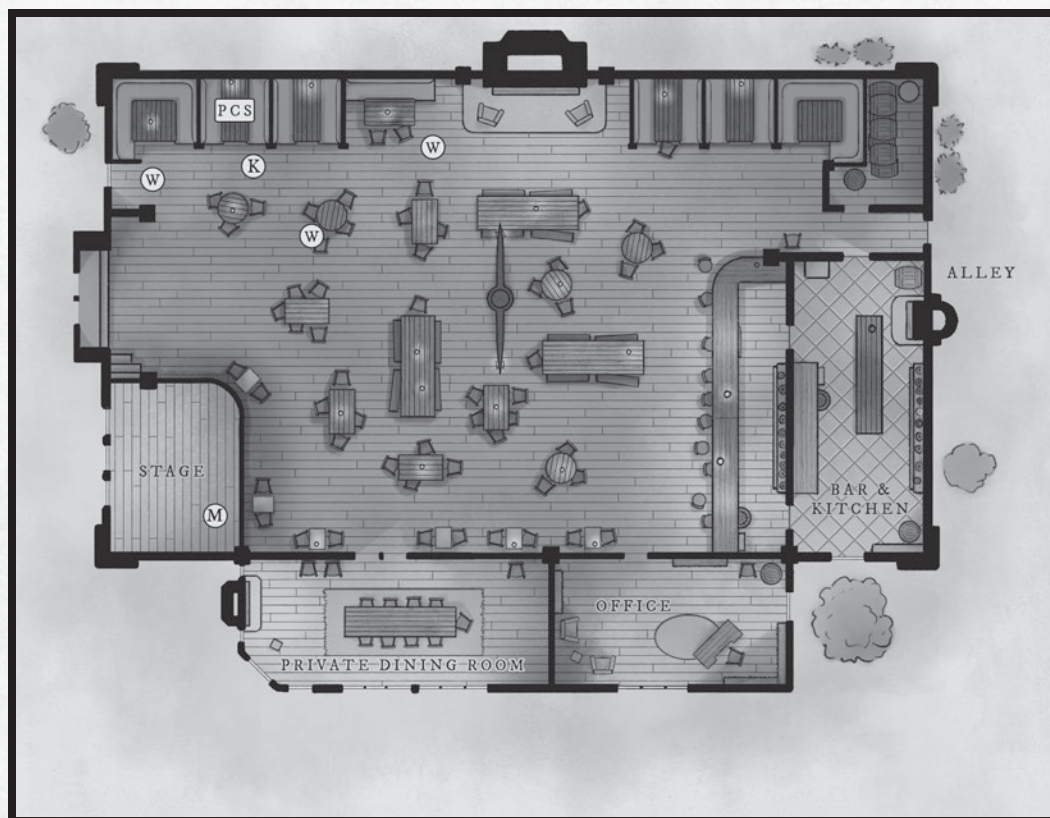
### MONSTERS

The dwarven woman is Kella Fourthborn, though she goes by the title of "Orcbane" among her comrades, and she's the leader of a mercenary band looking for a score. She's joined by Malsurn Fire-eye, a roguish dwarf who's good with a crossbow, and a band of dwarven warriors who've seen their share of fights.

Kella's mercenaries are moving into position around the PCs' booth as she talks to them. Any PC that succeeds on a DC 15 check will note the group of eager-looking dwarves trying to move into place unobserved.

**Additional Reinforcements:** If you want to challenge the PCs more, include a dwarf brawler named Morg who is completely hairless and is testy about it. Treat him like a triple-strength dwarven warrior with 99 hp who deals 18 damage with a *punch* attack.





effective melee fighter among the PCs might draw her off.

**Malsurn:** Malsurn is the only mercenary who doesn't move in close to the PCs' booth. He's made his way to the stage nearby and has a crossbow hidden under his cloak. He'll use ranged attacks against PCs engaged with his allies to take advantage of his *deadeye shot* ability. He's also added something special to a few bolts, a spider poison that will hamper the opposition. He'll target spellcasters with bolts, hoping the poison will even the odds.

Malsurn has some roguish skills and will attempt to stay mobile to keep firing his crossbow. If he has to, he can drop the crossbow and will pull out a long knife that he's skilled with as well.

**Dwarven Warriors:** The warriors will take orders from

Kella during the battle as things change, but their general strategy is to keep enemies off their captain. They try to fight in pairs.

If Kella drops, the warriors roll a d10 at the start of each of their turns: if it's less than the escalation die, they will instead attempt to flee so they can regroup and figure out their next move.

## LOOT

Kella carries 35 gp, has a gold chain necklace set with a garnet worth 50 gp, and carries a *potion of healing* (adv tier) in her pouch for

#/Level of PCs	Kella "Orcbane" (K)	Malsurn Fire-eye (M)	Dwarven Warrior (W)
4 x 2 <sup>nd</sup> level	1*	1	1
5 x 2 <sup>nd</sup> level	1	1	2
6 x 2 <sup>nd</sup> level	1	1	3
4 x 3 <sup>rd</sup> level	1	1	2
5 x 3 <sup>rd</sup> level	1	1	3**
6 x 3 <sup>rd</sup> level*	1	1	4**

\* Reduce Kella's axe attack damage to 7.

\*\* Increase the warrior's weapon damage to 8.

## TACTICS

**Kella Orcbane:** Kella will demand the item from the PC. She might be willing to back down if offered the same amount as the reward (1000 gp or more), although getting in the good graces of Lord Silveraxe and the Dwarf King for future work is also a strong motivator, especially if there are any among the PCs who have conflicted or negative relationships with the Dwarf King. She'll mention that if the PCs try to negotiate with her (making them more aware that their reputations are already known in the world).

If the PCs look like they're going to refuse to hand over the item, Kella will tell them that, "*it will go bad for ye if you choose to make this difficult.*" After that, any refusal or move to grab a weapon will bring a "*So be it!*" from Kella and initiative rolls as her mercenaries move in to take the item.

Kella is a good fighter and she'll focus her attacks on the PC with the item, though taunts about her prowess or a particularly

## GOING WITH A TAVERN BRAWL INSTEAD

If you're in the mood for a non-lethal fight, you can take this battle that direction. No weapons are drawn (unless the PCs do so). Instead it's haymakers and Malsurn throwing mugs and plates.

In this case use skill checks: Each PC describes how they will fight and makes a check based on the ability that fits. The DC is 15, or 20 for something really dicey. Each PC must use a different ability for each check. At any point after seeing one of the skill check rolls, the GM can make the player reroll it (the dwarves are tough, or Kella pulls out a dirty trick). The fight ends when each PC has succeeded twice (describing their action each time).

If a PC has one failure or less when the fight ends, they're fine. If they have two failures or more, that character loses one recovery. Either way, the dwarves get knocked out cold.



emergencies. (She probably won't take time to use it during combat, but if you enjoy the drama of an NPC enemy drinking the PCs' treasure in the middle of combat, go for it, and let her heal 30 hit points by taking the standard action to drink.) She also has a letter describing the item and the PC who owns it, with Lord Silveraxe's signature.

Malsurn has 20 gp in a pouch and keeps a small 40 gp amethyst hidden in his lower lip. He also has a note hidden in a boot that contains information the PCs will be interested in; the Prince's mark is on it at the bottom. He also has a small silver bottle that holds *wasp-spider venom*. It can be applied to one melee weapon or up to three arrows/bolts/bullets. The first time the ammo hits (or for one battle for a melee weapon), the target is hampered on a natural roll of 16+.

The warriors have a total of 30 gp among them, in addition to normal weapons and light armor.

If the PCs take too much time to search the bodies, it will give the local constables time to show up. Depending on where you placed the Rusty Pick, this could cause problems for the PCs. If they do a quick search of the bodies and then leave, there won't be any issue, but it means finding the gem or note on Malsurn will actually require a successful DC 15 check to search him quickly.

## Icons

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Dwarf King could use one or more of them to work out a deal with Kella to look the other way, but in addition to the advantage it will probably cost at least 200 gp for her trouble. If the group has a PC with a conflicted or positive relationship with the Orc Lord who's open about it, however, Kella won't negotiate and will be looking forward to violence.

A PC that has relationship advantages with any icon other than the Lich King or High Druid could use one or more of them to try to get help from someone in the crowd. Options could include a +2 bonus to skill checks during the battle, getting to roll two d20 for one attack during the battle, an attack only dealing half damage to the PC, or other benefits that make sense or that the players suggest.

## KELLA

*"Ye asked for it."*

*Double-strength 3<sup>rd</sup> level wrecker* [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +5

**Two-handed axe +8 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—10 damage

*First natural even hit each turn:* Kella can make a *headbutt* attack against the target as a free action.

**Headbutt +7 vs. PD**—3 damage, and the target is dazed until the end of its next turn

*Mercenary trick:* Twice per battle as a free action when Kella hits with an *axe* attack, she knocks a weapon or implement in the target's hand away from it, if any. The item skitters across the room and requires a move action and quick action to retrieve (or a friendly patron or ally to throw it back).

AC 19  
PD 18  
MD 14

HP 92

## MALSURN

*"Stings, doesn't it?"*

*3<sup>rd</sup> level spoiler* [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +6

**Long dagger +8 vs. AC**—10 damage

**R: Crossbow +8 vs. AC**—8 damage

*Natural 16+:* The target is also hampered (save ends) from a poisoned bolt.

*Deadeye shot:* Malsurn doesn't target allies when he rolls a natural 1 with a ranged attack. In addition, when he hits a target engaged with one of his allies, the target either takes 1d8 extra damage or is vulnerable until the start of its next turn (GM's choice).

*Roll with it:* Malsurn gains a +5 bonus to disengage checks.

AC 18  
PD 17  
MD 13

HP 42

## DWARVEN WARRIOR

*These warriors look like they can both give and take a pounding.*

*2<sup>nd</sup> level troop* [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +4

**Hammer, sword, or axe +7 vs. AC**—6 damage

*Natural even hit or miss:* The warrior gains a +2 bonus to AC until the start of its next turn.

*That's all you got?:* Once per battle as a free action when the warrior is hit by a non-critical attack, it can take half damage from that attack.

AC 17  
PD 15  
MD 11

HP 33

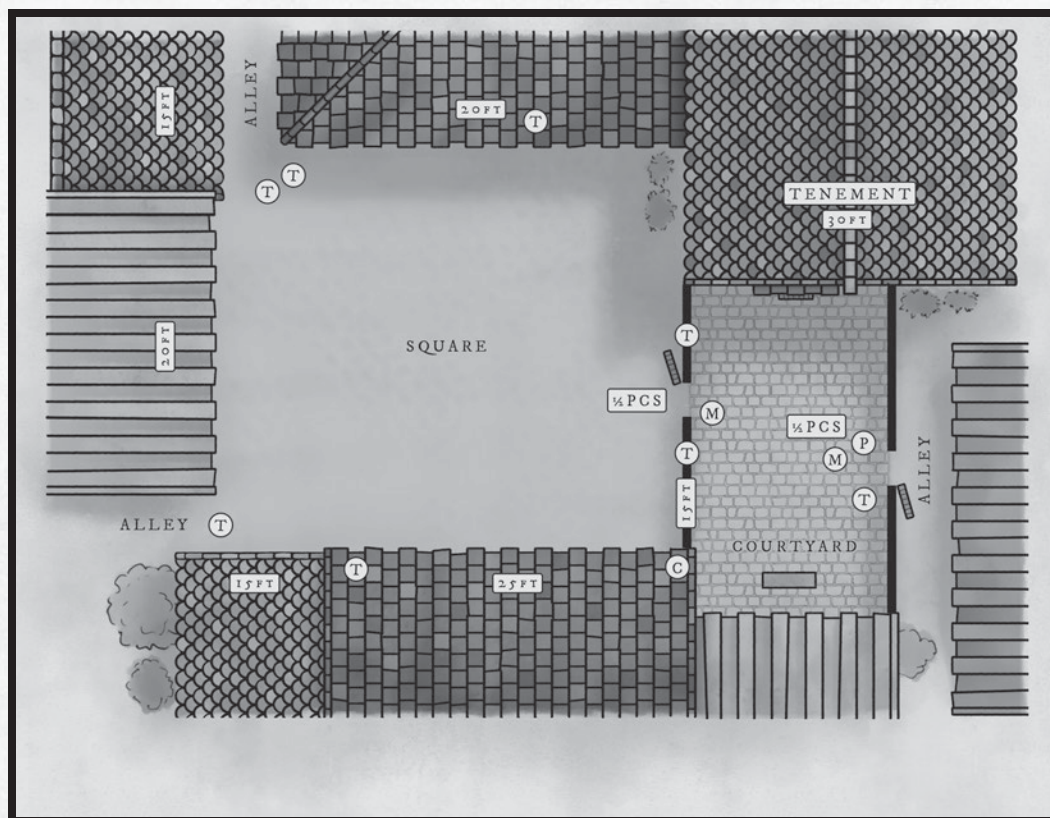
## NEXT STEPS

Assuming the PCs vacate the Rusty Pick quickly, they can avoid any constables with questions. If they were at the tavern to meet a contact, it doesn't happen; they might have to set up a new meet, which could perhaps be the setup from Battle 2. If they managed to take any of the dwarves prisoner, they can question them in a back alley or other secure place and learn about the reward issued by Lord Silveraxe.

If the PCs figure out what's really going on, start the next battle soon before the PCs can get proactive about Lord Silveraxe. If they don't have a clue yet, you can take your time, if you wish.

At some point in the next few hours or days, now that the word is out about their location, another mercenary group takes a shot at them, arranging an ambush. See **Battle 2: Back-Alley Ambush**.





archway has a heavy wooden door that's currently open. The door to the tenement is closed (and locked).

The mercenaries have set an ambush. See **Tactics** for what happens. Note, this is a double-strength battle, and it will test the PCs' capabilities; they will probably need to expend a lot of daily resources to win out.

### TERRAIN & TRAPS

#### Brick Walls and Buildings:

Climbing either the walls of buildings in the square, or the walls around the courtyard requires a successful DC 15 Strength or Dexterity check. However, there are some bricks missing from the eastern courtyard wall facing the square. Climbing to the top of the wall from there only requires a DC 10 check.

If a creature is hit by an attack while climbing a wall or building, or standing on the edge if hit by an attack that might force it off-balance, it must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity check or fall, taking 2d6 damage (wall) or 3d6 damage (top of building).

**Wood Doors:** The three doors in the courtyard (one to the square, one to an alley, and one to the tenement) are thick and heavy. Bashing one down will take a DC 22 Strength check. Each also has a bolt on the inside that can be thrown and pulled down to secure it (DC 20 Dexterity check to jimmy it from the far side as a move action). The courtyard doors will be shut and bolted by mercenaries at the start of the battle.

**Stone Bench:** The bench is 5 feet long and 3 feet high. Small or prone PCs can gain some cover (+2 to all defenses) while hiding behind the bench.

### MONSTERS

This band of anti-Dwarf King mercenaries have set an ambush for the PCs, and they have the manpower and mix of abilities to give the heroes trouble. The group is co-led by two NPCs who are lovers: a ridiculously handsome half-orc warrior named Palg and a ridiculously bloodthirsty half-elf sorcerer named Celeste. They make a good team, for NPCs who aren't really intended to contribute more than this battle to the campaign!

Palg has a pet eagle named Talons that he's trained to fight with him; it dives out of the sky to attack enemies attacking him.

Palg and Celeste are supported by a few dwarven malcontents on the outs with their King who add some muscle to the battle.

Finally, there's a group of hired thugs that the pair enlisted to make sure of their success.

**Additional Reinforcements:** If you want to challenge the PCs more, change Talons to a medium bronze dragon (13 True

## BATTLE 2: BACK-ALLEY AMBUSH

*You're on your way to a meeting with a contact (or following an NPC who has something the PCs want, or attempting to follow up on the information about Lord Silveraxe, or just wandering) and cut through some back alleys to reach your destination. As you pass out of a small square into an open courtyard of a tenement building, the shadows start to move as a rough voice above you yells out, "It's them. Attack!"*

### LOCATION DESCRIPTION

A group of mercenaries who are affiliated with an icon that's not the Dwarf King (GM's choice, based on icon rolls and complications; use the Prince or Orc Lord as a default) have set up an ambush for the PCs. They want the item the PC carries, knowing that the Dwarf King desires it and wanting to cause trouble among his nobles (Lord Silveraxe in particular). They've devised a way to divide and conquer the PCs using the square and courtyard.

The square is 60 feet wide by 70 feet long and has three exits: two alleys leading away from it on one end and an open archway into a walled courtyard next to a three-story brick building that connects to another alley on the far side. It is open and empty of furnishings except for a single stone bench. The backs of the buildings that form the square are between 15- and 30-feet high, with no windows or doors.

The courtyard is 30 feet wide and 50 feet long. Its walls are made of brick, are 15 feet high, and about 2 feet thick. Each



Ways, page 184) who's small for its size and was raised on the wrong side of the nest.

#/Level of PCs	Palg, Celeste & Talons (P) (C)*	Dwarf Malcontent (M)	Thug Mook (T)
4 x 2 <sup>nd</sup> level	1	2	5 (1 mob)
5 x 2 <sup>nd</sup> level	1	3	8 (1 mob)
6 x 2 <sup>nd</sup> level	1	5	7 (1 mob)
4 x 3 <sup>rd</sup> level	1	4	10 (1 mob)
5 x 3 <sup>rd</sup> level	1	5**	12 (2 mobs)
6 x 3 <sup>rd</sup> level	1***	6	14 (2 mobs)

\* Includes one of each, not one of the three

\*\* Increase malcontent hammer attack damage by +3

\*\*\* Make Palg a double-strength enemy (double damage output and HP)

## TACTICS

**Ambush:** First, have each PC roll a DC 18 Wisdom check to detect the ambush (or use another ability that makes sense for that PC). If at least half the PCs succeed, they sniff out the ambush and aren't surprised. If not, then Palg and one of the thugs on the roof can make a free ranged attack before the PCs roll initiative.

In addition, each PC that succeeds on the check can choose to be either in the courtyard or in the square. For each one that fails, the GM chooses where they will be as the battle begins. (Make sure to split the PCs as evenly as possible between the two areas. If possible, have the PC with the item be in the courtyard with Palg.)

Finally, as part of the ambush, Palg drops into the courtyard beside the door to the alley, followed by a malcontent who closes the door and throws the bolt. At the same time, another malcontent hiding behind the door to the square closes it and throws the bolt, effectively separating the PCs into two groups. These mercenaries mean business. Now the battle starts, including any surprise attacks by the mercenaries.

**Palg:** Palg is an in-your-face type of fighter who is sure of his skills. He wields two hand axes and has four of them on him (he'll throw one and draw another if he has surprise). He has a touch of the wild in him, however, and if either Talons or Celeste falls in battle, his *battlerage* ability will trigger and he'll do his best to put an end to the PC who did it.

**Talons:** Talons goes last in the round, dropping out of the sky to attack an enemy engaged with Palg. His *death from the skies* attack is deadly; afterward he'll scratch at an enemy using his *sharp talons* and then attempt to disengage and fly back into the sky to do it again. If Palg drops, Talons will fly away.

**Celeste:** The half-elf sorceress starts the battle on top of the tenement building near the wall separating it from the square. She will focus on the PCs in the square with her ranged spell attacks, trying to keep them from reaching the others. Rather than giving up attacks, she has taught herself to gather a little bit

## ADDING EXTRA TURMOIL TO THE GROUP

If you have a group that likes party turmoil and hidden motives, give this a try. Choose one of the PCs that the mercenaries won't attack, preferably one who has a complication with an icon (and even better if it's the icon these mercenaries serve, but it doesn't have to be). The mercenaries will always target other characters instead of that PC, and will try to disengage from the PC if possible. They will attack if it would mean losing an action due to inaction, however.

Make it obvious to the players that the PC is being spared/avoided ("no not him, the others only"). Then after the battle, have the PCs find a letter on Palg or Celeste that says, "*Do not harm the [race] named [name of PC not being attacked]. Once the item is secure, I shall settle up with [him/her].*" This is intended to be vague and open-ended so the PC can try to explain what "settle up" might mean and it puts some doubt into the other PCs. Of course, if you want to really create some conflict, you could have the letter mention something about paying the PC their cut for their assistance. Some groups can handle that style of nastiness, others won't appreciate it.

of power to empower her spells every other round (see *partial empowerment*) without losing an entire round of attacks.

If Palg drops, she will curse the PCs who did it as she focuses all her attacks on that character, though if she sees that the battle is lost at that point, she'll try to flee across the rooftops and take revenge later.

**Malcontents:** One comes into the courtyard with Palg and bolts the door. Another closes and bolts the door between the courtyard and square. Any others will emerge from the alleyways behind the PCs and attack to keep them from fleeing. They will also do their best to keep any PCs from opening either door.

**Hired Thugs:** Half the thugs will be on the roofs and walls using ranged attacks, and the other half will emerge into the square from one of the alleys (unless somehow all the PCs are in the courtyard, in which case they will climb over the walls into the courtyard). The ones above will be on the roofs of the buildings, except for two who were lying down on the top of the courtyard wall; they will move along the top of the wall over the door.

Once Palg and Celeste drop, the thugs will flee unless they've managed to drop a few PCs and it looks like they could still win out.

## LOOT

Palg is carrying the other half of the thug's pay in addition to his own coins, so he's got 120 gp in mixed coinage. He also carries a nice hunting knife with an ivory grip depicting an eagle worth 100 gp.





Celeste has 20 gp in coins, a simple silver ring worth 10 gp, and a pair of sapphire earrings Palg gave her worth 100 gp. She also uses a wand crafted from ebony that is a *baton of the Queen* (see page 26 of the Book of Loot)

The malcontents carry a total of 80 gp, though at least one of them probably also has a token from an icon at odds with the Dwarf King. It might be something that could get the PCs past creatures of that icon in the right situation.

The thugs only have their pay: 40 gp total among them.

## Icons

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Dwarf King, Elf Queen, Emperor, Orc Lord, Prince, and maybe the High Druid could use one or more of them to keep a malcontent, some of the thugs, or even Talons from attacking them by making those enemies think the PC is on their side or confusing them—a save ends effect that has the enemy do nothing on their turn would work, as long as they aren't attacked.

Once in the heat of battle, Palg won't listen to any offers, but someone with an advantage might realize that a threat against Talons or Celeste could throw him off his game. Celeste could be encouraged to stop fighting if two or three advantages with the Elf Queen come into play, as long as Palg is still okay.

## PALG

*The big half-orc spins his hand axes and grins at you. It's a great grin, even though you know he's about to try to kill you.*

4<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +8

**Deadly hand axes +9 vs. AC (2 attacks)—8 damage**

*First natural 16+ each turn:* Palg gains a +2 bonus to AC until the start of his next turn.

*Miss:* 2 damage.

**R: Hurling axe +8 vs. AC—13 damage**

*Limited use:* 2/battle.

**Battlerage:** When Celeste or Talons drops, or Palg is staggered, he can reroll one attack during his turn and he gains a +2 bonus to melee damage (10 damage) and miss damage (4 damage).

<b>AC</b>	<b>19</b>	
<b>PD</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>HP 58</b>
<b>MD</b>	<b>13</b>	

## TALONS

2<sup>nd</sup> level spoiler [BEAST]

Initiative: End of round

**Sharp talons +7 (+9) vs. AC—7 damage**

*Natural even hit:* The target is vulnerable until the start of its next turn.

**Death from the skies:** If Talons is unengaged and moves before it attacks, the crit range of its *sharp talons* attack that turn expands by 4 (16+) and it gains a +2 attack bonus.

**Flight:** Talons is a strong flier and fast, but it needs space and can't hover.

<b>AC</b>	<b>16</b>	
<b>PD</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>HP 30</b>
<b>MD</b>	<b>14</b>	



## CELESTE

"Kill the King's dupes quickly!"

Double-strength 3<sup>rd</sup> level caster [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +7

Offhand dagger +7 vs. AC—14 damage

**R: Chaos bolt +8 vs. PD (one nearby enemy or a far away enemy at -2 atk)**—16 cold or lightning damage (GM's choice)

*Natural even hit:* The target is dazed (save ends).

*Miss:* 3 cold or lightning damage.

**R: Prismatic ray +7 vs. PD (up to 2 nearby enemies)**—8 force damage

*Natural 14+:* The target is also vulnerable until the end of its next turn.

*Natural 16+:* The target also loses its next move action.

*Natural 18+:* The target is also weakened until the end of its next turn.

**C: Frostbreath +8 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies)**—5 cold damage, and the target is stuck and can't make opportunity attacks (save ends)

*Limited use:* 1/battle, but it recharges when she's staggered.

*Partial empowerment:* When the escalation die is odd, Celeste adds 8 extra damage to her ranged spell attacks that hit and gains a +1 bonus to all defenses until the start of her next turn.

### Nastier Specials

*Half-elf versatility:* Once per battle as a free action, Celeste can subtract one from the natural result of an attack roll.

AC	19	
PD	14	HP 82
MD	17	

## DWARF MALCONTENT

"The Dwarf King can shove it!"

3<sup>rd</sup> level troop [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +5

Hammer and shield +8 vs. AC—8 damage

*Natural even hit:* The malcontent can make a *shield bash* attack against the target as a free action.

[Special trigger] **Shield bash +7 vs. PD**—3 damage, and the target is dazed (save ends)

*Dwarven ire:* The malcontent's attacks deal +1d6 damage against enemies with a positive or conflicted relationship with the Dwarf King.

AC	20	
PD	17	HP 40
MD	12	

## HIRED THUG

Half-orc, human, or dwarf, a thug is a thug.

2<sup>nd</sup> level mook [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +4

Hand axe or mace +6 vs. AC—5 damage

*Superior numbers:* While there are more hired thugs than enemies, the thug gains a +1 attack bonus.

Shortbow +6 vs. AC—5 damage

*Superior numbers:* While there are more hired thugs than enemies, the thug gains a +1 attack bonus.

AC	17	
PD	15	HP 8 (mook)
MD	11	

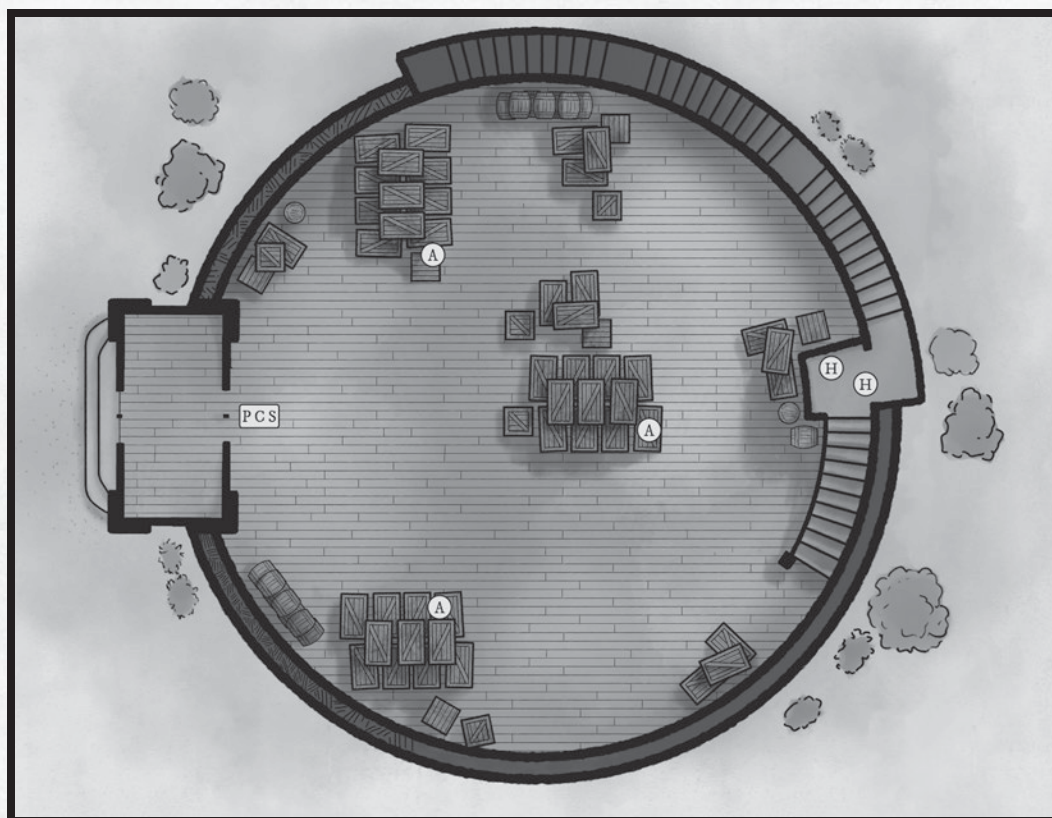
*Mook:* Kill one hired thug mook for every 8 damage you deal to the mob.

### NEXT STEPS

If the PCs survive this ambush, they'll be looking over their shoulders for the next attack, because it's obvious someone really wants the item. Any enemies they capture will reveal the 1000 gp (or more) reward for the return of the item to Lord Silveraxe.

Even if they start thinking about handing the item over to Silveraxe, some of those who serve him directly will still make a play for it. See **Battle 3: Housecarls of Lord Silveraxe**.





## BATTLE 3: HOUSECARLS OF LORD SILVERAXE

*You step inside the ground floor of the large old tower. Someone is obviously using it as storage, because wooden crates lay stacked in piles everywhere, some of them four or five feet high and wide. A pair of torches set into wall sconces light the area in flickering shadows. A dwarven voice calls out from the stairwell across the room saying “We’d like to talk,” and a couple dwarves in heavy armor clunk slowly down the steps across the room. They stop on a platform 10 feet above the floor, with their hands open to show their weapons are sheathed. They each bear the crest of a silver axe upon their tabards. You weren’t expecting this.*

### LOCATION DESCRIPTION

Whatever drew the PCs to this location, the housecarls of Lord Silveraxe were behind it. Following rumors about the item they seek for their lord, they learned of the heroes and now have come to negotiate for the item he desires to see returned.

The tower is round and 100 feet in diameter, with 20-foot ceilings. Besides the door in, the only other exit is a set of crumbling stone stairs that lead 10 feet up to a landing, where there’s an archway. The stairs to the upper levels of the tower continue within the walls of the tower and out of sight of the main chamber.

Scattered around the room are piles of crates anywhere from 4 to 8 feet high, some stacked near walls and others in the center of the room.

Before it comes to violence, these dwarven housecarls of Lord Silveraxe want to talk. They explain the situation to the PCs, hoping they’ll understand the pressure Lord Silveraxe is under. Since no one wants more bloodshed over this, they are willing to make a generous offer to acquire the item (they’re also the ones who were to pay off the other mercenaries for it).

These are dwarves, however, and they’re confident in their skills, so they see no reason not to make a profit from this endeavor. They’re willing to offer up to 500 gp for the item, though they’ll start with an offer of 250 gp. If the PCs mention the 1000 gp number, the dwarves will shrug and mention how rumors get out of hand.

This battle could end up being a negotiation if the PCs are agreeable to the idea of giving up the item. Feel free to roleplay it out, but be aware that the housecarls will not GIVE gold away when they believe they can take the item. If you choose to use skill checks, let each PC state their case, probably using Charisma (negotiation, bluff), Strength (intimidation), or Intelligence (logic), but possibly other abilities with a good story. The DC is 15, and each success increases the amount the housecarls will pay by 100 gp (from 250 gp). If the PCs agree to a price, the dwarves will meet with them again after going to a banker to turn in a writ from Lord Silveraxe for the money (and pocketing the extra).

If the PCs won’t hand over the item, or want more than the dwarves are willing to give, then the housecarls will demand it and be willing to fight. At that point, one of them whistles and during their turn in initiative, any clockwork automatons in the battle will burst forth from their storage crates.

### TERRAIN & TRAPS

**Crates:** Most of the crates are filled with cloth tunics, building materials, and wooden plates and mugs belonging to a local merchant. A few, however, hold surprises placed by the dwarven housecarls in case things turned ugly—clockwork automatons who serve them.

The crates provide cover from ranged attacks, and anyone trying a dicey move with them or by running on top of them must roll a DC 15 check. On a failure, the action fails (if someone is moving across them, they fall in and lose the rest of their movement).

**Stairs & Platform:** The platform is 5 feet by 5 feet; anyone falling off it must roll an easy save (6+) or take 2d6 damage. It also gives a good vantage over the area. The stairs beyond go to



a second and third level, each closed off by a padlocked door. Those areas hold more storage for common goods.

**Entry Door:** These housecarls have used their dwarven knowhow to rig a surprise on the front door. There's a rope extending along a ledge through small iron hooks to the stairs. With a quick action yank, one of the dwarves can release a catch that causes the outer door to slam shut (or to lock if already closed), keeping the PC with the item trapped inside if need be.

Bashing the door open (or figuring out how to trigger the locking mechanism) requires two standard actions and two DC 20 Strength (or Dexterity or Intelligence) checks.

## MONSTERS

The dwarves bear axes and wear fine chainmail with cloaks covering their tabards showing they are Lord Silveraxe's men.

The constructs are made out of iron with copper gearwork. They have wheels instead of legs and their upper bodies are shells that look vaguely dwarven with "arms" that are basically spear points.

**Additional Reinforcements:** If you want to challenge the PCs more, the housecarls have some ranged firepower with them. One of their companions is a sharpshooter that has a repeating crossbow he can put to good use.

#/Level of PCs	Dwarf Housecarls (H)	Clockwork Automaton (A)
4 x 2 <sup>nd</sup> level	2	1
5 x 2 <sup>nd</sup> level	2	2
6 x 2 <sup>nd</sup> level	3	2
4 x 3 <sup>rd</sup> level	2	4
5 x 3 <sup>rd</sup> level	3	3
6 x 3 <sup>rd</sup> level	4	4

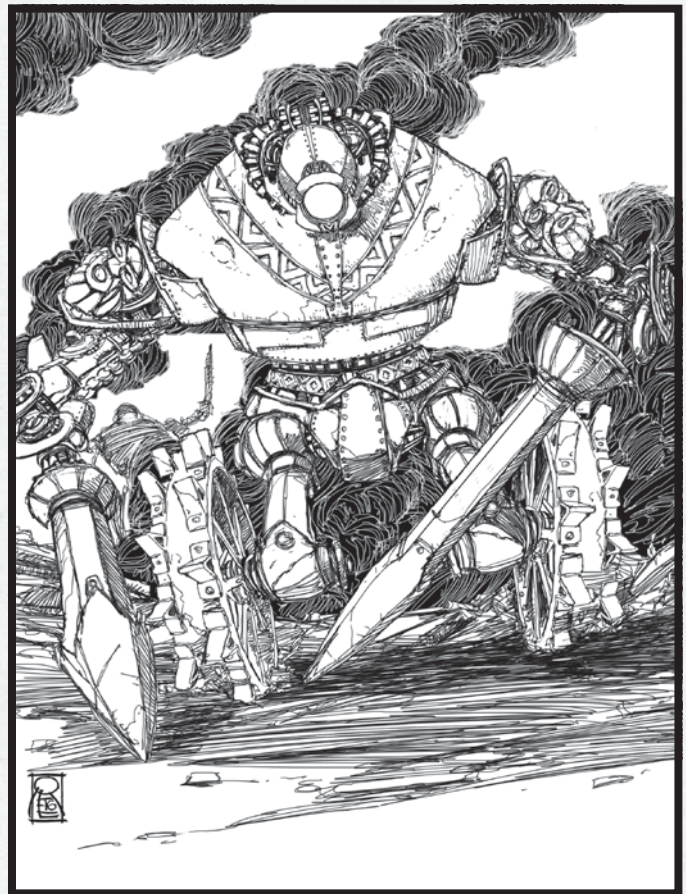
## TACTICS

The housecarls will try to stay together, ganging up on a single enemy (probably the one with the item if possible) until that enemy drops and then move to the next—standard dwarven infantry tactics. If they can take the item from a downed PC (with a quick action if it's not armor), they will retreat into the stairway where the PCs can only approach one at a time.

The automatons will attack whoever is closest to them and not wearing Lord Silveraxe's crest (though if a PC is a dwarf, the automaton will look to another target first). The housecarls can give them orders to change targets, however, and they will.

## LOOT

The housecarls only have a total of 100 gp between them, but they do have a writ for a dwarven banker in town worth up to 1000 gp.



If someone who is not a member of Lord Silveraxe's retinue (or at least bearing his crest like the housecarls do) approaches the banker, the writ will be refused "until it can be sorted out." The banker will remember faces, so further attempts might fail also, plus he should be well-guarded with that being public knowledge (those who try to steal from him don't survive).

Each automaton has a 25 gp clear crystal embedded inside it that allows it to translate commands into action. The copper gears and parts from each one might be another 30 gp to an artificer.

## Icons

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Dwarf King, Archmage High Druid, Prince, or Orc Lord could use one or more of them to disrupt an automaton's inner workings after scoring a hit, forcing it to make a normal save or explode apart.

A PC that has advantages with any icon could use them to replace a successful skill check toward negotiating a price for the item (promises, threats, blackmail, etc.)



## DWARF HOUSECARL

Each of these noble house warriors looks the part—heavy armor and a wicked double-axe, with a tabard sporting a silver battle axe.

4<sup>th</sup> level troop [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +7

**Double-bladed axe +9 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—8 damage

*First natural 12+ each turn:* The housecarl can make a kick to the gut attack as a free action.

[Special trigger] **Kick to the gut +9 vs. PD**—The target is weakened (easy save ends, 6+)

**R: Throwing axe +8 vs. AC**—12 damage

*Limited use:* 2/battle.

*Dwarven leverage:* Twice per battle as a move action, the housecarl can use well-honed dwarven tactics, superior footwork, and good balance to try to force an enemy it's engaged with to the ground. The target must roll a DC 18 Strength, Constitution, or Dexterity check; on a failure it goes to the ground and takes a -2 penalty to AC and PD until the start of its next turn.

AC	20	
PD	18	HP 55
MD	15	

## CLOCKWORK AUTOMATON

Gears grind and the thing moves forward on a pair of spoked iron wheels. Each of its metal arms ends in a sharp point.

2<sup>nd</sup> level troop [CONSTRUCT]

Initiative: +4

**Spear-hands +6 vs. AC**—6 damage

*Natural even hit:* The automaton can make a second spear-hands attack as a free action (but not a third).

*Made of gears and cables:* When an attack crits it or when it's staggered, the automaton must roll an easy save (6+). On a failure, the construct's internal workings fail and the thing breaks apart with a small explosion of metal and gears. Make an *exploding gears* attack.

**C: Exploding gears +6 vs. PD (each creature engaged with it or next to it)**—2d12 damage

AC	17	
PD	14	HP 40
MD	12	

### Additional Reinforcements

## DWARF SHARPSHOOTER

Double-strength 3<sup>rd</sup> level archer [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +7

**Crossbow butt +7 vs. AC**—16 damage

**R: Repeating crossbow +8 vs. AC**—9 damage

*Natural 11+:* The sharpshooter can make another repeating crossbow attack as a free action (max 3 per round).

*Infernal contraption:* After each battle, the repeating crossbow usually has some minor malfunction. If used by a PC, the crossbow allows one extra attack with it each battle as a quick action, and it's not a magic item. When a PC uses it in battle, they must roll a recharge 16+ check to use it next battle; on a failure, it needs repairs.

AC	18	
PD	17	HP 82
MD	13	

### NEXT STEPS

If the PCs didn't give up the item, word gets around not to mess with them. No one in this town or city will try to take the item now (unless you want them to, GM).

## THE KING'S TRIBUTE STORY ENDINGS

Here are outcomes for each story opening, detailing what success or failure might mean.

If the PCs did face all three battles, remember to give them a full heal-up.

### LOOKING FOR ANSWERS

**Success:** Their contact tells them that they need to talk to someone to get what they need. If they gave up the item, it's Lord Silveraxe, who will treat them well for handing it over. If they didn't, then it's someone who had Palg and Celeste for enemies, and they will be thankful for rumors of their demise at the PCs' hands.

**Failure:** While the PCs were dealing with the groups after the item, their contact got fed up and stops contacting them or working with them. They'll need to find a new source of information for what they were after.



**I THINK WE'RE SUPPOSED TO GO THERE**

**Success:** If the item is sent back to Lord Silveraxe, it will tell the PC of its stronger brother/sister item and where it's hidden (or give them an image of the location and item). If the PC keeps the item and lets it lead them around, it decides that they are the right fit and improves to champion tier quality or gains some other benefit.

**Failure:** The item decides that the PC isn't worthy of it and will find a way to get stolen or lost sometime soon.

**WRONG TIME, WRONG PLACE**

**Success:** The PCs finally start getting things right and the terrain works in their favor for their next battle, making it easier than normal.

**Failure:** The PCs just can't do anything right. They either face a tougher fight in their next battle due to terrain, or they have to go one extra battle before getting a full heal-up.

**THE ICON'S GAME**

**Success:** After surviving the mercenaries and working out the issue with the item (one way or another), the PCs prove themselves to the second icon's people. The PCs are given a quest to recover (and keep) a magic item associated with that icon.

**Failure:** The second icon continues to throw roadblocks in the PCs' path. When the PCs roll icon story-guide dice, any 6s for that second icon are 5s instead. This remains in effect until two 6s have become 5s.

**INTERRUPTED JOB INTERVIEWS**

**Success:** Word of the PCs' successes, even in the face of unexpected opposition, gets out. The next job they get offered comes from somebody powerful, and the payoff is big.

**Failure:** Word gets out about the PCs failure. Few if any jobs are forthcoming as their reputation takes a hit, and those that get offered are more dangerous and pay worse.

**BATTLE SCENE CONNECTIONS**

The stories from this set of battle scenes can lead to other scenes:

- *Moz's Magnificent Mess* (Archmage): Moz hears about the PCs recovering the item for Lord Silveraxe from one of his court magician flunkies and sends them a message.
- *Rafting Razoredge Gorge* (Orc Lord): If the PCs are 2<sup>nd</sup> level, the battle with Lord Silveraxe's retainers happens in the town where the dwarven mining consortium, or a group of dwarven merchants, seeks to hire them to make the trip down the gorge.
- *Back-alley Politics* (Prince): If the PCs' are 2<sup>nd</sup> level, their ability to thwart Lord Silveraxe's people is noticed by someone in the town, who either hires or blackmails them into attacking Redfang.





# DWARF KING: THE GEARWORK DUNGEON

LEVEL RANGE: 4-5



The themes of this set of battles are underworld environments, living dungeons, and gearwork enemies. This sequence of battle scenes works best while the PCs are in the underworld, or at least in a deep subterranean setting.

A "living" dungeon is rising through territory the Dwarf King claims, and those who call him lord (or

enemy) in the region intend to try to stop the thing before it breaches the cavern that holds the dwarven town of Stonehelm. The dungeon seems to be some sort of mechanical contraption that is burrowing slowly but steadily upward. The dwarves only have a few days, at best.

The town's local ruler, Rondo Stonehelm, has put together a plan to assault the place after learning of it from his people in the deeper mines. The plan relies on getting help, the kind that adventurers and heroes can provide.

Through one means or another, the PCs land the mission. The hourglass is tumbling.

## THE GEARWORK DUNGEON STORY OPENINGS

- **Calling All Favors:** Word from the Dwarf King has reached one or more PCs with a positive or conflicted relationship with the icon. One of his vassals, Lord Rondo Stonehelm, needs help in assaulting a living dungeon rising toward his town. The Dwarf King calls upon the PC(s) for past favors paid to help his liege man put an end to the dungeon.
- **A Wrench in the Works:** Word is that a local vassal of the Dwarf King, Lord Rondo Stonehelm, has put out a call for help to assault a living dungeon rising toward his town. The town holds a key defensive and economic position within the icon's holdings. Enemies of the icon contact a PC with a negative or conflicted relationship with the Dwarf King. They are given false introduction as the King's hero to do the job, and then can choose to either claim the glory for saving the town, or maybe delay just enough for the dungeon to cripple the town for a few months rather than destroy it.
- **One Way Out:** While adventuring in the underworld near the deeper mines of the dwarven town of Stonehelm, the

earth shakes and many of the tunnels cave in, cutting off the PCs from the only way out. The reason for the cave-in soon appears, a huge, metallic living dungeon rising through the stone. And the thing has entrances within its inner shell. Some of the dwarven miners the PCs are stuck with rush one entrance, while the heroes have just enough time to go to a second smaller opening.

- **The Stone Diviners:** A group of dwarven seers and engineers has predicted that a living dungeon is approaching the dwarven town of Stonehelm in the underworld. The Stone Diviners, as this special guild under the purview of the Dwarf King is called, contacts the PCs (or a member of the group with Dwarf King ties). They offer a sizeable reward to the PCs to travel into the depths below the town and find a way to stop the dungeon before it reaches the town. There's also a second group of dwarven mercenaries that has been hired as a failsafe. Whoever gets in first and stops the thing has dibs on whatever valuables might be inside.

## ALTERNATE ICONS



**Crusader:** The living dungeon is rising under one of the Crusader's hellhole fortresses, and that simply can't be allowed. Since it's coming through the underworld, the Crusader's people contact a few teams to solve the problem, including the PCs. Instead of constructs and a giant, the dungeon is carrying demons and elementals that have aimed the thing for the fortress.



**Orc Lord:** The living dungeon is instead filled with humanoids serving the Orc Lord. They have figured out how to control the dungeon, and after they test it against the dwarven town of Stonehelm, plan on using it to haul troops past the walls and defenses of the towns and fortresses of the Dwarf King, Elf Queen, and Emperor during invasions. Replace the gearwork creatures with orcs, goblin engineers, and other similar humanoids.

## THE GEARWORK DUNGEON OVERVIEW

The action starts after the PCs have traveled to a small underworld cavern through which the gearwork dungeon is about to pass. As it tears into the chamber, its spinning top grinding through the stone, an open passageway reveals itself in the side of the bullet-shaped dungeon. The PCs leap aboard, only to face a group of azer and their gearwork servants in Battle 1 who have been watching for just such an intrusion.



## ICONS IN PLAY

Characters that have relationships (and story-guide advantages) with the Dwarf King, Crusader, Orc Lord, Prince of Shadows, and maybe even the Archmage should be able to shine in these battle scenes. Moreso than PCs with other icon relationships, feel free to give such PCs extra knowledge about the opposition, make checks to pull off fun actions the players might suggest, and use their advantages to particularly good effect, such as negating or bypassing some of the advantages or abilities of the enemies.

Once the azers are defeated, the PCs must make their way inward toward the “engine room” of the dungeon where a combination of gears and magic propel the thing. In Battle 2, they enter a chamber where a cyclops smith is forging new gearwork servants for the dungeon and have to fight their way through.

At the bottom level of the dungeon, the PCs enter the engine room. Massive magical gears in the room rotate and grind against each other, producing the force necessary for the dungeon to rise. In Battle 3, a fire giant engineer, her cyclops assistants, and their newest gearwork servants crafted from the bodies of a dwarven strike team who were defeated, including a gearwork champion, now defend the dungeon’s engine. The PCs must defeat the giant and her crew before they can choose whether to stop the dungeon, or direct it as they wish.

GM, feel free to expand upon these battles by including battles with more gearwork enemies and other foes traveling with the dungeon, or fights with underworld creatures on the way to their rendezvous point with the dungeon. The PCs could also have to deal with the politics of Rondo Stonehelm and his dwarven town, such as interviewing to qualify as the group that gets the honor of assaulting the dungeon.

The battles outlined here can take place over a few minutes or tens of minutes, depending on how big you want the dungeon to be. Since the Dwarf King is in play, the enemies presented here are natural enemies to dwarves like azers and fire giants, and there’s a heavy flavor of gearwork machinery.

See story endings after the final battle for options on what happens after the PCs finish the last battle.

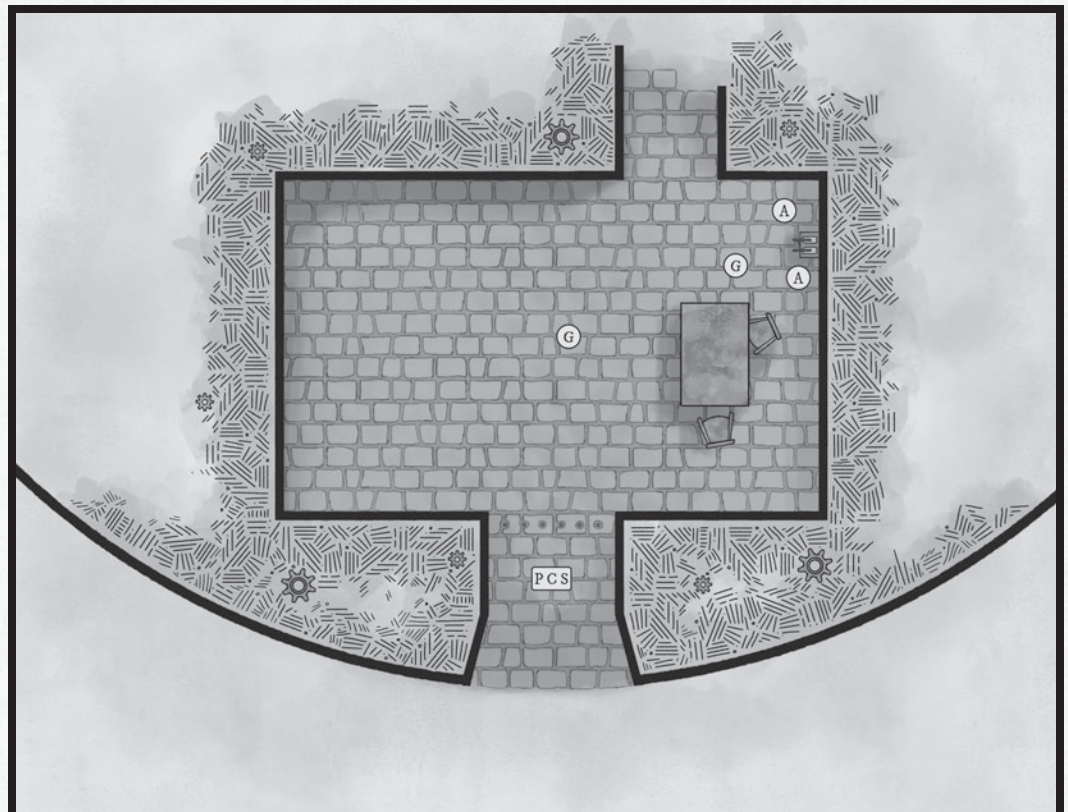
## BATTLE 1: ENTERING THE DUNGEON

*You wait in a small cavern, the rumbling increasing in intensity and you can feel the vibrations in your bones. Then the thing breaches the room! It’s shaped like a round tower with a conical cap, but very wide and made entirely from an iron shell. Magic flares from the top as it disintegrates the rock in the chamber ceiling and continues on. Suddenly, you see the tower is only a shell rotating around an interior core as a flared opening in the side of the iron shell comes into view with a passage leading inward. Sprinting forward, you manage to leap inside the thing before it rotates or rises too high. Inside, the corridor opens into a small chamber where dwarves with black skin and flaming beards stand at guard, along with some sort of gearwork creatures. One of the dwarves yells, “Burn them!”*

### LOCATION DESCRIPTION

**Note:** If there was a competing group of dwarves also entering the dungeon, describe how they wait on ledge on the other side of the cavern from the PCs. A large opening passes by too quickly for the PCs, but they know there’s a second entrance that follows it. The dwarves go into the main opening while the PCs take the smaller one.

The dungeon is basically a wide iron bullet rotating around an inner core. It uses burning coal as a fuel source in the engine room at the base to push the huge gears that rotate the shell, and elemental magic at the top where the cone spins to break apart the stone it travels through.







The PCs have entered into a small outer guard station where a group of azers and their gearwork automatons stand watch. The room is 40 feet wide and 25 feet long, with a 15-foot ceiling. To the right is a small iron shelf extending 2 feet from the wall; a pair of levers jut from the wall and two azers and an automaton stand near it. One of the azer can throw one lever to drop a portcullis gate across the archway into the chamber, while the second lever activates nozzles that direct exhaust heat into the area on the other side of the gate (see **Terrain & Traps**).

The rest of the azers and automatons, if any, are spread out in the chamber to keep anyone from bypassing the room easily. There is an iron table and three iron chairs set up in the far corner of the room as well.

## TERRAIN & TRAPS

**Portcullis Gate:** One of the azers near the levers will throw the portcullis lever as a move action as soon as possible, though he'll try to separate the PCs after one or two have entered the chamber if possible (readying an action if needed). The gate slams down from the ceiling over the archway into the chamber and locks in place. Lifting it or bending the bars requires a successful DC 25 Strength check. Throwing the lever again also will lift the gate, but the enemies guard the lever, taking opportunity attacks against anyone who pulls on it.

**Flame Jet Trap:** Once the gate is down, the same azer that threw the lever uses its standard action to throw the second lever. It causes excess heat from the engine room to travel through pipes to a pair of nozzles in the ceiling. The nozzles immediately make a *flame jet* attack, and then repeat the attack again each time the escalation die increases at the start of the round.

**C: Flame jets +10 vs. PD (each enemy behind the portcullis)—2d12 fire damage**

Throwing the lever again (a standard action) turns the jets off, or a PC that can reach the 12-foot high ceiling can try to disable the jets (there are two) as a DC 20 check (each success disables one jet and reduces damage by one die).

**Table and Chairs:** Like the walls, floor, and ceiling, the furniture is made of iron to avoid catching fire from the azers. It's still hot from their proximity. A set

of iron dice (d6) and three piles of very small garnets sit on the table.

## MONSTERS

The azer guards here serve the fire giant engineer below and help keep the dungeon gears and engine working (they came to an agreement some time ago, with both sides wishing to see the dwarves of Stonehelm burn). Like the flames surrounding them, they're a bit hot-headed and will fight to the death unless someone can find a way to get through to them. If there are more than two azers in the battle, put the others around the room behind the automatons.

The gearwork automatons are made of iron and brass, using cables, pulleys, and a multitude of various-sized gears to move and attack. They move on wheels rather than legs, and each has one arm that ends in a spinning gear and the other than ends



## FORGEBORN OR DWARF-FORGED PCs

This dungeon and this battle are well-suited for construct-type characters. Feel free to let them try things the other PCs couldn't easily get away with, either with easier DCs or without a roll. For example, they might be able to communicate, or even override, orders from the azer to the automatons (at least momentarily; it could be a Charisma check as a quick action each round). Or they might understand the inner workings of this gearwork dungeon so well they can remove an iron panel that no one else even knew was there and pass through to suddenly appear on the other side of the room. Or maybe they cause the dungeon to shutter, throwing everyone off-balance. And so on. Give creative players some leeway.

with a clamp. If there are more than two automatons in the room, spread them out in a line along the center of the room.

**Additional Reinforcements:** If you want to challenge the PCs more, include another construct guardian in the battle, a bronze golem (*Bestiary*, page 100). It looks like a large azer, but it only has 120 hp and its hidden flaw is obvious to all and in effect—a gap in its hip joint.

#/Level of PCs	Azer Soldier (A)	Gearwork Automaton (G)
4 x 4 <sup>th</sup> level	2	2
5 x 4 <sup>th</sup> level	3	2
6 x 4 <sup>th</sup> level	4	2
4 x 5 <sup>th</sup> level	5	3
5 x 5 <sup>th</sup> level	6	4
6 x 5 <sup>th</sup> level	7	5

### TACTICS

The azers try to separate the PCs with the portcullis, then block them from reaching the levers while those stuck in the corridor get fried. At least one will stay back by the exit to intercept any enemies from moving out of the room. Everyone in the chamber is nearby.

The automatons simply attack whatever the azers tell them to attack until given another order by an azer (so they'll keep attacking after the azers are dead).

### LOOT

There's 100 gp in garnets on the table. Each automaton has a 50% chance of keeping its crystal cube brain intact when destroyed (assuming someone searches the thing). Each is worth 50 gp.

### Icons

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Dwarf King, Prince, Archmage, or perhaps the Orc Lord, could use one or more of them

to make an automaton go off programming to start the battle. Each round, there's a 50% chance it becomes confused that turn.

## AZER SOLDIER

4<sup>th</sup> level troop [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +7

**Red-hot hammer +9 vs. AC**—8 damage

*Natural even hit or miss:* 4 ongoing fire damage.

**R: Throwing axe +9 vs. AC**—7 damage

*Blistering heat:* When an enemy engaged with the azer attacks it, that enemy takes 2 fire damage.

*Fighting surge:* Once per battle when an attack crits the azer but doesn't kill it, the azer can heal 4d6 hp.

*Cold haters:* The azer adds the escalation die to its attacks against a target that is capable of dealing cold damage with a spell, attack, or magic item.

*Fire resistance 18+:* When a fire attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 18+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

AC 20  
PD 17  
MD 14

HP 50

## GEARWORK AUTOMATON

*It looks like a pile of gears and pulleys attached to an iron barrel with a brass dwarven-shaped "head" bolted on to a thick rod. Somehow it manages to radiate hostility.*

5<sup>th</sup> level troop [CONSTRUCT]

Initiative: +6

**Snapping clamp +10 vs. AC**—6 damage

*Natural even hit:* The automaton grabs the target.

*Natural odd miss:* The automaton can make a second *snapping clamp* attack with a –2 penalty against the same target as a free action.

**Grinding gear +9 vs. AC**—9 damage

*Natural 16+:* The target is also dazed (save ends).

*Snap and grind:* The automaton can make a *snapping clamp* attack and a *grinding gear* attack as a standard action. It gains a +4 bonus to the *gear* attack if it grabs the target with the *clamp* attack first.

*Fire resistance 12+:* When a fire attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 12+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

*Sprung gear:* If the automaton rolls a natural 1 with an attack, it takes 5 damage.

AC 22  
PD 18  
MD 13

HP 70



## NEXT STEPS

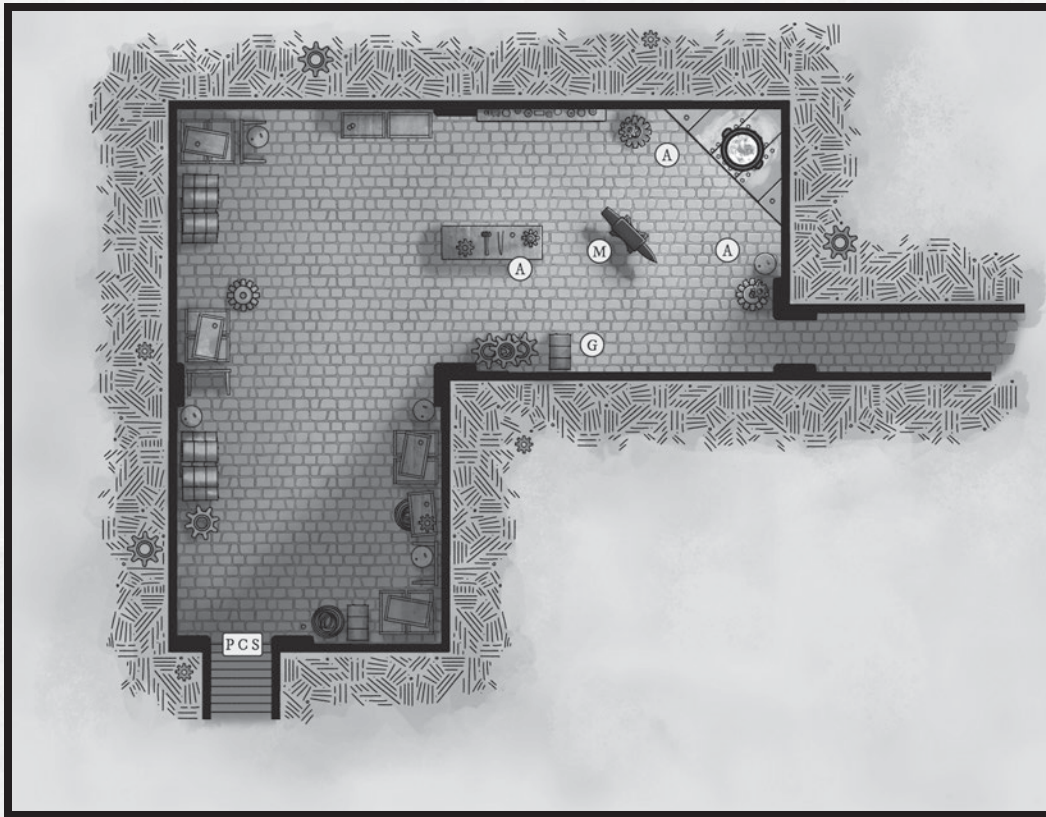
Another corridor exits the guard station and then ends at a set of iron stairs leading down. Whether or not the PCs take

a moment to rest, they'll be able to feel the dungeon grinding through the earth.

When the PCs are ready to push on, go to **Battle 2: The Gearwork Smith.**







The cyclops stands by a large anvil and group of iron forms designed to be filled with molten brass (copper and zinc) to form gears and cables. A huge iron vat of molten liquid bubbles in one corner, kept simmering by blasts of fire that occasionally erupt from nozzles in the floor. The azers wait nearby, some looking back toward where the PCs will enter from, for the cyclops to give them instructions to pour the brass or to pull items from the forms once they've cooled.

A small table of various tools, mostly tongs and hammers, sits close to the cyclops, and more tools hang from a belt at his waist. On the ground near the vat are bars of copper and iron bins filled with chunks of zinc.

If the smith, his assistants, or the gearwork creatures see the PCs, they will attack without stopping to talk. PCs trying to sneak up on the enemies, or spy on them, must succeed on a DC 20 check since the azers and constructs are both watching the area. Any failure means the azers spot the PCs first.

## BATTLE 2: THE GEARWORK SMITH

*The heat builds as you descend, warm drafts rising up the stairwell. Ahead the sound of ringing metal, whirring gears, and spinning widgets is getting louder. The bottom of the stairwell opens into a large L-shaped chamber that turns out of sight to the right. The section you can see has large iron tables stacked with brass gears, iron cables, and iron barrels and wheels. From around the corner, the repeated ringing of metal starts again after a whooshing sound and a blast of heat.*

### LOCATION DESCRIPTION

The PCs have entered a foundry with a large forge designed to create brass gears and other parts of the gearwork automatons. The foundry uses excess heat from the engines to turn the metals molten for the work.

The chamber is L-shaped; the main branch is 80 feet long and 40 feet wide, with the side branch to the right being 40 feet wide and extending 50 feet. The ceilings in the place are 20 feet high, and everything is made from riveted iron panels.

Out of sight around the corner a cyclops smith is busy crafting new automaton parts with the help of azer assistants. Guarding their work is a different type of construct: a gearwork gatlinger. The crossbow-armed creature(s) guards against unwanted intruders, standing silently along the edge of the room.

### TERRAIN & TRAPS

**Table of Gears:** The table is 5 feet high with thick iron post legs and could provide some cover to anyone behind it. It holds three large brass gears, a pile of smaller ones, plus plenty of pulleys and cables that might be used creatively by the PCs.

**Vat of Liquid Metal:** The iron vat is 6 feet high and 4 feet in diameter. It's designed to pivot down and pour into the forms, so it has wheels and a tilt bar. Getting it to pour somewhere else, or knocking it over completely, will take some effort (DC 25 Strength check). It's about half full of molten brass.

If someone does spill the vat's contents, make the following attack:

**Molten metal spray +10 vs. PD (one nearby enemy, plus 1d4 random nearby creatures)**—4d6 fire damage, and ongoing fire damage equal to the damage roll (hard save ends, 16+). Each random nearby creature besides the main target that's hit only takes half the total ongoing fire damage, and uses a normal save.

The azer and cyclops have some fire resistance, which applies. Once tipped over, the vat empties and can't be used again.

**Fire Nozzles:** If the vat is moved, anyone standing in the area at the start of the round when the escalation die increases takes 10 fire damage as the nozzles flare.



**Table of Tools:** There are three sledgehammers, two sets of tongs, and a handful of chisels and other metalworking tools on the table if the PCs can find a creative use for them. Also there, but initially out of sight due to the cyclops, is a low, wide tub of water for cooling items in the forms.

## MONSTERS

The smith, a cyclops named Molkides, stands with his back to the PCs. He looks like a large ogre from that angle; only when he turns will they see he only has a single large eye. He wields a large, red-hot hammer and wears oversized heavy leather gloves.

The azers are helpers and do a lot of the hot work, which they are suited for. They aren't carrying throwing axes, but will hurl tools and gears instead, which work the same way as their normal ranged attack, if needed.

The gearwork gatlingers each have a pair of round 10-slot cylinders filled with bolts. They rotate the cylinders using a multi-part gear system that sends them spinning, then fire the bolts using compressed air. They have no true "heads," being only gatling cylinders on top of a rolling barrel base. If forced to, they can slam into enemies.

**Additional Reinforcements:** If you want to challenge the PCs more, add a second cyclops smith to the battle named Pekiros.

#/Level of PCs	Molkides, Cyclops Smith (M)	Azer Soldier (A)	Gearwork Gatlinger (G)
4 x 4 <sup>th</sup> level	1	1	1
5 x 4 <sup>th</sup> level	1	2	1
6 x 4 <sup>th</sup> level	1	3	1
4 x 5 <sup>th</sup> level	1	4	2
5 x 5 <sup>th</sup> level	1	6	2
6 x 5 <sup>th</sup> level	1	7	3

## TACTICS

Molkides will first hurl various tools from the back, then wade in with his hammer. If staggered and given the opportunity, he tries to pour the vat upon the PCs (he initially resists due to the mess it would make).

The azers defend the gearwork gatlingers, keeping the PCs away from them as they light up the enemies. They are willing to walk through a molten brass spill or go close to the vat to try to get an enemy burned, since the heat doesn't really bother them. Feel free to apply 5 fire damage to any PC that ends their turn too close to a hot source.

The gatlingers stand by the wall and fire away. They have enough intelligence to try to roll away from enemies to attack freely.

## LOOT

The brass workings in this place have some intrinsic value, but most of the items are too bulky or too hot to take. (If the PCs figure out a way, there's a 200–300 gp worth of metal here.

Molkides carries a pair of nice fire opals that were gifts from the fire giant engineer for his work. Each is worth 100 gp.

Each gatlinger has a 50% chance of keeping its crystal cube brain intact when destroyed (assuming someone searches the thing). Each is worth 50 gp.

## Icons

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Dwarf King, Prince, Archmage, or maybe the Orc Lord or High Druid could use one or more of them at the start of the battle to trick the gearwork gatlingers to stop functioning or to fire upon their allies for 1d2 rounds.



## MOLKIDES, CYCLOPS SMITH

The one-eyed brute distracts you with its ominous glare to set you up as just another nail for its hammer.

Large 5<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [GIANT]

Initiative: +7

**Deadly hammer strike +10 vs. AC**—38 damage

*Natural roll is above target's Constitution:* The target also takes 10 ongoing fire damage from the heat of the hammer.

*Miss:* 19 damage.

**R: Hurlled tool +9 vs. AC**—30 damage

*Miss, natural 1–3:* The cyclops targets a random nearby ally instead; reroll the attack against that creature.

*Cyclopean glare:* As a quick action once per turn, the cyclops can glare at a nearby enemy within sight. Until the start of the cyclops next turn, that creature takes a –2 penalty to all defenses, or to saves (cyclops' choice).

AC	20	
PD	20	HP 150
MD	14	

## AZER SOLDIER

4<sup>th</sup> level troop [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +7

**Red-hot hammer +9 vs. AC**—8 damage

*Natural even hit or miss:* 4 ongoing fire damage.

**R: Thrown gear +9 vs. AC**—7 damage

*Blistering heat:* When an enemy engaged with the azer attacks it, that enemy takes 2 fire damage.

*Fighting surge:* Once per battle when an attack crits the azer but doesn't kill it, the azer can heal 4d6 hp.

*Cold haters:* The azer adds the escalation die to its attacks against a target that is capable of dealing cold damage with a spell, attack, or magic item.

*Fire resistance 18+:* When a fire attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 18+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

AC	20	
PD	17	HP 50
MD	14	

## GEARWORK GATLINGER

Two cylinders on the thing's torso start to spin as a series of gears and springs release. Then the barrage of bolts begins.

5<sup>th</sup> level archer [CONSTRUCT]

Initiative: +6

**Rolling slam +9 vs. AC**—12 damage

**R: Twin gatling shot +10 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—8 damage

*First natural even hit each turn:* The gatlinger can make another *twin gatling shot* attack with a –2 penalty as a free action.

*Fire resistance 12+:* When a fire attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 12+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

*Sprung gear:* If the automaton rolls a natural 1 with an attack, it takes 5 damage.

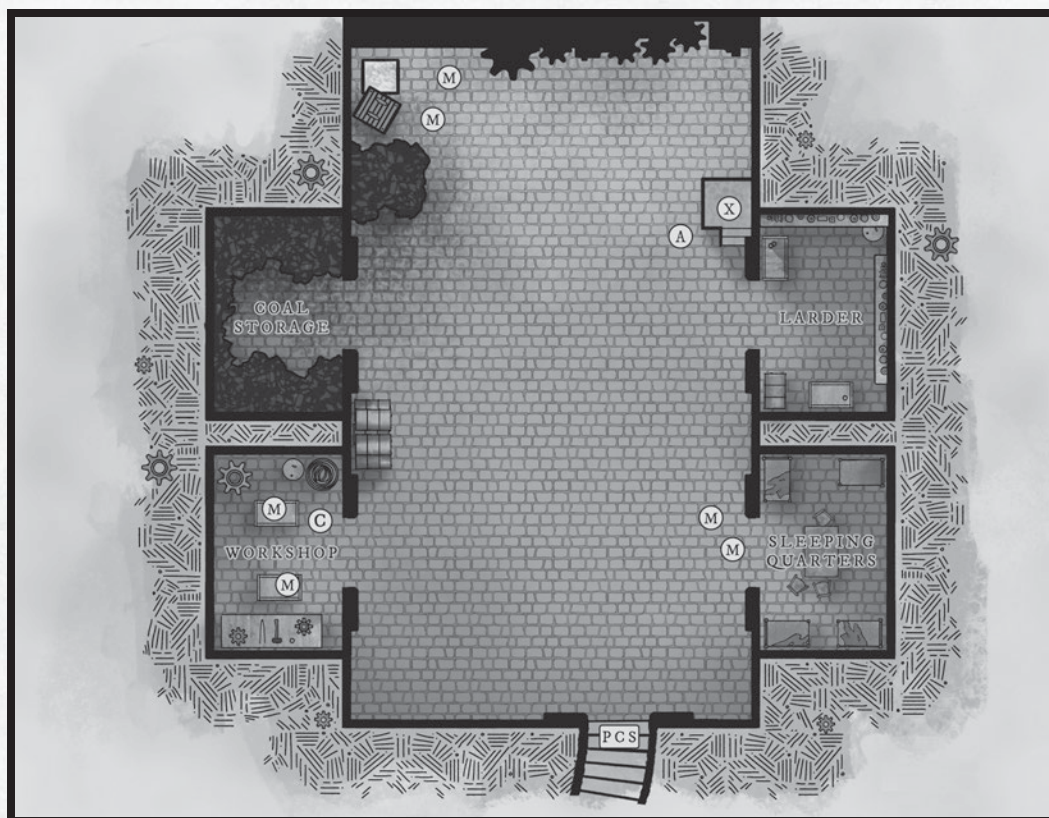
AC	20	
PD	19	HP 64
MD	14	

### NEXT STEPS

Once the PCs catch their breath after the battle, they can follow the exit out of the foundry. It quickly becomes a ramp that descends in a slow, wide curve to the engine room.

When the PCs are ready, go to **Battle 3: The Gearwork Engine**.





## BATTLE 3: THE GEARWORK ENGINE

The ramp you've been following finally ends ahead, but the constant noise of machinery only grows louder. Gears click and grind against each other and with each crank, you can sense the dungeon spin and move slowly upward. At the end of the long room ahead of you, fire flares from a wide opening in the floor where two dwarves are shoveling black rock. Behind them, the wall is constructed of spinning interlocked gears, some twice as tall as a man. A huge, black-skinned fire giant emerges from a side room and stands next to a pedestal platform of some sort, with a cyclops trailing after. She looks you over and then booms out, "Good, more workers. Prepare them for assembly." More dwarves move into view from side chambers, and that's when you see that they all have iron rods piercing the flesh of their dead limbs and exoskeletons made of gears that allow them to move.

### LOCATION DESCRIPTION

Xeromas, the fire giant engineer, runs the engine room of the gearwork dungeon. She also controls the dungeon's direction, and is intent on smashing through into Stonehelm cavern. The dwarves, who were former enemies that assaulted the dungeon (perhaps even a competing strike team that recently entered the place), have now been turned into gearwork creatures to serve the dungeon and the engineer.

The main chamber is 60 feet wide, 100 feet long, and 25 feet high, and it's also constructed of riveted iron panels. The giant and two dwarves by the pit start the battle far away. The back wall is filled with gears rotating to turn the dungeon's outer shell. Near the left wall is an open iron hatch (5 x 5) with a large pile of black rock (coal) nearby. The dwarves shovel the coal in to fuel the fires that turn the gears. The pedestal is a control platform.

There are four archways leading to smaller side rooms off the engine room; each is 20 x 30 and has a 10-foot wide, 15-foot high archway connecting it to the engine room. The two rooms on the right are a sleeping quarters for the giants and a larder. The two on the left are a coal-storage room and a workshop.

The dwarves emerge from the rooms on the right.

In addition to Xeromas, the cyclops, and the gearwork dwarves, there might be a gearwork champion—one of the dwarves outfitted with an arsenal of weapons. This is a double-strength battle.

### TERRAIN & TRAPS

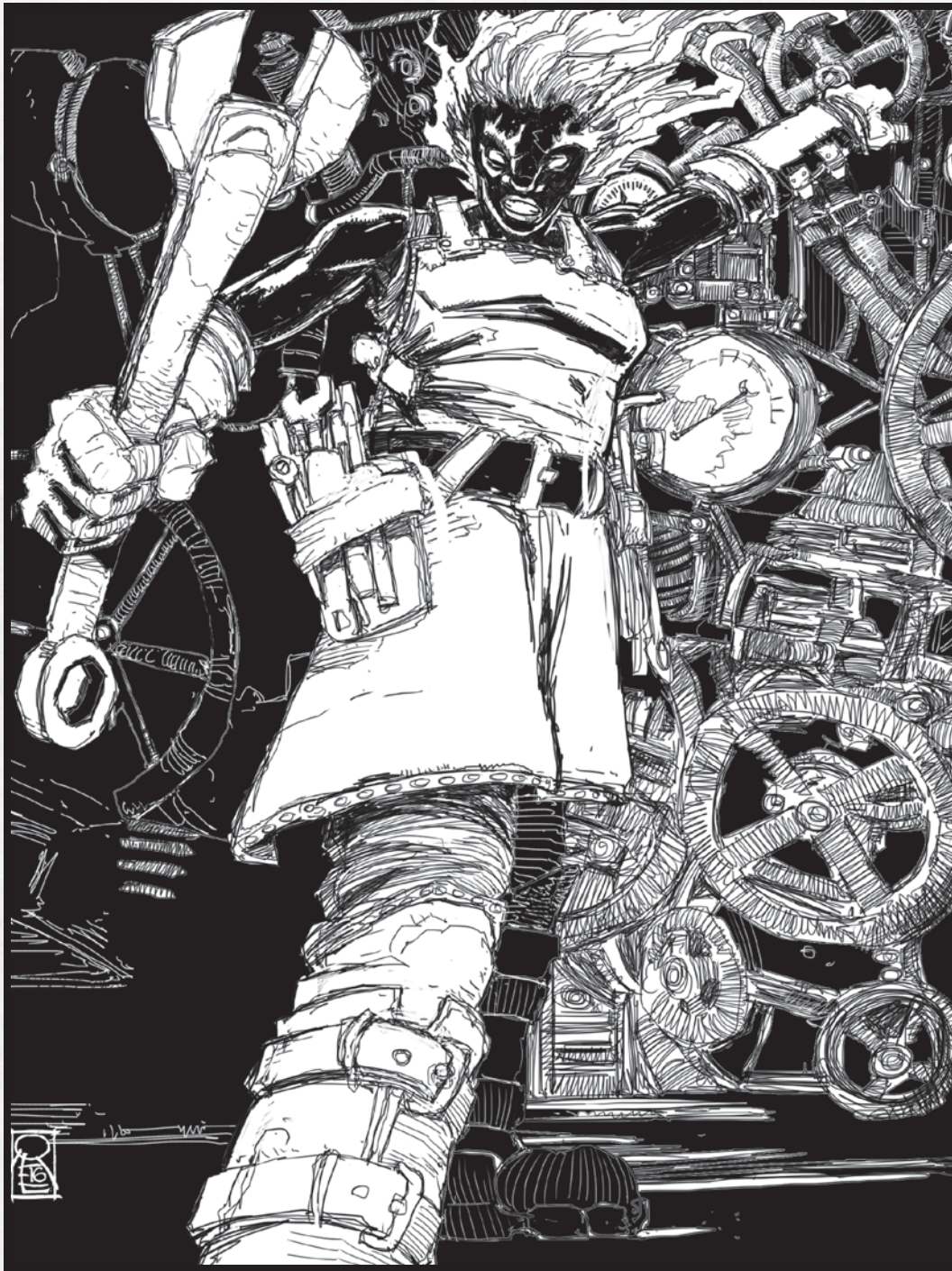
**Furnace Pit & Coal Pile:** The pit drops 8 feet down to a raging inferno of burning coal. The edges of the opening glow from the heat. Any creature that falls into the opening takes 30 fire damage, and ongoing 30 fire damage while in the pit. Climbing out requires a DC 20 Strength or Dexterity check to leap up to grab the sides. The furnace also magically expels the heat and exhaust gases through pipes leading to other areas of the dungeon.

The coal pile is 10 feet from the furnace opening and fills a 10 x 10 area against the wall that's 7 feet high. The coal is flammable, but requires an ongoing open flame source to ignite. Once it does, anyone nearby takes 10 fire damage at the end of their turn. The chunks of coal are loose and climbing on the pile without losing your balance and stopping movement requires a successful DC 15 Dexterity check.

**Wall of Gears:** The gears turn the outer shell of the dungeon, allowing it to ascend through rock. They also provide mechanical power to other areas of the dungeon. The coal fire provides the energy to turn the gears. The control platform near the giant can bring the gears to a stop, or speed them up.

It is possible to jam something between the gears to try to slow the dungeon or cause a distraction. The gears are large and very strong, however, so anything placed between them will eventually get shredded and they will continue to turn again.





blast of flame into the engine room. This isn't too bad for the giant and cyclops, but might fry the gearworks and other creatures there. The vents can only be used once per battle as a move action. When this happens, make a *fiery blast* attack against each creature in the engine room. **Fiery blast +10 vs. PD (each creature in engine room)**—15 fire damage, and 15 ongoing fire damage.

**Sleeping Quarters & Larder:** One room holds a number of large beds with moss-padded mattresses, plus a simple iron table and chairs. The larder holds shelves of underworld fungus and other foodstuffs, and barrels of water and fire ale.

**Workshop & Coal Room:** The workshop is filled with tools and spare parts (gears, cables, pulleys, sharp iron rods) used to craft gearwork creatures. There are currently a pair of dwarves laid out on tables that have iron rods inserted into their legs and a few gears and pulleys screwed into their flesh and bone—they are in process of being crafted into gearworks. If a PC wants some sort of tool, there's an 80% chance they can find it in this chamber.

The coal room is simply that, a room filled with chunks of coal. There's also two wheelbarrows and some shovels.

Knowing the right place to jam up the works requires a successful DC 25 Intelligence check. The obstruction lasts 1d3 rounds. When this happens, the dungeon shell comes to a grinding halt and everyone in the engine room must roll a DC 20 Dexterity check (or normal save for monsters). On a failure, that creature is thrown from its feet and loses its next move action.

Any creature forced into the grinding gears takes 10 damage and is stuck (save ends). Each failed save results in 4d10 damage.

**Control Platform:** The platform has four small levers; all are currently in the down position. From left to right, they are: on/off; faster/slower; furnace on/off; and gas vents open/closed.

**Gas Vents:** There are emergency gas vents in the floor panels that can be opened in case of a buildup in the furnace, releasing a

## MONSTERS

Xeromas is the ruler of this dungeon; the azer and cyclops simply refer to her as "the engineer." She's also a bit mad, something the dungeon's magic has done to her. She'll hang back by the platform initially to let the gearwork dwarves deal with the PCs.

The cyclopes are Xeromas' assistants and are the ones who craft the gearwork creatures in the workshop. With a bellow of rage, each one will lunge forward to try to pound the PCs into scrap.

The gearwork dwarves are completely silent except for the sounds the gears and pistons make as the creatures move forward to attack. They follow the Engineer's orders. Many of them have the fleshy parts badly burned from the furnace fires.



Some of the dwarves, gearwork champions, are outfitted with more weapons and stronger gears than the others. They also have wheels instead of legs and will roll to the front to hack the PCs to pieces.

**Additional Reinforcements:** If you want to challenge the PCs more, there's an apex zorigami (*Bestiary*, page 225) named bonkbokwoddle working with Xeromas to help create the gearworks (it's trying to understand what it means to create life). It's not yet done with its experiments, and so will side with the giant.

#/Level of PCs	Xeromas, Fire Giant Engineer (X)	Cyclops Assistant (A)	Gearwork Champion (C)	Gearwork Dwarf Mook (M)
4 x 4 <sup>th</sup> level	1	1	0	3 (1 mob)
5 x 4 <sup>th</sup> level	1	1	0	11 (1 mob)
6 x 4 <sup>th</sup> level	1	1	1	6 (1 mob)
4 x 5 <sup>th</sup> level	1	2	1	11 (1 mob)
5 x 5 <sup>th</sup> level	1	2	2	15 (2 mobs)
6 x 5 <sup>th</sup> level	1	3	3	10 (1 mob)

## TACTICS

Xeromas will stay back, throwing red-hot gears from an iron satchel at her side. When enemies engage her, she'll use her flaming wrench to send them flying. She'll try to stand close to the control platform, and once she's staggered will throw the gas vent lever as a move action, assuming that her fire resistance will protect her. If she sees an opportunity, she'll try to hurl an enemy into the furnace (but not the gears) as a standard action attack vs. PD (+12). A hit enemy must roll a DC 25 Strength or Dexterity check; on a failure they land near the edge and must roll a save. If they fail that, they fall into the furnace; otherwise they take half damage from the fire and heat. GM, it's your option if you have one of the cyclopes throw a gear across the pit opening to block a PC from escaping....

The cyclopes will try to keep enemies away from Xeromas, turning the hostile eye on anyone dealing cold damage.

The champion and the gearwork dwarves will move forward and attack the closest enemies.

## LOOT

There's a pile of pouches and packs in the barracks that held the dwarves' gear. Among them are 250 gp in coins and jewelry.

Xeromas wears a pair of diamond stud earrings in her upper left ear; each is worth 200 gp.

## Icons

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Dwarf King, Diabolist, Crusader, Prince, or maybe the Archmage or High Druid could use one or more of them to be able to mess with the gears in the back wall without a roll, causing them to stop momentarily. That PC should probably also get some additional benefit and not have to roll to keep their balance.

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Dwarf King, Archmage, Crusader, Lich King, Orc Lord, or Prince could use one or more of them to override the controls of one or more gearwork dwarves, causing them to roll into the furnace, leave the area, or attack themselves or the enemies (a one turn confused effect that targets 1d4 mooks).

## XEROMAS, FIRE GIANT ENGINEER

*She's a bit on the short side for a fire giant, but you might not notice that while you're on fire.*

Large 7<sup>th</sup> level archer [GIANT]

Initiative: +11

Vulnerability: cold

**Flaming wrench +12 vs. AC (2 attacks)—22 damage**

*Natural even hit or miss:* The target also takes 10 ongoing fire damage and pops free from Xeromas as it's knocked backward.

**R: Red-hot iron gear +13 vs. AC—50 damage**

*Natural even hit or miss:* The target also takes 10 ongoing fire damage.

*Fiery escalator:* The fire giant adds the escalation die to its attacks against targets taking ongoing fire damage.

*Resist fire 16+:* When a fire attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 16+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

## Nastier Specials

*Overgear:* Twice per battle as a move action, Xeromas can grant a gearwork creature next to her double damage with its next hit that battle as she winds its gears. After the hit, the gearwork creature falls apart and drops (best-used on mooks).

AC 24  
PD 20  
MD 16

HP 205



## CYCLOPS ASSISTANT

*Single-eyed, single-minded, and furiously devoted to their Engineer.*

Large 5<sup>th</sup> level troop [GIANT]

Initiative: +6

**Deadly maul strike +9 vs. AC**—32 damage

*Natural roll is above target's Constitution:* The target also takes 5 ongoing fire damage from the heat of the hammer.

*Miss:* 16 damage.

**Cyclopean glare:** As a quick action once per turn, the cyclops can glare at a nearby enemy within sight. Until the start of the cyclops next turn, that creature takes a –2 penalty to all defenses, or to saves (cyclops' choice).

AC	21	
PD	20	HP 140
MD	15	

## GEARWORK CHAMPION

*This gearwork dwarf has small wheels for feet and there's a multitude of nasty weapons fused to its arms and torso. Its only purpose is to inflict pain.*

Triple-strength 5<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [CONSTRUCT]

Initiative: +8

**Blades, pokers, and hammers +10 vs. AC (3 attacks)**—15 damage

*Natural 14+:* The target takes 5 extra damage from a blade that springs out. (Don't include this effect if you roll a higher effect.)

*Natural 16+:* The target takes 5 ongoing fire damage from a red-hot weapon. (Don't include this effect if you roll a higher effect.)

*Natural 18+:* The target is dazed (save ends) as hot oil spurts into its face.

*First miss each turn:* The champion can reroll the attack as a new weapon springs out of it.

**Fire resistance 14+:** When a fire attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 14+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

**Sprung gear:** If the champion rolls a natural 1 with an attack, it takes 15 damage.

AC	21	
PD	19	HP 210
MD	14	

## GEARWORK DWARF

*The dwarf's body is riddled with gears, pulleys, pistons, and iron rods driven through its flesh and bone. The thing moves in jerky starts, but the iron shovel or poker fused to its arm looks dangerous enough.*

5<sup>th</sup> level mook [CONSTRUCT]

Initiative: +6

**Hot shovel or poker +9 vs. AC**—10 damage

*Natural 16+:* The target takes 5 ongoing fire damage.

**Fire resistance 12+:** When a fire attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 12+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

**Sprung gear:** If the gearwork rolls a natural 1 with an attack, it takes 5 damage.

AC	22	
PD	18	HP 20 (mook)
MD	13	

**Mook:** Kill one gearwork dwarf mook for every 20 damage you deal to the mob.

### NEXT STEPS

Assuming that the point is to stop the dungeon, if the PCs messed with the gears or furnace at all, shortly after the battle the gearwork dungeon will begin to shake and shutter. They will only have a few minutes to escape before the place shakes itself apart... unless you want to keep the structure as a future stronghold, hideout, or weird location in the underworld. In that case, the dwarves will claim it if the PCs don't. Either way, the living dungeon has been stopped.

If the PCs are allied with icons who despise the Dwarf King and are putting "A Wrench in the Works" of Stonehelm, treat controlling the dungeon well enough to crash into Stonehelm as a DC 25 skill check. If the check fails, the dungeon stops short.

## THE GEARWORK DUNGEON STORY ENDINGS

Here are outcomes for each story opening, detailing what success or failure might mean.

If the PCs did face all three battles, remember to give them a full heal-up.

### CALLING ALL FAVORS

**Success:** The PCs assault the gearwork dungeon and stop it and the engineer controlling it. The rising dungeon is no longer a threat. In thanks for heeding the call and repaying past favors, each 5 the PCs roll for the Dwarf King is a 6 instead until they level up.



**Failure:** The gearwork dungeon continues on its path, turning Stonehelm's cavern into a pile of rubble and killing Lord Rondo in the process. The Dwarf King acknowledges the PCs' failure, and his people tell them that they still owe a favor to the icon and the next time they'd better not fail. All 6s rolled for the Dwarf King are 5s instead for the next two sets of icon relationship rolls.

## A WRENCH IN THE WORKS

**Success:** The PCs either direct the dungeon to partially collapse Stonehelm, or they manage to stop the gearwork dungeon from destroying the town. In the latter case, they claim the honor having saved the town, but not in the Dwarf King's name, spreading tales of how he failed his vassals. The PCs are each rewarded with one-shot magic items and a 5 with one icon of their choice that lasts until they use it or level up.

**Failure:** The PCs fail to stop the dungeon. Luckily for Stonehelm, the Dwarf King's engineers show up and manage to stop the dungeon before it can do any real harm. Now the structure is a new vault in the town dedicated to the King and glorifying his name. The PCs are seen as failures by those who sent them to the dungeon and the next time they roll icon dice, they must reroll each 5 or 6 once.

## ONE WAY OUT

**Success:** The PCs overcome the dungeon and its engineer, keeping Stonehelm safe. They also ride the dungeon out to safety, either destroying the place or parking it within Stonehelm cave as a new hall for the Dwarf King's folk. Lord Rondo Stonehelm rewards them with a champion-tier magic item in the name of the King, and each PC gains a 6 with the Dwarf King that lasts until they use it or level up.

**Failure:** The PCs are forced to flee to a different section of tunnels on their way up toward Stonehelm. The earthquakes caused by the dungeon shift and destroy many of the underworld tunnels in the area. They're still trapped, and now must deal with a new danger that was awakened during the collapse.

## THE STONE DIVINERS

**Success:** The PCs succeed in putting a stop to the dungeon, even if the second team ended up failing. They are able to divert the dungeon to an unused cavern and power it down for the Stone Diviners to study. In exchange, the Diviners give them an earth node crystal that is a powerful epic-tier wondrous item (GM's call on its power; default is that it allows them to summon an earth elemental servant as per the druid once per day). They also have need of the group to explore an ancient dark elf den said to be emanating demonic magic.

**Failure:** The PCs fail and the town of Stonehelm is partially destroyed before a third dwarven strike team paid for by the Dwarf King's purse puts a stop to it. The PCs are blamed for the damage, and the Stone Diviners ridiculed for their poor choice. The PCs must reroll all 5s and 6s for the Dwarf King and any heroic icons until they change two successes into failures.

## BATTLE SCENE CONNECTIONS

The stories from this set of battle scenes can lead to other scenes:

- *Escort the Relic* (Priestess): After stopping the living dungeon and saving Stonehelm, the PCs encounter a group of archeologists in the upper reaches of the underworld who have just made a discovery. They now need to escort a relic they uncovered back to the Cathedral.
- *Conquer & Defend* (Orc Lord): The lord of Stonehelm thanks the PCs for their help. He also asks for their help again. He and his people must deal with the effects caused by the living dungeon, but he has had reports of trouble at one of the landside keeps that guard entrance to his realm. He'll reward them richly if they travel to Tenrock Hold and help the dwarves there.





# DWARF KING: STONECUTTER'S AXE

LEVEL RANGE: 7-8



The theme of this set of battles is exploring an ancient dwarven ruin in the underworld to recover a dwarven artifact of power. This set of battle scenes works best while the PCs are in the underworld, or while visiting Anvil, Forge, or another dwarven city.

Recently, a group of

adventurers exploring the wild underworld discovered the ruins of a dwarven outpost while they were on other business. Their report has garnered a lot of interest, because the outpost bore symbols of Lost Garzendahl, a stronghold of one of the dwarven dukes of old long destroyed. Knowing the outpost's location, the Dwarf King's senior advisors believe they can now find the hidden entrance to the stronghold. This is particularly exciting, because the Lord of Garzendahl was the keeper of *Stonecutter's Axe*, a weapon of renown.

As word of the discovery gets out, the PCs get caught up in the search to find the lost stronghold and explore it in hopes of recovering the axe. The only problem, of course, is that the stronghold was sacked long ago, and other, more dangerous creatures have taken over, including a fire giant champion and his allies.

## STONECUTTER'S AXE STORY OPENINGS

- **For the Glory of the Dwarf King:** Garzendahl has possibly been discovered, and the Dwarf King wishes to reclaim it under his banner. One of the PCs with a positive or conflicted relationship with the icon is contacted by one of the King's relatives. They need talented heroes to seek out the stronghold and search it for *Stonecutter's Axe*, a powerful dwarven weapon, before any of the King's enemies can try to thwart him. The PCs will be well rewarded for recovery of the axe.
- **Foiled Again!:** Rumors are running rampant through the area thanks to a talkative adventurer. She and her group discovered an outpost linked to lost Garzendahl, and the stronghold must be nearby. The dwarves are mustering resources to send a team to the site to look for a magic axe. One of the PCs with a negative or conflicted relationship with the Dwarf

King learns the location of the outpost and has information from a contact on how to get to Garzendahl from there. If they're quick, the PCs can reach it first and loot the place. If the artifact, *Stonecutter's Axe*, is there, it would be a huge win against the Dwarf King, or a good way to leverage the King to gain certain advantages in exchange for the item.

- **The Axe Rush:** While resting at a dwarven settlement in the underworld or a surface location near an entrance to the underworld, a rumor spreads like wildfire through the place. An outpost of lost Garzendahl was discovered! Now a handful of other adventuring groups at the settlement are all gearing up to make a play to search the ruins near the outpost, which are rumored to hold *Stonecutter's Axe*. Luckily, the PCs were about to head out, so they should have a few hours start on the others.

## ALTERNATE ICONS



**The Three:** Garzendahl is the rumored lair of a rogue red dragon who fled the Three's wrath. That dragon's head is still desired, greatly. The PCs are enlisted to follow the rumors coming out of a dwarven outpost about the stronghold being discovered. If the dragon, Karlag, still resides there, they need to put an end to him and bring his head to representatives of the Three. His hoard and other favors are offered as an incentive.



**Orc Lord:** One of the PCs with a positive or conflicted relationship with the icon has contacts among the dwarves who report the discovery of Garzendahl. The Orc Lord offers a dwarf's fortune to the PCs for getting there before the dwarves and recovering *Stonecutter's Axe*, an artifact rumored to be in the ruins.

## ICONS IN PLAY

Characters that have relationships (and story-guide advantages) with the Dwarf King, Orc Lord, the Three, and maybe the Prince should be able to shine in these battle scenes. Moreso than PCs with other icon relationships, feel free to give such PCs extra knowledge about the opposition, make checks to pull off fun actions the players might suggest, and use their advantages to particularly good effect, such as negating or bypassing some of the advantages or abilities of the enemies.



# STONECUTTER'S AXE OVERVIEW

After reaching the newly discovered outpost, the PCs follow clues or directions that lead to the back door to Lost Garzendahl, except that it's guarded by a band of drow who have been paid to keep out unwanted visitors. In Battle 1, the PCs must overcome the dark elves to gain entrance.

Once inside, the PCs make their way through the ancient halls filled with dust and cobwebs before entering an area with natural volcanic activity that indicates the place is inhabited. Near a lava pool and falls and across a stone bridge, a group of ogres are busy at work in a chamber whose lava pools are used as the front door by the current masters of the caverns. As the PCs try to deal with the ogre bucket brigadiers, free elemental spirits among the lava falls join in the fun in Battle 2.

Finally, the PCs reach the Hall of Leadership and attached vault, only to discover that a band of fire giants and their red dragon ally have no plans to give up the fortress without a fight in a double-strength battle.

GM, feel free to expand upon these battles by including battles with competing groups or other monsters on the way to Garzendahl, additional chambers with obstacles, traps, or enemies within the fortress, or encounters with dwarven or drow NPCs who might have useful knowledge (or warnings) about Garzendahl at the start.

The battles outlined here can take place over a few minutes or hours, depending on how big you want Garzendahl to be. Since the Dwarf King is in play, the enemies presented here are

creatures of the underworld and classic enemies of the dwarves—giants, ogres, drow, and dragons.

See story endings after the final battle for options on what happens after the PCs finish the last battle.

## BATTLE I: THE BACK DOOR

*Once you reached the outpost, following the clues and patching together the various directions you were given has led you to a mid-size cavern full of stalagmites that sparkle with mineral veins and dripping water. The cave entrance you're in leads down a short ramp to the ground level, where a large and very sturdy iron door waits. Another ramp up the far side of the cavern leads to a second exit from this cave. The water trickling from small stalactites drips to form the large lower spires, some higher than a man, before pooling in a low spot in the room and then draining away over the edge of a chasm that splits part of the chamber.*

### LOCATION DESCRIPTION

The cavern is roughly 90 feet in diameter, with a few small alcoves that bend out of sight of the cave where the PCs are at. The stalagmites are large enough to provide cover, or even make for opportunities to do dicey moves, while the chasm is deep and wide enough to be dangerous. The pool is harmless and the water drinkable.

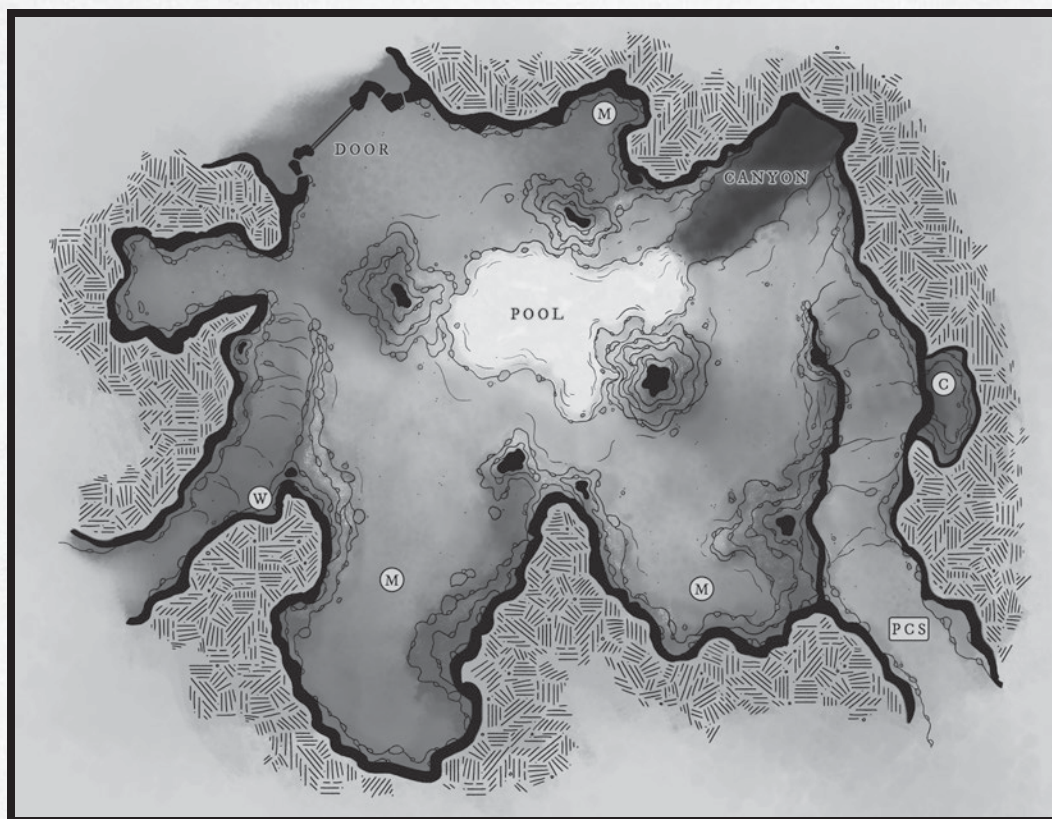
At first glance, the chamber looks empty. That's because the drow guarding the door are hiding. Some are in the nooks or just out of sight by the far exit, but there's also a cave the PCs can't see from their vantage; it delves into the cave wall directly below their location and the ramp down. A drow rider and its spider mount wait there.

The door is closed and might require some effort to get through. Luckily, sounds of battle won't carry much beyond it.

### TERRAIN & TRAPS

**Narrow Chasm:** The chasm is 12 feet wide and 25 feet long as it extends into the cave and partially into the wall. It's also 60 feet deep. Anyone falling in (or thrown in) will take 4d12 damage as they land among broken rocks and refuse thrown into the crack by dwarves of old and drow more recently. Climbing the walls back to the cave is a DC 25 Strength check, with failure meaning a slide back to the bottom for 2d12 damage. It takes two moves (but only one roll) to get to the top without magic or special movement.

**Stalagmites:** The stone spires range from 3 to 8 feet high and 3 to 6 feet in diameter





at the base. Most are slick with dripping water and minerals, so climbing or maneuvering on them requires a successful DC 20 Dexterity check to pull off anything dicey (except for these dark elves, who've trained to use their silk lines on them).

**Ramps & Pool:** The cave opening and ramp where the PCs enter the chamber is 20 feet above the ground and angles down to the right. The ramp on the far side climbs to a height of 30 feet before exiting. There's a small alcove there where drow can hide out of sight.

The pool is only a few inches deep and thick with minerals, but it is clean if drunk. The area the pool takes up and a few feet around it are fairly slick, possibly providing an opportunity to send someone into the chasm easier (+2 to a check).

**Iron Door:** The door is 12 feet high and 8 feet wide, with arrow slits in the stone around it. It's 4 inches thick and well made to withstand a battering. Luckily, the mechanism for locking it was broken long ago during an invasion, so it isn't locked.

## MONSTERS

The drow guarding the back door are mercenaries hired by the giants for the job. They are all males who have left or been exiled from their home, an underworld drow enclave in the area. They keep a good watch on the area and can hear the sounds of approaching creatures easily. Unless the PCs specifically say they are moving stealthily, or have a scout out front, the drow may surprise them when they enter the chamber (see Ambush in **Tactics**). If the PCs are sneaking, each of them (or the scout) must roll a DC 30 Dexterity check; if at least half of them (or the scout) succeed, they can hear the dark elves talking to each other in the chamber ahead and ambush them.

The drow cavalry is in the cave under the PCs. The mage is just out of sight in the alcove by the far exit. The mercenaries are hidden in the alcoves. None of them wears any insignia, and their equipment looks worn.

## THE DOOR AS AN OBSTACLE

After the fight, if you want to break out some problem solving at the back door, feel free. Perhaps the door is locked with ingenious dwarven skill and it will only open if the right password is given, the correct sequence of runes are pushed, or some other requirement is met. If your players like that sort of thing, here's your chance to give it to them. It also is a good opportunity for someone to use an icon advantage to remember the password or code.

As a default, you could tell the players that there's a set of runes for the full dwarven alphabet on the door, and the runes are on squares that look like they can be depressed. The passphrase is "Stonecutter." Any wrong answer should probably send a barrage of bolts, a tumble of boulders, or poisonous gas into the area. Or come up with your own puzzle and consequences.

**Additional Reinforcements:** If you want to challenge the PCs more, have a black pudding (core rulebook, page 241) ooze up from the chasm when the escalation die reaches 2+. The drow on the ground will fall back, letting it attack advancing PCs.

#/Level of PCs	Drow Cavalry (C)	Drow Mercenary (M)	Drow Wizard (W)
4 x 7 <sup>th</sup> level	1	2	0
5 x 7 <sup>th</sup> level	1	2	1
6 x 7 <sup>th</sup> level	1	3	1
4 x 8 <sup>th</sup> level	1	5	1
5 x 8 <sup>th</sup> level	2	5	1
6 x 8 <sup>th</sup> level	2	5	2

## TACTICS

**Ambush:** When at least one PC moves into the cave to the point where they can see back into the overhang below the entrance or into one of the nooks, the drow will strike (assuming the PCs didn't discover them). Each PC must roll a DC 30 Wisdom check, with anyone moving into the cave gaining a +2 bonus. If at least half of them succeed, they are not surprised. If surprised, the drow cavalry will charge out and attack before initiative is rolled.

The cavalry will move to engage someone in the room, possibly with its spider mount climbing up the wall onto the ramp to isolate whoever moved into the area. If staggered, it will try to disengage and climb up a wall after attacking to avoid melee attacks, then move back down the next round. The mount can be attacked separately.

The mercenaries will rush out of hiding and move near the chasm to attack across it. They are experts with their line-knives (barbed knife tied to a strong silk line), and know how to use the lines to pull targets off balance, or secure themselves for dicey moves with the intent of knocking a few PCs into the chasm. When a creature is pulled or knocked into the chasm, it can roll a save. On a failure, it falls in.

The wizard will stay at the top of the far ramp (far away from the opposite entrance) as long as possible. He will try to blast the PCs while they are grouped in the cave entrance, using *fireball* first, then *force bolts* on nearer enemies. When he starts his turn in sight of the PCs, he'll attack then use his move action to retreat to the alcove out of sight.

Note that by expending their drow racial ability, *cruel*, each drow in the battle can use *umbral caul*. If there are five mercenaries, one of them will use it each round while avoiding melee.

**Umbral caul:** As long as at least one drow uses a standard action each round to maintain the supernatural darkness, each non-drow creature in the battle becomes dazed (save ends) whenever it rolls a natural 1–5 with an attack roll.

## LOOT

This group of mercenaries is still semi-flush from their last payment and have 400 gp in gold and silver dwarven tower stacks among them. The wizard carries a *Potion of Spider Climbing* (as per the druid spell at 5<sup>th</sup> level).





## Icons

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Dwarf King, Elf Queen, or Prince of Shadows, could use one or more of them to notice some telltale sign of the hidden mercenaries instead of getting ambushed.

A PC that has relationship advantages with any icon could use one or more of them to bypass the door if you choose to make it an impediment.

## DROW CAVALRY

*So far this job has been nothing but waiting in a cave. It's good you showed up as the entertainment!*

*Double-strength 9<sup>th</sup> level wrecker* [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +14

**Glass-tipped lance +14 vs. AC—75 (90/25) damage**, and the target pops free from the cavalry and is weakened (save ends)

*Limited use:* 1/battle, during a surprise round or the first round of battle.

**Spider saber +14 vs. AC—75 (90/25) damage**

*Expert spider-rider:* While mounted, the drow cavalry deals +15 damage with its attacks, hit or miss, against unmounted enemies.

*Mounted combatant:* Reduce the drow cavalry's attack damage by 50 when it's not riding a spider.

*Spider mount:* Whenever the drow cavalry rolls a natural 1–10 on an attack roll, its spider mount acts independently, choosing one of the following options:

**Bite**—The spider makes a *bite* attack.

**Jump & Scuttle**—The spider and its rider pop free from all enemies and can move somewhere nearby.

**Web**—The spider makes a *web* attack.

AC 25

PD 23

MD 18

HP 270



## SPIDER MOUNT

*It's larger than a horse and has fangs the size of steak knives. It looks eerily intelligent.*

6<sup>th</sup> level troop [BEAST]

Initiative: +15 (or same as rider if it has one)

**Bite +11 vs. AC**—15 damage, and 10 ongoing poison damage

**C: Web +11 vs. PD (up to 2 nearby enemies in a group)**—The target is stuck (save ends)

*Wall-crawler:* A spider mount can climb on ceilings and walls as easily as it moves on the ground, and so can its rider.

*Uncontrolled:* A riderless spider mount will eventually run away. At the start of the spider's turn roll a d4; if you roll less than the escalation die, the mount flees.

AC	22	
PD	16	HP 90
MD	20	

## DROW MERCENARY

*If you met this elf in a bar or in a forest somewhere, he'd probably still try to kill you.*

8<sup>th</sup> level troop [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +14

**Scimitar and knife +13 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—20 damage

**R: Line-knife +13 vs. AC**—35 damage, and the target must roll a DC 25 Strength or Dexterity check as the mercenary tries to pull it off balance; on a failure, the mercenary can pull the target about 5 feet (doesn't provoke opportunity attacks)

*Rope expert:* The mercenary can use its line to pull off a dicey move using terrain it knows. For example, it could try to trip an interceptor, spin around a stalagmite to footslam an enemy, or grab an enemy. Pulling off the move requires a successful line-knife attack roll or an easy save (6+) as a standard action or move action, depending on what the action is.

AC	24	
PD	21	HP 140
MD	19	

## DROW WIZARD

*Waiting in ambush was a chance to catch up on her reading. All spells now prepared.*

10<sup>th</sup> level caster [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +12

**Poisoned blade +14 vs. AC**—30 damage, and 10 ongoing poison damage

**R: Fireball +15 vs. PD (1d4 nearby or far away enemies in a group)**—44 fire damage

*Limited use:* 2/battle.

**R: Force bolts +15 vs. PD (one nearby enemy, or 1d2 + 1 nearby enemies in a group)**—60 force damage against one enemy, or 40 force damage against multiple targets

*Limited use:* 3/battle, when the escalation die is odd.

**C: Forceblast +15 vs. PD (one nearby enemy)**—55 force damage, and each enemy engaged with the mage pops free from it as they are pushed back by a bubble of force

*Versatile spellcaster:* The drow mage can also cast each of these spells once per battle (as per the core book spell at 5<sup>th</sup> level): *feather fall*, *levitate*, *invisibility*.

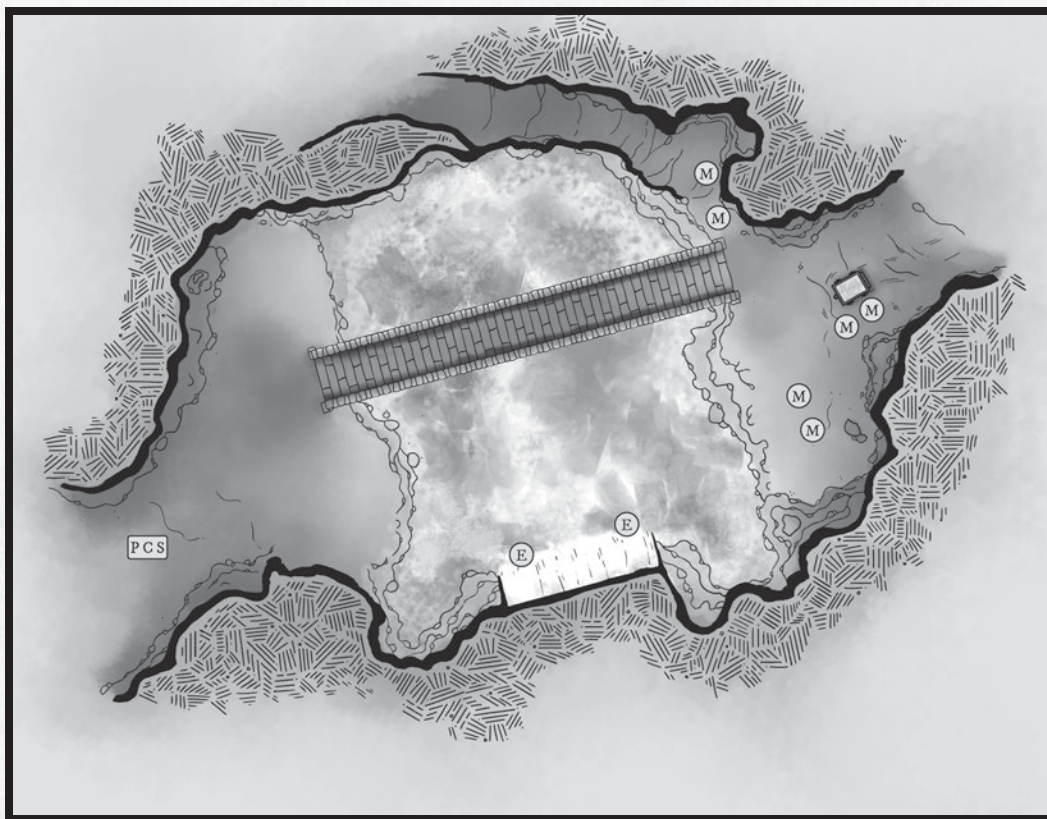
AC	25	
PD	19	HP 208
MD	25	

### NEXT STEPS

Once the PCs get past the door, they will find a defensive area designed for fighting invaders as they pass through the doors, with a broken door mechanism (or not if you kept the door locked). There are dwarf skeletons and rusty armor strewn about, but it looks like they were fighting a force behind them if anyone checks. Beyond the hall are more corridors, some storage rooms and barracks, and one hallway that leads away from the area. Give the PCs a quick rest as they explore.

After a few minutes of travel, the PCs will feel the air warming, hear a dull roar, and see a wavering glow ahead; it's coming from the lava falls. When they're ready to proceed, go to **Battle 2: The Lava Bridge**.





## BATTLE 2: THE LAVA BRIDGE

*As you reach a large stone archway, you see the source of heat and light. A steady stream of lava pours out of an opening in the wall of the large cavern ahead. The molten rock cascades down to a pool perhaps a hundred feet down. Crossing the pool on arched supports is a wide stone bridge about forty feet away from the falls. On a ledge on the far side of the bridge you see many large figures in heavy leathers lowering steel buckets on wire cables down to the pool and hauling up the lava, then putting the buckets onto a small four-wheel cart—ogres! Besides another large archway that exits the far ledge, you realize that there's also a ramp on that side that leads upward, circling the cave before exiting out the roof.*

### LOCATION DESCRIPTION

The cavern is shaped like a bean and 150 feet long and 80 feet wide. The ceiling extends a few hundred feet upward, and gets very hot from the rising heat that lingers there. The bridge crosses the pool, which is 100 feet down and fills the bottom of the cavern. The lava in the pool is more molten right under the falls, but the rock has solidified on the pool in places farther away from it. The molten rock drains away out of an 8-foot wide stone channel not far from the bottom of the falls. The bridge is 80 feet long and 10 feet wide, arching upward at the center. It's still in good shape (dwarven-made after all).

This lava chamber is also the exit to the main entrance (the front door) of the fortress if the PCs travel upward. The only problem is that the giants have altered the structure of the caverns

above and that path now passes through areas filled with lava, steam, and heated gases, causing fire damage every round while traveling through those areas (GM choice on how much), so unless the PCs all have fire protection, it's probably not a good immediate option for them to take. The hallway exiting the far ledge has obvious signs of passage (wheel tracks and occasional lava bucket spills).

The ogres are a work crew for the fire giants. They collect the magma for the giants, bringing it to the Hall of Leadership to fill a pool there that keeps the hall warm (and stays magically molten until the giants use it for work or play). The ogres' orders are to attack and/or capture any intruders they find.

But this scene has one additional threat. A few fire elementals are currently playing in the lava falls. They will attack any creature that burns (like the PCs) that is crossing the bridge. So far, they haven't noticed or bothered with the ogres on the far ledge, but movement on the bridge will draw them.

### TERRAIN & TRAPS

**Stone Bridge:** The bridge has flared edges that extend upward about 3 feet to help keep people from going over the edge. Anyone standing (or hanging) along the edge or looking over is hit by a wave of heat rising from the pool and takes 10 fire damage at the start of each round exposed this way. The bridge is well-made and strong, making it difficult even for ogres to bring down with errant misses.

Anyone going over the edge (or falling into the pool from the far ledge for that matter) will take 4d12 falling damage, plus exposure to the lava (see below).

**Lava Falls & Pool:** The falls pour out of a 30-foot opening and cascade down in a sheet a few feet thick. The opening is 50 feet above the bridge in the cave wall to the right. The pool fills the bottom of the cave and is roughly 90 x 70 feet across. Some parts of the pool away from the falls have formed a hot, rocky crust on the top.

Any creature exposed to the lava falls or pool takes 25 fire damage, and 20 ongoing fire damage each round without fire protection.

**Far Ledge & Ramp:** The far ledge is 40 feet wide and 60 feet long, with the archway leading away from it. The ramp begins at the ledge and climbs up around the cavern toward an exit in the roof. The heat and gases of the cavern pools near the ceiling and streams upward through that exit, making it a hot climb.



There are dwarven runes on the walls next to the ramp and the archway. The runes near the ramp indicate it's the path to the main entrance. The ones by the archway indicate that it leads to the Hall of Leadership.

**Lava Bucket Cart:** The cart is made from iron with iron wheels. Currently there are 8 large buckets (cask size) filled with lava in it. Any dicey moves using the cart require a successful DC 25 skill check. Anyone grabbing a bucket without hand protection will take 15 fire damage since the iron buckets are very hot (not quite red hot though). The ogres have heavy leather gauntlets to protect them.

## MONSTERS

The fire elementals will initially take the form of winged flyers (bat, phoenix, hawk, or whatever suits you) and coast away from the falls to land on the bridge and attack. Then they switch to flame form, humanoid form, or whatever you prefer.

The ogres are working at pulling up buckets of lava, but they will notice the ruckus on the bridge and come running. For flavor, you could add a few extra mooks on the ledge that get attacked by an extra fire elemental, all of which don't get involved in the PCs' battle.

**Additional Reinforcements:** If you want to challenge the PCs more, have a fire giant (Battle 3, or core rulebook, page 227) wander down from the ramp above on his way to the Hall of Leadership. He will use ranged attacks as he descends the ramp.



## TACTICS

The elementals normally attack the closest PC, but they will focus on someone hurting them, especially with cold attacks. Unless you want to give them the *flight* nastier special, these elementals can only glide from the falls to the bridge, not actually fly.

The ogres will attack those closest to their side of the bridge, especially any PCs not engaged by elementals (not wanting to attract their attention). Feel free to replace their javelin attacks with hurled lava buckets or coils of red hot wire for flavor.

Although not part of their stat block, feel free to have one or two of the ogres give up a normal melee attack to try to use its strength to hurl a PC off the bridge. Use its normal attack to see if the ogre gets a grip (no damage), then have the target make a DC 25 Strength check. On a failure, that PC is hurled over the edge (see **Terrain & Tactics**). Or if you're feeling nice, let a thrown PC roll a save; on a success, they catch the edge and are hanging

#/Level of PCs	Epic Fire Elemental (E)	Ogre Mook (M)*
4 x 7 <sup>th</sup> level	2	3 (1 mob)
5 x 7 <sup>th</sup> level	2	5 (1 mob)
6 x 7 <sup>th</sup> level	3	5 (1 mob)
4 x 8 <sup>th</sup> level	4	9 (2 mobs)
5 x 8 <sup>th</sup> level	5	9 (1 mob)
6 x 8 <sup>th</sup> level	6	12 (1 mob)

\* Each ogre can use its nastier special.



(requiring a move action and DC 20 Strength skill check to pull themselves back up while taking heat damage).

## LOOT

The elementals have nothing of value and simply turn to flames that stream back to the lava when they die. The ogres have a few pieces of scavenged dwarven jewelry worth a total of 150 gp.

## Icons

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Archmage, Diabolist, Elf Queen, or High Druid could use one or more of them to encourage an elemental to spend a round or two frying ogres.

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Diabolist, High Druid, or the Three could use one or more advantages to survive a fall into the lava pool, instead riding the heat currents to safety, gaining momentary fire resistance, or some similar advantage that lets them resist the fire.

## ERIC FIRE ELEMENTAL

9<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [ELEMENTAL]

Initiative: +15

**Whipping flames +14 vs. PD**—40 fire damage, and 20 ongoing fire damage to a random nearby enemy (including an unconscious one)

**Melee burn:** When an enemy makes a natural odd melee attack roll against the fire elemental, that attacker takes 3d12 fire damage.

**Resist fire 18+:** When a fire attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 18+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

**Wildfire transformation:** Roll a d6 at the start of each of the fire elemental's turns. If you roll less than or equal to the escalation die, it shifts into wildfire form until the end of the battle. While in this form, it gains the following improved attack (and you stop rolling *wildfire transformation* checks):

**C: Elemental wildfire +14 vs. PD (one nearby enemy OR each nearby enemy taking ongoing fire damage)**—55 fire damage, and 20 ongoing fire damage

*Miss:* 20 ongoing fire damage.

## Nastier Specials

**Flight (Archmage):** Fire elementals that can fly are rare. This one can, and it only touches the ground to set something ablaze.

AC	24	
PD	24	HP 166
MD	21	

## OGRE BUCKET BRIGADIER

*Dangerous work for monsters who might wish they had stayed in their living dungeon.*

Large 9<sup>th</sup> level mook [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +11

**Ogre-sized chopper +14 vs. AC**—50 damage

*Miss:* 20 damage.

**R: Ogre-sized javelin +14 vs. AC (one nearby or far away enemy)**—20 damage

**C: Sloppy magma bucket +12 vs. PD (1d4 random nearby enemies on the ogres' side of the bridge)**—42 fire damage

*Miss:* Ogre mook takes 5 fire damage.

*Limited use:* 2/battle for the entire mob.

**Incidental damage:** When an enemy makes an opportunity attack against the ogre minion, hit or miss, that enemy takes 4d6 damage.

**Double-strength mook:** The ogre minion mook counts as two 9<sup>th</sup> level mooks when you're building battles.

## Nastier Specials

**Punching above its weight:** Once per round, the ogre minion mob can take 5d10 damage to reroll an attack (a member of the mob takes one for the team).

AC	24	
PD	23	HP 80 (mook)
MD	19	

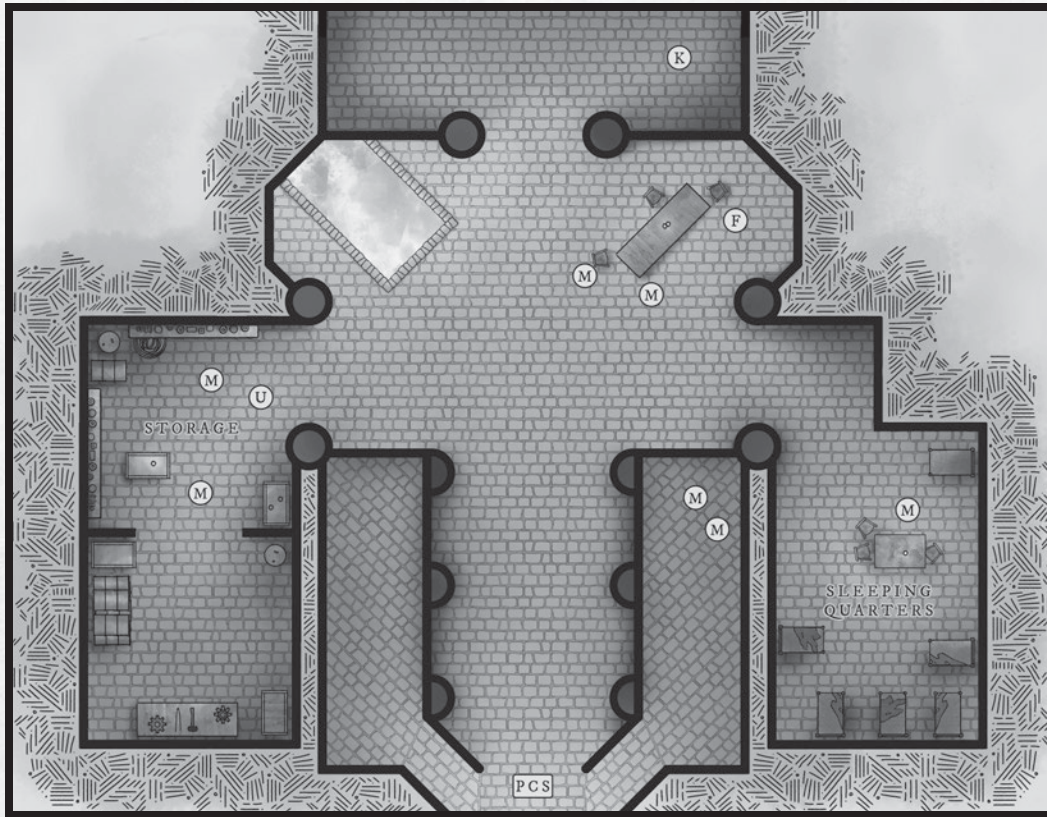
**Mook:** Kill one ogre minion mook for every 80 damage you deal to the mob.

## NEXT STEPS

There are two options from this cavern, but the axe (and the fire giants) are through the archway and not up the ramp. There are two clues to help the PCs realize this: the dwarven runes indicating the Hall of Leadership, and the fact that the upward route becomes very hot and deadly (and possibly filled with gases that make them start to fall unconscious). If you want to expand the adventure, feel free to make the upward track merely uncomfortable instead of lethal. Then the PCs can face more giants and other enemies that have taken over the fortress as they make their way to the front entrance.

When the PCs move into the passage through the archway, they will eventually come to the Hall of Leadership and vault. Go to **Battle 3: The Hall of Leadership**.





## BATTLE 3: THE HALL OF LEADERSHIP

*You turn a corner in the wide corridor you've been following to see more wavering light ahead and feel warmth washing over you. Ahead lies a large hall supported by three tall, round pillars flanking each side of the chamber. Ramps lead up to a low balcony attached to the pillars. Beyond them the room flares outward and there's a long, low stone table with a few much larger iron chairs scattered around it. To the left is a pool of lava in a pit dug into the stone floor, which gives off the light and heat. Three wide archways, each supported by a pair of sculpted dwarves with raised swords, exit the room. You see a bald, black-skinned fire giant lounging in one chair, laughing at a pair of ogres standing nearby as they toss the "hot potato," a cooled ball of lava, back and forth.*

### LOCATION DESCRIPTION

The PCs have found the Hall of Leadership, the command room for the ancient dwarven fortress, which is now a lounge and throne room of sorts for Urstoll Firebrand, a fire giant champion, and his troops. Urstoll and the other giants are currently out of sight through the archway on the left in a storeroom gathering ale and cheese. There are a few more ogres in the sleeping room through the arch to the right, plus two who are snoozing on the upper balcony on the right out of sight. Finally, Urstoll has a powerful ally, the red dragon Karlag the Destroyer, who is lairing

on a pile of dwarven stacks in the chamber beyond the archway at the end of the room (also out of sight).

The chamber is 120 feet long and 80 feet wide, but the back section flares outward to 110 feet. It also has vaulted 50-foot ceilings. A ramp on either side of the entrance near the PCs leads up to a balcony on each side of the room (a place for the dwarven troops to see and hear their commander). Each archway is 15 feet high, framed by the raised swords of the dwarf warrior statues that are carved into the rock on either side.

Toward the end of the chamber and in front of the far archway is a 20 x 8 stone table that's 3 feet high (dwarven size), plus three large iron-wrought chairs (giant sized). To the left is a 15 x 10 pool of lava (once a natural spring now changed by the giants).

### TERRAIN & TRAPS

**Balconies & Pillars:** Each 20 x 60 foot balcony is 20 feet high with a ramp leading up to it near the PCs. It is supported by the pillars and connected to the outer walls. The balcony could potentially offer some cover from attacks from those below.

The pillars are round and 8 feet in diameter. Each is carved with the likeness of a muscular dwarf supporting the balcony on its shoulders with stonework scenes of dwarven triumphs of old on the sides. Thanks to the carvings, climbing the pillars to the balcony is easy, requiring a DC 15 Strength or Dexterity check.

**Lava Pool:** The ogres fill the rectangular pool with buckets of lava, and it has been magically heated to keep the lava in semi-liquid form without cooling. The giants use the molten stone for various amusements and projects, so it requires refilling. There are a few rock-filled buckets lying in the corner that solidified before their contents could be emptied by slow ogres.

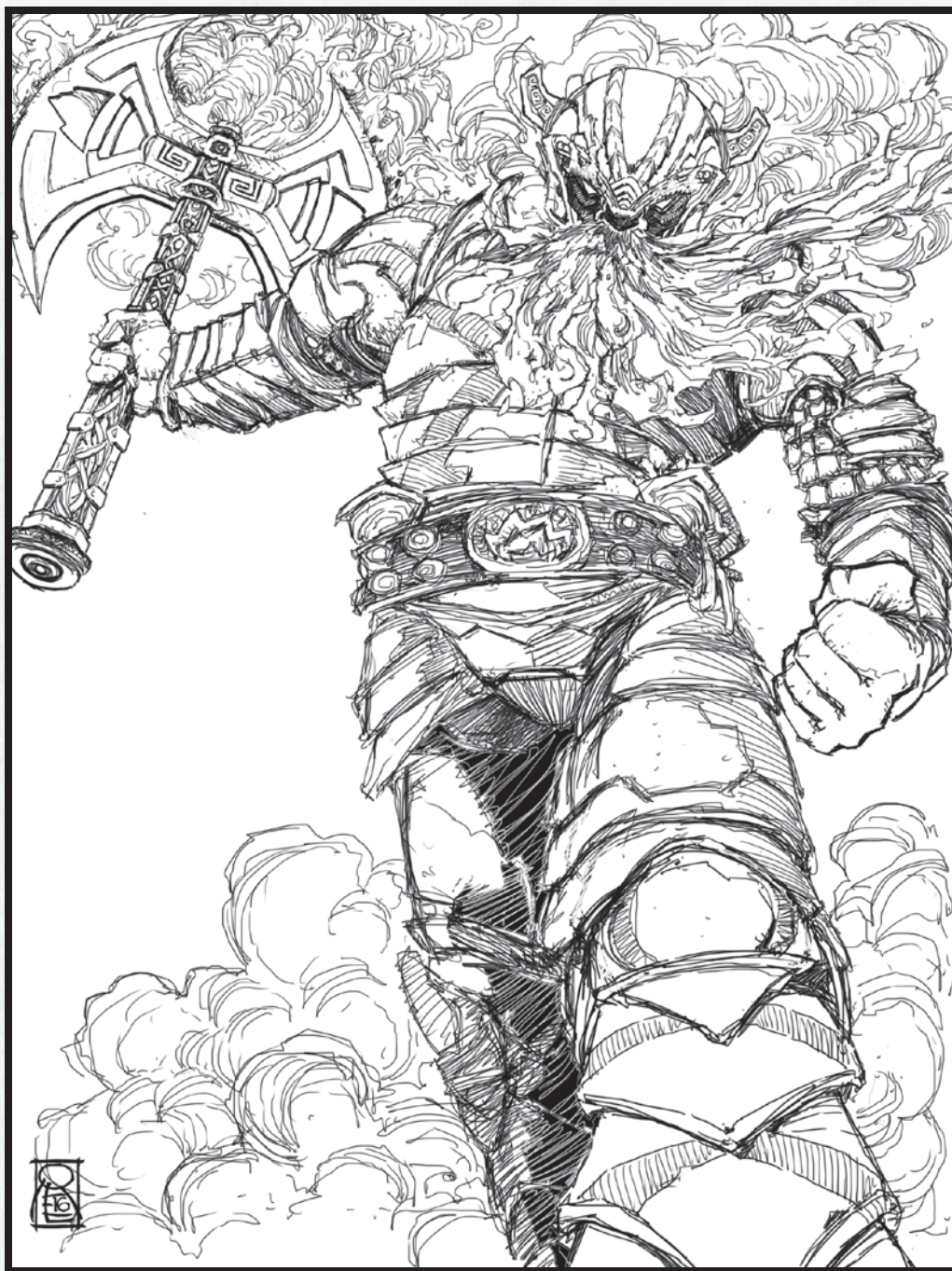
Anyone entering the pool takes 25 fire damage, plus 20 ongoing fire damage. The giants and dragon are immune to the heat, however, due to their fire resistance.

**Table & Chairs:** This furniture might offer some cover or concealment, and yields opportunities for PCs to gain some height or pull off dicey moves (no check for just leaping off of them for attacks; DC 20 to 25 for other maneuvers).

**Archways:** There are three 15-foot high 20-foot wide archways, each formed by dwarven statues crafted from the stone walls.

The chamber to the left leads to a pair of 40 x 40 storerooms with new archways (resized for giants). They hold food, drink, and weapons, but nothing of any true value. The one to the right





leads to a 40 x 60 barracks now converted into a sleeping chamber for the giants. It also holds little of interest.

The archway directly opposite leads to a 50 x 80 chamber with a large iron door at the back (the vault) that's open. The

vault holds Urstoll's valuables in a few chests. It's not locked because of its guardian, Karlag the red dragon, who sleeps on a pile of dwarven stacks just out of sight to the right of the archway.

## MONSTERS

Urstoll Firebrand is the current ruler of the fortress after his giant troops and dragon ally took the place from the former occupants, a group of mad derro. (If you feel like adding touches from former masters, the place has been in half a dozen hands since the dwarves lost it long ago).

Urstoll and any other fire giants besides the one lounging in the chair are currently in the storerooms gathering up food and drink (all are far away initially). The giants stand 11 to 13 feet tall and wear heavy iron breastplates with bracers and greaves.

The ogres wear heavy leathers to protect them from the heat and wield axes and javelins (or buckets). They are big even for ogres.

Karlag is a large red dragon with scales of dull red that become almost orange toward his belly. He begins the battle asleep on his hoard in the next chamber and won't enter the fight until the third round unless the PCs try to talk to the giants first and rouse him.

### *Additional Reinforcements:*

If you want to challenge the PCs more, include an iron golem (see stats) in the Hall that looks like a

big dwarf (or a fire giant). Urstoll can activate it as quick action and the golem will defend him, though its programming might be hackable by PCs using icon advantages.



#/Level of PCs	Urstoll, Fire Giant Champion (U)	Karlag, Red Dragon (K)	Fire Giant (F)*	Ogre Minion Mook (M)*
4 x 7 <sup>th</sup> level	1	1	1	2 (1 mob)
5 x 7 <sup>th</sup> level	1	1	1	4 (1 mob)
6 x 7 <sup>th</sup> level	1	1	2	5 (1 mob)
4 x 8 <sup>th</sup> level	1	1	3	10 (1 mob)
5 x 8 <sup>th</sup> level	1	1	4	15 (2 mobs)
6 x 8 <sup>th</sup> level	1	1	8**	10 (1 mob)*

\* The ogres and fire giants can use their nastier specials.

\*\* There's a second fire giant sitting at the table, and more are sleeping in the chamber to the right.

## Tactics

It's possible the PCs might be able to surprise the giant and ogres near the table. Once they cry out in alarm, Urstoll and the other giants and ogres will rush in from the side rooms. If the PCs try to talk to the giant, all the other enemies will rouse and be ready to rush in from the side rooms once things go bad.

The ogres will follow Urstoll's orders to harry any PCs the giants don't engage. One of them could use the lava ball instead of a javelin attack (the hot potato).

Each giant will face off on one PC, unless someone is using cold attacks, in which case the giants will group attack to drop that enemy quickly. They aren't above using the pool as a barrier, or even wading in for anyone willing to engage them in melee and take fire damage. Urstoll might be willing to negotiate terms for surrender if most of his troops and the dragon have been slain, assuming he can drop out of his battle rage.

Karlag will be slow to wake and not arrive until the third round, unless the PCs enter the back room, try to parley, or make enough noise to rouse the dragon (it's used to hearing the ogres' stupid ramblings and crashes). There's enough room for him to leap and fly to a balcony to attack someone there, or to breathe

down upon enemies. He may also submerge himself in the pool as a tactic, or do a running leap into it to spray hot lava upon everyone nearby (have each PC roll a save or take the normal damage for exposure), but can only do that once. He will not leave his hoard by fleeing unless obviously overmatched.

## Loot

Karlag has a large neatly stacked pile of dwarven towers, mostly copper and silver, but with some gold that he beds upon (12000 cp, 5000 sp, and 300 gp). He also particularly likes a glass globe that magically contains a glob of molten rock inside that slowly changes shapes (think lava lamp) without being hot on the outside that's worth 100 gp.

In the vault, Urstoll has two chests that hold the giant's wealth—everything they have managed to keep away from the dragon because it's not coinage! There are two golden idols of giants and dwarves fighting worth 200 each, a bowl of small garnets worth 150 gp, three potions in a bandolier (two epic-tier *healing*, one *fire resistance*), two +3 *runes*, and a suit of +3 *Armor of Vigor (recharge 11+)*: Until the end of the battle, you gain 15 temporary hit points each time you hit with an attack. Quirk: Likes to take risks, especially moving away from enemies without disengaging. The armor can be light or heavy, whatever best fits the PCs.

Urstoll is using *Stonecutter's Axe*, which will resize down to the PCs' size once he drops.

## Icons

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Dwarf King, Diabolist, Prince, the Three, or maybe the Emperor could use one or more of them to try to convince the giants that they are actually allies or that they have something the giants want. The ruse should require some skill checks (DC 25) but could buy the entire party a free surprise round, allow them to learn about all the enemies in the area, or gain them some other advantage.

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Dwarf King or Prince could use one or more of them to call to *Stonecutter's Axe*, making it fight against Urstoll so that he takes a -2 attack penalty or only deals half damage with his attacks for 1d3 rounds.





## URSTOLL, FIRE GIANT WARLORD

*This giant carries a large axe made from intricately worked blue-gray steel whose edges gleam with fire. If you get a good look before the blade falls, you might not notice the symbol of the Dwarf King.*

Large 10<sup>th</sup> level leader [GIANT]

Initiative: +15

Vulnerability: cold

**Stonecutter's Axe +16 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—60 damage

*Natural even hit or miss:* The target also takes 15 ongoing fire damage.

**Massive strike +15 vs. AC**—100 damage, and 15 ongoing fire damage

*Fiery escalator:* The fire giant warlord adds the escalation die to its attacks against targets taking ongoing fire damage.

**Resist fire 16+:** When a fire attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 16+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

**Warlord of fire:** As a standard action, the warlord can command one nearby ally that has resistance to fire to make a melee attack as a free action.

**Unquenchable fires:** Enemies engaged with the fire giant warlord take a –5 penalty to saves against ongoing fire damage.

AC	27	
PD	23	HP 425
MD	19	

## FIRE GIANT

Large 8<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [GIANT]

Initiative: +12

Vulnerability: cold

**Flaming greatsword +13 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—35 damage

*Natural even hit or miss:* The target also takes 10 ongoing fire damage.

**R: Flaming black-iron javelin +11 vs. AC**—40 damage

*Natural even hit or miss:* The target also takes 10 ongoing fire damage.

*Fiery escalator:* The fire giant adds the escalation die to its attacks against targets taking ongoing fire damage.

**Resist fire 16+:** When a fire attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 16+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

### Nastier Specials

**Burning blood:** When a fire giant becomes staggered, it deals 10 ongoing fire damage to each enemy engaged with it.

**Strength of giants:** Twice per battle, the giant can make a *slam* attack as a quick action (once per round).

**Slam +12 vs. PD (one enemy smaller than it)**—10 damage, the target pops free from the giant, and the target loses its next move action

AC	25	
PD	21	HP 285
MD	17	

## KARLAG, LARGE RED DRAGON

Large 10<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [DRAGON]

Initiative: +13

Vulnerability: cold

**Fangs, claws, and tail +15 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—35 damage

*First natural even hit or miss each turn:* Roll a third *fangs, claws, and tail* attack.

**C: Fiery breath +15 vs. PD (2d3 nearby enemies)**—40 fire damage

*Miss:* Half damage.

**Intermittent breath:** A large red dragon can use *fiery breath* 1d4 times per battle, but never two turns in a row.

**Fear:** While engaged with this creature, enemies with 72 hp or fewer are dazed (–4 attack) and do not add the escalation die to their attacks.

**Resist fire 16+:** When a fire attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 16+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

### Nastier Special

You can also give Karlag the following dragon ability:

**Tough hide:** Karlag gains a +1 bonus to AC.

AC	25	
PD	24	HP 400
MD	20	



## OGRE MINION

*Evil masterminds always have a place for minions who are too tough to realize when they are outclassed.*

Large 9<sup>th</sup> level mook [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +11

**Ogre-sized chopper +14 vs. AC**—35 damage

Miss: Half damage.

**R: Ogre-sized javelin +14 vs. AC (one nearby or far away enemy)**—20 damage

*Incidental damage:* When an enemy makes an opportunity attack against the ogre minion, hit or miss, that enemy takes 4d6 damage.

*Double-strength mook:* The ogre minion mook counts as two 9<sup>th</sup> level mooks when you're building battles.

### Nastier Specials

*Punching above its weight:* Once per round, the ogre minion mob can take 5d10 damage to reroll an attack (a member of the mob takes one for the team).

AC	24	
PD	23	HP 80 (mook)
MD	19	

*Mook:* Kill one ogre minion mook for every 80 damage you deal to the mob.

### Additional Reinforcements

## IRON GOLEM

Large 10<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [CONSTRUCT]

Initiative: +13

**Fists of iron +17 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—50 damage

Miss: 5d10 damage.

*Golem immunity:* Non-organic golems are immune to effects. They can't be dazed, weakened, confused, made vulnerable, or touched by ongoing damage. You can damage a golem, but that's about it.

*Rampage:* At the start of each of the iron golem's turns, roll a d6. If the roll is equal to or less than the escalation die, the iron golem goes on a rampage that turn. Instead of its two normal *fists of iron* attacks, it can make three attacks with *fists of iron*, each against a different random nearby creature, enemy or ally. It can move after each such attack as a free action, if necessary, taking only half damage from opportunity attacks during the rampage.

AC	28	
PD	24	HP 360
MD	20	

## WHAT IF THE PCs WANT TO KEEP THE AXE?

If the PCs decide to keep *Stonecutter's Axe*, or you like the idea of them being rewarded with it, that's an option. It might bring them trouble from those they considered allies if they work against the Dwarf King or whichever icon put them up to the task, with groups trying to recover it, however.

If one of the PCs uses the artifact axe, here's one option for its powers.

**Default bonus:** Attacks and damage while using the axe: +2 (champion); +3 (epic)

### CHAMPION

*Slicer (recharge 16+):* Until the end of the battle, the crit range of attacks using the axe expands by 2. Quirk: Has a sharp tongue and isn't afraid to speak out.

### EPIC

*Stonecutter (once per level):* The axe can cut anything, provided it isn't constructed from magic of greater power (GM's call). Quirk: Likes to test the axe's edge on common items and often talks of cutting strange things.

**History:** *Stonecutter's Axe* was crafted by a mighty Dwarf King of old. It is said to be so sharp and indestructible that it could cut through a mountain's roots or the lies of the Prince. It's said that the axe often speaks to its wielder, but only during battle.

### NEXT STEPS

Once the PCs have the axe and the dragon and giants are defeated, they can return to present the axe to the Dwarf King's people, or his enemies (or perhaps keep it for themselves). It's a mighty symbol of the Dwarf King and his people, so whatever course they choose shouldn't be taken lightly. For example, if they return it to the Dwarf King, maybe he personally receives it in an audience with the PCs and his power in the campaign grows. Or if they keep it, dwarven heroes will continually seek them out to recover the axe.

## STONECUTTER'S AXE STORY ENDINGS

Here are outcomes for each story opening, detailing what success or failure might mean.

If the PCs did face all three battles, remember to give them a full heal-up.



## FOR THE GLORY OF THE DWARF KING

**Success:** The PCs find Garzendahl and take the axe from the fire giants there, ancient enemies of the dwarves. For their efforts they are recognized as heroes and rewarded with 150 gp each in free credit in the town. In addition, each PC gains two 6s with the Dwarf King that last until used.

Alternatively, this would be a fine time for one or two PCs to be gifted with true magic items, perhaps something the dwarves are happy to be rid of but that could still be useful to non-dwarves.

**Failure:** The PCs stir up the fire giants at hidden Garzendahl and Urstoll begins raiding the dwarven settlements in the area, causing trouble. The PCs are considered cowards until they save face by defeating the giants or perform some other service. Each PCs with a Dwarf King relationship gets 5s instead of 6s the next two times they roll.

## FOILED AGAIN!

**Success:** The PCs find Garzendahl and take the axe from the fire giants there. The PCs' contact uses the axe to gain leverage on the Dwarf King and wins some important concessions in exchange for it. Each PC gets an automatic 6 with one of their icon dice the next time they roll.

**Failure:** The PCs fail to recover the axe or defeat the giants. Eventually, the Dwarf King's people find lost Garzendahl and recover the item, but the dragon Karlag escapes, even if the PCs thought they'd killed him, and plans vengeance against the PCs, who it sees as the rats that revealed where its hoard was located.

## THE AXE RUSH

**Success:** The PCs find lost Garzendahl before any others can reach it and defeat the giants and dragon, claiming *Stonecutter's Axe*. The Dwarf King's people contact them and offer them rich rewards in exchange for the ancient dwarven weapon. Other icons are also interested. Each PC can reroll each icon die once the next time they roll dice.

**Failure:** The PCs are forced to flee or retreat from Garzendahl, and by the time they regroup, others have taken the fortress and claimed the axe. Word spreads about the PCs' failure, and few others seem willing to hire them or work with them for a time. The next 6 each PC rolls on an icon die is a 5 instead.

## BATTLE SCENE CONNECTIONS

The stories from this set of battle scenes can lead to other scenes:

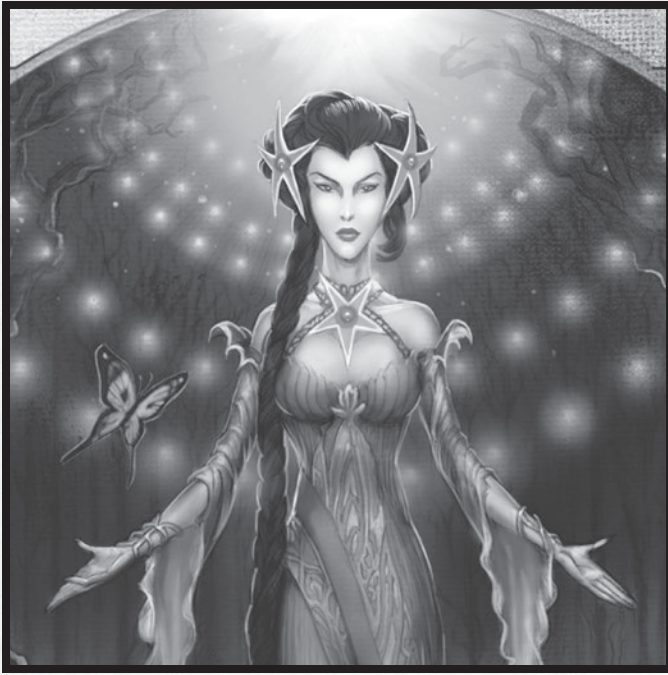
- *The Dream Thief* (Prince): While handling *Stonecutter's Axe*, the PCs accidentally slice a tear in reality. It pulls them inside with a huge sucking vortex, and they find themselves in the Dreamlands. There they meet someone who instructs them to find the Dreamlord to escape.
- *The Library of Galwyn* (Elf Queen): The axe talks, and it soon informs the PCs that it must have its companion, a shield of renown named Basher. In fact, it starts cutting all kinds of things and making a real nuisance of itself. It can only be kept in check with promises to find Basher. It suggests a trip to the overworld to the Library of Galwyn. The librarians will be able to tell the PCs where Basher might be.





# ELF QUEEN: A PIXIE PROBLEM

LEVEL RANGE: 3–4



The themes of this set of battles are forest dangers and interactions with creatures in the Elf Queen's sphere of influence. This set of battles works best in a wilderness or sylvan forest setting, but you could sprinkle some pixie dust on the PCs to transport them from their current location to a fey-like realm and back again while they're facing these battles.

While resting, camping, or traveling between adventures (or even during a different adventure, as a side trip), the adventurers encounter a pixie with a problem.

Tizilla the pixie (Tiz for short) is searching the area for someone who can help her defend some people she refers to as friends: a group of wood elves (or another group of humanoids relevant to the PCs) are being stalked by dark forest spirits that are killing them. That's the part of the truth she'll probably admit. The rest of the story is more complicated and not the sort of thing she's likely to share with people she's trying to get help from, at least not at first. So, GM, the facts follow, and you can decide how to use them, possibly with the help of the story openings that follow.

It all started when the group of wood elves set up a camp in the glade where Tizilla lives without so much as a "by your leave." They were also very tall and tied up some ropes between trees that she almost ran into... twice. So she did what any proper pixie would do, and she went into the wilderness to find someone to drive the elves off so she could return to her very important pursuits.

She sought out Ulla, the forest hag, and asked for help. In exchange for some of her pixie dust, Ulla agreed to use her magic to rid Tizilla's home of the elves. Tizilla left happily, believing that the elves would be driven off and her glade would soon be free of "house guests." She was not at all happy, however, when that evening a pack of forest hunger-spirits attacked the elf camp and killed one of the elves. Killing wasn't what she wanted, just to drive them off. Even worse, the elves stayed in the glade, either out of fear of being ambushed on the forest paths by their unknown attackers, or because they wanted vengeance, or because the spirits have messed up their minds. The elves have begun building defenses. They seem to be planning to stay.

Now she needs someone else—someone touched by the Elf Queen perhaps—to get rid of the forest spirits attacking the elves, so the elves can leave. She didn't tell the elves any of this, of course, because that would just be embarrassing. And now she has found someone among a group of heroes that should be able to help her, with a little convincing.

Tizilla will use one of the following methods to get the PCs to help. Along the way, she sees no issue with steering the PCs through some "problem areas" that need fixing too.

## A PIXIE PROBLEM STORY OPENINGS

The following story options alter or augment the basic situation.

- **Follow the Thief:** While the PCs are traveling or camping, Tizilla will cause a distraction using her illusions and then steal a valuable item from one of the PCs, preferably one with an Elf Queen relationship. She'll take an item the PC has a strong personal/story relationship with, or a non-weapon, non-implement, non-armor magic item like a belt or wondrous item. (An item that speaks is even better, as it cries for help from its owner as Tizilla flies away with it.) She allows the PCs to see her with the item as she leads them into the wilds on a merry chase. (A PC who loses a magic item loses its benefits until they get it back.)
- **Please, Come Quickly Elf-friend:** Tizilla approaches one of the heroes (preferably one with a positive or conflicted Elf Queen relationship), as she suddenly appears before them from out of nowhere. She implores the PC to follow her to help some "children of the Elf Queen" (or "friends" if you're not using wood elves) who are "nearby." She tells the PCs that the elves/friends are being stalked by something evil that will hurt them, and promises to grant the PC a boon from the Queen for their help: either a magic item, information they need, or some other benefit. She says she doesn't know what hunts them, however.



- **A Call for Help:** One of the PCs (preferably one with an Elf Queen relationship) sees a flash of color in the distance and hears an ethereal voice plead, "Please, come help us." If they move to where the lights were, again there's a flash of color and the call, some distance away. Tizilla continues to pester the heroes with light shows and pleas for help as she leads them through the wild. If they choose not to follow, she paces them invisibly and causes numerous small mishaps for them. With each occurrence of "bad luck," she projects the magical voice that calls for help. If they still don't get it, she'll get more direct, having the voice say, "please come help, or be cursed by the powers of forest magic."
- **Follow the Pixie Road:** As the PCs travel, Tizilla uses her powers of illusion to move them away from their desired path and in the direction she wishes. They find bogs and marshy areas barring their path, dense thorn bushes cutting off the trail, and nests of wasps, clouds of marsh gas, or other similar dangers steadily forcing them to detour. Moving in any other direction than what Tizilla wishes takes a long time and possibly comes at a cost of recoveries. The PCs will become aware that something is directing them after the first battle, if they haven't already. Alternately, she could also create illusions that will draw the PCs toward the battles for other reasons (like greed).
- **A Hit of Pixie Dust:** Tizilla sneaks up on one or more of the PCs (preferably ones with an Elf Queen relationship) and gives them a face full of pixie dust (no attack rolls necessary). The PC(s) is overcome by madness, but unlike the normal pixie ability, this madness lasts hours or days and causes the character to wander away from their allies, following a song only they can hear (Tizilla's wings are the source of the song). The maddened PCs are fully functional in all other ways, however. Tizilla might or might not show herself to the heroes.

## ALTERNATE ICONS



**High Druid:** Some pixies hold the High Druid in the same regard as the Elf Queen. The options above all work if you replace the Queen's connections with the High Druid. As for the battles, theme them more toward untamed wild than magical fey landscape, with the redcaps being a sect of civilization-hating, mad gnome wildfolk.



**Archmage:** Rather than a pixie, you could portray Tizilla as a magical sprite or familiar who wants the characters' help to assist its master and his allies (a gnome wizard and wood elf guides) who are traveling through a wood infested with arcane magic. Their investigations into an old cairn released the guardian spirits that are now stalking them.



**Priestess:** Tizilla could be a divine servant of one of the gods (as a spirit animal or even a floating mote of light), and the wood elves could be pilgrims traveling to the Cathedral through the wilderness. The battles are against forest inhabitants and wild creatures filled with frenzy from the recent emergence of a nature god, and the forest spirits attacking the elves are servants of that god who are seeking corporeal bodies.

## A PIXIE PROBLEM OVERVIEW

No matter which opening you used, the PCs will be following Tizilla through magical forest or wilderness surroundings. As she travels, the pixie will lead the PCs to four locations. Each location holds a possible battle with those considered to be within the Elf Queen's sphere of influence (fey/magical creatures of the wilderness), though by no means under her control. The final

### PLAYING TIZILLA

The pixie is flighty, to say the least. She's also a highly magical creature who's used to getting her way, so there's some arrogance there as well. She also likes to argue, but she's easily distracted by pretty baubles, squirrels, music, flowers, magical displays, and similar things. Luckily, she wants her glade back and does feel bad about the dead elves, so she'll be able to keep her purpose in mind long enough to lead the PCs to them. If the PCs are resisting her efforts, she's willing to change tactics and use a different opening as needed.

If you use an opening where the PCs are aware of her, Tizilla won't help in any battles, but she may offer encouragement (advice on better tactics) during the fight from a safe (and invisible) distance. Play her comments for as many laughs as you want. She will also fly in after the battle and tell the heroes to get a move on and quit messing around... until something distracts her too for a while. If she hasn't shown herself, then after the battle she reuses her method of getting the PCs to follow again.

As noted in the pixie entry on page 198 of *13 True Ways*, pixies can use their illusion abilities to good effect outside of battle. Feel free to take advantage of this ability in all dealings with Tizilla:

Pixies can create complex illusions at will outside of battle. Outside of combat, it's usually a normal or hard skill check to sort out what's real—have fun figuring out whether a PC's backgrounds can help them pierce the veils!

### ICONS IN PLAY

Characters that have relationships (and story-guide advantages) with the Elf Queen, High Druid, Archmage, and maybe even the Three (specifically the Blue) should be able to shine in these battle scenes. Moreso than PCs with other icon relationships, feel free to give such PCs extra knowledge about the opposition, make checks to pull off fun actions the players might suggest, and use their advantages to particularly good effect, such as negating or bypassing some of the terrain impediments or abilities of the enemies.

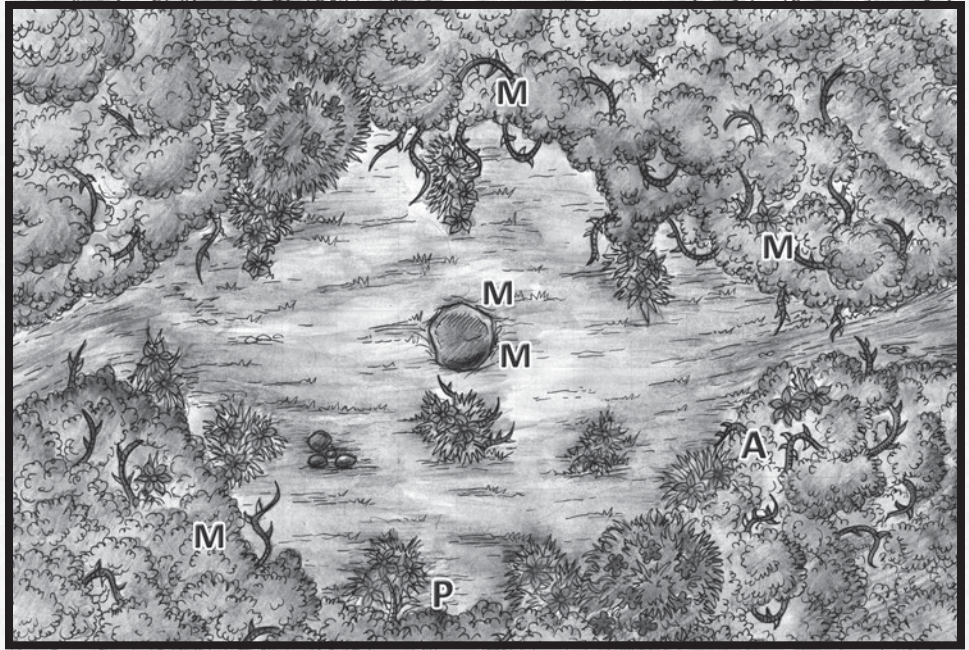


battle's composition depends on how the PCs interact with the wood elves, who are fearful for their lives from unknown attackers and unaware of Tizilla's actions (both setting an enemy upon them and then trying to help them).

GM, feel free to expand upon these battles by including fights with other magical beasts and wild humanoids, interludes with strange NPCs on the path, exploration of old elven ruins holding mysterious lore, and similarly flavored areas to flesh out this excursion.

The battles outlined here can take place over a few minutes, hours, or even days of travel if you prefer to stretch things out. Since the Elf Queen is in play, we suggest flavoring descriptions and battle scenes with a sense of sylvan forest magic (both dark and light).

See story endings after the final battle for options on what happens after the PCs finish the last battle.



## BATTLE I: DEADLY ΦΑΥΝΑ & HUNGRY ΑΝΚΗΓΕΣ

*As you make your way along a wild, overgrown path, you suddenly break through into a small glade filled with bright orange flowers growing from the rich, dark soil that give off an exotic, spicy scent. There's also the high-pitched hum of insects buzzing, and it starts to grow louder.*

### LOCATION DESCRIPTION

As Tizilla leads the PCs toward her destination, she decides to make a slight detour to have them solve another problem for her: a patch of pixie pods she came across while she was searching for help. She absolutely hates pixie pods—they're not pixies at all, and rude to boot! In her earlier haste, however, she failed to notice the glade's other inhabitant, an ankheg that has fed well on creatures drawn to the pod.

The glade is 50 feet long and 30 feet across, and it's filled with long-stemmed orange wildflowers growing out of thick clumps of thorn bushes sporting large, sharp barbs. The trail the PCs enter from continues out the far side of the glade—moving off the trail in any other direction means traveling through the thorn bushes. A single small boulder sticks out of the rich dirt near the center of the glade, and there are a pair of large rhododendron bushes/trees on the edge of the glade.

### TERRAIN & TRAPS

**Thorn Bushes:** The thorn bushes are thick and hard to move through. Those with armor are somewhat protected from the barbs, but they will catch on flesh, cloth, and fibrous material and make progress difficult. Any PC attempting to move through

the bushes must succeed on a DC 18 Dexterity or Strength check, otherwise they become stuck until the start of their next turn. Anyone wearing heavy armor gains a +4 bonus to the check.

In addition, the orange flowers growing through the thorns secrete hallucinogenic pollen that causes creatures who inhale it to become giddy and intoxicated. When a living non-plant creature moves through the thorn bushes, make a *pollen* attack against it: **Pollen +10 vs. PD**—The target is dazed (save ends).

**Boulder:** The stone in the middle of the glade is roughly 3 feet in diameter and sticks out of the ground 2 feet. More importantly, it can hold one normal-sized humanoid (or two small ones) and anyone standing on it won't be attacked by the ankheg, though that character will make a great target for a pixie pod.

**Rhododendron Trees:** The trees are wide but only about twelve feet tall, and the branches aren't strong. A small creature (gnome, halfling) can climb one easily. A larger creature must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity check, or fall with a crash (no damage) as branches break under them. Each tree can only support one creature.

### MONSTERS

The glade contains three threats: an ankheg, one or more pixie pods and their podling mooks, and additional podlings.

The ankheg is hidden under the soil beneath a patch of thorn bushes near the trail. It's large for its size due to the plentiful food it gathers near the pixie pods. If there are two ankhegs, then one is by the trail entrance and another by the exit.

The pixie pods have sunk their roots on the edge of the glade among the flowers and thorn bushes. Each pixie pod has a mob of five podlings that are buzzing among the bushes when the PCs first enter the glade (these extra podlings have already been added on the chart below). We only put one pixie pod plant on the map—if the battle calls for another, put it on a different edge of the glade.

Finally, there are also mobs of podlings in the area that the pixie pods previously released that are now semi-independent.

Any player with a nature-type background or a background related to fey or plant creatures can roll a DC 15 Intelligence check to determine what the podlings are (they come from pixie





already. This is reinforced each time a pixie pod adds podlings to the battle.

The podlings will swarm the nearest PCs, with each mob focusing on a different enemy. They fight to the death in defense of the pod. The pixie pod will exude its spicy scent into the area, using *peripheral summoning* on the nearest enemy. A pod won't teleport until it's staggered. When the pods are generally located, see the rules for how to handle invisible enemies on page 172 of the core rulebook.

**Ankheg:** The ankheg(s) won't attack on the first round, because it takes a moment to sense the presence of real food (the PCs) and burrow into position. During the second round, it will emerge from under the soil to attack one of the PCs on the periphery who isn't engaged (possibly someone still on the trail or trying to hide in the thorn bushes). There is an ankheg burrow hole about 50 feet farther up the trail among the thorn bushes and it will try to pull any small prey it's grabbing into the den (see stat block). It will flee if reduced to less than 10 hp.

## Loot

The pollen glands on the inside of a pixie pod are valuable components to many spells and rituals (DC 10 Intelligence check for anyone who asks; automatic knowledge to anyone who made the check to identify the pods). Retrieving the glands is a delicate process, requiring a DC 15 Intelligence or Dexterity check per pod; failure means all the glands were

pods, and aren't true pixies). Those who succeed also know about the invisible pods that create the podlings.

The podlings all have wings, but they are not fully formed and only make a high-pitched buzzing noise (so no *flight*, unless the PCs are having an easy time with them).

**Additional Reinforcements:** If you want to challenge the PCs more, each time a pixie pod drops to 0 hp, have it fire 2d4 elder spores (*Bestiary*, page 85) into the air that seek out humanoid flesh.

## Tactics

**Pods & Podlings:** At the start of the battle, if you want to give the PCs more of a clue of what's going on, a pixie pod will disgorge a few podlings that are part of its existing mob, making strange glorping sounds as it does so. Pixie pods aren't visible, so the podlings will seem to suddenly appear out of nowhere. That might clue the players into the fact that there's a source for the things if they haven't realized it

#/Level of PCs	Ankheg (A)	Pixie Pod (P)	Podling Mook (M)
4 x 3 <sup>rd</sup> level	1	1	10 (2 mobs*)
5 x 3 <sup>rd</sup> level	1	1	16 (3 mobs*)
6 x 3 <sup>rd</sup> level	1	2	17 (3 mobs*)
4 x 4 <sup>th</sup> level	1	2	13 (3 mobs*)
5 x 4 <sup>th</sup> level	2	2	12 (3 mobs*)
6 x 4 <sup>th</sup> level	2	2	20 (3 mobs*)

\* Each pixie pod comes with one free mob of five podlings. For example, the 4 x 4<sup>th</sup> podling entry would have two mobs of 5 podlings (the ones that come with pods) plus a third mob of 3 podlings.



destroyed in the battle or were removed incorrectly. On a success, the PC removes 1d3 glands, each worth 50 gp.

If the PCs managed to find the ankheg lair, a small cavity a few feet under the ground, it holds various detritus from previous kills that it has passed. There's also 40 gp in coins and two 50 gp pearls among the leftovers.

## Icons

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Elf Queen or High Druid might know enough about pixie pods to use them to help locate the concealed plants through other senses. Using an advantage this way drops the DC to detect them by 5.

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Archmage, Diabolist, Lich King, or Prince could use one or more of them to remove the pollen glands from all pixie pods in the battle without rolling a check, since they know how to gather components, dissect creatures, and/or remove valuable things carefully.

## PIXIE POD

*Double-strength 3<sup>rd</sup> level leader* [PLANT]

Initiative: +7

**C: Peripheral summoning +8 vs. MD (one random nearby enemy)**—8 psychic damage

*Natural even hit:* Add a new podling into the battle in a random location.

*Release the pods:* Once per battle when the pixie pod rolls a natural even hit with *peripheral summoning*, it adds a number of podlings into the battle equal to the escalation die instead of only one.

*Immobile:* Although its podlings occasionally pick up and move it around out of combat, in battle the pixie pod can't move and is stuck except for its teleport ability.

*Lost opportunity:* This creature can't make opportunity attacks.

*Lurching teleport:* Once per battle as a move action, the pixie-pod can teleport to a nearby location. But its control sucks. The teleport goes in a random direction. Roll it using a d8 for direction.

*Magical concealment:* As long as one or more of its podlings are nearby, the pixie pod is invisible and extremely difficult to even detect. A PC who wants to locate the pixie pod must spend a standard action searching and succeed at a DC 25 skill check using Wisdom. Backgrounds connected to plants and the wilderness help normally, and general searching skills and magic talents might help a bit but not at full strength. Once located, the plant can be attacked like a normal invisible creature. When it teleports, however, it must be located all over again.

*Start with mooks:* The pixie pod is normally accompanied by five active podlings that don't count toward the total when building a battle with the pod. Additional podlings do count, however.

AC	17	
PD	13	HP 40
MD	16	

## PODLING

*3<sup>rd</sup> level mook* [PLANT]

Initiative: +9

**Needle sword +8 vs. AC**—6 damage

*Natural even hit:* The target can't choose to search for the pixie-pod plant until all podlings in the battle are slain.

**R: Tiny green bow +8 vs. AC**—5 damage

### Nastier Specials

*Flight:* A podling that can fly, hovering out of reach and firing arrows, can be a real pain in the pate.

AC	18	
PD	17	HP 10 (mook)
MD	13	

*Mook:* Kill one podling mook for every 10 damage you deal to the mob.

## HIDDEN ANKHEG

*This ankheg has grown large from easy meals the pixie pods draw.*

*Large 3<sup>rd</sup> level troop* [BEAST]

Initiative: +9

**Mandibles +8 vs. AC**—12 damage

*Natural even hit:* If the target is small (i.e., a gnome or halfling), the ankheg grabs it. While the ankheg is grabbing a creature, the only legal target for its *mandibles* attack is the grabbed creature.

**C: Acid spit +8 vs. PD (one nearby enemy, plus any enemy the ankheg has grabbed)**—7 ongoing acid damage

*Limited use:* 1/round, as a quick action.

*Hidden attacker:* The first time each battle the hidden ankheg attacks, it gains a +2 attack bonus against the target with its *mandibles* attack due to its concealment.

*Escape speed:* At the end of the ankheg's turn, roll a d6. If it's equal to or less than the escalation die, the ankheg can move again as a free action. (Usually it's trying to flee to a pre-dug burrow with a small-sized creature in its mandibles; ankhegs do burrow, but at slow speeds that aren't relevant to combat rounds).

AC	20	
PD	18	HP 76
MD	12	



## TOO MANY PODLING ATTACKS?

GMs, if the PCs are facing 2 or 3 full mobs of podlings, instead of rolling attacks for each mook, you can speed things up at the expense of skewing the averages a little. Make one attack roll for all podlings in a mob on a PC, then multiply the damage by the number of podlings. It's all or nothing, but be warned that it can be a lot of damage all at once. Once there's a more reasonable number of mooks, go back to rolling separately again.

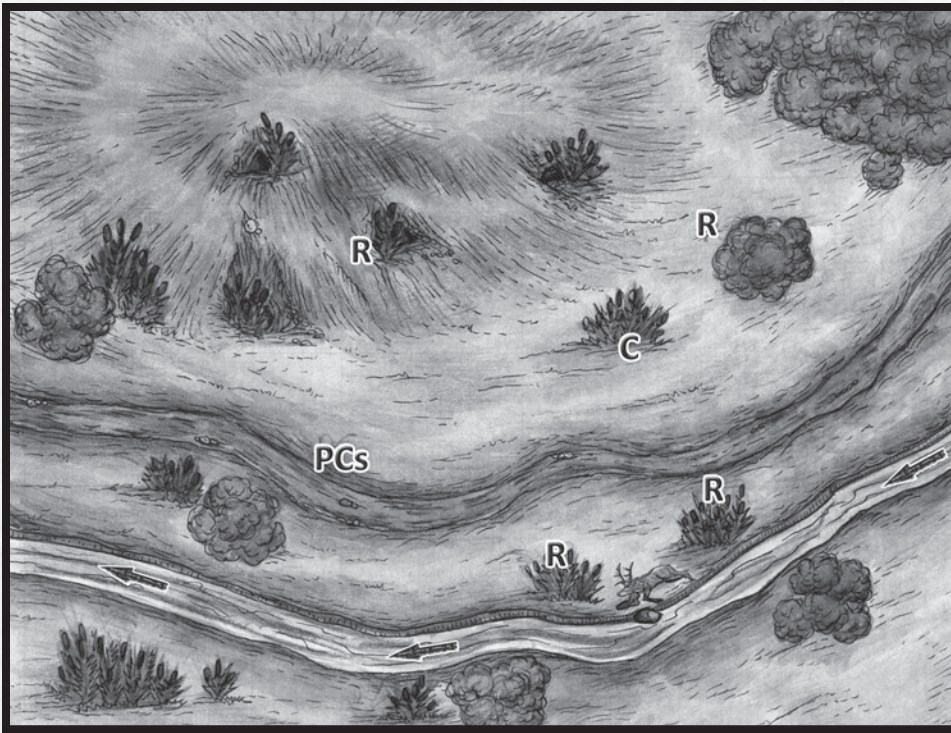
## NEXT STEPS

After a quick rest, Tizilla will get the PCs moving again, using her preferred opening option. If you wish, the journey to the next battle could take minutes, hours, or even days, and it could include other encounters.

The pixie's next detour will lead the heroes to **Battle 2: A Feast For Redcaps**, where a band of redcaps are looking for their next murder victim.







## BATTLE 2: A FEAST FOR REDCAPS

The animal trail you've been following drops down into a small wooded dell at the base of a low hill. A small stream meanders through the shady trees, and the hill is pockmarked with large, red-tipped ferns, some of which partially cover up small openings into the dirt and rock. The buzzing of flies draws your attention to the corpse of a deer lying near the stream; it looks like something slashed its neck and chest to ribbons, and it stares at you with dead bulging eyes.

### LOCATION DESCRIPTION

Since the heroes handled the pods, Tizilla figures she'll take care of another problem in the area: a band of nasty redcaps who threw stones at her when she passed over their warren earlier.

Within the hill, there is a den of three low, small caves dug from the dirt and rock with many interconnecting dirt tunnels that emerge all over the area (though not across the stream). The openings are somewhat hidden by ferns, trees roots, and the like, allowing the redcaps to pop up close to the heroes. Reaching any of the caves is a hands-and-knees affair for anyone not small. But don't fear—the redcaps will come to the heroes.

The hill climbs 30 feet above the rest of the area, and is roughly 110 feet long, 60 feet wide and shaped like an oval with a slight knob on the far side. The dell is a large area (80 feet by 130 feet) bordered by the hill on the left and the stream on the right. The stream is small, only 6 feet across. Numerous elm trees dot the area, providing deep shade.

The PCs will be roughly in the center of the dell when they see the slain deer, unless they had one or more scouts, in which case the main group will be on the edge of the area.

### TERRAIN & TRAPS

**Tunnels:** The hill warren isn't a permanent home for the redcap band, but they do stay here often and have excavated out some of the natural caves, creating many exits from the den. Spotting one of these tunnel exits (a big hole) requires a DC 15 check. Each eventually leads to the caves inside the hill.

Any non-small creature that attempts to crawl down a tunnel only has to worry about facing one enemy at a time (or at least from one side) due to the tightness, but they also take a -2 penalty to attacks and defenses, and must use a small or light weapon.

**Hidden Holes:** The surface soil of both hill and dell are riddled with weak points from the tunneling. When the escalation die is *odd*, any PC who moves along the ground in the area must make a DC 15 Dexterity check; on a failure the ground gives way and the PC is stuck (easy save ends, 6+) as they fall into a hole.

**Elm Trees:** The elm trees are climbable, although their first branches are at least 15 feet up, making the climb slightly difficult (DC 12 Dex or Str). PCs on branches aren't necessarily safe, however, because those shadowy branches also make a great place for the redcaps to use *impossible teleport* and *pop-out surprise*.

**Deer Corpse:** The corpse is covering a hole to a tunnel. One of the redcaps will emerge from under the stinking, bloody animal, with guts flying everywhere.

### MONSTERS

This warren currently has a band of redcaps who've earned their boots and some color in their caps. Against stronger PC groups, they'll have a crimsoncap leader or two. They are all disgusting, vicious, and nasty, but they're happy to have visitors since it's meal time.

Unless you choose otherwise, the bad word for this group is: **Attack** (see page 175 of the *13<sup>th</sup> Age Bestiary*).

Once the heroes see the deer corpse, or at least one of them (like a scout) does, the redcaps will come spilling out of their warren via the hidden tunnels all over the place, yelling, "Guests. Guests. Dinner guests."

**Additional Reinforcements:** If you want to challenge the PCs more, the redcaps have trapped a troll (core rulebook, page 248) in a wood-cage pit and have been tormenting it endlessly since it's able to heal the knife wounds they inflict upon it. At the start of the battle, one of them will release a trapdoor buried in the dirt and the enraged troll will climb out of the pit. Let it roll twice for each attack during the first round of battle. Of course, the bad word then becomes "troll."



/Level of PCs	Redcap (R)	Crimsoncap (C)
4 x 3 <sup>rd</sup> level	5	0
5 x 3 <sup>rd</sup> level	6	0
6 x 3 <sup>rd</sup> level	8	0
4 x 4 <sup>th</sup> level	7	0
5 x 4 <sup>th</sup> level	6	1
6 x 4 <sup>th</sup> level	5	2

## TACTICS

The redcaps will appear from the tunnels surrounding the PC or PCs who get close enough to see the deer corpse, seeming to pop up from nowhere. In general they will gang up on a few PCs, if possible (3 per PC) using their knives and/or boot attacks. Staggered enemies will definitely draw their attention, since those caps need to be moistened. They will chant out, "Feast. Feast. We will feast!" while they attack.

When someone says the bad word (*Attack*), they will all point and giggle and say, "Bad word, bad word, he/she said the bad word!" and use *impossible teleport* unless the enemy they're facing is close to dropping (so they can kick it). The tree branches are a favorite hiding spot, but any of the large ferns or tunnel holes will work too. The trees work particularly well for when they make *pop out and ride 'em* attacks on their next turn.

The redcaps know where all the weak points are in the tunnels, so they don't have to worry about moving around the area.

## LOOT

Each redcap carries a few items of value to it like gnawed bones, smooth rocks, and strips of dried meat, but of little real value, though their caps and boots might hold value to strange sorts seeking such items.

Inside the warren is a small collection of valuables gained from previous kills, some of whom were humanoids. There's a total of 180 gp in mixed coins, a nice ivory dagger carved from a beast's tooth with a carved-bear handle worth 100 gp, and a pair of *Wise Eyelet Boots* (*13 True Ways*, page 235).

## Icons

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Dwarf King, High Druid, or Prince could use one or more of them to note some telltale sign of the weak earth/hidden holes in the area and warn their allies at the start of the battle. Either no longer require checks for moving during odd escalation

rounds, or reduce the check to DC 10. (You could probably give the latter benefit also to a PC willing to spend a standard action and who makes a DC 18 skill check using an appropriate background.)

The redcaps are all mad and prone to violence, but if any PC has a relationship with the Elf Queen (or another icon if you think it fits), there is a possibility of using one or more advantages to hold the redcaps at bay momentarily (at the player's suggestion) to talk with them. They are hungry and mad, but will be willing to let the PCs off lightly if they hand over a magic item or other valuable worth at least 500 gp.

If that happens, getting off lightly means one or more redcaps won't join the fight to come. Roll a d6. On a 1–3, remove one redcap from the fight. On a 4–6, remove two. One of these redcaps will take the item or valuable with them, of course. (Any redcap who leaves the battle will flee if approached in the warren, or perhaps will give up a secret in exchange for its life.)





If anyone touches the deer corpse, however, all bets are off and the redcaps will attack no matter what advantages are used as they yell out, "No touching the food!"

## REDCAP

Warriors who've fought redcaps once too often shudder at the thought of giving their own children piggy-back rides.

3<sup>rd</sup> level wrecker [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +9

**Twin skinning knives +8 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—6 damage

*Miss:* Damage equal to the escalation die.

**Stompy iron boots +8 vs. PD (one staggered or unconscious enemy)**—12 damage

*Miss:* 5 damage.

[Special trigger] **C: Pop-out and ride 'em +10 vs. AC (one nearby enemy)**—10 damage, and 5 ongoing damage

*Ridey-horsey:* While the target is taking ongoing damage from this attack, the redcap is riding the target's shoulders with its knives in the target's ears, and once during its turn the redcap can use a move action to make the target move anywhere nearby that won't directly cause it harm (but opportunity attacks are fair game).

*Miss:* 5 damage.

*Impossible teleport:* When the redcap scores a critical hit OR when a PC or a player at the table says the *bad word*, the redcap can teleport to a nearby hidden location it can see as a free action.

*Pop-out surprise:* When the redcap starts its turn and no enemy can see it, it can make a *pop-out and ride 'em* attack that turn as a standard action

AC	17	
PD	18	HP 42
MD	15	

## CRIMSONCAP

"Crimsons'n'crusties" was a curse frequently heard on the docks of Shadow Port... until the redcaps heard it and "transferred" half a shift of dockworkers over to the beggars' guilds.

6<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +11

**Huge bloody cleavers +11 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—13 damage, and the crimsoncap can pop free from the target

**Horrible stompy boots +11 vs. PD (one staggered or unconscious enemy)**—20 damage, and the target is hampered (save ends)

*Miss:* 5 damage.

[Special trigger] **C: Pop-out and slash 'em +11 vs. AC (1d4 nearby enemies)**—15 damage, and 5 ongoing damage

*Miss:* 10 damage.

*Impossible teleport:* When the crimsoncap scores a critical hit OR when a PC or a player at the table says the *bad word*, the crimsoncap can teleport to a nearby hidden location it can see or can't see (like inside a closet) as a free action.

*Pop-out surprise:* When the crimsoncap starts its turn and no enemy can see it, it can make a *pop-out and slash 'em* attack that turn as a standard action

### Nastier Specials

F\*\*\* T\*\*\*: The crimsoncap has two *bad words* instead of one. And the PCs find that out the hard way. Write the words down ahead of time to prove you're not *just* being a mean GM.

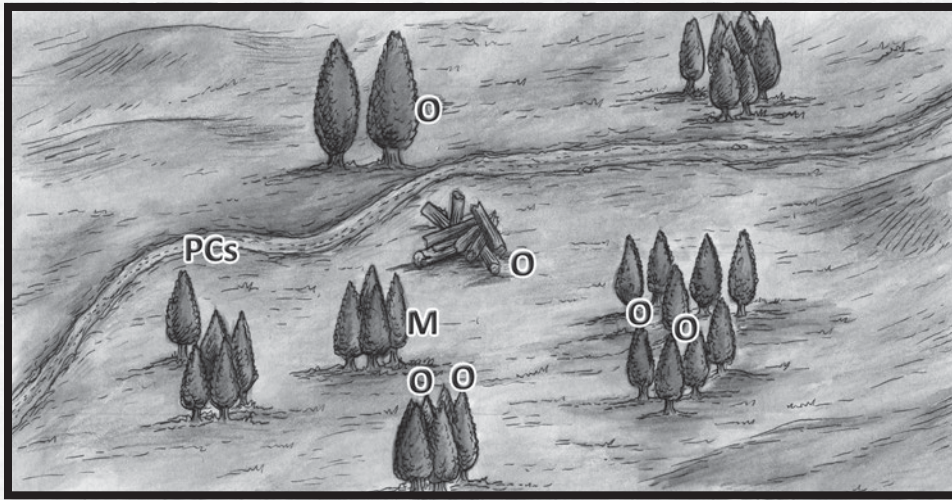
AC	20	
PD	21	HP 84
MD	18	

### NEXT STEPS

Once the redcap reception has been taken care of, Tizilla may thank the heroes for "getting rid of those creeps" and tell them it's time to go, since her friends aren't far now. Or she will use whichever method you selected as motivation where she remains hidden.

Before the group reaches her friends, however, they in for a shock as they face some roving owlbeards taking care of an itch. See **Battle 3: Bears of a Feather**.





## BATTLE 3: BEARS OF A FEATHER

As you travel deeper into the wilderness, the semi-open fields of wildflowers and low vegetation you've been traveling through changes to stands of poplar trees and tall grasses. Just ahead, you see a few downed trees, but it doesn't look like a woodsman's axe did the job, unless he was very sloppy at the work since the trunks have been shattered. Looking at another clump of trees to the left, you see the bark is covered in silvery-gray fur as well as a few large purple-gray feathers, as if some huge bird had rubbed itself against them. That's when a screech silences all the other wildlife around you.

### LOCATION DESCRIPTION

Tizilla is heading straight toward the wood elves, but she doesn't notice the danger below her until too late as she leads the PCs straight into a pack of molting owlbears and cubs. It's an unexpected challenge, and a tough one at that.

The area is open, except for roughly 10-by-10 foot clumps of 1-foot diameter poplar trees scattered about that provide some concealment to the owlbears that are foraging and scratching themselves. The adult(s) is molting and has taken time to rub itself against the trees as the family hunts.

### TERRAIN & TRAPS

**Poplar Clumps:** The clumps of poplar trees grow very close to each other (2 to 3 feet, or even closer). Any PC who wishes to move among them must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity check. While inside, the PC gains a +4 bonus to all defenses but takes a -2 penalty to attacks due to the narrow quarters. This won't stop a molting owlbear for long, however. After the owlbear's first missed attack, the bonus drops to +2 and -1, and after a second miss, no bonus or penalty as the owlbear literally topples trees with each swipe.

The cubs can move through the clumps more easily and suffer no penalties.

Two of the trees are bigger and taller (see Map) and will hold up to an owlbear's attacks. Climbing one requires a DC 10 Strength check. A molting owlbear (but not the cubs) might still go after someone in one of these trees, however. As a standard action, it can make an attack against the tree (no attack roll). A PC in a tree must make a DC 15 Dexterity or Strength check; on a failure, they fall out of the tree and take 2d6 damage.

### MONSTERS

Tizilla wasn't aware of the owlbears and didn't lead the heroes into this fight.

The molting owlbear(s) came here with its cubs to rub against the trees to help it molt. But any food that offers itself to them (like the PCs) is fair game, since its cubs are always hungry.

**Additional Reinforcements:** If you want to challenge the PCs more, include a harpy or two (core rulebook, page 234) who are following the owlbear and its cubs, waiting to dive in to steal morsels of flesh from its kills. They will sing to distract the PCs so the owlbears can tear the humanoid apart.

#/Level of PCs	Molting Owlbear (M)	Owlbear Cub Mook (O)
4 x 3 <sup>rd</sup> level	1	6 (1 mob)
5 x 3 <sup>rd</sup> level	2*	3 (1 mob)
6 x 3 <sup>rd</sup> level	2	5 (1 mob)
4 x 4 <sup>th</sup> level	2	5 (1 mob)
5 x 4 <sup>th</sup> level	2**	8 (1 mob)
6 x 4 <sup>th</sup> level	3	7 (1 mob)

\* Increase *rip and peck* to 22 damage, but remove the *vicious hybrid* trigger from it.

\*\* Use the *protect the cubs* nastier special for the molting owlbear(s) in this battle.

### TACTICS

The molting owlbears' and cubs' tactics are straightforward—go tear off a piece of flesh and share it among the cubs. When a PC drops one or more cubs, the molting owlbear(s) will converge on that adventurer (taking opportunity attacks unless staggered) to attack it.

Once the owlbears have a limb or strip of flesh from an enemy, if the escalation die is under 3, roll a normal save; on a failure, the owlbears flee with their meal. If the escalation die is 3+, they automatically try to flee with their meal.



### Loot

There are no coins, gems, or items here, but owlbear feathers hold value for some people, either as decoration or components. And owlbear claws have been known to fetch a few coins. The cubs aren't large enough to provide any materials, but a PC can attempt to collect such items from an adult (DC 15 Wisdom or Intelligence check; one try only or the items are ruined in the process of collecting them). On a success, the feathers and claws from a single molting owlbear are worth 150 gp.

### Icons

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Elf Queen, Archmage, or High Druid could use one or more of them to soothe or frighten the molting owlbear(s), nullifying its *feed the cubs* ability.

In the case of a lost limb, a ritual caster with one or more advantages from the Priestess, High Druid, or maybe the Diabolist or the Three could know a ritual to help mend a severed limb (or replace the limb with something "else" depending on who provided the ritual).

Someone with a Prince of Shadows relationship could use an advantage to collect the materials from the owlbears with no check required and will know the right buyers to get double their value.





## MOLTING OWLBEAR

Owlbears are vicious beasts. But the ones that are in discomfort from molting are worse.

Large 4<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [BEAST]

Initiative: +10

**Rip and peck +9 vs. AC**—14 damage, and until the end of the owlbear's next turn, the target is hampered (makes only basic attacks) while engaged with the owlbear.

*Vicious hybrid:* If the escalation die is even, make another *rip* and *peck* attack.

*Feed the cubs:* An owlbear that scores a critical hit against a hampered enemy tears a piece of the creature off (GM chooses a limb) and will subsequently attempt to retreat with the prize, screeching to its cubs to flee with it. The torn-up enemy is stunned until the end of its next turn.

*Screech of pain and anger:* When the molting owlbear is staggered, it makes a *stunning screech* attack as a free action.

**C: Stunning screech +8 vs. MD (1d2 nearby enemies)**—The target is stunned (easy save ends, 6+).

### Nastier Specials

*Protect the cubs:* The molting owlbear's crit range expands by 1 for each owlbear cub that has dropped this battle.

AC	19	
PD	17	HP 95
MD	13	

## OTHER OPTIONS TO LOSING A LIMB

If having a PC lose a limb doesn't fit the story you want, or doesn't work well in the middle of these battle scenes for the group, here's two alternatives.

- The PC loses two recoveries, or
- The heroes take a campaign loss in the greater story they're currently taking a break from while following Tizilla. The PC's wound slows the group up, or forces them to find a healer who can regenerate the flesh, and so they miss out on something.

## OWLBEAR CUB

Owlbear cubs are always hungry. They're also dangerous to be around, because an adult is always nearby looking for the next meal for them.

4<sup>th</sup> level mook [BEAST]

Initiative: +7

**Hungry beak +9 vs. AC**—7 damage

*Death screech:* When an owlbear cub drops, it makes a *dazing screech* attack as a free action before it dies. This screech will alert any owlbear parents nearby, which will move to attack the enemy that killed the cub during its turn.

**C: Dazing screech +7 vs. MD (the enemy that dropped it)**—The target is dazed until the end of its next turn.

AC	19	
PD	16	HP 14 (mook)
MD	12	

*Mook:* Kill one owlbear cub mook for every 14 damage you deal to the mob.

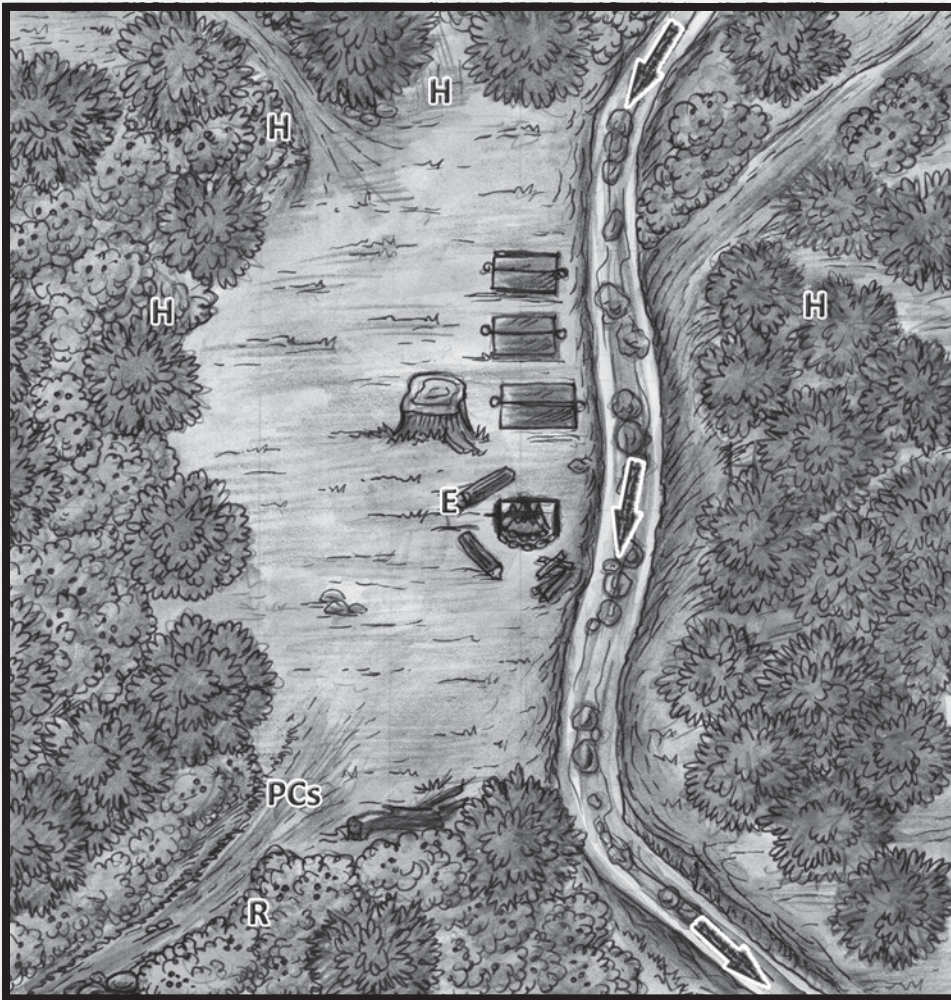
### NEXT STEPS

After the battle with the owlbears, Tizilla will have more respect for the heroes. She will either confirm to them that she made a good choice and they are the ones to help if she's revealed herself; otherwise she'll continue to steer them toward her glade. If she talks to them, she'll tell them that her friends are very close now.

See **Battle 4: Unwanted Guests**.







## BATTLE 4: UNWANTED GUESTS

*Suddenly you smell smoke, and something roasting on a fire. Just ahead a camp comes into view in a glade among the trees near a stream. Near the center of the glade is a large cedar stump nearly eight feet high. You barely have time to register the scene as an arrow slams into the ground at your feet and a grim voice calls out: "Trouble us no more dark ones! Leave us in peace." You see a wood elf with a bow trained on you standing partially behind a cedar tree. More figures are taking cover as they move toward you from the camp.*

### LOCATION DESCRIPTION

A band of wood elves (or other humanoids that fit your story) have set up a camp in a small glade among the cedar trees (Tizilla's home). Tizilla wanted them out, but her method brought unexpected consequences in the form of hunger-spirits, so now she's brought the PCs to get rid of the spirits.

The camp has been constructed in the middle of a 60-foot by 80-foot glade, with a thick patch of cedar trees bordering one

side and thick berry bushes with thorns on the other. A single tall cedar stump that looks hollow at the top extends upward from the center of the glade. A 10-foot wide stream bisects the glade not far from the stump, and where it enters and leaves the glade, the area is open with low foliage (the PCs are approaching from downstream). The ground is generally level, but visibility isn't high due to the trees and bushes.

The camp consists of a few simple open-ended tents strung over ropes, a fire with roasting rabbits on it, a few logs pulled into seating, and a pile of deadwood firewood.

If you use an alternate icon option, adjust the camp description accordingly (a gnome wizard would have a real tent and more gear, or nature-worshipping wood elves might have turned the central stump into a shrine).

### TERRAIN & TRAPS

**Berry Bushes:** The berry bushes have thorns but aren't especially dangerous, only slightly tough to move through. Those with armor are somewhat protected from the barbs, but they will catch on flesh, cloth, and fibrous material and make progress difficult.

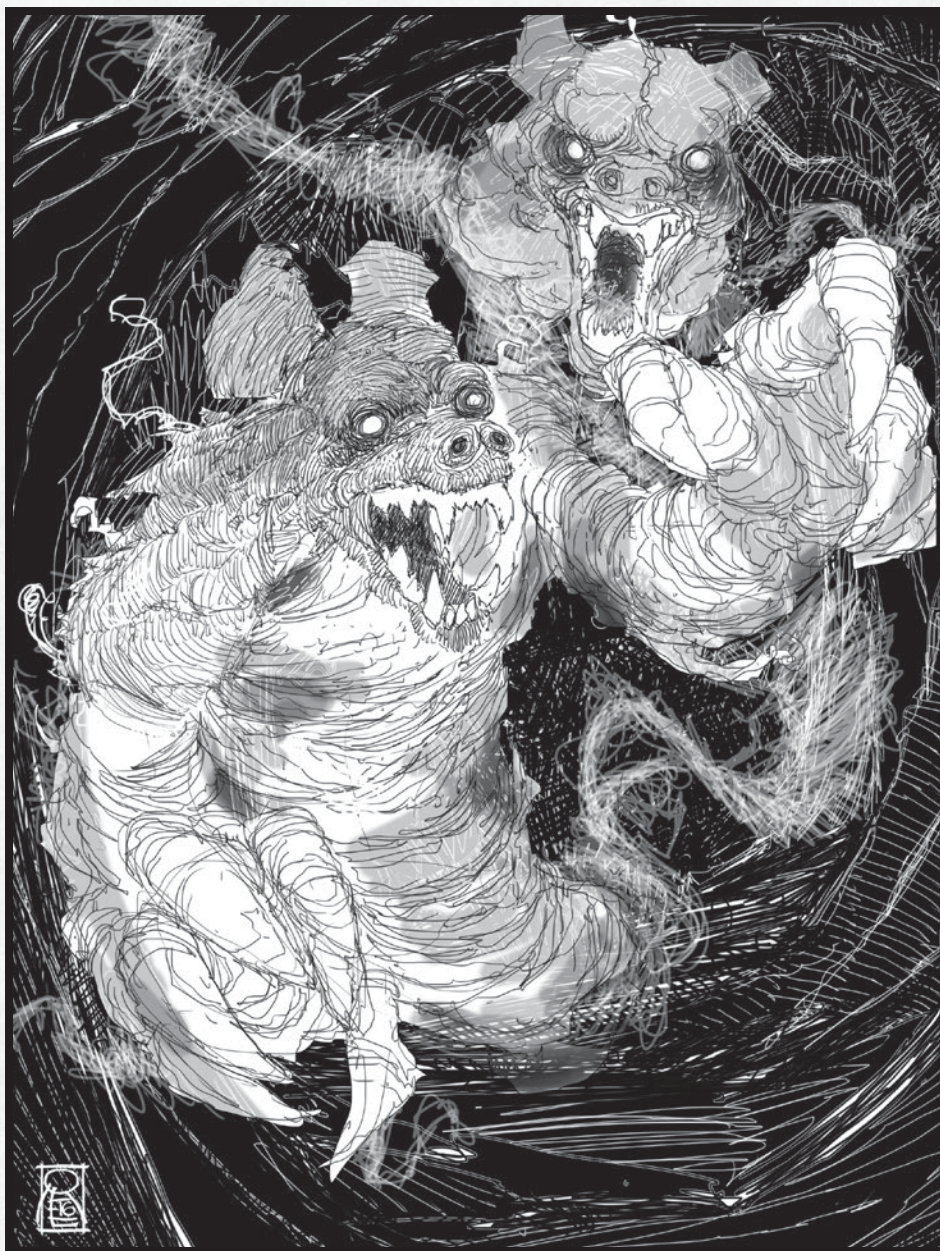
Any PC attempting to move through the bushes must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity or Strength check, otherwise they become stuck until the start of their next turn. Anyone wearing heavy armor gains a +4 bonus to the check.

**Cedar Trees:** The cedar trees are roughly 50 feet high and 25 feet wide at the base, have low and somewhat thick branches, and are easily climbable (no check). Anyone falling from one must roll a save; on a failure, they take 2d6 damage as they fail to grab a branch. The elves have bound branches together in two of the trees to form a more stable platform for archers.

**Cedar Stump:** The tall stump is Tizilla's home. The inside is hollow and makes for good living quarters for her. If the stump takes more than 30 damage or if anyone tries to knock it over (DC 20 Strength check), Tizilla will be miffed—have the perpetrator roll a save; on a failure, Tizilla will pester them with illusions (save ends); whether they are stuck in fear, weakened from seeing false enemies, or take another penalty is up to the GM.

**Stream:** The stream is only 3 feet deep at the middle, but the bottom is filled with large mossy rocks and the water is moving swiftly enough that anyone entering it must make a DC 10 Strength check or be pushed downstream instead of moving where they want (the water moves them 20 to 30 feet and they are dazed until the end of their turn).





## MONSTERS

**Wood Elves:** The wood elves don't know anything about Tizilla or that she brought the forest hunger-spirits upon them. They do know they are being hunted and have retreated to their camp while they try to figure out what to do next. So far, two members of their band have been killed at night.

For this reason, they elves will be distrustful of anyone approaching the camp, unsure if they are the ones stalking them or sending "things in the night" to come after them (so far the hunger-spirits have used stealth to ambush them, and they've only found their comrades' remains in the morning). If the PCs don't try to start a conversation quickly, or take any threatening actions, the elves will attack them out of fear. In this case, the battle is 20–25% harder than normal.

If the PCs do attempt to talk, they may be able to convince the elves that they mean them no harm or could possibly even

help, but it won't be easy. Once the PCs start talking, the elves will want to hear why the heroes are out in the wilderness and what their intentions are.

Once the PCs choose to talk, the interaction changes to one of roleplaying and negotiation momentarily. The elves are wary and edgy with fear, so it won't take much to start a fight. If you want to rely on skill rolls over roleplaying, it will take two skill checks to convince the elves to stand down, the first a DC 20 check to get them listening, and the second a DC 15 check to convince them the PCs are friends. Failure of either results in the elves attacking (first fail) or not helping (second fail).

The PCs might have some bonuses in their favor, however. If there is a wood elf in the group, these checks gain a +3 bonus. However, if there is a necromancer or other "dealer-in-death" in the group, the checks take a –2 penalty since spirits have been stalking the elves. Additionally, this is a perfect time to use icon advantages.

If the PCs hash things out with the elves, they will be welcomed into the camp. Just as their leader, Gulias, begins to explain their fears and the attacks, the forest hunger-spirits will attack. To keep things simpler, instead of having the GM or players have to manage allied elven mook attacks, the PCs will gain bonuses for the battle (see **Tactics**).

**Forest Hunger-Spirits:** When Ulla called forth the hunger-spirits to harry the elves, she used gnoll ears in the ritual, adding aggressiveness and hunger to the spirits' aspects. Now this spirit pack hunts the elves, picking them off one-

by-one until only a few remain. If a battle breaks out with the elves and the PCs, the spirits will sense the vulnerability of their prey and surge forward from the surrounding wilderness to join the carnage. They look like gnoll wraiths when next to a PC, but become indistinct shadows the further away they are from an opponent.

**Vengeful Redcap:** To add to the chaos of this situation, a redcap has been tracking the PCs after they killed his warren-mates, and he wants blood. He watches as the elves and PCs square off, waiting for his opportunity. When the PCs enter battle, either with the elves and spirits, or just the spirits, he will join in once the escalation die reaches 2.

**Additional Reinforcements:** If you want to challenge the PCs more, add a couple of other vengeful redcaps that have come looking for blood.



## Using Tizilla in This Scene

Tizilla should reveal herself at some point during this battle scene if she hasn't already. Once she does (or if she has), she will turn into an in-air commentator on the battle as it breaks out, keeping a safe distance but informing the heroes when one of them isn't looking so good, or doing so well.

Depending on how you want things to go, Tizilla can also inject herself into the discussion with the elves, either helping the PCs make their case ("They are with a magical creature favored by the Elf Queen"), or she can be a catalyst toward starting a battle ("There's a pixie with them. She must be using her magic on us."). Feel free to include another +2 bonus or -2 penalty to the checks to talk to the elves.

#/Level of PCs	Hunger-Spirit (H)	Redcap (R)	Wood Elf Mook (E)*
4 x 3 <sup>rd</sup> level	3	1	4 (1 mob)
5 x 3 <sup>rd</sup> level	4	1	5 (1 mob)
6 x 3 <sup>rd</sup> level	5	1	6 (1 mob)
4 x 4 <sup>th</sup> level	4	1	4 (1 mob)
5 x 4 <sup>th</sup> level	6	1	5 (1 mob)
6 x 4 <sup>th</sup> level	7	1	6 (1 mob)

\* Add the wood elf mooks to the battle only if the PCs fail the first check to gain their trust.

### Tactics

**Wood Elves:** If the wood elves choose to fight the PCs, they will try to use skirmisher tactics, moving and firing bows over melee. There are currently two elves hidden in tree platforms around the camp. Give those two a +2 attack bonus with their first attack of the battle. The elves will focus attacks on the PCs instead of the spirits, assuming that the heroes summoned the spirits and that killing them is the best way to get rid of the spirits; they will focus on spellcaster types.

If they accept the PCs into their camp, the wood elves fight alongside the PCs when the spirits attack. Instead of having to worry about making attacks for each mook, the elves attacks aid

the PCs: **Each PC in the battle gains a +1 attack bonus and deals one extra die of damage for the attack they make.**

GM, at your option, each time the escalation die advances, one wood elf in the group will fall wounded from the spirits' attacks and one PC will lose that bonus.

**Hunger-Spirits:** The spirits channel the bloodthirstiness and pack mentality of gnolls and will attack PCs in groups of two to three. They don't want anyone helping the elves. They will fight to the death (or in their case, their return to oblivion). When they drop, each will howl in anger and dissipate.

**Redcap:** The redcap won't enter battle until the escalation die reaches 2. When he does, he'll try to sneak up on a lightly armored PC like a spellcaster who's trying to stay away from the spirits, and he will continue to attack that target as long as possible. For him, the bad word is: **HELP!**

The first time the redcap attacks, have his target roll a save to spot the lurking creature. On a failure, the redcap gains a +2 bonus to his attacks that first round.

### Loot

The hunger-spirits and redcap have no valuables on them.

The elves are traveling light and only carry a few coins between them (10 gp), but they do have other valuables in the form of nature-themed silver jewelry, small wood carvings, and stone-beaded necklaces worth another 150 gp. They may offer some of their jewelry to the PCs (75 gp) in thanks if the PCs helped them.

In addition, the leader of the band, a wood elf named Gulias, will thank the PCs and might offer them a special gift for saving their lives: a *Belt of Resilience* made from silver tree bark (page 234 of *13TW*; or another item that fits the group).

Of course, if the PCs end up killing the elves after being attacked by them, the PCs will find the valuables, but whether to give them the magic item is up to the GM.

### Icons

Any PC can tell a story and use one icon advantage to gain a +3 to +6 bonus (based on how good the story was) on their checks to convince the elves that the heroes are friendly. Using two advantages from the same icon will gain an automatic success.

If the elves end up attacking the heroes, a PC with one or more advantages with the Elf Queen or High Druid could use them to get the elves to pull back during the battle to let the heroes kill the spirits. Someone with Lich King or Priestess advantages could use them to recognize the spirits for what they are, allowing them to make a DC 20 check as a standard action each round to dismiss one spirit. Success means that spirit returns wherever terrible spirits come from.



## WOOD ELF

3<sup>rd</sup> level mook [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +7

**Dagger +7 vs. AC**—5 damage

**R: Shortbow +8 vs. AC**—7 damage

*Natural 16+:* The wood elf can make another *shortbow* attack as a free action this turn.

*Light of step:* The wood elf gains a bonus to disengage checks equal to the escalation die.

<b>AC</b>	<b>18</b>	
<b>PD</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>HP 10 (mook)</b>
<b>MD</b>	<b>12</b>	

*Mook:* Kill a wood elf mook for every 10 damage you deal to the mob.

## FOREST HUNGER-SPIRIT

4<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +8

Vulnerability: holy

**Icy jaws of pain +9 vs. PD**—12 negative energy damage

*Natural even hit:* The spirit tries to draw life force from its target to sate its hunger: the target must roll a save; on a failure it's weakened until the end of its next turn, and the spirit gains 3 hp.

*Miss:* 3 negative energy damage.

*Pack attack:* The spirit gains a +1 attack bonus for each other spirit engaged with a target it's attacking (max +3).

*Spirit of the forest:* This creature has *resist damage 12+* to all damage except force damage and damage from elemental sources, which damages it normally.

In addition, it can move through solid objects (like trees and bushes), but can't end its turn in them.

<b>AC</b>	<b>18</b>	
<b>PD</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>HP 40</b>
<b>MD</b>	<b>15</b>	

## REDCAP

3<sup>rd</sup> level wrecker [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +9

**Twin skinning knives +8 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—6 damage

*Miss:* Damage equal to the escalation die.

**Stompy iron boots +8 vs. PD (one staggered or unconscious enemy)**—12 damage

*Miss:* 5 damage.

[Special trigger] **C: Pop-out and ride 'em +10 vs. AC (one nearby enemy)**—10 damage, and 5 ongoing damage

*Ridey-horsey:* While the target is taking ongoing damage from this attack, the redcap is riding the target's shoulders with its knives in the target's ears, and once during its turn the redcap can use a move action to make the target move anywhere nearby that won't directly cause it harm (but opportunity attacks are fair game).

*Miss:* 5 damage.

*Impossible teleport:* When the redcap scores a critical hit OR when a PC or a player at the table says the *bad word*, the redcap can teleport to a nearby hidden location it can see as a free action.

*Pop-out surprise:* When the redcap starts its turn and no enemy can see it, it can make a *pop-out and ride 'em* attack that turn as a standard action

<b>AC</b>	<b>17</b>	
<b>PD</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>HP 42</b>
<b>MD</b>	<b>15</b>	

### NEXT STEPS

If the heroes learned the story of what Tizilla did to the elves during their interactions with her (or through conversations after the battle), making a visit to Ulla the hag might be next on the PCs' wish list. Tizilla warns them against it, but gives them (pixie) directions for reaching the hag's abode. A wiser course would be for the PCs to hold on to the grudge until they have gained a level or two, and then you can run *Danger in Darkwood* (page 66).



If annoyed PCs choose to attack Tizilla, run a battle using the pixie stats from page 198 of *13 True Ways*, but once staggered, Tiz will try to escape, though if she can manage it, she'll try to lead the PCs to Ulla the hag and her guardians.

If the PCs missed some loot along the way, feel free to have Tizilla fly into her stump and return with a "pretty"—an uncut 200 gp garnet.

## A PIXIE PROBLEM STORY ENDINGS

Here are outcomes for each story opening, detailing what success or failure might mean.

If the PCs did face all four battles, remember to give them a full heal-up.

### FOLLOW THE THIEF

**Success:** Once the hunger-spirits are gone, Tizilla will agree to give back the item she took, if they promise to leave and make sure the elves leave also (taking their dead with them). When she returns the item, if it was magical, it comes back with a slightly improved power (GM's choice) and a new quirk, from being around a pixie for so long (like: Gets distracted by baubles and shiny things). If it was a non-magical item, it's now become an adventurer-tier magic item, if the GM wishes it.

**Failure:** The PCs eventually make it out of the area, but the lost item is never recovered.

### PLEASE, COME QUICKLY ELF-FRIEND

**Success:** Tizilla thanks the PCs for their help saving the elves. In accordance with her request, she bestows one of the PCs with a magic item (GM choice), gives them the information they need, or grants a boon to each of them: each PC gains a one-time reroll blessing (d20) from the Elf Queen that they must use before their next full heal-up or lose.

**Failure:** As the PCs flee or abandon their pledge, Tizilla pops them with a pixie-dust curse. Until they level up, each icon relationship roll of 6 with the Elf Queen is a 5, and each 5 doesn't count as an advantage only a complication.

### A CALL FOR HELP

**Success:** Tizilla reveals herself if she hasn't already and that she led the PCs here to help. Because they did such a good job, she

says the Forest is thankful and hands each of them a piece of gold-colored bark with the Elf Queen's emblem: a +1 *rune*.

**Failure:** Tizilla uses her magic to place an illusionary symbol above each PC's head that remains visible, marking them as cowards. Until they level up, any time they make a social skill check involving servants of the Elf Queen, they must roll twice and take the worst result.

### FOLLOW THE PIXIE ROAD

**Success:** As *A Call For Help* above, but replace the runes with loot if you prefer.

**Failure:** Tizilla uses her magic to mark each PC. Until they level up, any time they make a skill check to navigate dangerous terrain, they take a -2 penalty.

### A HIT OF PIXIE DUST

**Success:** Tizilla blows the dust off the maddened PC's face and they return to normal. During the trek through the wilderness, however, the PC had visions or dreams sent by the Elf Queen that will help them in the future. The next time the PC would roll Elf Queen icon relationship dice, they either automatically get one or two 6s, or they can reroll each die once.

**Failure:** The need for the maddened PC to find the song (Tizilla's wings) slowly lessens over time, but until they level up, they take a -4 penalty to skill checks to detect enemies or notice details (since they're distracted by echoes of the song).

## BATTLE SCENE CONNECTIONS

The stories from this set of battle scenes can lead to other scenes:

- *The King's Tribute* (Dwarf King): If the PCs are 3<sup>rd</sup> level, the item Tizilla gives them in *Please, Come Quickly Elf-friend* is the one that Lord Silveraxe seeks (of course).
- *Wild Sacrifice* (High Druid): As the PCs finish up with Tizilla and emerge from the forest, they come upon the frontier village of Thorn, and a grisly murder.
- *A Pit of Vipers* (the Three): After fighting the hunger-spirits, the PCs exit the forest or are in its outlying regions when they are attacked by the kobolds with the map. Or Tizilla gives them half of a magic item that leads them to its partner in the Vipers' lair.



# ELF QUEEN: DANGER IN DARKWOOD

LEVEL RANGE: 6-7



The themes of this set of battles are unexpected allies and enemies, dealing with drow, and interacting with the dark heart of the forest.

This set of battles works best in a forest or sylvan setting. You could loosely connect it to the adventurer-tier Elf Queen battle scene with Tizilla the pixie if you like (using either a success or a failure). Note, there's a little more complexity to this set of battle scenes in the first and third battles.

We suggest giving them a thorough read before running the adventure.

The PCs are traveling near or through Darkwood, a small forest in the region with a dark reputation. Someone or something they seek is in the wood, but it's a dangerous forest full of dark elves. During their travels, the PCs will encounter a band of dark elf musicians who don't fit their expectations (probably) and who will help them to find what they seek, if they can survive the night against an otherworldly threat.

Once they know where to go, they'll have to deal with Ulla the hag. They are now in her domain, and she is disinclined to help them. Making matters worse, some of the local dark elves have fallen under the hag's will and now serve her as thralls, defending the approach to her abode with all of their cruel skills.

## DANGER IN DARKWOOD STORY OPENINGS

- **The Hag's Curse:** One or more of the PCs that has an Elf Queen relationship is approached by Elantir Abalanth, a high elf of the Queen's Court. His wife was cursed by the hag Ulla, who lives in Darkwood forest. He needs them to enter the wood and seek the hag. They must get the hag to rescind the curse upon his wife Anabell, or if the hag won't cooperate, slay Ulla in hopes that the curse's magic will fade. Elantir says this is the Queen's will since "other avenues" have failed.
- **The Secrets of Darkwood:** Rumors of many dangers swell around Darkwood, but the PCs need to find Rileth Greenbark, a wood elf druid who went missing in the area. He knows the location of something they seek, or possibly has knowledge of a cure the PCs need. They have followed the druid's trail to the forest, and now must enter it if they'll have any chance of finding him. Rumors suggest he's the guest of someone named Ulla.

- **The Elf Queen's Folly:** One or more PCs with a negative or conflicted relationship with the Elf Queen are approached by her enemies, either those in service to another icon, or those from Court that she has spurned and cast out. Rumors suggest an old woman living in a hut in the depths of Darkwood Forest knows something about the Elf Queen that will put a dark stain upon her reputation. The PCs must seek out this woman, Ulla, and convince her to reveal the secret so that the information can be used against the Queen.
- **Friends of Tamril:** The small forest hamlet of Tamril has come under hard times of late. Dark elves have been raiding the village and killing its inhabitants for the last few weeks. Usually the elves stay within the dark interior of the forest, but something has stirred them up. The village elder, a friend of one of the PCs (or their parents) asks for help in finding the cause, in the name of the Elf Queen or another icon.

## ALTERNATE ICONS



**Diabolist:** Ulla is linked to the Diabolist instead, drawing her dark magic from that icon. Those arrayed against that icon call upon the PCs to seek out the hag and put an end to her. The forest spirit is actually an elder wendigo, and there are demons fighting alongside her drow thralls (use glabrezou demons in the last battle for topiary monsters).



**Emperor:** The Emperor's influence comes from the fact that the PCs are seeking an Imperial envoy who was attacked by raiding dark elves from Darkwood. The elves took the envoy with them, back to Ulla's abode. The PCs are tasked with retrieving the envoy, who is a valuable player in negotiations with either the Elf Queen or another icon in the region.

## ICONS IN PLAY

Characters that have relationships (and story-guide advantages) with the Elf Queen, Diabolist, High Druid, and maybe even the Prince of Shadows or the Archmage should be able to shine in these battle scenes. Moreso than PCs with other icon relationships, feel free to give such PCs extra knowledge about the opposition, make checks to pull off fun actions the players might suggest, and use their advantages to particularly good effect, such as negating or bypassing some of the terrain impediments or abilities of the enemies.



## DA NGER I N D A R K W O O D O V E R V I E W

After the PCs enter Darkwood Forest, they will encounter a band of dark elf musicians. Probably expecting enemies, they will instead find allies within the forest who are willing to help them. But first the PCs must save this band of gypsy bards and their seer leader from a corrupted forest spirit seeking to cleanse Darkwood of humanoids.

Once the spirit is driven off and the elves are saved, they will provide guidance on where the hag is, or where the thing the PCs seek waits (with Ulla). Following these directions, the PCs enter the domain of Ulla. Before they reach her hut, however, they must deal with a group of dark elf raiders working for the hag who are guarding the approach.

Finally, the PCs reach the hag's hut. After an initial encounter with an illusion of her, they must seek the hag out to finish their business. When her hut begins to move on its own, things become even stranger. Eventually, they find a passage to an extradimensional space within the hut that leads to a topiary garden where the hag is waiting.

GM, feel free to expand upon these battles by including battles with additional forest enemies, drow raiders, or other weird places within the hag's hut.

The battles outlined here can take place over a few hours, days, or even weeks of travel if you prefer to stretch things out. Since the dark elf aspect of the Elf Queen is in play, we suggest flavoring descriptions and battle scenes with cruelty, dark forest magic, and unwholesome sights and sounds that a hag would find comforting.

See story endings after the final battle for options on what happens after the PCs finish the last battle.

## B A T T L E I : T H E S I N G I N G S T O N E S

*You entered Darkwood Forest some hours ago, and the canopy has been getting heavier and darker ever since. You feel like something has been watching you for the last hour since you chose your current path. Suddenly, a light breeze brings the sound of drums. Not war drums; the music is dark and brooding, but not angry. The tune draws you to a large circle of standing stones among a glade in the forest. Within the ring, there are three covered wagons and a group of figures in a drum circle... dark elves! A voice from the shadows says, "What do you want here?"*

### L O C A T I O N D E S C R I P T I O N

A group of dark elf musicians has set up camp within the large ring of standing stones that circle in the glade. The slate-gray stones are heavily weathered, with soft green grass covering the ground inside them.

There are three wagons covered with a mix of stretched hides and heavy cloth, and what look like arcane symbols inscribed upon the outside in dark stain. In the center of the ring a low fire burns, with log benches around it. A handful of dark elves with drums beat a brooding rhythm. Outside the ring are a handful of

hidden sentries, one of whom has challenged the PCs. When this happens, the drummers stop playing and look that way.

But these dark elf bards aren't looking for trouble. As long as the PCs don't immediately attack them, one male dark elf named Tulio will approach the group and offer to share fire, drink, and a safe place to sleep since the wood is "restless" tonight.

If the PCs refuse and attack without provocation, there are two ways to go with it: either treat them as a group of low-level mooks who will try to flee, or quickly design a triple-strength battle using double-strength 10<sup>th</sup> level warrior-bards and hand the PCs their lunch for not talking.

If the PCs accept the offer of friendship, the dark elves' offer is true. Tulio will introduce his folk as the *Caenfare* (elven for traveling folk), musicians of the stones. They are led by the only woman in the camp, the seer Hratha, who remains in one of the covered wagons. The group has the feel of a gypsy band.

When Tulio leads them into the circle of stones, he'll sing a song of entry allowing the PCs to pass wards the dark elves have woven upon the stones. After offering the guests food and drink, Tulio will say that Hratha would like to talk to one of them (preferably someone with an Elf Queen relationship). See the sidebar Hratha the Seer.

Unlike most drow, these dark elves show courtesy and not a lot of cruelty in their actions and conversation. They wear muted colors of silver and gray, with a touch of color here and there. They break into song or drum beat suddenly, and don't pose a threat. The real trouble will come later in the night when the forest spirit that has been stalking the PCs during daylight decides to attack the camp.





## HRATHA THE SEER

Hratha is an ancient dark elf woman with graying hair and milky eyes. Her tongue is sharp, but most of the bite is gone from her. She wears robes of fine gray spidersilk and wears many silver rings upon her fingers. She sits within her covered wagon at a small table with one chair facing her. Behind her is an assortment of oddities, some disgusting or disturbing.

Hratha will ask to speak to one of the PCs if they enter camp peacefully, preferably a PC with an Elf Queen relationship. She will say things that make her seem to know things about the PCs and their reasons for being in Darkwood. Then she will ask the PCs if they wish for a reading. If they do, she will throw the bones for them. Have the PC roll a Wisdom or Charisma check, using a background that might be related to prophecy or foretelling. The higher the roll, the more Hratha reveals. At the very least, she tells them the first two items below.

- That which you seek is within a hut in the forest. You can find it by this stone (she gives them a river stone on a cord; when spun it will lean toward the hut).
- An old crone, Ulla, lives in the hut. She has allies guarding the place. (DC 20)
- Reaching Ulla will be dangerous. She has hidden dark elf allies who will try to stop you on the path. (DC 25)
- Beware Ulla. She is a powerful spellcaster with the power to beguile you. (DC 30)
- Ulla is a hag of great power. Beware her evil eye. (DC 35).

Other PCs may approach Ulla wishing to know their fortunes. If they give her a suitable gift and treat her with respect, she will throw the bones for them. She reveals nothing about this adventure, only details about that PC's unique or outside storylines, with more information coming with a better roll.

Luckily, the Caenfare drow have warded the singing stones against such evil, but when one of the wards falters, the PCs must defend the camp until the bards can restore the ward (see **Monsters**).

### TERRAIN & TRAPS

**Warded Stones:** There are a total of twelve stones each set 15 to 20 feet apart that form a 120-foot diameter ring. Each is 15 feet high, around 10 feet wide, and 4 feet thick. The stones also have various warding sigils the Caenfare inscribed upon them in a mixture of berry juice, blood, and silver dust similar to the ones on the covered wagon hides.

When the forest spirit comes, the wards will hold it at bay for a time, flaring with eldritch energy as the spirit tests them for weakness.

**Surrounding Forest:** The woods around the glade are thick with a mixture of deciduous trees and dense ground foliage,

making movement outside the glade or off the path difficult (easy save each round to be able to move normally). There is a lot of cover and concealment among the vegetation, and the trees are easy to climb (no check needed).

**Covered Wagons:** The wagons are 12 feet long and 7 feet wide with built-up sides, a driver's bench, and wooden support arches that the hides are secured to. Two hold supplies: food, drink, and equipment. The middle one is Hratha's home, where the seer performs readings (see sidebar). Interestingly, there are no signs of any animals to draw the carts (because the Caenfare use the singing stones to *travel* between stone rings; they will not give up the secret to this magic willingly).

### MONSTERS

Unless the PCs are hasty and attack the dark elves outright, the true threat here is a corrupted forest spirit that began stalking the PCs soon after they entered the Darkwood. As darkness fully settles on the camp and the PCs settle down to rest, a heavy mist rises outside of the stones; it's the forest spirit. The spirit tests the wards, trying to enter the circle of stones, and those in the camp see flashes of arcane energy as this happens. After a short time, one of the wards fails with a bright flash.

When this happens, the spirit flows into the camp as a column of fog and attacks. Also entering the circle is a group of mist monsters created by the spirit's dark will. Tulio will shout to the PCs to hold the evil spirits at bay until the Caenfare can reset the wards. At that point, the PCs must protect the singers and survive until the escalation die reaches 5, when the wards will be refreshed (it's a ritual powered by the magic of the bards' singing).

If the PCs haven't defeated the spirit by escalation 5, the wards go up at that point and force it and the mist monsters out, assuming there are enough bards left to power the ward. Eventually, it will go seek other prey and leave the camp.

If the PCs have abilities that increase or decrease the escalation die, it's going to be more fun to count to the start of the 5<sup>th</sup> round instead of using the die itself.

**Additional Reinforcements:** If you want to challenge the PCs more, make the mooks double strength (or triple strength for the last entry).

#/Level of PCs	Corrupted Forest Spirit (S)	Mist Monster Mook (M)*
4 x 6 <sup>th</sup> level	1	5 (1 mob)
5 x 6 <sup>th</sup> level	1	12 (1 mob)
6 x 6 <sup>th</sup> level	1	17 (2 mobs)
4 x 7 <sup>th</sup> level	1	13 (1 mob)
5 x 7 <sup>th</sup> level	1	21 (3 mobs)
6 x 7 <sup>th</sup> level	1	15 (2 mobs)**

\* Indicates how many mooks start the battle along with the spirit. The spirit will create more mooks each round that aren't part of this total.

\*\* Make each mook double-strength: it has 40 hp and deals 28 cold damage with its *freezing vapors* attack. This includes spirit-created mooks.





mook is out of the battle at that point. Unconscious bards will die if the PCs are forced to flee and the wards aren't reset.

PCs can attempt to drive a mist monster out of a bard with a skill check (and a creative idea) as a standard action. Make the DC 20.

There are 10 bards total, and they will form three groups of three with Tulio in the center guiding the ritual song. One group goes to the stone whose ward has failed, and the other two groups form the other two points of a triangle inside the ring of stones. One bard sings while the other two try to fend off attacks against him. If more than 6 bards are overcome by mist monsters, the ritual will be delayed for a round (or fail if you prefer).

## Loot

If the PCs managed to hold off the spirit, the dark elves are thankful. In addition to any information Hratha provides, each bard will give a PC a token of friendship with the Caenfare, some small item of jewelry. Each item is only worth a few gold pieces, but it's also a symbol to others under the Elf Queen's rule and allows the PC to reroll one icon die the next time they roll dice.

## Tactics

The forest spirit wishes to destroy all humanoids, a plan that seems to it to be guaranteed to save the forest. Pick a weak point in the circle of stones; the spirit and mist monsters will enter the circle at that point and spread out (the map picked a spot for you, if you like). The spirit only attacks the PCs, leaving the dark elf bards to the mist monsters. Any PC who goes outside the circle of stones is engaged with the forest spirit, since it fills the entire glade around the ring.

The mist monsters swarm over the closest enemies, including the dark elf bards trying to reset the wards (in general send one-third of the mooks toward the bards). When a mist monster hits a bard (AC 20), the mook enters the dark elf's nose and mouth, filling the elf's lungs, and the bard falls unconscious to the ground. The

## Icons

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Elf Queen, Archmage, High Druid, Priestess, or maybe the Crusader, Diabolist, or the GGW could use one or more of them to help the bards ward the stones more quickly. For every two advantages used this way, reduce the time it takes to reset the wards by 1 round (so two advantages means it happens on escalation die 4).

A PC that has relationship advantages with any icon could use one or more of them to gain a true reading with Hratha without a roll. In this case, the seer sees something of the future and relates it. This can be a story element for that PC's larger story or unique, or something about the upcoming encounter with the hag or the drow ambush. GM, try not to be too specific, unless a PC uses multiple advantages for the reading.



## CORRUPTED FOREST SPIRIT

*Misty tendrils of malevolence and pain lash out of the fog cloud like steam boiling from a pot.*

*Huge 8<sup>th</sup> level spoiler* [ELEMENTAL]

Initiative: +11

Vulnerability: fire

**C: Mist tendrils +13 vs. PD (1d3 enemies)**—20 cold damage, and the target is stuck until the start of the spirit's next turn

*Natural 18+*: The target begins to suffocate (if living) as the mist enters its lungs. It must begin making last gasp saves. On the fourth failure, the target dies from suffocation.

*Elemental cold*: At the start of its turn, each enemy in the battle takes 15 cold damage as the mist freezes its flesh. When this happens, the spirit creates one mist monster for each PC damaged.

*Spirit of mist and ice*: The spirit has *resist damage 16+* to all damage except fire or force damage. In addition, the spirit doesn't make opportunity attacks (it's everywhere, but it has to focus its will to attack).

AC 22  
PD 21  
MD 20

HP 380

## MIST MONSTER

*Shapes come out of the mist, or perhaps they are the mist. There's a troll... and a bear... oh wait, the troll is a bear now. No wait, it's a giant spider.*

*7<sup>th</sup> level mook* [ELEMENTAL]

Initiative: +12

**Freezing vapors +12 vs. AC**—14 cold damage

*Natural even hit*: The target takes 5 ongoing cold damage and is stuck (save ends both).

*Made of mist*: The mist monster has *resist weapon damage 12+* to all damage except fire or force damage.

AC 22  
PD 19  
MD 15

HP 20 (mook)

*Mook*: Kill one mist monster mook for every 20 damage you deal to the mob.

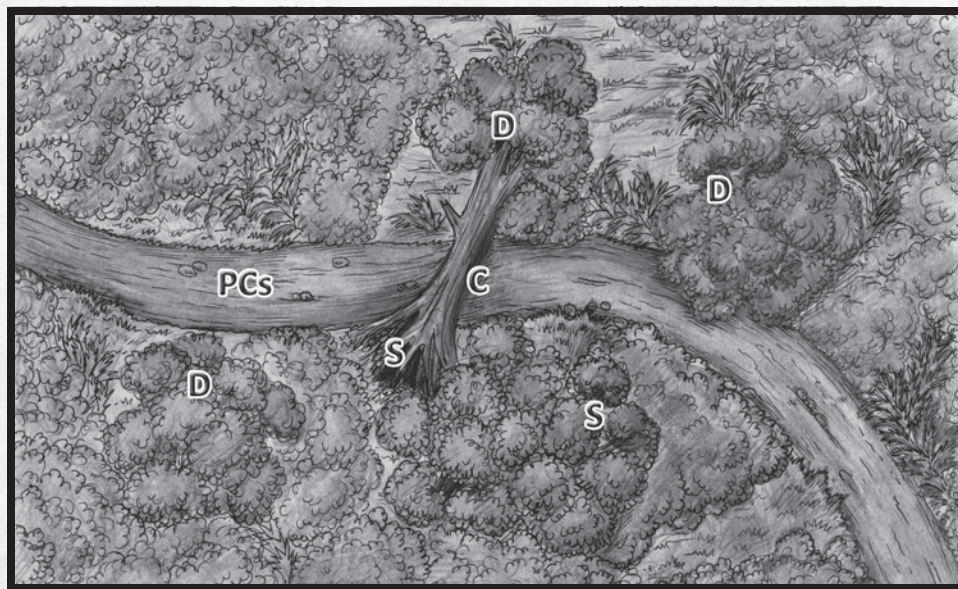
### NEXT STEPS

Once the spirit is destroyed, or defeated by resetting the wards, the sense of danger and foreboding from the forest will lessen. In the morning, the Caenfare dark elves will be gone, with even PCs who were awake on watch not seeing them go. (They use the stones to travel/teleport; those awake briefly sleep and dream as the bards sing a lullaby.)

The PCs should now know where to find Ulla's hut thanks to Hratha and can set out upon the right paths when they're ready. Go to **Battle 2: Dark Elf Ambush**.







## BATTLE 2: DARK ELF AMBUSH

*Your path has led ever deeper into Darkwood, and the canopy is so thick that shadows linger everywhere even during the height of the day. You've jumped at moving shadows a hundred times already, and night is still hours away. Just ahead, a huge tree trunk lies angled across the path, with only enough room to pass through on the right. The forest beyond the path is filled with its namesake darkwood trees with black bark and thick trunks that rise hundreds of feet. Thick ferns with rust-colored tips cover the ground around the trees' bases, rising nearly five feet in places to obscure the surrounding area.*

### LOCATION DESCRIPTION

Dark elves who serve the hag Ulla have set an ambush point up on this path that leads to her hut. They have no desire to talk, only to kill the prey that has entered their new hunting grounds.

The large tree crossing the path touches the ground some 30 feet off the path to the left and rises to nearly 60 feet at its end to the right off the path, where the upper branches are locked in place with other trees keeping gravity from fully taking it. The trunk is easily 15 feet in diameter. The large trees bordering the path in this area have many branches starting 30 feet up and going higher; each is easily wide enough for a humanoid to walk on.

A group of drow are hidden in the area, trying to ambush the PCs (see **Terrain & Traps**). They hope to strike quickly, bringing their enemies down.

### TERRAIN & TRAPS

**Ambush:** The elves know the Darkwood well and are experts at hiding. Each PC can roll a DC 30 Wisdom check to spot the ambush. If any succeed, the dark elves don't manage to surprise the PCs. If the drow do ambush the PCs, see **Tactics** for their first actions.

**Fallen Darkwood Tree:** The tree is 10 feet off the ground at its lowest point on the path, but there are a few shattered branches leading up to the trunk. A creature can use a move action to head off the path and climb onto the log easily, but it takes another

move action to walk along it to a point back over the path where the drow wait. Climbing a branch to the top of the log above the path is a single move action, and requires a DC 20 Strength check.

Anyone falling from the trunk above the path takes 2d8 damage (about 30 feet). Falls from further up the trunk deal 4d8 damage (about 50 feet). The tree isn't completely anchored either; any effects that might shift it could cause the entire thing to fall to the ground, dealing falling damage to everyone on it. Each time such an effect occurs, roll an easy save (6+); on a failure, the trunk crashes to the ground.

The tree is wide enough on top for normal movement. Any dicey moves that force a creature to balance require either a DC 20 Dexterity check (PCs), or

an easy save (dark elves).

**Darkwood Trees:** The lowest branches are nearby and require one move action to reach by climbing. The higher branches require another move action. Climbing a tree requires a successful DC 20 Strength check for each move action, with failure either resulting in no progress, or the creature is vulnerable until the start of its next turn as it moves upward badly. Use the same rules as above for balancing on branches.

**Ferns & Foliage:** The giant ferns and other undergrowth offer plenty of places for concealment. GM, if you're feeling nice and a PC falls from a tree, you could have them roll a save. On a success, that PC hits a fern perfectly and only takes half damage from the fall.

### MONSTERS

A male drow and its wolf spider mount (spider cavalry) waits out of sight on the backside of the downed tree. Drow darkbolts hide on the branches of the trees on either side of the path, ready to fire. Half are nearby, and half are far away on higher branches. The leaders of these ambushers, drow spider-sorcerers, hide farther up the fallen tree and on nearby branches of darkwood trees behind the PCs, where they've just given the order to attack.

**Additional Reinforcements:** If you want to challenge the PCs more, the drow have enlisted a "distraction" in the form of a centaur champion (*Bestiary*, page 36) to hit the PCs from behind at the start of the battle.

#/Level of PCs	Spider-Sorcerer (S)	Drow Darkbolts (D)	Drow Cavalry (C)
4 x 6 <sup>th</sup> level	2	3	1*
5 x 6 <sup>th</sup> level	1	2	1**
6 x 6 <sup>th</sup> level	2	2	1
4 x 7 <sup>th</sup> level	1	2	1
5 x 7 <sup>th</sup> level	2	3	1
6 x 7 <sup>th</sup> level	2	5	1

\* The spider has no rider. Use only the giant spider stats.

\*\* The drow cavalry doesn't get its *expert spider-rider* damage bonus.





## TACTICS

**Ambush:** The drow are experts at stealth, so it's possible they'll surprise the PCs (*13<sup>th</sup> Age* core rulebook page 164). If they do, choose one of the spider-sorceresses as the drow who will start the ambush by attacking with *greater malediction of webs*.

**Spider-sorceress:** During the battle, each spider-sorceress will continue to use her webs to keep enemies stuck, then switch to *darkfire* against any targets not stuck, then back to webs until she can use *darkfire* again. The *dark orison* crit bonus can add up with multiple sorceresses, so if you choose, you could rule that it only works for the senior spellcaster (until she dies and then the next in line gets the effect). Or just be cruel and bring the pain.

**Darkbolts:** The darkbolts will try to stay at range, using *darkbolt vanish* to avoid those trying to reach them. They are experts at maneuvering in places like the branches, but if they try some very difficult maneuver (or a PC effect forces them off a branch), they can roll an easy save to pull it off or mitigate the fall on a success. They will focus their barbed arrows on spellcasters, especially ranged arcane types.

**Drow Cavalry:** The drow cavalry has an advantage in that the spider can move to the bottom of the fallen log and the drow riding it can reach those on the ground under the log, allowing it to use its lance in melee. After that, it will need to engage PCs to attack them, though it might delay to see if any PCs come to it upon the fallen tree.

## LOOT

These dark elves have received gifts from Ulla, and also been successful in their hunts. Each carries 50 gp in coins, but also has

2 pieces of spider- or shadow-themed jewelry worth another 50 gp (so 100 gp per drow).

In addition, one of the spider-sorceresses has a *potion of spider climbing* and one packet of *web dust* (*13<sup>th</sup> Age Bestiary*, page 61), or two other one-use items of your choosing.

## Icons

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Elf Queen, High Druid, Prince, Dwarf King, or maybe the Diabolist or Crusader could use one or more of them to help avoid the ambush thanks to stories of Darkwood or other means. Each advantage gives a +5 bonus to the roll, allows a reroll, or possibly negates the ambush completely for a strong advantage, as the GM wishes.

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Elf Queen, Emperor, High Druid, Prince, Diabolist, or the Three could use one or more of them to fend off the cruelty of these drow by negating a *poisoner* effect.

## DROW CRUELTY

Drow are diverse yet universally cruel. These drow all have the following ability instead of the racial ability possessed by player characters.

**Poisoner:** When the drow scores a critical hit, it can forego damage to force the target to start making last gasp saves. On the fourth failure, the target falls unconscious (and can't be woken normally) for 2d4 minutes.

## DROW SPIDER-SORCERESS

*If her smile seems familiar, she's failing to disguise her contempt.*

*6<sup>th</sup> level caster* [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +11

**Sharpened wand +11 vs. AC**—20 damage

**R: Darkfire +11 vs. PD (one nearby or far away enemy)**—20 damage, and the target is weakened (save ends)

**Limited use:** Once the sorceress hits with *darkfire*, she can't use it again until the target saves.

**C: Greater malediction of webs +11 vs. PD (up to 2 nearby enemies in a group)**—10 damage, and the target is stuck (save ends) and takes 10 damage each time it fails the save

**Dark orison:** Each time the spider-sorceress misses with an attack, the crit range of attacks by drow and spiders in the battle expands by 1.

**Spider speaker:** The first time each battle an enemy hits the spider-sorceress with a melee attack, that attacker takes 16 ongoing poison damage from her familiar.

## Nastier Specials

**Arcane arachnids:** The spider-sorceress has a true magic item (probably an implement) and uses it to her benefit (adjust stats accordingly).

AC 22  
PD 16  
MD 20

HP 84



# DROW DARKBOLT

*A rush of wind, a flicker of movement at the corner of your eye, and a sudden stab of pain.*

7<sup>th</sup> level archer [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +12

**Dagger and spidersilk line +12 vs. AC (one nearby enemy)—22 damage**

Miss: 8 damage.

**R: Exsanguinating barbed arrows +12 vs. AC (one nearby or far away enemy)—20 damage, and 6 ongoing damage**

*Natural even hit:* As a free action, the darkbolt can make a second *barbed arrows* attack against a different enemy with a –2 attack penalty. If it gets another natural even hit, it can make a third (and final) *barbed arrows* attack against a different enemy with a –4 attack penalty as a free action.

*Darkbolt vanish!:* If unengaged, when the darkbolt attacks and rolls a natural even miss, it can step into a shadow-dimension that turn as a move action. While in the shadows, it can't be seen or targeted with attacks, and it reappears anywhere nearby at the start of its next turn.

*Wall-crawler:* A darkbolt can climb on ceilings and walls as easily as it moves on the ground thanks to its rope-dagger and spiked bracers.

## Nastier Specials

*Well equipped:* The drow has a potion or poison that it can use as a quick action twice this battle (see **Poisons and Potions** below).

AC	23	
PD	21	HP 100
MD	17	

# DROW CAVALRY

*Scuttling into view with lances and sabers, the drow cavalry moves like a dark and silent wave. Their leader raises his lance in salute, and then they are on you!*

Double-strength 9<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +14

**Glass-tipped lance +14 vs. AC—75 (90/25) damage, and the target pops free from the cavalry and is weakened (save ends)**

*Limited use:* 1/battle, during a surprise round or the first round of battle.

**Spider saber +14 vs. AC—75 (90/25) damage**

*Expert spider-rider:* While mounted, the drow cavalry deals +15 damage with its attacks, hit or miss, against unmounted enemies.

*Mounted combatant:* Reduce the drow cavalry's attack damage by 50 when it's not riding a spider.

*Spider mount:* Whenever the drow cavalry rolls a natural 1–10 on an attack roll, its spider mount acts independently, choosing one of the following options:

**Bite**—The spider makes a *bite* attack.

**Jump & Scuttle**—The spider and its rider pop free from all enemies and can move somewhere nearby.

**Web**—The spider makes a *web* attack.

AC	25	
PD	23	HP 270
MD	18	

# SPIDER MOUNT

*It's larger than a horse and has fangs the size of steak knives. It looks eerily intelligent.*

6<sup>th</sup> level troop [BEAST]

Initiative: +15 (or same as rider if it has one)

**Bite +11 vs. AC—15 damage, and 10 ongoing poison damage**

**C: Web +11 vs. PD (up to 2 nearby enemies in a group)**—The target is stuck (save ends)

*Wall-crawler:* A spider mount can climb on ceilings and walls as easily as it moves on the ground, and so can its rider.

*Uncontrolled:* A riderless spider mount will eventually run away. At the start of the spider's turn roll a d4; if you roll less than the escalation die, the mount flees.

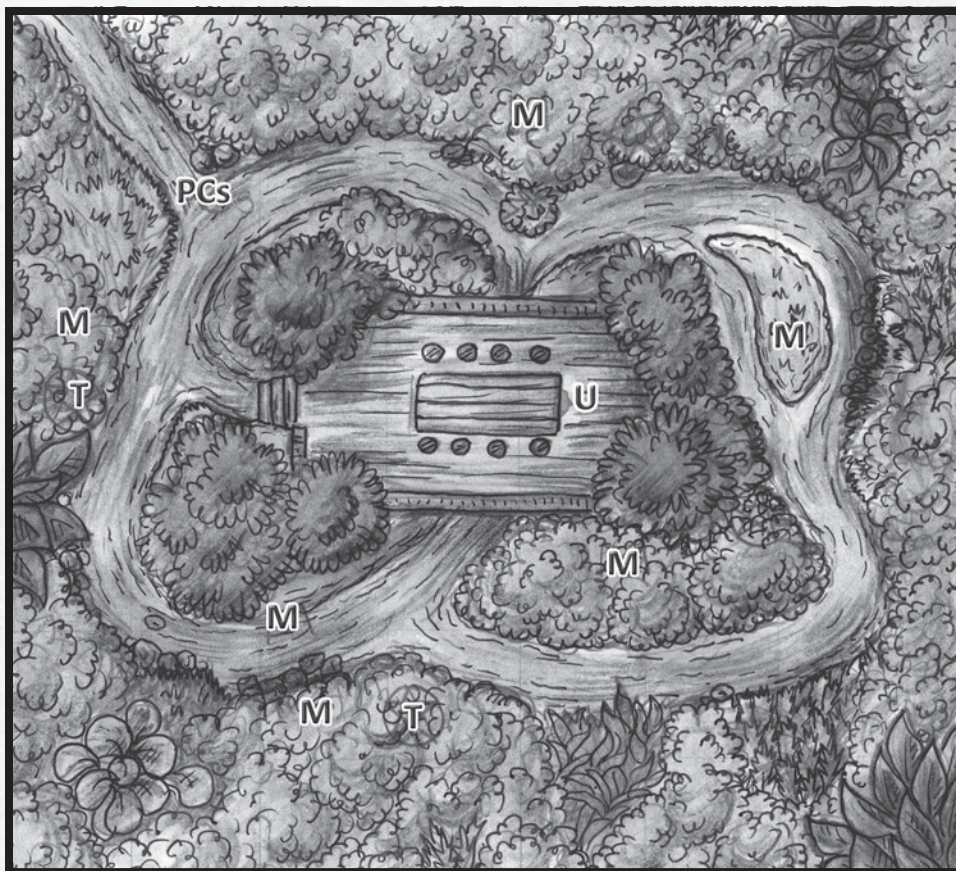
AC	22	
PD	16	HP 90
MD	20	

## NEXT STEPS

If any of these dark elves are captured, they can confirm that Ulla's hut is close, only a few hours travel. They'll also tell the PCs that they are doomed for trespassing on her lands, and more of her servants will come for them. They are utterly dedicated to her.

Once the PCs are ready to face Ulla, go to **Battle 3: The Hag's Hut**.





## BATTLE 3: THE HAG'S HUT

*You're in the darkest stretch of forest you've encountered so far. The path has been following a slow-moving, murky brook, but ahead it pools near an open area under the canopy. You see a structure built between two smaller darkwood trees—a hut made of wood and thatch. There's a simple thatch door, a few shuttered windows, and a trail of smoke curling from the roof.*

### LOCATION DESCRIPTION

The PCs have found Ulla's hut, and she is inside, but she has a trick waiting for those who've intruded upon her abode. She appears to be sitting in a rocking chair by a small firepit in the center of the hut, busily carving a figure from a tree branch with a sharp knife. In reality, this is only a complex illusion that Ulla is viewing from an extradimensional space within the hut through which she can project her voice and hear sounds. If any PCs call out, she'll answer back and welcome them inside for tea.

The PCs might not be expecting a welcome reception, but that's what they'll get. Inside they see an ancient half-elven woman rocking in her chair. She will invite them to have tea and point to a kettle set near the fire along with a tray of wooden mugs. Ulla will try to learn about the PCs through conversation as they interact with her illusion. She will, of course, claim to be a hermit living in the wood, minding her own business. Feel free to play that up.

The hut is a single 25 x 15 foot room, with the darkwood trees forming the rough, rounded walls on each end. The interior is simple

with a woodsy décor. There's a small table and chair, a large wooden trunk, a pile of turnips in a pot next to a cutting board, a string of animal pelts hung to dry, a wood axe and pile of logs, and an open barrel of water, all set upon a dirt floor.

Once the PCs are inside, or at least most of them are inside if some choose to stay out, and Ulla has gained what information she wants from them, this scene will change. She will say something about being so happy to have guests and then the illusion will disappear (as will happen if anyone tries to physically interact with her) with a cackle. Then the ground starts to shake as the two trees lift themselves out of the ground and begin to move on root legs, carrying the hut (the dirt floor is kept intact through the magic of the hut and digging into it won't allow escape). At the same time, the doors and shutters will magically seal against anyone exiting the hut. Those inside will be aware that they are moving, but can't see outside. No amount of damage will break the doors or shutters either, unless you wish it GM.

At that point, the trees begin to walk into the forest, avoiding other trees and obstacles thanks to the hut's magic. Any PCs on the outside will have to decide if they're going to jump on the trees or go in the hut, otherwise they will get left behind. See **Terrain & Traps** for PC options on getting inside, and getting the hut to stop moving.

Ulla will be waiting for the PCs to come to her in the Garden of Delights, where she is preparing a feast with them as the main course (see **Garden of Delights**). This is a double-strength battle.

### ULLA THE HAG

Ulla appears as an ancient half-elven woman (dark elf) with graying hair and sagging skin who must once have been beautiful. She speaks with a strong, steady voice and her teeth appear to be perfect. Her emerald eyes show intelligence and a hint of cunning.

Ulla was a mortal once, a half-elven woman cursed to become a hag. In her hag form, she has hair made from darkwood bark, black claws as hard as root wood, dark, rough, bark-like skin, wood-splinter teeth, and eyes of inky blackness.

She will enjoy playing a game of cat and mouse with the PCs while sitting in the rocking chair, delivering subtle threats and assessing the PCs' capabilities, but she takes no direct action. Everyone will probably know she is more than what they see, but sometimes the clichés work for a reason.



## TERRAIN & TRAPS

**Entering the Moving Hut:** Once the hut starts to move thanks to the walking trees, it doesn't move quickly, but the trees seem to have a magical ability to move through foliage and branches without getting hung up, which will slow down PCs outside trying to keep pace. After a short distance, it should be obvious that they will fall behind the longer it goes.

A PC can easily move to the doorway and enter. From the inside, they just appear; there is no opening to the outside world. If they attempt to cling to the outside, or climb onto one of the trees, the trees' ability to avoid foliage doesn't apply to them and they will have a tough time of it. The idea is to get them to go inside, but if some PCs are stubborn, have them roll a save every minute or two in real time. Each failure means they lose a recovery due to being smashed or trampled.

The hut and trees are highly magical, and they will resist most attempts to damage them (blades don't seem to penetrate the bark, fire rolls off of them, etc.). Creative solutions might get the hut and trees to slow down or stop moving for a short time. When PCs start messing with the trees, have a tree branch grab a riding PC and shove them through the doorway to the hut.

**Escaping the Moving Hut:** When the illusion of Ulla vanishes, the hut magically seals to prevent anyone inside from leaving until Ulla is destroyed or she unseals it. The magic is strong, and attempts to open the door or shutters will fail unless you want the PCs to be able to flee. No communication between the inside and outside is possible at that point. Hopefully those outside will decide it's better to not be separated.

**The Hut Interior:** Everything inside the hut is normal, except for the wood trunk and the tea. Anyone who drinks the tea will come under a charm effect by Ulla that she can use during battle (see **Tactics**).

The trunk opens to reveal a set of stairs leading down (to the extradimensional garden space where Ulla is waiting). The stairs descend 10 feet, where a narrow 4 x 4 foot dirt tunnel leads away (obviously going beyond the hut's dimensions). Most PCs will have to crawl. The tunnel is 80 feet long.

**The Hidden Garden of Haggish Delights:** At the end of the tunnel, it opens into a large space that seems to be carved from a canopy of darkwood trees and leaves (like an oval in the canopy). There's a raised dais at the center of the 140 x 100 foot area, with a long wooden table filled with a feast (much of it still wiggling, still bloody, and still squealing).

The rest of the area is a hedge garden interspersed with flowerbeds sprouting humanoid bones. In a few areas around the garden, there are large topiary shrubs, bushes shaped like a wyvern, a hill giant, a dire wolf, and an owlbear. The PCs may not realize at first that these topiaries are giant topiary monsters, but you can describe the topiary creatures stretching and moving instead of keeping it as a big secret!

Ulla in her hag form stands near the table and welcomes the PCs to the feast. There's a large wooden trunk behind the table, out of view.

## MONSTERS

There are three different types of enemies waiting for the PCs in the garden: Ulla the hag, the topiary monsters, and some drow

blood thralls who are hidden out of sight, waiting for the signal to attack.

**Ulla:** At this point, if the PCs need something from Ulla (such as the removal of a curse, or information on where she's stashing the druid) there's still a chance to negotiate with her. She may be willing to forego her feast if they're willing to deal. Getting her to agree to their demands will require good roleplaying, at least two successful social skill checks (Strength for intimidation or Charisma for negotiation probably) at DC 25 to 30, and each PC agreeing to owe her a favor of her choosing, sealed by a drop of their blood to bind them. Any failure to meet these conditions causes Ulla to order her allies to prepare the PCs as the main course.

**Topiary:** The hedge topiary creatures are simple constructs that will animate and follow her orders.

**Blood Thralls:** The drow blood thralls are fully subsumed to her will and are willing to die to protect her. They are hidden through illusion and stealth in the hedges around the table (DC 30 to detect them if looking).

**Additional Reinforcements:** If you want to challenge the PCs more, the hag is also entertaining 1d3 crustycaps (*Bestiary*, page 176), who will emerge from under the table with high-pitched giggles ready to carve some fresh meat. For them, the bad word is "recovery." The hag has been inviting redcaps into the wood for some time now, and this is the latest group.

#/Level of PCs	Ulla the Hag (U)	Topiary Monsters (T)	Drow Blood Thrall Mook (M)
4 x 6 <sup>th</sup> level	1	2	8 (1 mob)
5 x 6 <sup>th</sup> level	1	2	22 (2 mobs)
6 x 6 <sup>th</sup> level	1	3	15 (2 mobs)
4 x 7 <sup>th</sup> level	1*	2	12 (1 mob)**
5 x 7 <sup>th</sup> level	1*	3	10 (1 mob)**
6 x 7 <sup>th</sup> level	1*	4	8 (1 mob)**

\* Make Ulla a double-strength enemy: increase her hp to 216, her *iron claws* attacks deal 18 damage, and her *evil eye* deals 24 ongoing damage.

\*\* Make each thrall double-strength: increase its hp to 40, and its *wicked blade* attack deals 20 damage.

## TACTICS

Ulla attempts to stay away from engagement while she uses her *evil eye* attack, but if engaged she will claw a foe to use her hag abilities. Remember to deal her *foul-touched* damage to enemies engaged with her. She prefers to let her thralls and constructs do the dirty work.

The topiary monsters will attack the closest enemy, unless the hag gives them different orders.

The drow thralls intercept attackers trying to reach Ulla, and about half will emerge from hiding to attack and take advantage of their *masters of stealth* ability.

**If the PCs drank the tea:** Any PC that drank the tea in the hut is affected by an enchantment Ulla placed on it. Once per battle per PC, as a quick action, she can activate the magic to



make the drinker confused during their next turn. The PC will feel something inside their stomach roil and slither, and then take control of them for a moment.

**Ulla's Death Curse:** If you allow Ulla to die rather than flee the Garden, she utters the following death curse upon the one who kills her: *Epics of you shall never be sung, for you will always trip upon your tongue.*

## LOOT

The thralls and topiary monsters have nothing of value. Ulla wears a single piece of jewelry, an emerald and darkwood necklace depicting the Elf Queen worth 500 gp.

The trunk on the back side of the table holds more inside than seems possible. If the PCs are looking for the druid or another person, they're stashed inside the trunk in a state of slumber. If not, there might be some other poor soul the hag captured and has plans for that could set up the next story.

The trunk also holds many odd and disgusting items the hag has collected for her various rituals, most of them having little true value. There's a smattering of coins and small trinkets from past victims scattered within also, worth a total of 300 gp.

If removed from the hut, the trunk becomes non-magical, unless you want to reward the PCs with a trunk of holding.

## Icons

A PC that has relationship advantages with any icon could use one or more of them to help convince the hag to agree to help them. Advantages could also be used in place of the blood-favors Ulla asks for in payment; the PC loses the advantage and loses that icon die until they level up. Basically, Ulla takes her "favor" from the icon, which could have further story ramifications.

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Elf Queen, Archmage, Lich King, Priestess, or maybe the Crusader or Diabolist could use one or more of them to control the reality within the extradimensional space that is the Garden for a short time to gain an effect they desire.

## ULLA THE HAG

*Twisted. Wizen. Evil. Fond of creating topiary monsters.*

6<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +10

**Iron claws +10 vs. AC (2 attacks)—9 damage**

*Natural 14+:* The hag triggers one *hag ability* as a free action.

*Natural 18+:* The hag triggers two *hag abilities* as a free action (can't be the same ability twice).

**R: Evil eye +10 vs. MD—12 ongoing damage** (hard save ends, 16+)

*Natural 16+:* The attack roll also targets a second different enemy of the hag's choice (but not a third with another 16+).

*Natural 18+:* As above, and the attack roll also targets a third different enemy of the hag's choice (but not a fourth with another 18+).

**Death curse:** Each hag can lay a curse upon the one who ends its horrible life. After dropping to 0 hit points, a hag always lingers long enough to pronounce the words of the curse. (See **Tactics**.)

**Delusionist:** All hags have the ability to twist the perceptions of others. If the hag has a short time to prepare, it can hide a small hut, disguise a volunteer or captive as a monster, disguise itself as a harmless peasant woman, etc. A DC 30 skill check is required to overcome the delusion and see the truth of it (if a player gives a reason for not trusting what their character sees; perhaps add subtle clues toward that end). The magic fades as soon as the hag enters combat.

**Fear:** While engaged with this creature, enemies with 30 hp or fewer are dazed (–4 attack) and do not add the escalation die to their attacks.

## Hag Abilities

**Blood pact:** Each creature allied to the hag through a pact gains a +2 bonus with their first attack each battle if the hag is present.

**Hag ability:** The hag spits blood in the face of the target and makes a command. The target must roll an immediate save; on a failure, as a free action it makes basic attack against an ally or against itself (target's choice).

**Foul-touched:** Just looking at the hag's true form causes mental anguish. When an enemy is battling the hag, at the start of each of its turns, it takes 2d6 psychic damage from the horror of the hag's visage unless it takes precautions to avoid directly glancing at her terrible face (mirror, blindfold, etc., which might cause attack penalties).

**Hag ability:** The hag chooses a nearby enemy and glares at it.

That target must roll an immediate save; on a failure, the target is stricken blind by her ugliness. While blinded this way, the target is hampered, weakened, and can't make ranged attacks. The target can end the effect by splashing liquid into their eyes or using a similar act to clear the ugly out as a standard action.

**AC 21**

**PD 19 HP 108 (see death curse)**

**MD 15**





## MONSTROUS TOPIARY

The creature made of shrubs and roots rips itself free of the ground and moves toward you, menace in every step.

Large 9<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [CONSTRUCT]

Initiative: +10

Vulnerability: fire

**Shrubbery smash +13 vs. AC (2 attacks)—45 damage**

*Natural even hit:* The target takes 10 ongoing damage and is stuck (save ends both) in the topiary.

*Miss:* 22 damage.

*Made of shrubs:* The topiary monster has *resist weapon damage 16+* against ranged attacks by piercing weapons (arrows, bolts, javelins, etc.).

AC 24  
PD 24  
MD 17

HP 345

## DROW BLOOD THRALL

*They weep silent tears of blood.*

6<sup>th</sup> level mook [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +11

**Wicked blade +11 vs. AC—10 damage**

*Blood pact:* Thanks to its pact with the hag, the thrall's first attack each battle gains a +2 bonus.

*Cruel intentions:* The crit range of the thrall's attack expands by 2 against staggered enemies.

*Masters of stealth:* The thrall deals double damage if the target wasn't aware of it before the attack.

AC 22  
PD 20  
MD 14

HP 20 (mook)

*Mook:* Kill one drow blood thrall mook for every 20 damage you deal to the mob.

### Additional Reinforcements

## CRUSTYCAP

7<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +14

**Big bloody axe +12 vs. AC (2 attacks)—10 damage**

*Natural even hit:* The crustycap can make a single *big bloody axe* attack against a different nearby enemy as a free action.

*Miss:* 5 ongoing damage.

**Devastating stompy boots +12 vs. PD (one staggered or unconscious enemy)—40 damage**

*Miss:* 10 damage.

*Oh no oh no:* When a PC or a player at the table says the *bad word*, the crustycap can take an extra standard action during its next turn. Feel free to let the extra actions stack a few times if someone gets cocky.

AC 21  
PD 22  
MD 19

HP 100

### NEXT STEPS

When the hag is defeated, either by being slain or if she flees screaming from the Garden to hide in another extradimensional chamber, the hut stops moving and the PCs can escape at top



speed or experiment with taking the hut as their own. Depending on how you wish to play it, it will either lose its magic over time, or the PCs can claim their very own walking hut, though it can't leave forest settings. Having a cool pad will appeal to some groups. For simple mechanics to use if the PCs adopt the hut as a base, see the *Home Bases* issue of *13<sup>th</sup> Age Monthly* by Steven Warzeha and Rob Heinsoo.

If you simply by deciding that the magic fades, there's still time for the PCs to escape before the hut collapses in upon itself.

Assume the PCs gain what they need from the hag before she dies or flees (or those acts bring about the desired result).

## DANGER IN DARKWOOD STORY ENDINGS

Here are outcomes for each story opening, detailing what success or failure might mean.

If the PCs did face all three battles, remember to give them a full heal-up.

### THE HAG'S CURSE

**Success:** The curse is broken (either willingly by the hag, or upon her death) and Elantir is pleased and rewards one of the PCs with an champion-tier magic item from his household. Unfortunately, the Elf Queen didn't buy off on the plan, and all 6s the PCs get for the Elf Queen on their next icon relationship roll are 5s instead.

**Failure:** The curse remains and Anabell suffers. Elantir curses the PCs for their failure and becomes an enemy, smearing their names at Court. Until they level up, all 6s with the Elf Queen are 5s instead.

### THE SECRETS OF DARKWOOD

**Success:** The PCs find the druid Rileth stashed away in a trunk, slumbering away. He thanks them for the save and gives them the information they need. In addition, each of them gains a 6 with the High Druid that lasts until they use it or level up.

**Failure:** The druid Rileth Greenbark is never seen again. The information the PCs need will have to come from another source, taking more time and probably causing issues.

### THE ELF QUEEN'S FOLLY

**Success:** The PCs get Ulla the hag to reveal the Elf Queen's secret, one way or another. The Queen's enemies reward them

with a champion-tier magic item, and each gains a 6 with the icon that set them upon Ulla's trail. Rumors of the Elf Queen bowing to some pressure in negotiations fill the Court.

**Failure:** The Elf Queen learns of the PCs' attempt to gain the secret from Ulla, who the Queen considers an ally. Ulla sends blood thralls to waylay the PCs the next time they're in the woods, and all 6s with the Elf Queen are 5s instead until the PCs level up.

### FRIENDS OF TAMRIL

**Success:** The defeat of the hag Ulla puts a stop to the raids upon Tamril. The village elder thanks the PCs, revealing hidden knowledge about an ancient site in the area rumored to hold a champion-tier magic item. Each PC also gains a 6 with the Elf Queen that lasts until they use it or level up.

**Failure:** The PCs return to find the village of Tamril sacked, half of its inhabitants dead, and the rest captured and dragged off into the wood by dark elves or something worse.

## BATTLE SCENE CONNECTIONS

The stories from this set of battle scenes can lead to other scenes:

- *The Lich's Spire* (Lich King): The PCs find a letter to Ulla from Cornellion, outlining a plan the two of them were working on to disrupt the Elf Queen's hold on the region. It seems the hag's evil plan is only half undone, and the PCs must travel to the high elf wizard's tower to finish it.
- *Corrupted Nature* (High Druid): The PCs save the druid Rileth and put an end to the Hag. Then they escort Rileth through the forest back to his glade near the Olander homesteads. But when they arrive, there's terrible news about Mother Bark.
- *Old Injuries Repaid* (Orc Lord): The PCs manage to capture and interrogate one of the hag's dark elf thralls. Once the hag is gone, the elf returns to his senses. He informs them about the kidnapping plan the hag put in motion with a group of stone giants lead by a chieftain named Lars Granum. They are going to take the elf ambassador to disrupt the annual peace accord, and if that happens, it will be a bigger blow to the region than anyone truly realizes.



# ELF QUEEN: THE LIBRARY OF GALWYN

LEVEL RANGE: 10



This set of battle scenes is designed to test 10<sup>th</sup> level characters and might be more challenging than most other battle scenes, depending on the group. The PCs will probably need to rely on some icon advantages to help them get through it, especially the final battle. If it's too taxing for your group, tone down the monsters, terrain effects, and nasty tricks. (One place to start would be reducing the damage dealt by the djinn prince's *assault of the whirlwind* attack; in the 13<sup>th</sup> Age

*Bestiary*, the 9<sup>th</sup> level version of the djinn didn't do enough damage with that attack, so this is the properly upgunned version!)

The themes of this set of battles are high elf magic, iconic secrets, and epic enemies. These battles works best in an ancient forest or forested mountain setting, perhaps the Queen's Wood or Dragon Wood in the Dragon Empire, though the PCs could be anywhere when contacted.

The PCs are enlisted by the iconic powers to stop (or beat) a strike-team of powerful enemies serving the Three from ransacking an ancient treetop library that contains a powerful secret of the Elf Queen—the truth about the Green's fate (and possible location if that icon is still alive). The strike-team believe they are invading the prison where the Green is kept, but while that's not true, the library they are assaulting does hold information about the Green.

The PCs must fight through two waves of enemies to protect the information (or gain it for themselves) in a pair of double-strength plus battles.

## THE LIBRARY OF GALWYN STORY OPENINGS

- **Protect the Secret:** One or more of the PCs that has a positive or conflicted relationship with the Elf Queen is magically contacted, either by a powerful fey servant, a sprite or familiar, or a high elf wizard using portal magic. The Queen needs their help immediately. Agents of the Three have gained information they believe will lead them to the Green. The facility they are assaulting is not a prison, but instead a library that contains much elven lore, including information about the Green that the Queen doesn't want known. They

must immediately travel to the library via portal magic to confront the invaders.

- **Plunder the Elf Queen's Secret:** One or more PCs with a negative or conflicted relationship with the Elf Queen learns of great distress at the Court. Reports of agents of the Three gaining the location of the Library of Galwyn have surfaced and it's believed they will invade it shortly in an attempt to find the Green. From the reactions of the Queen's advisors, there must be some truth to the threat. The PCs' contacts can tap into the magic of the portal at the library momentarily, allowing the PCs to travel there. They need to beat the agents of the Three to the prize and learn what they can about the Green; if he's still alive, that could be very useful information.
- **Draconic Agents:** One or more of the PCs with relationships with the Three are contacted by the Black. Agents of the Three have possibly learned of the Green's location and a joint strike-team of agents from all three dragons is going to try to free the icon. But the Black wants the credit to herself, so she's going to send the PCs to take out the strike-team (yes, even though some of her servants are part of it) and free the Green themselves (or learn of the Green's location if he's not there). She provides them with the portal key to reach the library.
- **Inquisitive Minds, Wrong Place:** The PCs just happen to be traveling to the library seeking ancient elven knowledge when they arrive to see the Three's strike-team killing the library's guardians. They must step in to defend the library, and thus the knowledge they seek.

## ALTERNATE ICONS

You can't replace the Elf Queen's place in the story, but maybe the Three aren't the villains.



**Crusader:** It's agents of the Crusader hitting the library, believing it contains some ancient secret or weapon that can be used against the Diabolist. Change the dragonics to members of normal races serving the Crusader, and the green dragon to a dominated demonic flying creature.



**Orc Lord:** The Orc Lord wants an ally, and he figures freeing the Green might be the way to go. His elite troops think they found the prison and are about to hit the library. Use elite hobgoblins, a renegade storm giant, and similar troops, but keep the green dragon. It has agreed to help the Orc Lord's troops to free the Green, and claims it will put in a good word for him to its master.



## ICONS IN PLAY

Characters that have relationships (and story-guide advantages) with the Elf Queen, Archmage, Great Gold Wyrn, High Druid, the Three, and maybe the Prince of Shadows should be able to shine in these battle scenes. Moreso than PCs with other icon relationships, feel free to give such PCs extra knowledge about the opposition, make checks to pull off fun actions the players might suggest, and use their advantages to particularly good effect, such as negating or bypassing some of the terrain impediments or abilities of the enemies.

## THE LIBRARY OF GALWYN OVERVIEW

The PCs start the first scene thrown right into battle as they arrive through a portal at the library. A group of agents of the Three also arrived via the portal only a short time before and have just slain some of the library's elven guardians. Not wanting any witnesses to their mission, the agents will turn on the PCs. During the battle, a few of the remaining guardians, djinn princes bound by elven master wizards to guard the library, will arrive. They won't know friend from foe and will start by attacking everyone during this double-strength-plus battle.

Once the PCs deal with the initial threat, they'll need to make their way through the library, which is built upon the upper branches of elder goldenwood trees many hundreds of feet up. As they reach the great golden doors to the Hall of Lore, more enemies will show up as a huge green dragon named Quarvolg the Scourge arrives, along with elite troops of the Three, landing on the open-air platform in a double-strength-plus battle.

GM, feel free to expand upon these battles by including battles with additional library guardians or agents of the Three, traps and puzzles created by the elves to restrict intruders from reaching the Hall, or other threats appropriate to the setting.

The battles outlined here can take place over a few minutes of tens of minutes if you choose to expand the size of the library. Since the high elf aspect of the Elf Queen is in play, we suggest flavoring descriptions and battle scenes with high magic, long falls, ancient lore, and the sadness of the high elves' partial responsibility for the sundering of the three shards.

See story endings after the final battle for options on what happens after the PCs finish the last battle.

## GREEN GENDER

Is the Green male or female? We tried not to answer that question in the core *13<sup>th</sup> Age* rulebook. It seems like the gender of a vanished icon (?) is something your campaign should decide for itself, so in these scenes we're mixing it up. Maybe the Green is female, maybe he's male, maybe neither. Maybe your players know....

## BATTLE I: THE PORTAL ROOM

*You step through the portal and find yourselves on a windy wooden platform that is built around a large tree with gold bark. The top branches still tower some height above you, but you also see that you're a few hundred feet above the ground. Connecting your platform to another similar one is an ornate bridge of rope and wood of obviously elven design. On that platform, you see that a group of dragonics bearing the symbols of the Red and Black have just finished hacking down some elven guards in the Elf Queen's livery—they turn at sound of the portal's activation! As if they sense the coming battle, the wind intensifies, rocking the bridge between you as everyone readies their weapons.*

### LOCATION DESCRIPTION

The PCs are on an outer treetop platform at the Library of Galwyn. Directly behind them is the now faded portal, a group of runes formed from the natural patterns of the goldenwood tree wood where the bark was removed. The platform circles around the massive tree trunk out of sight and connects to other structures around more trees.

A 15-foot wide rope bridge with wooden slats and large wooden posts supporting the ropes stretches 60 feet across to the second platform where the agents of the Three wait. It's a long fall, nearly 200 feet, to the ground from the bridge or either platform (which don't have rails only ropes).

Waiting on the far platform are redscale reavers (Red) and a group of shadowscale assassins (Black). Adding to the PCs' troubles, more library guardians are approaching from behind them, djinn princes tasked with protecting the library against all threats. In general, the djinn will kill intruders first and ask questions later, partly because they don't *really* care about defending the library. It's a job they've been forced into and if they can 'accidentally' kill some friends of the elves who have put them in this position, that's a bonus.

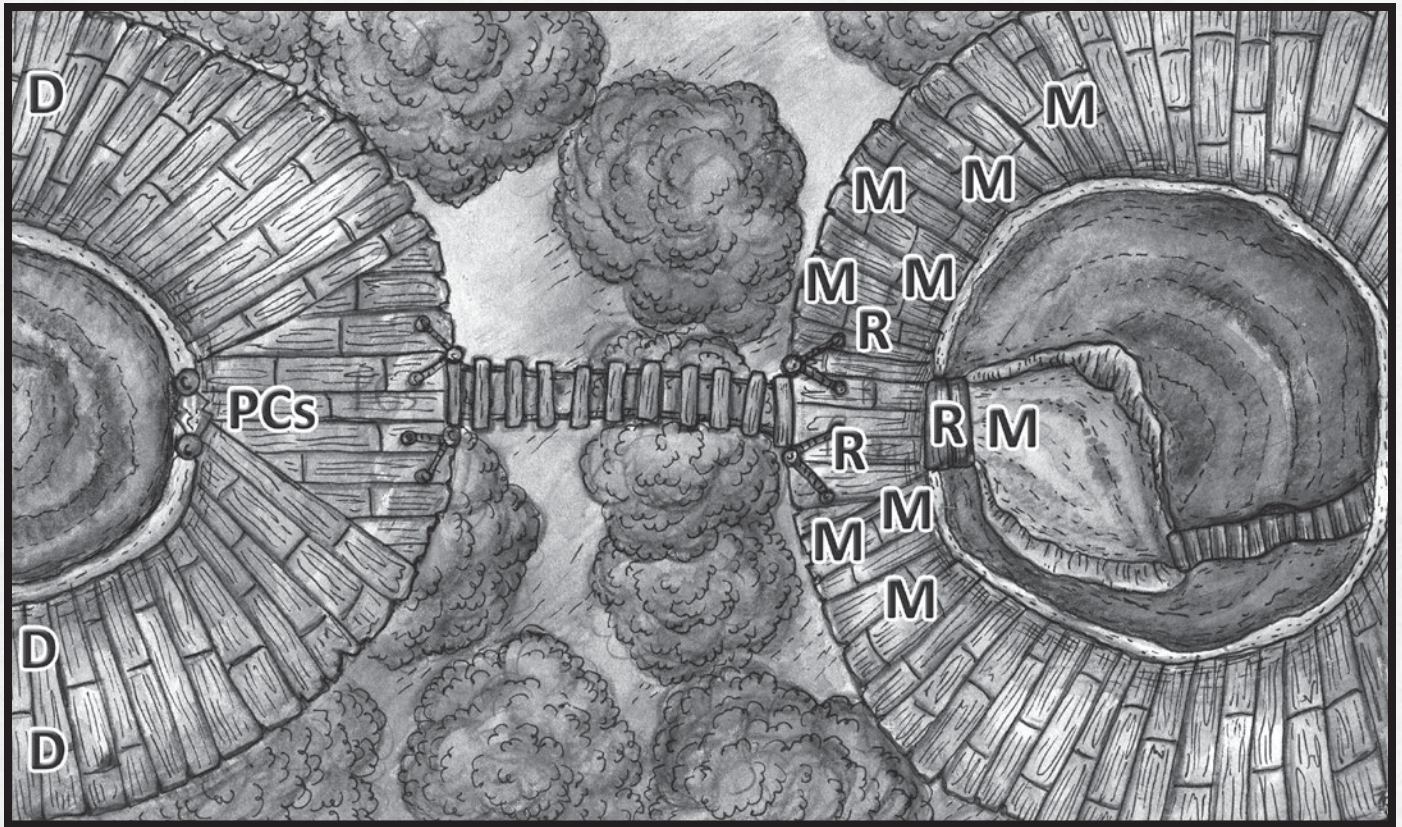
GM, if you don't have dragonics in your campaign, re flavor them as wyrmspawn or simply as humanoids of various races who serve the Three.

### TERRAIN & TRAPS

**Rope Bridge:** The bridge is well-made and fairly sturdy thanks to thick lines of elven rope and goldenwood planks providing footing with 4-foot high hand lines stretching across and smaller side ropes connecting bridge and lines every 5 feet. There are gaps to go through, but also plenty of places to gain a hold. The increased winds from the djinn will make the bridge sway, forcing anyone on it to roll DC 20 Dexterity checks or take a -2 penalty to attacks and defenses while on it.

The djinn could also choose to use a standard action to make the entire bridge sway hard, forcing each creature on it to roll an easy save (6+) or slide off and fall (see Falling). There are four ropes securing the walkway and a hand line on either side securing the bridge. Severing each rope requires one attack as a standard action that deals at least 40 damage (auto hit).





**Trees & Platforms:** The trees are ancient goldenwoods that grow in excess of 300 feet, with massive branches and 70-foot diameter trunks that are very strong. The elves take advantage of natural hollows to carve structures within them to work with the platforms as living spaces. The portal is on the outside of the nearest tree, but there is an archway in the far tree that the agents are about to enter. The trees have rough bark, allowing anyone to climb them with a DC 20 Strength check.

The platforms are also made from goldenwood boards stained in pleasing tones to the elven aesthetic. The wood is resistant to fire and some magic, so powerful spells and attacks won't necessarily destroy the platforms (unless it's intended, in which case give them a normal save). Due to the elves' natural grace, there are no rails around the outer edges. If anyone falls off an edge, see Falling (below).

**Teleportation Portal:** The portal's magic has faded now that the PCs have arrived, but it is possible to reactivate it without using a full ritual if the PCs wish to flee, or possibly to use its magic for a dicey move like teleporting to the far platform. An elf or a PC that can cast arcane spells could attempt to tap into the portal's magic. Doing so is difficult, and failure could result in odd effects.

When a PC tries to use the portal magic to reopen it and pull off a dicey move, they must roll a DC 30 Intelligence check. On a success, the PC can pull off their move or keep it open long enough for the PCs to flee. On a failure by 5 or less, the dicey move is only partially successful (half way across the bridge, on the far platform but hanging on the edge). On a failure by 6 to 10, anyone using the portal is teleported 1d10 x 10 feet in a random direction (use a d12), possibly ending up in open space and falling (see Falling), but not inside anything. On a failure of 11+, there is blowback of arcane energy, the portal won't be usable again

until re-attuned, and the PC manipulating the portal's magic must begin making last gasp saves, with a fourth failure meaning their body is magically spread out across the world (physically vaporized basically, but maybe not dead).

**Falling:** A fall from the bridge or platform isn't necessarily deadly due to lower branches, bridges, and ropes, but it might mean non-flying creatures are no longer part of the battle. When a creature falls, it takes 4d12 damage and rolls a hard save (16+). On a success it catches itself and can get back into the battle using a full round to move up nearby ladders or lines. On a failure, it takes 4d12 more damage and rolls a normal save. On a success, it stops its fall but take two full rounds of movement to return to battle. On a failure, it takes 4d12 more damage and rolls an easy save (6+). On a success, it stops its fall but is out of battle. On a failure, it takes 4d12 more damage but also stops its fall on the ground and is out of the battle. If a PC has *flight* or other special means of movement they might be able to return to the battle in less time, however.

**Editor's note:** I was so happy with the action in this battle scene's art that I didn't notice that it had an extra rope bridge until it was too late. Use that idea if you wish, or interpret the art as showing a different piece of the assault! —rh

## MONSTERS

The redscale reavers are tall, massive red-scaled dragonics in heavy armor with wicked double-axes. The shadowscale assassins are black-scaled dragonics of a size similar to elves who move quickly and use claw-blade gauntlets to fight, climb, and hang from precarious places. Their goal is to free the Green, but they are starting to realize this place isn't a prison.





The djinn princes are whirlwinds of air supporting large humanoid bodies that look like bald, bare-chested high elves with large tulwars. The PCs might be able to convince them that they are allies by using icon advantages, or possibly with great roleplaying or at least two successful DC 30 Charisma checks as standard actions.

**Additional Reinforcements:** If you want to challenge the PCs more, add one extra djinn prince.

#/Level of PCs	Djinn Prince (D)	Redscale Reaver (R)	Shadowscale Assassin Mook (M)
4 x 10 <sup>th</sup> level	2	3	10 (1 mob)
5 x 10 <sup>th</sup> level	3	3	12 (1 mob)
6 x 10 <sup>th</sup> level	3	4	15 (2 mobs)

## Tactics

Seeing new enemies, the redscale reavers will move to block the bridge about 15 feet from their platform. Each will choose a different

enemy to focus on, unless fewer PCs come across. Although they have no wings, they have strong legs and can jump back to the platform with an easy save (6+) if the bridge suddenly drops.

The shadowscale assassins will use their *shadow jaunt* to reach the PCs for surprise attacks, then move away if they can. They also have ranged *shadow star* attacks they can use to good effect from the platform behind the reavers. Both they and the reavers know their lives are forfeit if they return without information about the Green, so they fight to the death.

The djinn princes come up behind the PCs at the end of the round and will lead off with *whirlwind* attacks to get the bridge swaying. Then they move in to make melee attacks, probably starting with the PCs. When staggered, they might choose to use the winds again, foregoing damage to try to knock creatures from the bridge (see **Terrain & Tactics**). Remember to reward PCs who defeat the djinn with granted wishes (6s) as per the *Bestiary*, page 92.

## Loot

The dragonics are in hostile territory, so they have little on them. The reavers do each have a golden belt bearing the Red's image worth 200 gp. And the djinn grant wishes.

## Icons

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Elf Queen, Archmage, Great Gold Wyrn, the Three, or maybe the Prince could use one or more of them to turn a falling failure into a success, perhaps by riding an air current, catching a rope or levitation leaf that an unknown ally at the Library throws out, or some other means.

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Elf Queen, Archmage, Lich King, High Druid, or maybe the Three could use one or more of them to help with using the portal to some effect, gaining a +5 bonus per advantage or possibly an automatic success with a strong advantage.

A PC that has relationship advantages with any icon could use one or more of them to convince the djinn princes to stop attacking them because they're also allies of the Queen, whether that's true or not. In this case, it should take great roleplaying and a strong advantage for automatic success, or only give the PC a +5 bonus to the skill check to convince the djinn. In any case, they should attack at least a couple rounds before deciding the PCs might be okay.



*The 9<sup>th</sup> level djinn on page 93 of the 13<sup>th</sup> Age Bestiary had some damage math mistakes that made it a lot easier to fight than it should have been. If your PCs have previously ripped through the 9<sup>th</sup> level djinni, feel free to warn them that these 12<sup>th</sup> level djinni princes look like much tougher warriors.*



## DJINN PRINCE

The closest most people get to “making a wish” is wishing that the twelve-foot tall whirlwind giant in front of them will somehow decide not to kill them.

Large 12<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [GIANT]

Initiative: +17, but they go at end of round

**Greatsword +17 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—85 damage

*Natural 5, 10, 15, 20:* Until the end of its next turn, the djinn adds the escalation die to its attacks.

**C: Assault of the whirlwind +17 vs. PD (1d4 + 1 nearby creatures, including invisible creatures)**—110 damage, and after the attack the djinn teleports to one of the targets and engages it

*Natural 5, 10, 15, 20:* The target is hampered until the end of its next turn.

*Miss:* 20 damage.

*Limited use:* The djinn can only use this attack while it's not staggered.

*Flight:* Genies fly extremely well, but lumber, at best, when walking on the ground.

*Grant-a-wish:* A PC whose attack drops a djinn to 0 hp gains the equivalent of an extremely favorable roll of 6 with an icon relationship die with an icon of the PC's choice that the PC already has a positive or conflicted relationship with. Treat this advantage as if it came from a positive relationship. The GM is encouraged to treat this result with the utmost benevolence and compassion.

*Sorcerous reach (Elf Queen):* The djinn's assault of the whirlwind attack can also target far away enemies.

AC 28  
PD 25      HP 710  
MD 24

## REDSCALE REAVER

This dragonic stands nearly eight feet tall, with huge, muscled legs, a thick tail, and smoke trailing from her vicious jaws. You almost don't notice her giant double-bladed axe.

Double-strength 11<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +13

Vulnerability: cold

**Double-axe +16 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—55 damage

*First natural even hit each turn:* The reaver can make a *flaming breath* attack as a free action.

*Natural odd hit:* The target takes 20 extra damage from a rending bite or tail slap.

*Miss:* 27 damage.

**C: Flaming breath +15 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies)**—20 fire damage, and 10 ongoing fire damage

*Limited use:* 1/battle as a quick action, not including free uses from double-axe attacks.

*Blood of the Red:* Once per battle when the reaver rolls a natural 11+ with a *double-axe* attack and hits, it can change the hit into a critical hit as a free action.

*Resist fire 14+:* When a fire attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 14+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

AC 28  
PD 24      HP 560  
MD 19

## SHADOWSCALE ASSASSIN

Shadows swirl around the black-scaled dragonic and then it's behind you, slashing with sharp metal claws.

13<sup>th</sup> level mook [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +18

**Claw blades +18 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—35 damage, and it regains *shadow jaunt* if it's expended

*Natural 18+:* The assassin can also *shadow jaunt* away as a free action after the attack without expending the ability.

**R: Shadow stars +18 vs. PD (2 attacks)**—35 damage

*Shadow jaunt:* Once per battle as a move action, the assassin can teleport somewhere nearby or far away it can see. When it makes a *claw blades* attack the same turn it used *shadow jaunt*, the attack's crit range expands by 2.

AC 28  
PD 27      HP 100 (mook)  
MD 23

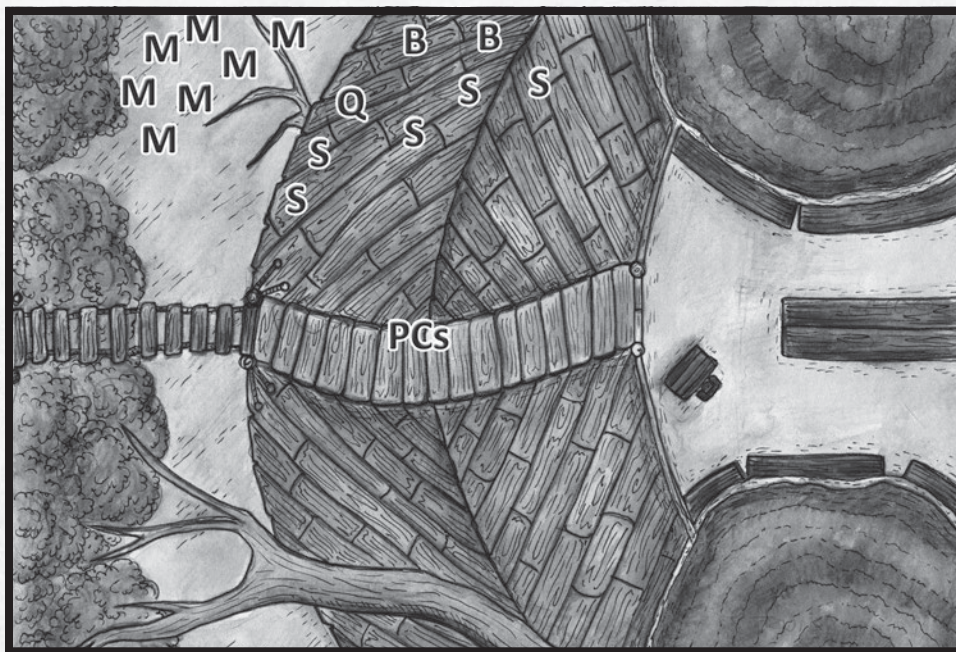
*Mook:* Kill one shadowscale assassin mook for every 100 damage you deal to the mob.

### NEXT STEPS

Once the PCs defeat the agents of the Three and the djinn prince guardians, they see that the agents were heading through an archway inside the tree. Following their path takes them to a stair up the inside of the tree and to another platform, then across another bridge to three massive goldenwood trees supporting a very large structure. Just as they cross the bridge to a large platform in front of a tall golden door set into the trunk of a huge tree, more agents of the Three will show up.

Once they've taken a quick rest and are ready to proceed, go to **Battle 2: Attack at the Golden Door**.





## BATTLE 2: ATTACK AT THE GOLDEN DOOR

*You move across another rope bridge to the largest platform yet, one built between and around three huge goldenwood trees that grow in a triangle. Ahead of you is a tall door made of gold and inscribed with elven runes—it must be the entrance to the Hall of Lore. Just as you reach the platform in front of it, there's a whooshing noise and blur of motion to your left as a huge green wyrm rises above the platform and flares out its wings. Dragonics and kobolds riding the beast leap off onto the platform as the dragon roars: "Kill these fools, then we shall free the Green!"*

### LOCATION DESCRIPTION

The PCs are facing Quarvolg the Scourge, a huge green dragon leading this strike-team to try to free the Green. They still believe she is trapped in this place. If the PCs don't stop the dragon and other agents of the Three, then they will eventually discover some truth the Elf Queen holds about the Green in the process of destroying the library.

In addition to Quarvolg, blue sorcerer masters and blackscale spitters are part of the group that leaps to the platform ready for battle. There's also a swarm of green wyrmlings about to fly up past the platform and enter the battle that were following Quarvolg.

The platform the PCs are on has a rope bridge at their backs and the golden door ahead of them that leads into a large structure (the library) filling the center space between the great trees. As before, there are no rails around the edges. One large tree branch provides a partial canopy 30 feet above the PCs' location.

### TERRAIN & TRAPS

**Golden Door:** The door looks like it's crafted from solid gold, but that is only superior elven design. It is made from a single

piece of goldenwood shaped, oiled, and treated to give it that appearance. There are multiple small rectangular panels carved into its face depicting scenes of elven lore gatherers and famous stories. It is also enchanted to resist fire and damaging magic to an extent. GM, decide if the door is locked or not, and what is required to bypass it. The agents of the Three will try to destroy the PCs before entering, however.

**Trees & Platforms:** These three trees are ancient goldenwoods and grow in excess of 400 feet, with massive branches and 80-foot diameter trunks that are very strong. There are several large branches that provide the support for the central structure that houses the Hall of Lore. The trees have rough bark, allowing anyone to climb them with a DC 20 Strength check.

The platforms are also made from goldenwood boards stained in pleasing tones to the elven aesthetic. The wood is resistant to fire and some magic, so powerful spells and attacks won't necessarily destroy the platforms (unless it's intended, in which case give them a normal save). Due to the elves' natural grace, there are no rails around the outer edges. If anyone falls off an edge, see Falling (below).

The branch above the PCs is large and strong enough to support the dragon's weight. Anyone falling from that branch to the platform will take 2d12 damage.

**Falling:** A fall from the bridge or platform isn't necessarily deadly due to lower branches, bridges, and ropes, but it might mean non-flying creatures are no longer part of the battle. When a creature falls, it takes 4d12 damage and rolls a hard save (16+). On a success it catches itself and can get back into the battle using a full round to move up nearby ladders or lines. On a failure, it takes 4d12 more damage and rolls a normal save. On a success, it stops its fall but takes two full rounds to return to battle. On a failure, it takes 4d12 more damage and rolls an easy save (6+). On a success, it stops its fall but is out of battle. On a failure, it takes 4d12 more damage but also stops its fall on the ground and is out of the battle. If a PC has *flight* or other special means of movement it might be able to return to the battle in less time, however.

**Rope Bridge:** See the description from Battle 1 if the PCs move back onto the bridge.

### MONSTERS

Quarvolg is an ancient green dragon who has been searching for the Green for decades. He wishes to re-establish his breed's place among the icons and so seeks the great one (he might also be related to that wyrm, and failed in his own bid to rise to icon). He is big, powerful, and cunning, and will use his advantages during the battle. He is also the leader of the strike-teams.

The blue sorcerer masters are kobolds who've studied the deeper mysteries at the Blue's tower in Drakkenhall and have more tricks than their less-skilled brethren. They are beginning



to realize what the facility is, and are as excited about raiding the library as finding the Green.

The blackscale spitters are dragonic elite troops trained by the Black's fighting masters as bodyguards. Each has sworn its life to the mission.

The green wyrmlings are lesser wyrms who seek to free the Green for a chance at the imprisoned icon's favor. None would be a match for the PCs on its own, but a swarm of them can cause some trouble. They stay aloft as they perform flyby attacks.

**Additional Reinforcements:** If you want to challenge the PCs more, make half of the wyrmlings double strength to show that some are bigger than the others.

#/Level of PCs	Quarvolg, Huge Green Dragon (Q)	Blue Sorcerer Master (B)	Blackscale Spitter (S)	Green Wyrmling Mook (M)
4 x 10 <sup>th</sup> level	1	2	5	15 (1 mob)
5 x 10 <sup>th</sup> level	1	4	6	15 (1 mob)
6 x 10 <sup>th</sup> level	1	6	6	20 (2 mobs)

## Tactics

Quarvolg will use his *master of fumes* ability to attack with his breath weapon initially, looking to hamper healers and spellcasters. Then he picks the most damaged-looking enemy and pounces with melee attacks, hoping to trigger more breath attacks. He is cunning and once staggered, is willing to take to the air seemingly to flee as he dips below the platform, only to reappear on the far side and attack vulnerable enemies. He will flee if badly outmatched and under 100 hit points, but will then track the PCs to attack them later.

The blue sorcerer masters will begin gathering power as they drop to the platform, hoping that the wyrmlings and blackscals will buy them time as interceptors so they can cast their spells. GM, make it clear to the PCs what the masters are doing to give

them a chance to react, because if a sorcerer hits the next turn, it's going to hurt. If there's more than one, each is so confident in its ability that it will target a different enemy.

The blackscale spitters' main job is to protect the sorcerers and they will intercept or attack enemies targeting them. When given a chance to attack at range, they'll seek to weaken those facing the dragon.

The wyrmlings simply swarm and attack any enemy they can, but they won't go after any enemies Quarvolg is attacking, afraid of stealing his kill.

## Loot

Each blue sorcerer master wears various rings and jewelry they believe enhances their personal magical power. The jewelry is worth 500 gp per sorcerer. Whether any of it is actually magical is up to the GM. They also each carry 1d2 epic *healing potions*.

The dragon has no wealth, but it is highly valuable itself. Its claws, scales, and teeth would make good weapons, or could be used by an expert crafter to create a true epic magic item (scale armor, a dragontooth blade, a talon wand), that the PCs need to complete a storyline (they're 10<sup>th</sup> level, so feel free to adjust the lack of magic item crafting rules to fit an epic story). The dragon's heart might also be vital in powering a ritual the PCs need for some story event (like freeing the Green, or reinforcing its prison if alive).

## Icons

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Elf Queen, Dwarf King, Great Gold Wyrms, the Three, or maybe the Prince of Shadows could use one or more of them to have acquired some item that helps them against Quarvolg, giving them a bonus to damage, a one-time automatic crit, or perhaps the ability to resist the dragon's breath attack.

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Elf Queen or High Druid could use one or more of them to call upon the goldenwood trees to help them in some way, tapping into the power of elven or nature magic in this place. For example, the trees enclose an enemy for a few rounds (stuck, save ends), a branch knocks an enemy off the platform, or the golden door flares with magic to heal the PC.



## QUARVOLG, HUGE GREEN DRAGON

Huge 13<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [DRAGON]

Initiative: +17

**Humongous claws +18 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—90 damage

*First natural 11–15:* The dragon can make a *bite* attack as a free action.

*First natural 16+ each turn:* The dragon can make a *poison breath* attack as a free action.

*Miss:* 50 damage.

[Special trigger] **Bite +17 vs. AC**—150 damage

*Natural 16+:* The target also takes 20 ongoing poison damage.

[Special trigger] **C: Poison breath +17 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies)**—100 poison damage, and the target is hampered (save ends)

*Escalator:* A dragon adds the escalation die to its attack rolls.

*Flight:* A dragon flies reasonably well, powerful and fast in a straight line though not as maneuverable as more agile flyers.

*Green supremacy (dragon ability):* At the start of each of his turns, one condition or effect on Quarvolg ends (his choice).

*Master of fumes (dragon ability):* Quarvolg can start each battle by using his *poison breath* attack as a standard action without triggering it from a *humongous claws* attack. The breath targets 1d2 + 1 nearby enemies this way.

*Resist poison 18+:* When a poison attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 18+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

AC 30  
PD 27 HP 1340  
MD 24

## BLUE SORCERER MASTER (KOBOLD)

*As a rule, kobolds don't survive long with a chip on their shoulders. Meet the exception.*

12<sup>th</sup> level caster [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +14

**Blue dragon tooth +16 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—40 damage, and the target pops free from the master as it's blown back 1d4 x 5 feet in a random direction by lightning (it can take damage from terrain effects; GM choice if the target gets a save or not to avoid such damage)

### Minor Spell

**R: Lightning fork +17 vs. PD**—60 lightning damage

*First natural even hit or miss each turn:* The sorcerer can target a different nearby enemy with the attack (but only the first attack is doubled if it gathered power).

### Major Spells

**C: Breath of the Blue +17 vs. PD (one nearby enemy)**—90 lightning damage, and at the start of the target's next turn, 1d6 nearby allies of the target take 30 lightning damage

**C: Chaos rays +17 vs. MD (1d3 nearby enemies)**—70 random damage (1: lightning; 2: fire; 3: cold; 4: thunder)

*Natural even hit:* The target undergoes some minor physical transformation that's possibly permanent (player's choice). It shouldn't affect the target's normal abilities unless the attack crits (GM's choice)

*Power-monger:* When the blue sorcerer starts its turn and it didn't *gather power* the previous turn, choose whether it will gather power or cast a spell this turn. When it chooses to cast a spell, roll a d20 to see if it uses a minor spell or a major spell: **1–10:** minor spell; **11–20:** major spell.

*Gather power:* Like a PC sorcerer, a blue sorcerer can use its standard action to gather power in order to cast a double-strength and double-damage spell with its next standard action. When it gathers power, the sorcerer rolls a d6 and gains one of the following chaotic benefits.

**1–2:** The sorcerer gains a +1 bonus to AC until the start of its next turn.

**3–4:** One nearby enemy of the sorcerer's choice takes damage equal to sorcerer's level (12).

**5–6:** Each nearby enemy engaged with the sorcerer's allies takes damage equal to sorcerer's level (12); OR grant one nearby dragon an additional use of its breath weapon during its next turn this battle.

### Nastier Specials

*Escalating caster:* Add the escalation die to the sorcerer's *power-monger* rolls and attack rolls.

*Sorcerous evasion:* Once per battle when an attack misses the sorcerer, the attacker takes the miss damage from that attack, if any, and the sorcerer takes no damage.

AC 26  
PD 24 HP 380  
MD 26



## BLACKSCALE SPITTER

*She weaves a death dance with twin-bladed sai. It's a tiny bit hypnotic, until she spits in your eye.*

11<sup>th</sup> level blocker [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +13

**Bladed sai +15 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—25 damage

*Natural odd hit:* The spitter grabs the target unless it's already grabbing a creature. When the spitter starts its turn grabbing an enemy, it can make a *blinding spit* attack against it that hits automatically without provoking opportunity attacks.

**R: Blinding spit +16 vs. PD**—50 acid damage, and the target must roll a save; on a failure it's weakened (save ends) as its eyes burn from the acid.

*Slippery scales and spinning leaps:* Twice per battle as an interrupt action, the spitter can pop free from all enemies and move to intercept an enemy moving past it.

*Resist acid 14+:* When an acid attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 14+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

AC	25	
PD	23	HP 270
MD	18	

## GREEN WYRMLING

*"Green wyrmlings are dragons almost ready to leave the lair on their own. They're quick, tough, and vicious. What more do you need to know?"*

10<sup>th</sup> level mook [DRAGON]

Initiative: +16

Vulnerability: psychic

**Clawing rake +14 vs. AC**—32 damage

*Natural even hit:* The target takes 10 extra damage from a second claw.

*Flyby attack:* When the wyrmling hits with a *clawing rake* attack after moving to engage the target that turn, it pops free from the target and moves again as a free action as it flies past. The target can't make an opportunity attack against it.

*Flight:* The wyrmlings are young enough that they're still agile fliers.

*Resist poison 14+:* When a poison attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 14+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

AC	25	
PD	24	HP 55 (mook)
MD	20	

*Mook:* Kill one green wyrmling mook for every 55 damage you deal to the mob.

### NEXT STEPS

Once Quarvolg and the other agents of the Three have been defeated, the library is safe... from them at least. Depending on the story opening, some PCs might ransack the library for information since the guards have all been killed and it will take a few minutes for any librarians to approach. If the PCs are servants of the Queen, the librarians will offer them knowledge from the Hall of Lore in thanks.







## THE LIBRARY OF GALWYN STORY ENDINGS

Here are outcomes for each story opening, detailing what success or failure might mean. We've treated these outcomes as if they belonged to a normal adventure, but since this is happening at 10<sup>th</sup> level, there's a chance that you'll want to make the outcomes more dramatic than we have suggested.

If the PCs did face both battles, remember to give them a full heal-up.

### PROTECT THE SECRET

**Success:** The PCs fend off the threat from the Three's agents and protect the library's secret. In thanks, the elves either provide some key piece of lore the PCs need, the Elf Queen helps construct a powerful weapon or armor from Quarvolg's carcass for one of the PCs (artifact), or they gain a personal audience with the Queen, who anoints the PCs to serve her as her personal champions.

**Failure:** The PCs fail to stop the agents and the library is destroyed, but not before the dragon Quarvolg gains information about the Green (alive, dead, or other). With the Elf Queen's people in disarray, each 6 the PCs get for her is a 5 instead the next time they roll.

### PLUNDER THE ELF QUEEN'S SECRET

**Success:** The PCs put down their competition, and while the librarians are regrouping, manage to learn the secret information about the Green without anyone realizing. Icons opposed to the Queen reward the PCs with magic as they vie to learn the secret. Each PC gains a 6 with one of their icons that lasts until they use it.

**Failure:** The Queen's heroes show up too soon and keep the PCs from recovering the secret about the Green. In addition, the Elf Queen puts out the word across the lands that any elf who captures the PCs and brings them to her at Court will gain an important appointment in her Court. The PCs begin to get harried by some very scary "champions."

### DRACONIC AGENTS

**Success:** The PCs defeat the primary strike-team and secure the information about the Green for the Black to use as she chooses. She rewards them well with the location of Quarvolg's lair, though it is guarded by his mate.

**Failure:** The PCs bungle the job and allow the strike-team to take the library. The Black has to play along with the others, all sharing in the information. The Black makes it clear to the PCs that their lives depend upon making sure only her agents are the ones to act on it (for example, if the Green is alive, they help free him and he knows his freedom is thanks to the Black).

### INQUISITIVE MINDS, WRONG PLACE

**Success:** The PCs defeat the unexpected agents of the Three and protect the library. Thankful librarians offer to provide them with what they seek to learn free of charge. In addition, one of the elves reveals that Quarvolg the Scourge was known, and there are rumors of where his lair (and hoard) might be located.

**Failure:** The PCs are forced to flee and by the time they regroup, the library is destroyed and the agents of the Three gone. A few remaining librarians tell the PCs that the agents took the master librarian with them, and he knows what the PCs were looking for. They must recover him to get it.

## BATTLE SCENE CONNECTIONS

The stories from this set of battle scenes can lead to another scene:

- *The Dream Thief* (Prince of Shadows): After the PCs defeat Quarvolg and either save or ransack the library, a shadow emerges from a nook. It's a dark elf, and he has a request that isn't a request. They need to steal something very difficult, OR ELSE! (GM, have fun with that one.) Of course, it's the Elf Queen's dreams.



# THE EMPEROR: IMPERIAL POLITICS

LEVEL RANGE: 4-5



The themes of this set of battles are power struggles among Imperial nobles and facing opponents from a city's rough side.

This set of battle scenes works best in an urban setting, preferably one of the seven cities or any large metropolis, though you could also make it work on a local level in a smaller town.

For one reason or another, the PCs are in a market or square to find a local politician and bring him to a deputy of the Imperial governor or Imperial ambassador for a "discussion." The politician, Tarius Rolle, is an Imperial citizen and minor noble who is giving speeches that have drawn the attention of the deputy.

Things don't go as planned and the politician gets kidnapped before the PCs can get to him. As the PCs pursue the man and his kidnappers, they encounter unexpected enemies as they descend into the slums and then the sewers. When they finally catch up with the kidnappers, they find out how convoluted Imperial politics can get when the now-freed politician, who is actually a honey devil, thanks his 'rescuers' by escaping again and leaving them to his devilish allies.

## IMPERIAL POLITICS STORY OPENINGS

- **The Deputy's "Request":** The deputy of a local Imperial authority—a half-elf woman named Galina Myre—has made a request to one of the PCs with a positive or conflicted

relationship with the Emperor. She needs to talk to a local politician and doesn't want Imperial troops to bring him in for reasons of her own. Not fulfilling the request would annoy Galina, and that could cause problems for the PCs.

- **A Simple Favor:** The PCs need help or information from the local Imperial authorities. They're willing to give it, in exchange for a simple favor. A half-elf deputy named Galina Myre asks the group to go find a local politician and bring him (unharmed) to her quietly, so they can discuss some "business matters."
- **A Fistful of Imps:** A reward has been posted by the local Imperial officials for a dissident who's been agitating the locals about demanding reduced tariffs by the Emperor and other blather. The man is to be brought in, unharmed if possible, to stand trial for sedition. The reward is 250 golden imps (alive), and the PCs have heard that the man will be speaking in a public place shortly. The contact name for claiming the reward is Galina Myre, a half-elf deputy of the Imperial governor.
- **It's All Politics:** A strong supporter of the Emperor is scheduled to make a public appearance to sway the people toward a certain policy. A deputy within the Imperial bureaucracy who actually works against the Emperor, a half-elf named Galina Myre, has put the word out to a PC who has a negative relationship with the Emperor to collect this politician. He has knowledge that will strike a blow against the Empire. He's about to give a public speech in a nearby market.

## ALTERNATE ICONS



**Archmage:** It's not a politician speaking, but a mage who's trying to convince people that the reign of the Wizard King was the best time the Empire ever knew. The man claims to have learned ancient rituals that will make the Empire strong again. Galina instead works as a "re-educator" within the Archmage's bureaucracy.



**Priestess:** As the Archmage, except that Galina receives dreams from the Priestess, and is therefore certain that this rising politician is the key to some strange plot.



**Crusader or Great Gold Wurm:** The man is rumored to be a cultist of the Diabolist, and Galina is a paladin (dark or light) who would like to find out if the rumors are true.

## IMPERIAL POLITICS OVERVIEW

The PCs arrive in the market square to find Tarius Rolle already in full speech talking to a group of people. Before the PCs can



## ICONS IN PLAY

Characters that have relationships (and story-guide advantages) with the Emperor, the Lich King, the Prince of Shadows, the Three (the Blue), and maybe the Archmage or Priestess should be able to shine in these battle scenes. Moreso than PCs with other icon relationships, feel free to give such PCs extra knowledge about the opposition, make checks to pull off fun actions the players might suggest, and use their advantages to particularly good effect, such as negating or bypassing some of the advantages or abilities of the enemies.

cross half the distance to him, however, some ruffians cause a disturbance in the crowd and run up to confront the PCs. During the scuffle, Tarius will cry out as two masked figures grab him and take him away before the PCs can reach him. Needing to retrieve the man, the PCs give chase.

The kidnappers move quickly and lead the heroes through back streets and slums, and into a confrontation with a group of half-orc mercenaries who are incentivized to slow them down.

Once they navigate that battle scene, the PCs will have lost ground on the kidnappers and their victim, but eventually discover that he was taken into the sewers. Pursuit leads the PCs into a confrontation with a den of wererats.

Once they handle that threat, the PCs find the kidnappers' lair, only to discover that Tarius Rolle was much more familiar with his enemies than it seemed, and he has no intention of going anywhere with the PCs. In fact, he's a honey devil, and he has hidden allies that turn his apparent kidnapping into a horror show.

GM, feel free to expand upon these battles by including more scrapes in the slums, additional beasts in the sewers, or other threats that seem appropriate.

The battles outlined here can take place over a few minutes or hours if you want the trail to go cold until the PCs catch a break. Since the Emperor is in play, sprinkle the battle scenes with betrayals, temptations, and all the "dirt" that civilization hides under its shiny exterior.

See story endings after the final battle for options on what happens after the PCs finish the last battle.

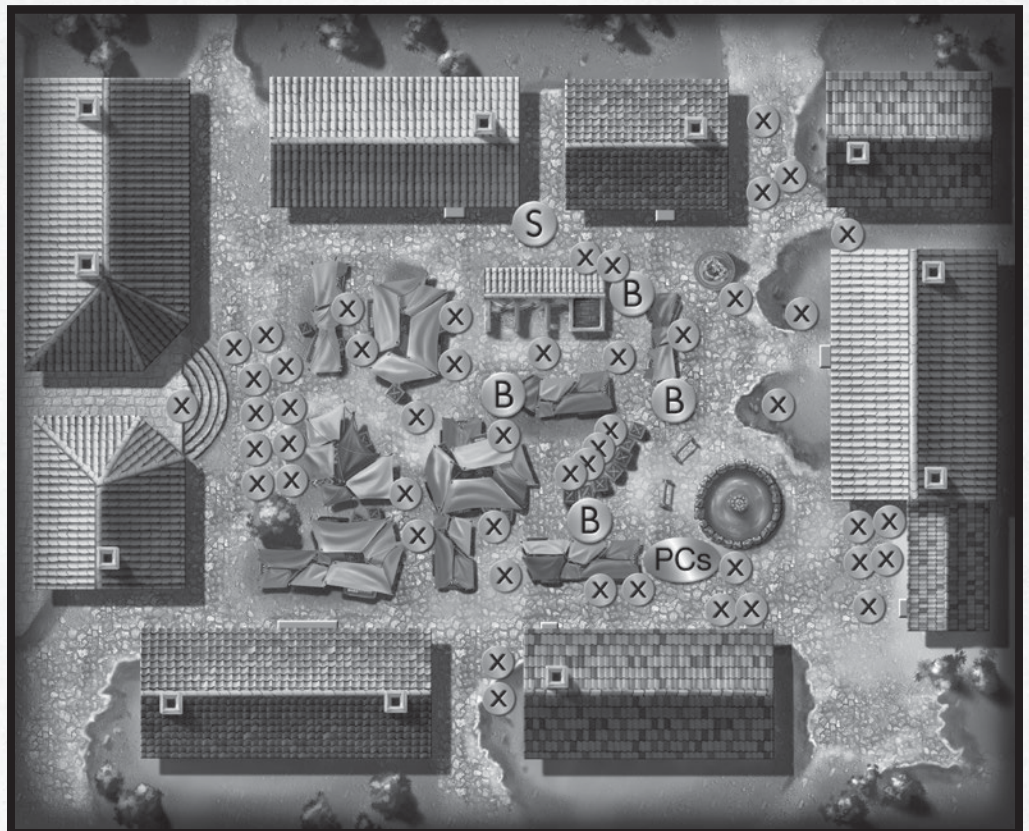
## BATTLE I: DISRUPTION IN THE SQUARE

*You enter a large market square to see the usual daily business of commerce at vendor booths and merchant stalls, but there's also a commotion on the far side. A group of people are arrayed in a half circle around a man standing on the top step of some stairs leading into an old brick building housing a mall of merchant stores. He's making exaggerated motions with his arms as he works the crowd, and you recognize him as Tarius Rolle, the man you're here for. As you start to make your way through the square toward him, yells erupt nearby as a group of armed dark elves wearing laughing-halfing masks rush you from out of the crowd. One of them calls out, "Get off our turf, scum! This is Jokers' country!"*

### LOCATION DESCRIPTION

The square is 200 feet long and 140 feet wide, with multiple alleys and roads exiting it. The PCs emerge near one end of the square near a small fountain; Tarius stands on the stairs on the opposite end. There are rows of tent stalls, vendor booths, and tables of displayed wares between them. The dark elves emerge when the PCs are still 100 feet away from the steps as passersby yell at them then get out of the way.

Tarius will be one move beyond far away due to the uneven thoroughfares and numerous pedestrians in the way. The dark elves, a gang who call themselves the Little Jokers, are tipping





carts, shoving people, and stealing items as they move toward the PCs.

The Little Jokers were paid to attack the PCs, or at least slow them down, by someone working for Tarius—he has contacts too and knew orders were given to “collect” him. The Jokers will give it a shot. Not their best shot, necessarily.

## TERRAIN & TRAPS

**Market Terrain:** There’s a lot of terrain the PCs could take advantage of for this battle, including tents, tables, various fruits and melons, bolts of cloth, groups of small items on blankets (like simple jewelry or carvings), and more. If any PC asks if “so and so” is nearby, it probably is, unless they want something exotic, then use a d20 roll to see if it’s available (6+, 11+, or 16+).

Making a dicey move using such an item, or trying something like moving over tents, running on tables, or tricking enemies into a collapsing stall requires a successful DC 18 check, or DC 23 if it’s really tricky.

**Shoppers:** There are various people of all types out shopping in the market, but coincidentally no town guards nearby. One of the bystanders could be convinced to help a PC in some way with a DC 20 Charisma check. For example, tripping a fleeing enemy, throwing an item to someone, or acting aggressively to distract an enemy (vulnerable to next attack). Asking for help is either a quick action or a move action depending on complexity. If someone helps, they do so immediately as a free action.

**Buildings & Exits:** There are many buildings framing the square. Most are one or two stories high, except for the one behind Tarius, which is three stories. Climbing the walls of any such structure to the roof requires a DC 15 or DC 20 Dexterity check, depending on how tall the building is.

Escape from the square is easy, since there are numerous roads and open doors to enter. The elves know the terrain and can fade into the crowd or down an alley pretty easily.

## MONSTERS

The Little Jokers are a band of male dark elf youths with a cruel streak, but also a strange sense of humor—thus the laughing-halfling masks (which are actually more like smiling halflings, but that’s not as much fun to say). Locals know to stay out of their way, and so they’ll let the PCs deal with the problem.

The Jokers were hired (anonymously through a third party) to target the PCs when they entered the square; the deal was agreed upon barely a minute before the PCs arrived. Any captured gang members will reveal this fact without too much encouragement. The gang’s leader is a dark elf named Jaquar Allsyndle.

Just for fun, a few Jokers carry bags of weaver swarm spiders they will release as they enter the fight.



Once it seems like they are losing badly, the Jokers will try to flee. If the PCs try to reach Tarius, he will get kidnapped before they can do so (see **Next Steps**).

**Additional Reinforcements:** If you want to challenge the PCs more, the gang is led by a woman they call the “Laughing Knife,” a masked drow sword maiden (*Bestiary*, page 58). Or perhaps a pair of sisters, if you want to be cruel.

#/Level of PCs	Joker Blade (B)	Joker Spellslinger (S)	Weaver Swarm Mook
4 x 4 <sup>th</sup> level	3	1	3
5 x 4 <sup>th</sup> level	4	1*	5
6 x 4 <sup>th</sup> level	4	2	4
4 x 5 <sup>th</sup> level	5	2*	7
5 x 5 <sup>th</sup> level	6	3	6
6 x 5 <sup>th</sup> level	8	3	8

\* Each spellslinger has a weaver swarm too.



## TACTICS

As they approach on the first round, each dark elf with a weaver swarm pouch will hurl it at an enemy as a quick action. The swarms act on the next initiative count after the last drow group. The weaver swarms know not to attack the dark elves due to a scent the drow have rubbed on their boots and clothes.

The blades will separate. Each will engage and attack a different PC, trying to slow them down in a one-on-one duel.

The spellslingers will try to hamper any free spellcasters, or try to hinder enemies who are giving the blades a hard time.

## LOOT

The dark elves carry their wealth, mostly items taken from illegal activity. They have a total of 80 gp in coins, plus two 25 gp silver spider rings, and one has a jade-handle knife carved with a waterfall worth 50 gp.

## ÍCONS

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Emperor, Prince of Shadows, or maybe the Elf Queen could use one or more of them to get a bystander to help them out without a check (perhaps they see an old friend, acquaintance, or fellow servant among the crowd). This assistance could provide a +2 to +4 bonus to a roll or check, in addition to any other effects.

A PC with one or more advantages with the Elf Queen could use them to convince the Jokers to flee (to avoid public humiliation), once the escalation die reaches 3+. Or to have one of the Jokers reveal that they were hired to waylay the PCs just before they showed up.

## DROW JOKER BLADE

*The smile behind the mask is also disturbing.*

4<sup>th</sup> level troop [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +9

**Wicked blade +9 vs. AC**—12 damage, and the Joker blade gains a +2 bonus to AC and PD until the start of its next turn

**Venomous blade:** The first time the Joker blade hits with this attack, it also deals 5 ongoing poison damage.

**Miss:** 4 damage.

**Cruel-blooded:** Once this battle as a free action when an attack would hit the Joker blade by 2 or less, the attack misses instead as it uses a maneuver to put a bystander in harm's way.

AC 19	
PD 19	HP 50
MD 13	

## DROW JOKER SPELLSLINGER

*Who says that society is falling apart? Street criminals somehow manage to get part of a magical education. Something must be going almost right.*

5<sup>th</sup> level caster [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +10

**Knuckle spike +9 vs. AC**—13 damage

**R: Blistering ray +11 vs. PD**—18 fire damage, and the target is hampered until the end of its next turn by painful heat blisters

**C: Force spikes +11 vs. PD (1d2 nearby enemies in a group)**—15 force damage, and the target is vulnerable until the start of the spellslinger's next turn as a web of force spikes spread out to hinder it

**Lingering cruelty:** The first time each battle the spellslinger hits with *blistering ray*, the hampered condition is save ends.

### Nastier Specials

**Smokeform escape:** Once per battle as a move action, the spellslinger can pop free from all enemies and move as its body turns to smoke and then reforms somewhere else.

AC 20	
PD 15	HP 63
MD 19	

## WEAVER SWARM

*A loom-full can weave a gown in under an hour, and a pouch of them thrown at you can mess up your whole day.*

3<sup>rd</sup> level mook [BEAST]

Initiative: +9, but see tactics

**A thousand needle wounds +8 vs. AC**—5 damage

**Natural 16+:** The target is hampered until the end of its next turn.

**Natural 18+:** As above, and the target is also stuck until the end of its next turn.

**Clinging:** Enemies take a -5 penalty to disengage checks against the swarm.

**Wall-crawler:** The swarm can climb on ceilings and walls as easily as it moves on the ground.

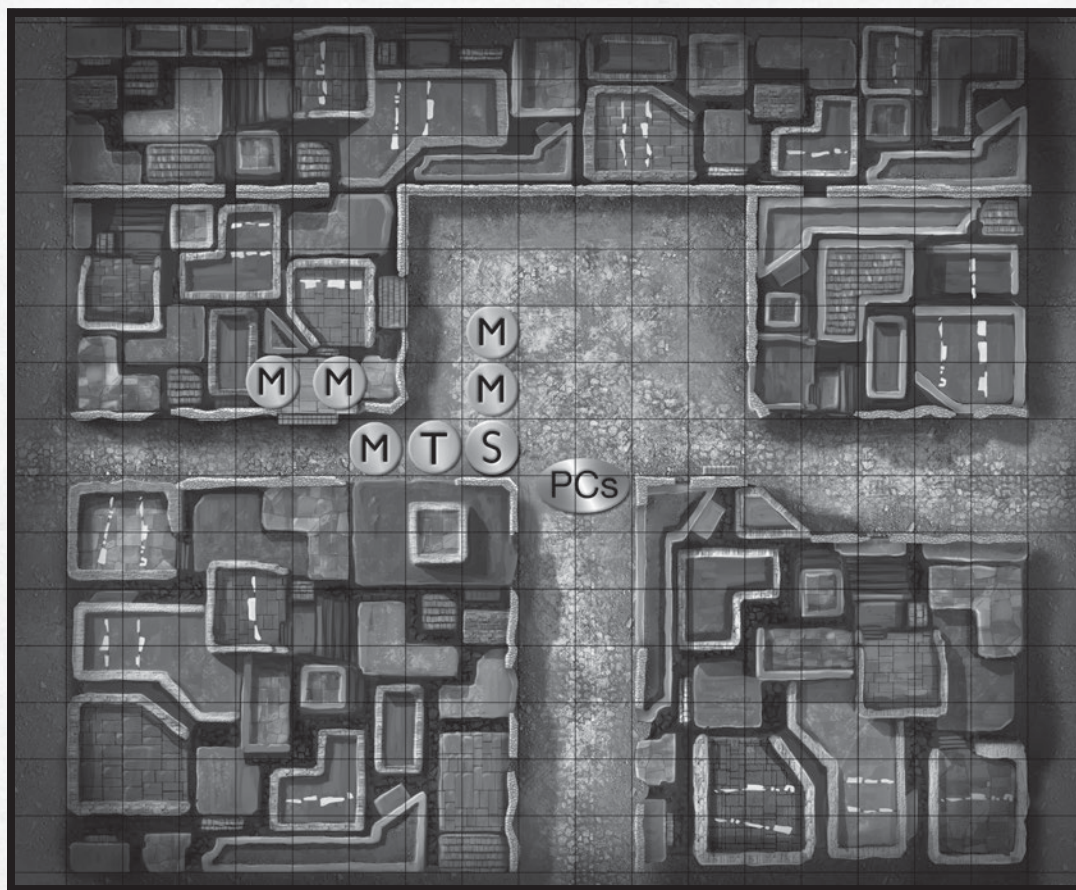
AC 19	
PD 17	HP 10 (mook)
MD 13	

**Mook:** Kill one weaver swarm mook for every 10 damage you deal to the mob.

### NEXT STEPS

As the battle is wrapping up (but while there are still enemies), or if the PCs try to move closer to Tarius Rolle, they will see two masked men come up and grab the politician. He struggles and they drag him out of sight into the building he's standing in front of. Unlike the Little Jokers, these kidnappers are wearing simple mask of black cloth. See **Battle 2: We Fight For Pay**.





## BATTLE 2: WE FIGHT FOR PAY

*You race after Tarius and the two masked men who carried him off. Vendors in the mall point out the back entrance as you search for him. Beyond is a maze of alleys and roads, but you catch sight of your quarry being carried around a corner. Hot in pursuit, you begin to gain as you turn one corner, and then another. You see the kidnappers and their smaller victim pass through an archway to your left, but before you can continue, a warehouse door slides open and a group of half-orcs steps out, followed by another half-orc man with a leash trailing a large lizard with snapping jaws. The half-orc with the lizard smiles and says, "Hold up. Ol' Snapper here would like a word." The others grin and draw weapons.*

### LOCATION DESCRIPTION

The PCs are in a back alley near the slums connected to a small T-shaped courtyard created by a pair of alleys connecting to the one they're in. Tarius's kidnappers stop for a moment at a corner to look at the PCs, before carrying him off. (The distance is too great and the glimpse is too quick for effective spellcasting, but if the PCs do try to fire off spells, consider giving them a slight advantage against the kidnappers later.)

The alley the PCs are in is 10 feet wide, as is the one to their right in the opposite direction of Tarius. The alley coming from the left is 5 feet wide. Where they meet the walls of the surrounding buildings pull back to form a small 25 x 30-foot

courtyard. The buildings here are two or three stories tall, and the walls are 20 to 30 feet high.

The mercenaries and their pet lizard "Snapper" fill the alleyway to the left down which Tarius was taken.

In addition to the wide, sliding door the half-orc mercenaries came out of (which leads to a small empty warehouse), there's a door into an apartment building just to the right of the PCs.

There's also one humorous, and possibly helpful, element to this battle: a dwarven bystander named Venda Goldenhair (see **Terrain & Traps**).

### TERRAIN & TRAPS

**Buildings & Walls:** The buildings here are made from mortared brick, though some of the upper floors have small balconies

covered with cloth tents against the sun. They are a mix of storage facilities, small industrial shops, and slum-style apartments.

The building walls are ill-kept and crumbling, making climbing them not difficult (DC 13 Strength check). Anyone falling from a roof will take 3d8 damage.

**Venda Goldenhair:** Venda is a dwarven woman who just happens to be out on her deck on one of the tenements bordering the square, and she can see what's going on down below. She's not a fan of half-orcs, and will yell encouragement to the PCs and insults at the mercenaries. Should any PC encourage her, or if the PCs have a dwarf among them, she'll even lend aid to the PCs each round by calling out weaknesses in the mercenaries' defense.

Pick a different PC each round who Venda hasn't helped before. During their turn, she'll offer encouragement and they gain a +1 bonus to their attack or to any saves. GM, be creative with your advice, or with insults she uses to get a mercenary's attention.

**Doors & Warehouse:** The door to the warehouse from which the half-orcs emerged is open. Beyond, the warehouse is 30 x 75 and mostly empty except for some lumber, nails, and tools used for wagonmaking.

The door next to the PCs is locked (DC 12 Strength or Dexterity check to bash it in or pick the lock as a move action). Inside a hall leads 70 feet to another road, and there's a set of rickety wooden stairs that lead to the roof.

**Side Alley:** The side alley to the right leads away from the direction that the kidnappers went, but after a short distance



there's another alley that will connect to the road where the mercenaries came out. Anyone choosing to go around can get behind the half-orcs using four move actions.

## MONSTERS

The half-orcs were paid ahead of time and told to wait in the warehouse until the kidnappers went by and gave them the correct signal. At that point they were to "discourage" any pursuit. While they've been paid to do so, there might be an opportunity to talk before fighting if the PCs choose it. Any negotiations for avoiding a fight will have involve paying the mercenaries more than they're getting for stalling the PCs, however. In this case, it will take at least 120 gp, though Walsin the half-orc leader will start at 200 gp if the PCs offer. Even if they negotiate, the delay will take some time. (If this amount of gold is trivial in your campaign, increase the amount to something that matters, maybe even healing potions or a magic item!)

Snapper is trained just enough not to attack the half-orcs. If there's a second lizard and trainer, the lizard's name is One-eye.

**Additional Reinforcements:** If you want to challenge the PCs more, the half-orcs have what they call an "insurance plan." During their time in the legions, they worked with a mantichore bard (*Bestiary*, page 139) conscripted by the Empire. They nicknamed the mantichore the Prince. When they deserted, the Prince came with them and has been giving the band aerial backup ever since. The Prince starts on the rooftop above the courtyard and the half-orcs may mention that the Prince has their backs; not the Prince the PCs might expect!

#/Level of PCs	Half-orc Mercenaries (M)	Half-orc Lizard Trainer (T)	Snapper (S)
4 x 4 <sup>th</sup> level	2	1	1
5 x 4 <sup>th</sup> level	3	1	1
6 x 4 <sup>th</sup> level	4	1	1
4 x 5 <sup>th</sup> level	5*	1	1
5 x 5 <sup>th</sup> level	5*	2	2
6 x 5 <sup>th</sup> level	7*	2	2

\* The mercenaries can use their *lethal strike* nastier special.

## TACTICS

The half-orcs are straightforward fighters. The mercenaries will attack in pairs, focusing on one PC. The lizard trainer and Snapper work together as well, keeping the lizard away from "friendly" allies (hey it's a lizard).

## LOOT

The mercenaries have half their payment spread out among them, 100 gp in imps. In addition, one of them has a *potion of heroism* (*Book of Loot*, page 62: The drinker gains one incremental advance for one battle or five minutes) on him he took off a dead adventurer.

## RUNNING THE MERCENARIES

GM, the half-orc mercenaries' attacks have a lot of outcomes, including a defense bonus and a critical hit possibility that can surface each attack. Since there are a number of them in the battle, that could mean tracking a lot of effects. If it's too much of a hassle, change the odd miss effect to 4 damage also, and/or don't use the even hit trigger.

## Icons

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Emperor, Crusader, Dwarf King, Orc Lord, or perhaps the Prince of Shadows could use one or more of them to get the mercenaries to parley instead of fight, thanks to an understanding of who and what they are. No matter what, however, the half-orcs will need to be paid to step down.

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Three or the Great Gold Wurm could use them to affect Snapper in some beneficial way, such as having it hold off attacking for a round or two, taking a snap at a half-orc, or something similar.





## HALF-ORC MERCENARY

*Mad, bad, and trained to be even worse.*

4<sup>th</sup> level troop [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +8

**Longsword +10 vs. AC—12 damage**

*Natural even hit:* The half-orc legionnaire gains a +2 bonus to all defenses until the start of its next turn.

*Natural odd hit:* The target takes +1d6 damage.

*Natural even miss:* 4 damage.

*Natural odd miss:* If the legionnaire's next melee attack is a natural even hit, it becomes a critical hit instead!

**R: Javelin +10 vs. AC—10 damage**

### Nastier Specials

*Lethal swing:* Once per battle, a half-orc can reroll a melee attack and use the result it prefers.

<b>AC</b>	<b>20</b>	
<b>PD</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>HP 56</b>
<b>MD</b>	<b>14</b>	

## HALF-ORC LIZARD TRAINER

*"No, Snapper! No eating! Kill!"*

5<sup>th</sup> level leader [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +8

**Well-worn gladius +11 vs. AC—14 damage**

**C: Twirling chain-whip +10 vs. AC—15 damage**

*Natural 16+:* Snapper can make a single *snapping jaws* attack as a free action.

*Defensive pullback:* Once per battle as a free action when an attack hits him, the trainer can yank on Snapper's chain and have the lizard take all damage and effects from that attack.

<b>AC</b>	<b>20</b>	
<b>PD</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>HP 73</b>
<b>MD</b>	<b>16</b>	

## SNAPPER

*Snap! Snap!*

Double-strength 4<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [BEAST]

Initiative: +9

**Snapping jaws +9 vs. AC (2 attacks)—13 damage**

*Natural even hit:* The target takes a -2 penalty to attacks until the end of its next turn.

*Miss:* 3 damage.

<b>AC</b>	<b>18</b>	
<b>PD</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>HP 110</b>
<b>MD</b>	<b>12</b>	

### NEXT STEPS

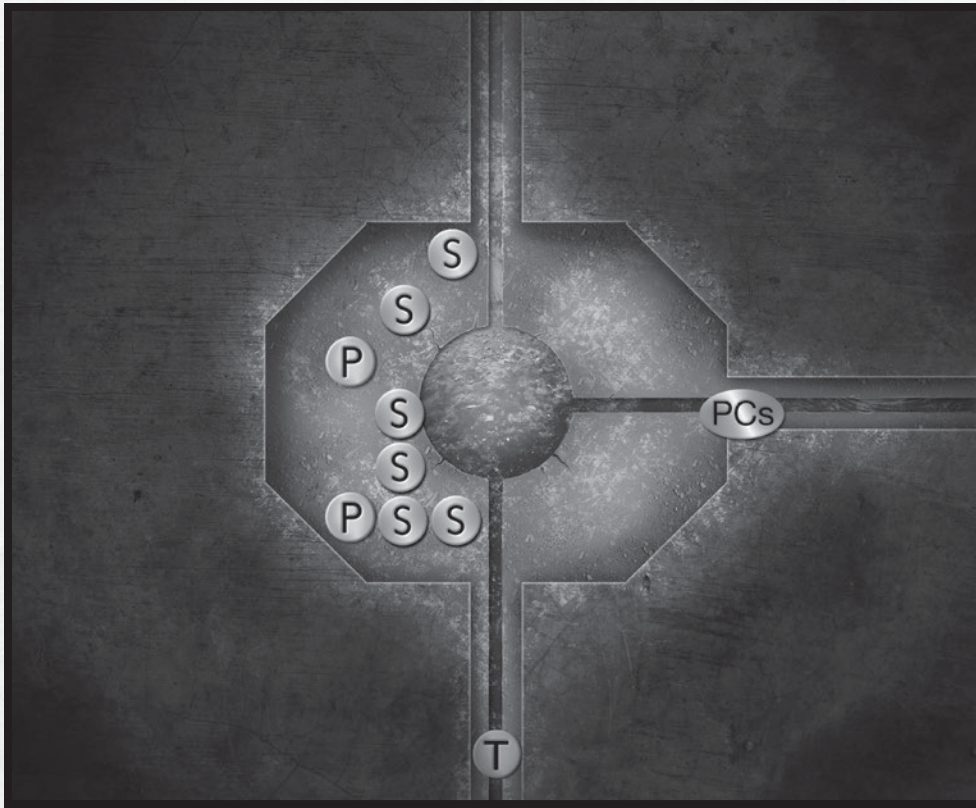
Once the PCs defeat the mercenaries, or manage to bypass them, they'll need to pick up the trail again. The kidnappers have a head start, but they didn't go far before entering an old, abandoned stables.

Luckily for the PCs, there was a witness to the kidnappers' passage. A halfling drunk named Bolo was half passed out in the alley across from the stables under some canvas bags. The PCs could literally trip over the small drunk. With the proper monetary incentive (a few gp), he'll be willing to reveal that he saw two masked men take a third man into the stables and not come out. Alternately, this is the perfect time for a PC to use an icon advantage to come up with a story that explains how the PCs find the trail.

Inside the stables, a large grate is slightly off its setting and there's an iron-rung ladder leading down into the sewers. Yep, the quarry went down. See **Battle 3: Into the Sewers**.







## BATTLE 3: INTO THE SEWERS

*Following signs of recent passage, you've been traveling the sewer tunnels for a couple of minutes now. The place holds mostly slowly moving water and a foul stench pervades everything. Up ahead, the tunnel you're in connects into a larger chamber with a cesspool. Two other large sewer mains connect to the pool, and its runoff leads down the one to the left. From the shadows many pairs of small beady eyes glow from your light.*

### LOCATION DESCRIPTION

This chamber is occupied by a pack of halfling wererat mooks and one or more pack leaders. They will be unhappy to have intruders in their lair. They also have an agreement with Tarius and his people and allow them to pass in exchange for payments and food. They are in dire rat form at the start of the battle, but the pack leader will shift into hybrid form and order his mates to attack in a hissing voice. The others will shift as a quick action during their first turn.

The chamber is octagonal and 35 x 45 from wall to wall, with a 10-foot ceiling. Besides the tunnel the PCs enter through, there are two other 6-foot-diameter tunnels exiting the chamber: one with water and debris flowing in on the right, and one flowing from the cesspool out to the left. The wererats are near the opposite wall.

The pool is 10 feet deep and filled with slimy, nasty water, refuse, and filth. A grated drain on one side allows the water to flow away.

There's one final surprise for everyone in the room: at the start of the second round of combat, a gelatinous tetrahedron (*13<sup>th</sup> Age Bestiary*, page 88) rolls into the chamber from the downstream tunnel to the PCs' left. It's not part of the wererats' plans and starts attacking any creatures it can reach.

### TERRAIN & TRAPS

**Cesspool:** The round 15-foot diameter pool doesn't have an edge and anyone who ends up in it might have a hard time getting out due to the slime (not to mention needing about five baths). A PC trying to crawl out of the pool must use a full move action to do so and succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity check or slip back in. The wererats' claws let them crawl out with an easy save (6+).

Anyone who falls into the pool and who uses a weapon or implement takes a -2 attack penalty for the rest of the battle due to the slippery filth

on them. GM, feel free to add some sort of disease effect for any PC who goes into the pool and who fails a save after the battle, and/or include a cursed magic item at the bottom of the pool for any PC willing to search the filth.

**Knocking Someone into the Pool:** Any combatant in the chamber can try to knock an enemy next to the pool into it with a standard action instead of making a normal attack. PCs trying to knock an enemy into it (excluding the ooze) must succeed on a DC 15 Strength (pushing) or Dexterity (off-balance) check. The wererats must hit with a normal attack and opt to deal only half damage in order to push the enemy; even then the pushed PC can succeed on a DC 15 Strength or Dexterity check to avoid going in. (We're aware these rules aren't precisely symmetrical, but they should be fun!)

### MONSTERS

Larnst is the wererat pack leader, and the rest of his gang are mooks. They are in rat form at the back of the chamber at the start of the battle. Larnst will change to hybrid form first, but this isn't one of those times where he's going to waste breath on warnings. Other pack leaders might be mixed in with the mooks as well; they are slightly larger than the others.

The wererats are cowards at heart and when the tetrahedron rolls into the room, they will all start squeaking in panic. Once all the pack leaders drop, the rest will flee.

The tetrahedron is huge and will fill most of the tunnel it rolls down, making slurping sounds the whole way as bits of it stick to the walls pulled along by tentacles of ooze. (GM, if you want, you could allow the PCs to make DC 20 checks to hear the ooze coming during the first round.)





If there's a second one, it will come from the direction the PCs were traveling, blocking that corridor (or have it slurp up from the pool).

#/Level of PCs	Wererat Pack Leader (P)	Wererat Sneak mook (S)	Gelatinous Tetrahedron (T)
4 x 4 <sup>th</sup> level	1	3 (1 mob)	1
5 x 4 <sup>th</sup> level	1	8 (1 mob)	1
6 x 4 <sup>th</sup> level	2	7 (1 mob)	1
4 x 5 <sup>th</sup> level	3	12 (2 mobs)	1
5 x 5 <sup>th</sup> level	4	12 (1 mob)*	1
6 x 2 <sup>nd</sup> level	4	15 (2 mobs)	2

\* Either increase the wererat sneaks to 14 hp and have them deal 3 extra damage, or use a gelatinous cubahedron from the *Bestiary* and don't boost the mooks.

**Additional Reinforcements:** If you want to challenge the PCs more, have a blackamber skeletal legionnaire (core rulebook, page 246) be encased in the tetrahedron. When the cube attacks, it leaps out of the jelly and attacks, either as a separate undead entity or as something somehow controlled by the jelly.

## Tactics

The pack leader will let his allies strike first, then engage a PC who is already engaged. The wererats' strategy is to mass attack and overwhelm one or two PCs, then move on to the others, though one or two mooks hidden in a corner or bolt hole could pop up near the back of the party to attack individually, and then pull back. With their improved senses, the wererats will hear the ooze coming and try to move away from the tunnel it's coming from during the first round to put the PCs between them and it.

At the start of the second round after the escalation die has advanced, the tetrahedron will slurp into the room. When this happens, it changes the battle and may take the wind out of the PCs' sails since it, not the wererats, is the real threat. **Decrease the escalation die by 1.** Then roll initiative for the ooze and have it take its turn during that round.

When the ooze uses *instinctive action*, it could target any creature in the room. When it makes a normal attack, it will choose bigger targets (more food)—in other words, the PCs, unless you've got an all-star squad of halflings and gnomes!

## Loot

When they die, the wererats revert to feral-looking halflings. Each carries a small amount of wealth in a pouch or pocket. They have a total of 80 gp among them, and Larst wears a gold and ruby nose ring worth 60 gp.

The ooze has the remnants of its last meal inside still dissolving—the skeleton of some mid-sized animal. In addition, during its slurping trek, it picked up a magical ivory wand of some type (GM's choice). The wand looks like one of the bones, so a PC searching the ooze must succeed on a DC 15 check to notice the item.

## Icons

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Emperor, High Druid, Prince of Shadows, or perhaps the Diabolist could use one or more of them to hinder the wererats in some way or put fear into them, perhaps reducing the effect of their *infected bite* cumulative expanding crit range.



A PC that has relationship advantages with the Dwarf King or Archmage could use one or more of them to know a trick or two about gelatinous oozes. For example, when it uses *instinctive action*, force it to roll a d6 instead of a d4. A roll of 5 or 6 means it does nothing instead. Or perhaps they know a trick for getting someone out of an ooze without making a disengage check.

## LARST, WERERAT PACK LEADER

*That one in the back is probably the leader. No, not that one, the other one, the big one. How did you miss again?*

5<sup>th</sup> level troop [BEAST]

Initiative: +10

**Infected bite +10 vs. AC**—10 damage and 5 ongoing damage, and the crit range for each wererat in the battle against the target expands by 1

*Natural 11+*: The target can't make opportunity attacks until the end of the turn (making it easier for the wererat sneak to move away from the target).

*Bestial fury (hybrid form only)*: Wererats gain a bonus to damage equal to the escalation die (champion: double the die; epic: quadruple it).

*Uncanny miss*: The wererat takes no damage and suffer no effects from attacks that miss.

*Evasive stinker*: Once per battle as a free action, force an attack that hit Larst to reroll with a –4 penalty.

*Unnatural vigor (hybrid or animal form only)*: When the wererat is unstaggered at the start of its turn, it heals 5 hp.

AC	20	
PD	16	HP 60
MD	19	

## WERERAT SNEAK

*They scurry and flinch, but continually move closer, running their tongues over sharp teeth.*

4<sup>th</sup> level mook [BEAST]

Initiative: +9

**Sharp, biting teeth +9 vs. AC**—5 damage, and the crit range for each wererat in the battle against the target expands by 1

*Natural 11+*: The target can't make opportunity attacks until the end of the turn (making it easier for the wererats to move away from the target).

*Unnatural vigor (hybrid or animal form only)*: The wererat sneak mob heals 6 hp at the start of each round (this might mean a dropped mook rejoins the fight, or a new mook enters the battle).

AC	20	
PD	13	HP 12 (mook)
MD	17	

## GELATINOUS TETRAHEDRON

*The ooze whips out a tentacle, grasps an enemy, and flings it through the air to the opposite side of the cavern. Gelatinous tetrahedrons prefer their meals pulped...*

Huge 4<sup>th</sup> level blocker [OOZE]

Initiative: +3

**Shlup'n'schlorp +9 vs. PD**—22 acid damage, and the tetrahedron engulfs the target (functions like a grab; see below) if it's smaller than the tetrahedron

*Miss*: The tetrahedron can make a *spasms* attack as a free action.

[Special trigger] **C: Spasms +9 vs. AC (up to 2 attacks, each against a different nearby enemy)**—11 damage

*Engulf and dissolve*: Targets engulfed/grabbed (13<sup>th</sup> Age core book, page 172) by the tetrahedron take 22 acid damage at the start of the cube's turn but are not viable targets for additional attacks by the tetrahedron. Multiple targets can be held within the tetrahedron simultaneously.

Any engulfed creature that is also staggered must begin making last gasp saves (page 200 of core rules) or become paralyzed as the tetrahedron's toxins overwhelm it.

*Instinctive actions*: Gelatinous creatures have no brains, sometimes they just *do things*. When the escalation die is odd, instead of making an attack or moving, roll a d4 to see what the tetrahedron does. If an option is not viable (you roll a 1 but there is no engaged enemy), reroll until you get a valid option.

**1. C: Fling +9 vs. PD (one engaged enemy)**—14 damage, and the target pops free from the ooze and must roll an easy save (6+); on a failure, it loses its next move action

**2. C: Fling +9 vs. PD (one nearby enemy not engaged with the ooze)**—28 damage, and the target is flung somewhere nearby and must roll an easy save (6+); on a failure, it loses its next move action

**3. C: Fling +9 vs. PD (one far away enemy)**—42 damage, and the target is flung somewhere far away and must roll an easy save (6+); on a failure, it loses its next move action

**4.** As a standard action the ooze quickly moves around the battlefield, oozing over 1d3 nearby enemies. Those enemies become engaged with the ooze and stuck (save ends).

*First failed save*: The target is engulfed instead of stuck.

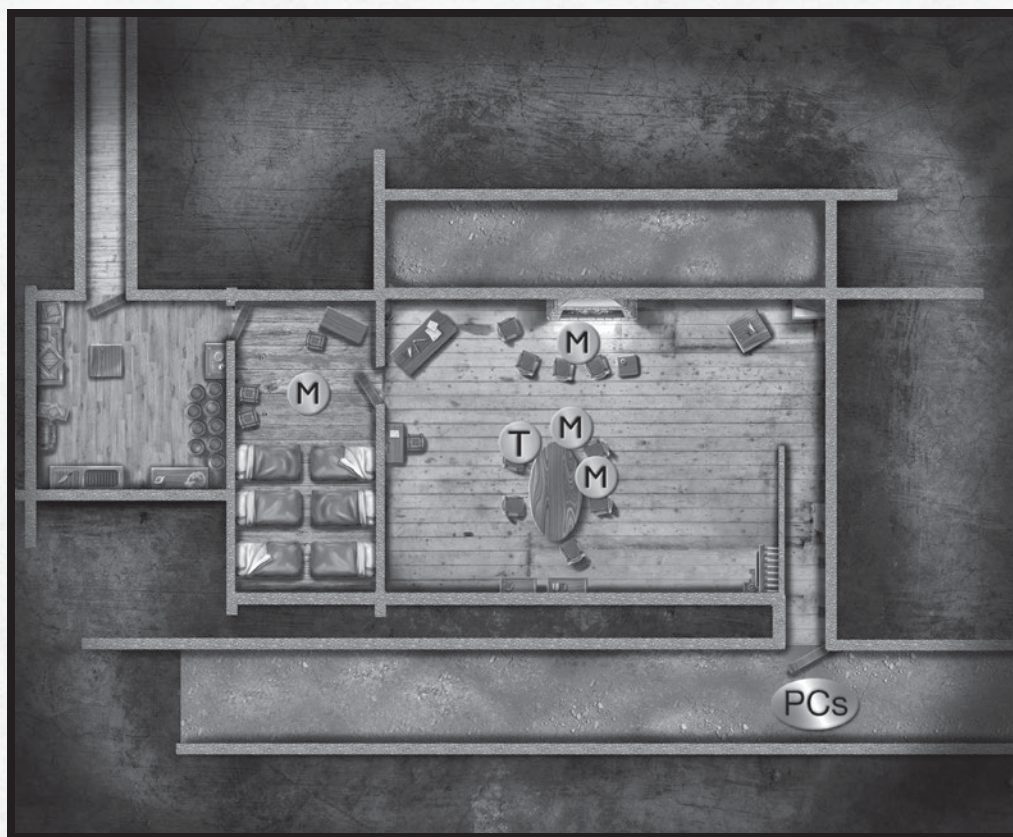
AC	19	
PD	17	HP 160
MD	14	

### NEXT STEPS

Once the ooze and wererats are defeated, a quick search of the area reveals boot prints moving down the tunnel with the water entering the chamber, the tunnel opposite the direction the ooze came from. Questioning one of the wererats will lead to the same answer, plus the fact that there's a door to a secure chamber a short distance away where the three went.

After a quick rest, when the PCs move down the tunnel to the door, see **Battle 4: Surprising Beards**.





is lounging on a chair, but if he detects the PCs, he will sit back as if his hands are tied behind him to put on the ruse of a kidnapped politician.

Lastly, these malcontents have a trick up their sleeves for uninvited guests. There's a trap in the long 20-foot hall leading to the lounge (see **Terrain & Traps**).

### TERRAIN & TRAPS

**Trapped Hallway:** If any PCs moves down the hall more than ten feet, they will trigger the tripwire set there (unless a PC searches and finds it; DC 20 check).

When the tripwire breaks, it will release a weighted iron rod on the other side of the inner wall in the lounge that's connected to numerous spikes. The spikes drive through narrow gaps in the wall covered with a thin mortar-like paper, impaling those in the hall. Make the following attack against each PC in the hall.

**Iron-spike Trap +10 vs. AC (each enemy in the hall)—10 damage.** Single use, but see tactics.

**Table & Furniture:** The wood table is 4 feet high, 6 feet long, and oval. There are two bookcases with a few books in the lounge also, plus a couple of low tables with ink and quills around the edges. The PCs should be able to maneuver around this area without requiring checks, unless someone tries something dicey.

The smaller side room holds a handful of cots; it's a sleeping quarters. The kitchen/larder holds dried goods, some fruit, a few small casks of beer and wine, and what looks like a bowl of honey (it's actually slime from the honey devil).

**Door Out:** The door out of the larder is locked on the inside. It opens to reveal a set of stone stairs that lead up to the ground floor of a semi-abandoned pottery shop, with a door out to the streets.

### MONSTERS

Tarius is a slime devil who looks like an overweight, pasty human noble. He has a nasally voice that projects well to audiences. Depending on whether or not the PCs sneak up on him, he will either be giving instructions to his malcontents, or acting like a scared noble who was kidnapped, until he can stick a knife in someone or flee. During the battle, he'll start to giggle nervously as he thinks about the surprise the intruders are in for when they drop one of the malcontents.

The malcontents are all human, and look like semi-capable streetfighters who bear short swords. They will be sitting at the table, or just out of sight in the bedroom or larder.

But they aren't the only threat here. Tarius has at least one devil ally present—bearded devils hiding in human flesh.

## BATTLE 4: SURPRISING BEARDS

*The tracks in the tunnel lead to a heavy wooden door set into the slimy stone wall. There are no sounds on the other side. You manage to get the door open quietly and enter. Beyond is a narrow tunnel just tall enough for you to walk. It leads about twenty feet then turns left into a lighted area. Two people are talking out of sight, their quiet voices echoing down the hall from ahead: one refined, the other rough with street talk.*

### LOCATION DESCRIPTION

This set of chambers is actually a secret lair for Tarius Rolle and his hired thugs/allies. While it has seemed that Tarius was kidnapped and taken here, that's not actually the truth. Tarius is a honey devil (13 *True Ways*, page 171). He orchestrated his kidnapping to gain sympathy from the crowd he was trying to sway, and also because he got word that the Imperial deputy had sent someone to bring him in. His people arranged the distraction in the square, and the quick getaway. Unfortunately for him, the PCs have been persistent.

The lair consists of a main lounge complete with a table and five comfy chairs. The room is 30 x 40, with a 12-foot ceiling. There's a wide archway in the center of one wall that connects to a smaller room that's 15 x 30 and a kitchen/larder that's 20 x 20. There's also a door that provides an exit back to the streets.

Currently, Tarius and one of the "kidnappers" are talking about the PCs, giving details about who and what they saw in the square for any PC who listens in to the conversation. Tarius



**Additional Reinforcements:** If you want to challenge the PCs more, Tarius is talking with a political advisor, a whispering prophet (*Bestiary*, page 216) named Draï who's working with the devils to achieve a change in local leadership.

#/Level of PCs	Tarius Rolle (T)	Human Malcontent (M)	Bearded Devil (B)
4 x 4 <sup>th</sup> level	1	4	0*
5 x 4 <sup>th</sup> level	1	2	1
6 x 4 <sup>th</sup> level	1	3	1
4 x 5 <sup>th</sup> level	1	2	2
5 x 5 <sup>th</sup> level	1	3	2
6 x 5 <sup>th</sup> level	1	3	3

\* The battle doesn't include a bearded devil.

## TACTICS

Tarius will hold off attacking the first round, unless the PCs surprise the group and seem to realize he wasn't kidnapped, but is in on the whole thing. Given the chance, he'll try to move behind the melee types to a leader, healer, or other spellcaster. He'll then proceed to try to hug them and thank them for their help, sobbing and blustering. It's his way to helping his allies without revealing himself. Anyone he's doing this to will take a -2 penalty to attacks and saves as long as he's engaged with them. Seeing his act for what it is requires a DC 20 Wisdom check.

The malcontents will yell out something appropriate like "Down with the Emperor!" and attack. The ones who aren't bearded devils believe that they've made a strong ally in Tarius who will help them destroy the empire (and raise themselves in the new regime). They will each attack a different PC.

When a malcontent drops, the ruse is up. For each bearded devil in the battle, when this happens, the now-dead malcontent's mouth will split into a too-big grin as its head literally peels apart from the mouth. Out of the flesh will emerge a large bearded devil. The normal human malcontents haven't been clued in, so they may freak out a bit.

Each bearded devil emerges at full strength and will focus on the PC that killed the fleshform it was wearing, if possible.

If at all possible, Tarius the honey devil will try to slip out the back door during the fight if things seem to be going against it. Per *13 True Ways*, honey devils have the following ability.

**Free-form covert ability—Slimy:** In any non-combat struggles with a honey devil, it excels at being too slippery for the PCs, both personally and through its underground network of minions. In an indirect contest, the PCs might try to talk sense to one of the devil's dupes or to discern suspicious activity while staking out the devil's secret network. The honey devil is an expert at what it does, so use DC 25 for any such skill checks. Assume that the



devil is competent at slipping its influence through the network unnoticed. Failure might mean that the PC has succeeded in gaining information, which in turn sends them down a dead end or into a trap. In a direct confrontation, the devil is likewise hard to pin down, see through, or otherwise get the better of.

## LOOT

The malcontents who aren't devils only carry a few coins on them. Most of the wealth is on Tarius. Besides a pouch of 60 gp in mixed coins, he wears a gold and emerald necklace worth 150 gp, two silver rings each worth 20 gp, and three gold ones worth 40 gp each. He also bears a +2 *Dagger of the Evangelist*: You gain a +4 bonus to Charisma checks whenever you're speaking to large crowds to try to sway them toward a course of action. Quirk: Licks lips and adjusts hair often.

## ICONS

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Emperor, Crusader, Diabolist, or Great Gold Wurm could use one or more of them to figure out exactly what Tarius is, and to force him to drop his illusions so everyone else sees him for the slimy devil he is as well.

A PC that has advantages with any icon could use them to overcome the honey devil's natural ability to slip out of trouble, helping them capture Tarius to fulfill their story endings.



## HUMAN MALCONTENT

"Down with the Emperor!"

4<sup>th</sup> level troop [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +7

**Shortsword +9 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—6 damage

*First natural even hit each turn:* The malcontent can make an elbow to the head attack as a free action.

[Special trigger] **Elbow to the head +7 vs. PD**—3 damage, and the target is weakened until the end of its next turn.

AC 19  
PD 17      HP 52  
MD 15

## TARIUS ROLLE, HONEY DEVIL

*Honey devils fight only when they have no other option. If heroes corner a honey devil and force it to fight, they're already halfway to winning.*

4<sup>th</sup> level troop [DEVIL]

Initiative: +6

**Hidden dagger +9 vs. AC**—6 damage

*The target has MD 15 or lower:* The honey devil can make a disengage check this turn as a free action.

*Desperate plea:* When the honey devil is staggered by an attack, it makes a *confusing plea* attack against the attacker as a free action after the attack.

**Confusing plea +9 vs. MD**—The target is confused (save ends).

*Glamour of innocence:* This creature seems innocent, not someone a hero should hurt. At worst, it's ugly, but is that a crime? When an enemy rolls a natural odd attack roll against a honey devil, the attack misses and has no effect.

*Resist fire 13+:* When a fire attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 13+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

*Dedicated instigator:* Once per battle as a free action, Tarius can roll a normal save. On a success, it decreases the escalation die by 1 as it confuses its enemies about whether it's an enemy or not.

*Weakling:* When building battles using this monster, it only counts as half a normal monster.

AC 18  
PD 17      HP 35  
MD 18

## BEARDED DEVIL (BARBAZU)

*These disgusting creatures are the most common guards in the Pit. They apparently also moonlight as political dissidents.*

Large 6<sup>th</sup> level blocker [DEVIL]

Initiative: +8

**Wicked halberd +11 vs. AC**—30 damage

*Natural 16+:* The bearded devil gains a +4 bonus to all defenses until the start of its next turn.

**Supernaturally filthy beard +11 vs. PD**—The target is weakened until the end of its next turn (−4 attacks and defenses)

*Bearded defense:* When an enemy engaged with the bearded devil misses it with an attack, the devil can make a *filthy beard* attack against that enemy as a free action.

*Devil's due (Solidity):* When you choose to add the escalation die to an attack against a bearded devil, the devil or one of its nearby allies can roll a save against a save ends effect.

*Opportunistic beard:* When the bearded devil makes an opportunity attack, it can also make a *filthy beard* attack against the same target as a free action.

*Skilled interceptor:* A bearded devil can intercept an enemy while engaged with other enemies. As a free action, it can either make a disengage check to try to move to intercept the enemy, or move to intercept the enemy and only take half damage from opportunity attacks.

*Resist fire 13+:* When a fire attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 13+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

### Nastier Specials

*Toxic beard:* The target of the bearded devil's *filthy beard* attack now takes 10 ongoing poison damage and is weakened (save ends both) instead.

AC 23  
PD 20      HP 200  
MD 20

### NEXT STEPS

After the malcontents and devils are defeated, the PCs' next actions depend on whether Tarius escaped or not, and if he was captured, whether he revealed himself as a devil or not. If he escaped, then there might be more adventures trying to root him out of his new hideout. Or the PCs could move on to their next adventure. This would be a good opportunity to introduce more devils and devilish politics into the empire. See *13 True Ways* for possible storylines involving devils and the icons.

If he was captured but the PCs don't realize he's a devil, it leaves open the possibility of retribution by him sometime in the near future once he wriggles out of Imperial grip.

The PCs should get a full heal-up after this battle. See story endings for what's next.



## IMPERIAL POLITICS STORY ENDINGS

Here are outcomes for each story opening, detailing what success or failure might mean.

If the PCs did face all four battles, remember to give them a full heal-up.

### THE DEPUTY'S "REQUEST"

**Success:** The PCs managed to capture Tarius and deliver him to Galina. If he's revealed as a devil, that might or might not be news to her. For doing the job as requested, a reward is probably in order, most likely a magic item, but maybe something else the PCs need, or just information that could be profitable for them.

**Failure:** Galina is unhappy with the PC's failure, and she takes it out on the whole group. Until they level up, any 6s rolled on icon dice for the Emperor are 5s instead. In addition, Tarius might now take an interest in them and throw some trouble their way.

### A SIMPLE FAVOR

**Success:** The PCs deliver Tarius to Galina quietly like she asked. News of his true origins, if discovered, doesn't seem to surprise her. She thanks the PCs, tells them she owes them a favor now, and invites them to go on their way. Each PC has a 6 icon advantage with the Emperor until they use it or level up.

**Failure:** Galina is vexed because word of her wanting to talk to Tarius gets out; she assumes the PCs were lazy or foolish. Life becomes difficult for the PCs in the town or city they're in; any positive relationships with the Emperor, Archmage, or Priestess become conflicted until two full heal-ups have passed.

### A FISTFUL OF IMPS

**Success:** The PCs turn in Tarius for the 250 gp reward. News of his origins might bring in some additional coin. They also get

approached about a reward for bringing in a highwaywoman who's been causing trouble on the Imperial roads...

**Failure:** No reward for the PCs, and the word goes out among the Emperor's people that the heroes are untrustworthy. Tarius decides to put a reward upon their heads, dead or dead, which one group of ruffians will try to collect upon.

### IT'S ALL POLITICS

**Success:** The PCs bring Tarius to Galina, and the two are able to hatch some plots to weaken the Empire. In thanks, Galina gives the PC a magic item or information they need.

**Failure:** Galina is revealed as a traitor to the Emperor, and the PCs' association with her is bad for them. Until they level up, any positive relationships with the Emperor become conflicted, and conflicted relationships become negative.

## BATTLE SCENE CONNECTIONS

The stories from this set of battle scenes can lead to other scenes:

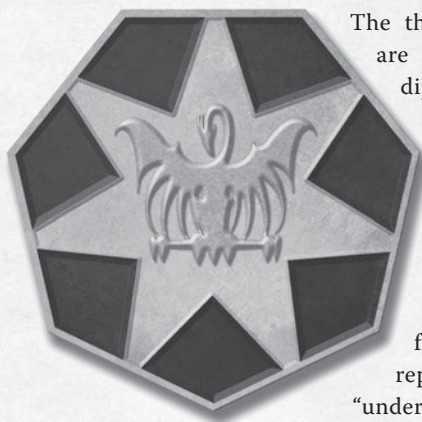
- *A Pit of Vipers* (The Three): The information Galina gives the PCs leads them toward the Vipers' lair, or they go after a highwaywoman and encounter kobold bandits. Or if they failed, the only opportunities coming their way are unsavory jobs from untrustworthy people.
- *Arena Games* (Emperor): The PCs' success or failure gains them notice among the city's elite, and they are enlisted, bribed, or blackmailed into becoming arena champions.
- *Conquer & Defend* (Orc Lord): The PCs' actions get them an assignment to help out a border captain at Tenrock Hold who's been reporting increased barbarian activity. Or Galina provides information that something they seek is at Tenrock Hold.





# EMPEROR: ARENA GAMES

LEVEL RANGE: 5-6



The themes of this set of battles are iconic politics, Imperial diplomacy, and taking advantage of terrain. This set of battle scenes works best while the PCs are in an urban environment like a major city, especially Axis.

Through one means or another, the PCs are fighting for their lives as representatives of an icon in an “underground” gladiatorial arena.

They will face enemies supported by other icons during their battles, with the icon who wins (meaning their champions survive) receiving a boon or prize of which only the icons are aware. The PCs have been enlisted to support the Emperor in this regard.

There are three total battles against monster and humanoid champions of the other icons. The first two involve single-icon enemies, while the last double-strength battle is a free-for-all involving multiple champions.

## ARENA GAMES STORY OPENINGS

- **A Favor Called:** The PCs have called in a number of favors from the Empire during their career to help them out of a jam, and now it's time for payback. One of the Emperor's sycophants needs their help, in the Emperor's name. There's a set of “underground” gladiatorial games among certain icons about to start, and the Emperor's champions (the PCs) need to win those games to claim a prize that will strengthen the Empire.
- **Crimes against the Empire:** One or more PCs with negative or conflicted relationships with the Emperor who are currently wanted for crimes against the Empire are contacted about an opportunity to exonerate themselves. If they (and their friends) are willing to fight in a set of gladiatorial games, they will be pardoned of all crimes should they win the contest, with a writ guaranteed by the Emperor himself. If they lose, then they'll be dead, and justice will be served anyway.
- **False Champions:** The contact of one of the PCs with a negative or conflicted relationship with the Emperor hears about a gladiatorial contest where the Emperor needs to be

represented. This contact has delayed the summons to the Imperial authorities and arranged for the PCs to stand in as the Emperor's champions. If they win out, the contact, as Imperial representative, will gain a valuable prize that can be used against the Emperor, either directly or by forcing the Imperials to purchase it back at a hefty price.

- **Imperial Champions:** The PCs are known far and wide throughout the empire as the Emperor's champions. So when word reaches his people that a gladiatorial contest is about to start for a prize that the Emperor must claim, they are the first ones summoned. If they choose to represent the Emperor in this endeavor, one that is vital to the safety of the Empire, they will be performing their Imperial duty, reinforcing their status as Imperial champions, and, of course, be rewarded accordingly, as usual.

## ALTERNATE ICONS



**Dwarf King:** The action happens in the underworld and involves a few monsters from that realm. Of course, the prize is some famous magic item the Dwarf King highly desires.



**Orc Lord:** Here's a chance to show that the Orc Lord is a true conqueror and that those who stand against him will fall. The PCs are secretly snuck in to fight in the games. Once announced, they have every right to fight for glory and the prize. In this case, the enemies in Battle 2 support the Crusader.



**Prince of Shadows:** It might be that the PCs know who they're really fighting for, or maybe they think it's the Emperor. But, as usual, the Prince will walk away with the prize if they succeed. And they'd better succeed.

## ICONS IN PLAY

Characters that have relationships (and story-guide advantages) with the Emperor, Lich King, Orc Lord, and maybe the Dwarf King should be able to shine in these battle scenes. Moreso than PCs with other icon relationships, feel free to give such PCs extra knowledge about the opposition, make checks to pull off fun actions the players might suggest, and use their advantages to particularly good effect, such as negating or bypassing some of the advantages or abilities of the enemies.



## ARENA GAMES OVERVIEW

The fights take place in an official gladiatorial arena during the early morning hours, an invite-only crowd. Others will be turned away by guards stationed around the arena. There are a handful of battles before and after the PCs match during which they can watch and talk to various representatives of the icons in attendance for the games. Unless, of course, the PCs get snuck in to fight at the last minute.

Once their turn comes up, Battle 1 pits them against a representative of the High Druid, a werebear druid named Ols Maksun, and his cave bear allies. Their appearance at the games signifies the importance of the prize, since even the High Druid is willing to send a champion.

Battle 2 has the PCs facing off against the Orc Lord's champions, an ettin and a troop of hobgoblins.

Battle 3 is a double-strength fight involving the champions of three other icons. The first two are planned for: dark elf warriors of the Elf Queen and a draconic knight representing the Blue (the Three). The champions of the third icon are not in the plans—a necromancer and his undead servants—but the rules of this particular set of games allows their inclusion as representatives of the Lich King.

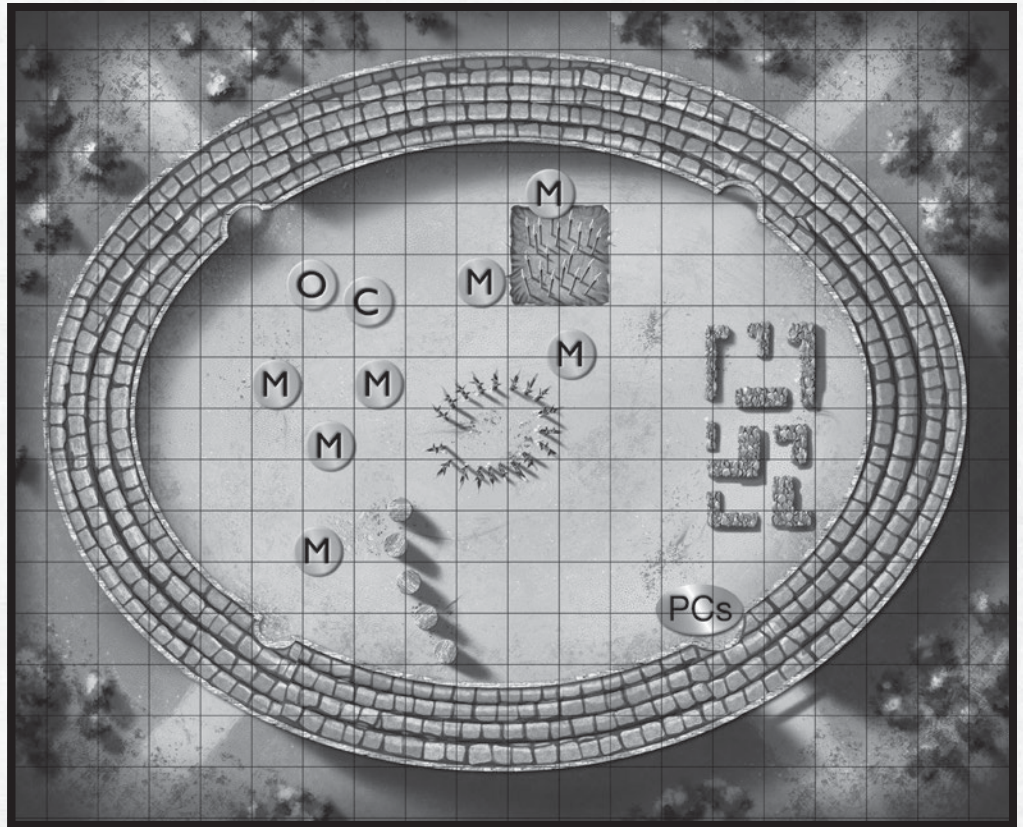
GM, feel free to expand upon these battles by including battles with other champions representing additional icons, or with non-combat interactions with various representatives of interested icons (and parties) who have a stake in the result.

The battles outlined here can take place over minutes, hours, or days depending on how much intrigue goes on between battle scenes. The location is all in a single arena, but because of the prize and those present, the setting is a place full of blood and intrigue.

See story endings after the final battle for options on what happens after the PCs finish the last battle.

## BATTLE I: THE BEARS OF BRILLWOOD

*You move out of a gated pen into the main arena to the sight of perhaps a hundred attendees in the stands, all connected in one way or another to the icons. There are a few cheers and a few boos for the "Emperor's champions," though more boos. The arena*



*contains a large pit, a section of sand protected by wood spikes, some rising pillars, and a section of low walls on one side. Coming out of the opposite gate is a large, hairy, bearded man followed by a large, fierce-looking bear. He smiles at you confidently as the games judge yells out, "Begin." You're not exactly sure why just one guy and a bear think they can take you on, but you're about to find out.*

### LOCATION DESCRIPTION

The arena is large and usually hosts official games for the local populace, though currently it's being reserved for special guests. The games area is an oval roughly 140 feet long and 100 wide, with 12-foot walls around the interior ring. The ground is coated in a few inches of sand that will absorb spilled blood.

In addition to the four 10-foot wide tunnel-gates that allow entrance into the arena, there are some terrain features that the combatants can use to their benefit (or should avoid). The terrain features include a pit of spikes, a set of upward rising stone pillars, a central defensive "box" formed from wood spikes, and small maze of short (4-foot) walls.

The man is the druid Ols Maksun with his cave bear and dust devil allies.

### TERRAIN & TRAPS

**Spiked Pit:** The 10 x 10 pit is 12 feet deep with rough dirt sides. At the bottom are a handful of sharpened iron spikes buried into the ground. Anyone who falls into the pit will be attacked by 1d3 spikes.

**Iron spike +10 vs. AC—4d6 damage.**

Climbing out of the pit requires a successful DC 15 Strength check; failure means the creature escapes, but not before slipping once and being attacked by a single spike.



**Upward-rising Stone Pillars:** This grouping of five 3-foot diameter round stone pillars are each set 5 feet apart in a half circle. The first is 4 feet high and each rises 3 feet higher than the next (so the last one is 19 feet off the ground). Moving up from one to the next takes move action and a DC 20 Strength or Dexterity check. Failure indicates a fall that dazes the creature (save ends). For every 5 points higher the roll is, the PC can make it to another pillar.

Climbing the sides of any of the smooth marble pillars requires a DC 25 Strength check, with the same daze effect on a failure.

**Defensive Box:** Thick, sharp wooden spikes form a 10 x 10 foot "box" with an opening on both sides near the center of the arena. When a creature outside the box makes a melee attack against a creature inside the box, that attacker must choose one: they take a -2 attack penalty; or they take 2d6 damage from the spikes as they ignore them. The spikes snap and shatter and become less effective over the course of a battle; roll a d6 at the start of the battle. When the escalation die reaches the rolled result, the spikes are no longer effective (a low roll means they were damaged in a previous battle).

**Small Maze:** This 20 x 40 section of the arena is filled with a maze of short walls (so the crowd can see). The walls are only 4 feet in height and easy to leap or climb over, but they may offer a cover bonus of +2 to AC and PD if it makes sense (GM's call). The walls also provide places for creatures to hide or get out of line of sight.

## MONSTERS

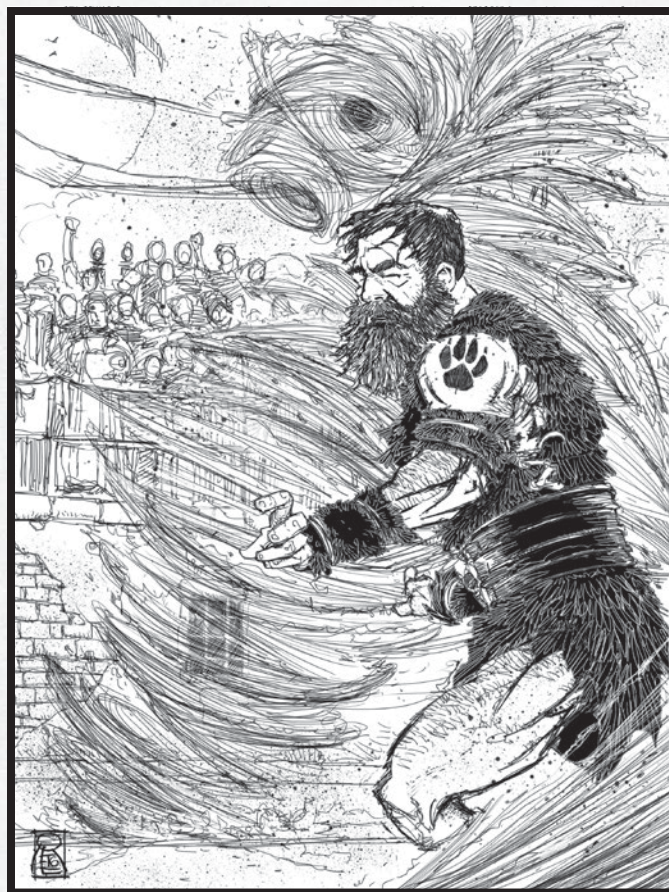
The werebear druid Ols Maksun has come to these games to represent the High Druid's interests. If he could take the prize, it would be a mighty blow for the Druid against the Empire, allowing her to ward off Imperial expansion in Maksun's home of Brillwood (or another region where the Wild is losing ground). For this reason, it was worth it to Maksun to make the attempt.

He and his cave bear allies are straightforward fighters who will look to put their opponents down quickly. But he does have one piece of cunning magic to help him win the prize: the ability to summon dust devil elementals from the arena sands to disrupt and push around enemies.

**Additional Reinforcements:** If you want to challenge the PCs more, make the dust devils double strength.

#/Level of PCs	Ols Maksun, Werebear (O)	Cave Bear (C)	Dust Devil Mook (M)
4 x 5 <sup>th</sup> level	1	1	3 (1 mob)
5 x 5 <sup>th</sup> level	1	1	9 (1 mob)
6 x 5 <sup>th</sup> level	1*	1	13 (2 mobs)
4 x 6 <sup>th</sup> level	1	1	12 (2 mobs)
5 x 6 <sup>th</sup> level	1	2	7 (1 mob)
6 x 6 <sup>th</sup> level	1*	3	3 (1 mob)

\* Ols summons the dust devils as a quick action instead of a standard action.



## TACTICS

Ols will summon in his dust devil allies on the first round (normally a standard action), then shift and double-team with one of the bears to put the hurt on an enemy. He understands the value of healers, so he may disengage to harry a PC who's got healing capabilities. Since he's not accomplishing much on the first round, go ahead and give him *resist damage 16+* just that first round; as some sort of interaction between summoning dust devils and shifting form, he's hard to hurt for a short time.

Each cave bear will choose a different target to try to drop quickly.

The dust devils are only semi-intelligent, but they will enjoy trying to hurl enemies around the arena, especially into the pit if possible.

If Ols is obviously losing badly, he may be willing to submit if the PCs seem likely to accept his surrender (it's their call). He may also be willing to deal a non-lethal finishing blow (instead of a killing blow) to a druid among the characters, depending on how things play out.

## LOOT

Each group's sponsor put forth a stake on their champion as part of the games, in addition to gaining the chance to take the prize. If the PCs defeat the High Druid's champions, they receive three 100 gp chunks of amber.

## Icons

A PC with a relationship advantage with the Emperor, Prince, High Druid, Elf Queen, or maybe the Three could use an advantage to



learn who their opponent will be and that opponent's capabilities ahead of time, giving the group a chance to discuss strategy before the battle starts.

Any PC with an icon advantage could use it have a trick up their sleeve in the form of a planted weapon or trap within the arena that will give them some sort of advantage (+2 to AC or to attacks) that battle. They could probably also use an advantage to influence side bets going on among the crowd to increase the PCs' reward for winning by 100 gp.

## OLS MAKSUM, WEREBEAR DRUID

*Cast a summoning spell, shift into bear form, rip enemies apart. So simple.*

Large 5<sup>th</sup> level caster [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +10

**Massive claws +10 vs. AC (2 attacks)—12 damage**

*First natural 16+ each round:* If Ols is still engaged with the target at the start of Ols' next turn, Ols can make a single *quick chomp* attack against the target as a free action.

[Special trigger] **Quick chomp +12 vs. AC—70 damage**

*Miss:* 20 damage.

*Bestial fury (hybrid form only):* Werebears gain a bonus to damage equal to the escalation die (champion: double the die; epic: quadruple the die).

*Summon dust devils:* Once per battle as a standard action, Ols can summon a number of dust devil mooks instead of a single air elemental (see **Monsters** for how many he summons).

*Unnatural vigor (hybrid or animal form only):* When the werebear is not staggered at the start of its turn, it heals 20 hp.

AC	19	
PD	17	HP 140
MD	21	

## CAVE BEAR

*This massive bear towers over others of its kind, and one swipe of its claws can slice through metal and bone.*

Large 7<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [BEAST]

Initiative: +8

**Claws and bite +12 vs. AC (2 attacks)—30 damage**

*Natural 16+:* The target is also dazed until the end of its next turn.

*Miss:* 7 damage.

*Madder and madder:* When the cave bear is staggered, the crit range of its attacks expands by an amount equal to the escalation die.

AC	22	
PD	22	HP 225
MD	15	

## DUST DEVIL

*The wind picks up and the sands begin to stir, forming into a small whirlwind of grit.*

6<sup>th</sup> level mook [ELEMENTAL]

Initiative: +12

**Spinning grit +10 vs. AC—11 damage**

**C: Whipping winds +10 vs. PD—8 damage**, and the target pops free from the dust devil if it's normal size or smaller as it is flung 1d3 x 10 feet away. The dust devil can control the direction of the fling, and if a target would land in harmful terrain, it can make an easy save (6+) to land safely instead.

*Made of wind and sand:* When an enemy hits the dust devil with a natural odd attack roll, that attack only deals half damage.

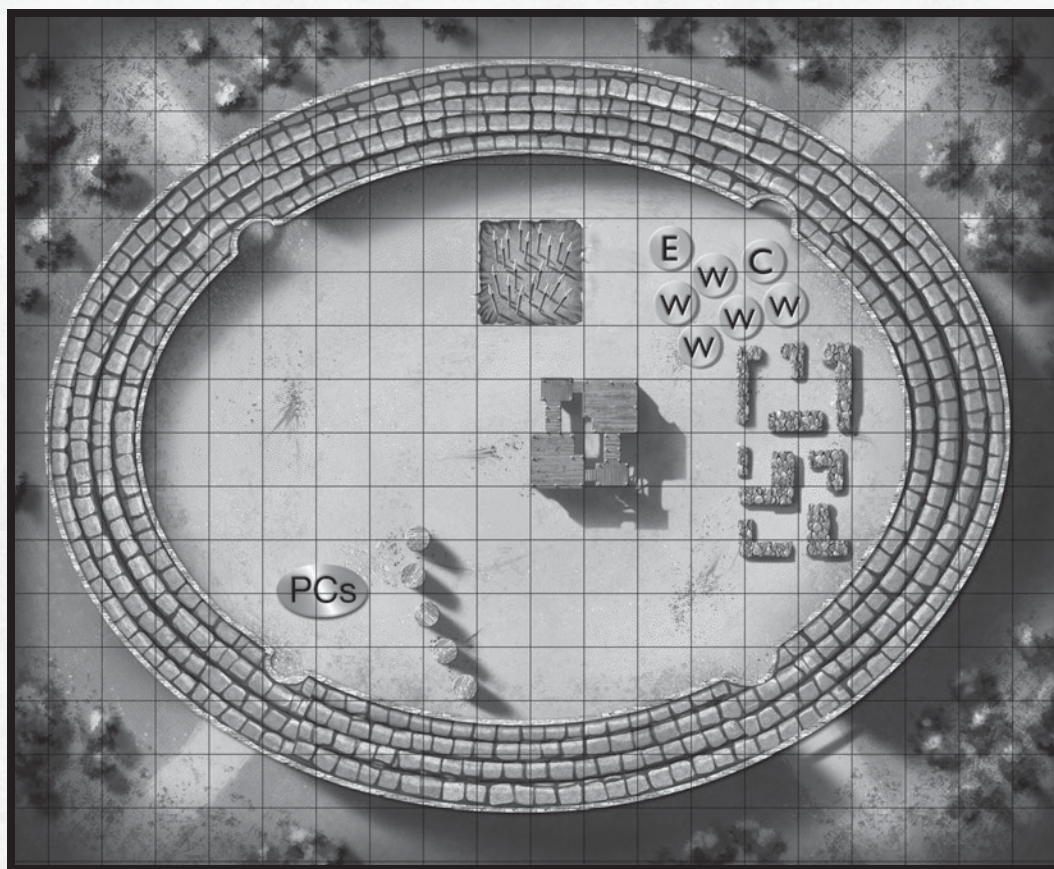
AC	22	
PD	20	HP 19 (mook)
MD	14	

*Mook:* Kill one dust devil mook for every 19 damage you deal to the mob.

### NEXT STEPS

Once the battle ends, the games judge will throw them their winnings for that round and tell them to go below and wait until their next battle in the semi-finals. If they choose, they could mingle with various representatives among the crowd during this time since they have some time. If they do, describe some tough battles involving other iconic champions than the ones they will face. Once you're ready, go to **Battle 2: The Two-headed Champion**.





fight for the prize, so they were allowed to compete.

The hobgoblins are some of the more disciplined of the Orc Lord's troops, and will work together with unit tactics to win this round. They are only one move away from the tower, while the PCs start far away from it.

### TERRAIN & TRAPS

**Wooden Tower:** The 15 x 15 square tower is 20 feet high, with a 10 x 10 platform at the top, and another halfway up at 10 feet. A 3-foot wide ramp leads up around all four sides to each level. Climbing the wooden beams up the side of the structure requires a DC 15 Strength or Dexterity check. Anyone falling off the top takes 2d6 damage (no damage from the middle platform).

Ranged attackers on the top platform gain a +1 attack bonus when firing upon enemies on the ground level.

## BATTLE 2: THE TWO-HEADED CHAMPION

*You move out of the gated pen into the main arena to the familiar site of the crowd. There are more cheers for the "Emperor's champions" this time. The arena looks the same except that the defensive "box" of wood spikes is gone. In its place is a small wooden tower with two platforms and a wooden ramp going up the outside to each level. Again, your enemies have already taken the field—a group of hobgoblin warriors bearing the Orc Lord's insignia, and behind them a massive two-headed giant wielding a massive maul in each hand.*

*There's something strange about the hobgoblins... they're calm. The Orc Lord's hordes are always screaming and carrying on. These hobgoblins hold formation and size you up like you're a job they've handled before.*

### LOCATION DESCRIPTION

The arena is set up as it was for the first battle, except for the wooden tower, which is closer to the Orc Lord's champions. See Battle 1 for the terrain effects of the pit, maze, and rising pillars.

The giant is an ettin named Locar and Rincar, a battle captain of the Orc Lord. Through political maneuvering that would seem beyond the Orc Lord's people, as well as the use of force, this group of champions managed to make their way to the arena. The rules of the games say any champions that enter the arena can

### MONSTERS

Locar/Rincar will argue about which enemy to attack until it's their turn in initiative order, noting which opponent looks most dangerous. As they attack, one or the other head will yell out battle cries along the lines of "For the Orc Lord" or "Death to runts!"

The hobgoblin champion and the elite warriors with him will stay grouped and attempt to use the terrain to their advantage, keeping the PCs occupied while the ettin bashes its way through them.

**Additional Reinforcements:** If you want to challenge the PCs more, add one or two hobgoblin warmages (core rulebook, page 230) to the battle.

#/Level of PCs	Locar/Rincar, Ettin (E)	Hobgoblin Champion (C)	Hobgoblin Elite Warrior (W)
4 x 5 <sup>th</sup> level	1*	1	3
5 x 5 <sup>th</sup> level	1*	1	5
6 x 5 <sup>th</sup> level	1	2	6
4 x 6 <sup>th</sup> level	1	2	5
5 x 6 <sup>th</sup> level	1*	2	7
6 x 6 <sup>th</sup> level	1**	3	8

\* The ettin uses its *big bully* nastier special.

\*\* The ettin uses both its nastier specials.



## TACTICS

The ettin will seek out the strongest looking melee enemy, unless an opponent has already engaged it or damaged it with ranged attacks. It may delay to let the hobgoblins go ahead of it if it rolls a high initiative, since the hobgoblins can suck up a few hits.

The hobgoblins use a move to reach the tower, with half the elite warriors remaining at the base to fend off attacks. The champion will move to the first platform where he can strike down at the heads of those engaged with his troops at the base. The other half of the warriors will move to the top of the tower to use ranged attacks.

This group seeks glory and knows they won't likely get away from the arena even if they win, so they fight to the death.

## LOOT

Each hobgoblin carries 1d6 x 5 gp in personal wealth.

The prize for winning the round is ruby-encrusted golden chalice worth 400 gp (and obviously looted from a temple somewhere).

## Icons

A PC that has relationship points with the Emperor, Orc Lord, Elf Queen, or Dwarf King could use an advantage to find a weak point in the hastily constructed tower, allowing them to bring the whole thing toppling down (3d8 damage to each enemy on it).

Any PC with an advantage could use it to confuse the ettin and get the heads arguing, so that it won't make a *second swing* attack for 1d3 rounds (and those without an advantage might be able to do it with a successful DC 25 Charisma check).

## ETTIN

*Ettins are smarter than most giants, but the two heads always disagree. Hampering each other in everything they set out to do, the two dueling personalities ensure that no ettin ever comes out "ahead."*

Large 5<sup>th</sup> level troop [GIANT]

Initiative: +9

**First big swing +10 vs. AC**—25 damage, and the target pops free from the ettin; then as a free action, the ettin can move (or choose not to move) and make a *second swing* attack.

[Special trigger] **Second swing +10 vs. AC (different target from first big swing)**—15 damage

*Two-headed save:* If an ettin's first save against an effect fails, it can roll a second save.

### Nastier Specials

*Big bully:* The ettin deals double damage with its attacks against staggered enemies.

*Escalating agreement:* If the escalation die is 3+, the ettin can target two engaged enemies with its *first big swing* attack.

AC	21	
PD	18	HP 160
MD	14	

## HOBGOBLIN CHAMPION

*"Tighten ranks and let 'em have it!"*

6<sup>th</sup> level leader [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +8

**Twin axes +11 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—10 damage

*Natural roll is above target's Strength:* The champion forces the target to the ground. The target takes a -2 penalty to its attacks until the end of its next turn.

*Twin axes:* If the champion throws one of its axes, it only gets a single *twin axes* attack, but for 20 damage.

**R: Hurling axe +10 vs. AC**—20 damage

*Limited use:* 1/battle, but it could pick up another unused weapon as a move action and use this attack again.

*Command from the front:* Each time the champion hits with an attack, one of its nearby allies gains 5 temporary hit points.

*Group ability:* For every two hobgoblins in the battle (round up, ignore mooks), one of them can use *well-armored* as a free action once during the battle.

*Well-armored (group):* Ignore all damage from a hit (but not a crit) against AC.

AC	22	
PD	19	HP 90
MD	16	

## HOBGOBLIN ELITE WARRIOR

[stoic silence]

5<sup>th</sup> level troop [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +7

**Mace +10 vs. AC**—14 damage

*Natural even hit:* The target takes 3 extra damage from a shield bash.

*Natural odd hit:* The hobgoblin goes into a defensive crouch and gains a +1 bonus to AC until the start of its next turn.

**R: Shortbow +10 vs. AC**—16 damage

*Group ability:* For every two hobgoblins in the battle (round up, ignore mooks), one of them can use *well-armored* as a free action once during the battle.

*Well-armored (group):* Ignore all damage from a hit (but not a crit) against AC.

AC	22	
PD	17	HP 65
MD	13	





## PLAYING LOCAR AND RIPCAR

While vicious, the ettin provides a good opportunity for some humor during the battle. One head could have a bad accent, be dull and slow, make sharp retorts, echo whatever the first head says, argue every decision, or act in some otherwise funny manner. One time-honored option is to draw upon Monty Python characters.

Another option is to have a none-too-smart head reveal some secret plans that the Orc Lord has put in motion in the region, with the smarter head telling it to shut up, but also revealing information on that topic in the process. It could lead to the next adventure for the PCs.

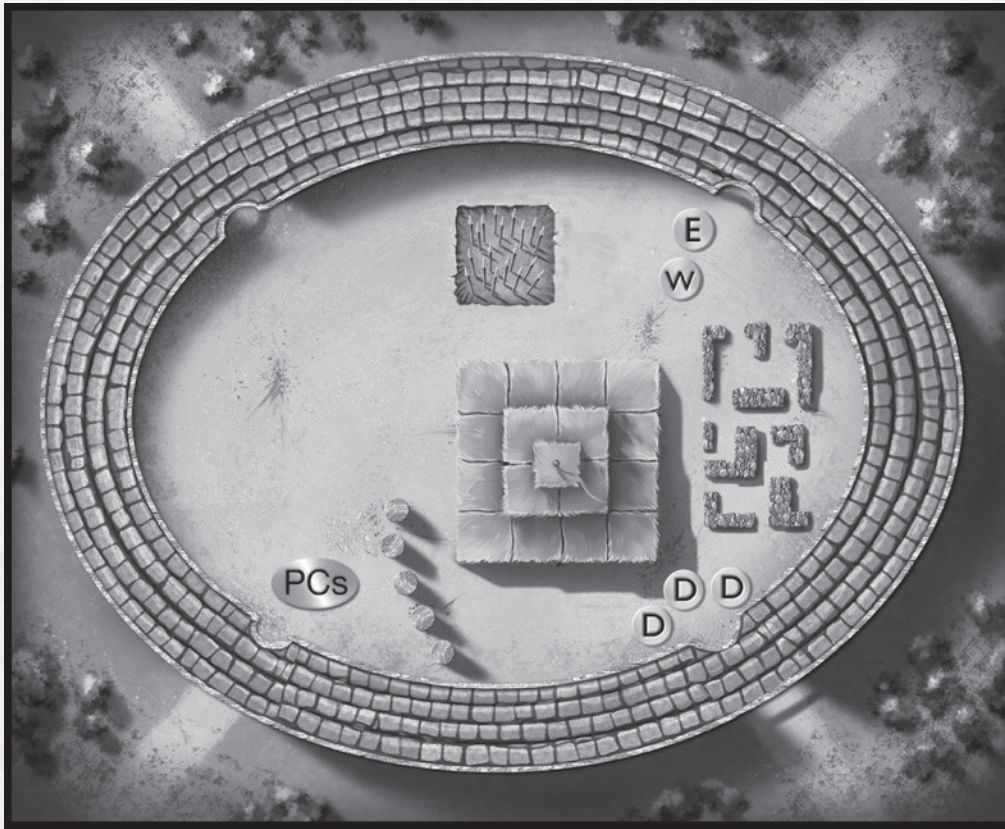
### NEXT STEPS

As before, once the PCs win this round, they gain the reward put up by the Orc Lord's representative and have more time to mingle with the crowd.

Once they're ready, they move on to the finals, where an unexpected entrant and a double-strength battle await. See **Battle 3: All for One and All Against Us.**







gate like death walking. The games judge will challenge his appearance, but the man, a necromancer, will cackle out that he calls the Lich King master and he has arrived before the final battle has finished, so he claims the icon's right to join. After a few brief words with the iconic patrons in attendance among the stands, the judge will allow it. And so Elastor Var and his undead minions will join the battle. **When this happens, it changes the mood of the crowd and the battle and the escalation die decreases by 1.**

The base of the pyramid is nearby each group, but the top usually requires two moves to reach, climbing up soft and treacherous hay from the base. Obviously a flyer has a huge advantage (and see **Terrain & Traps**). It's tough to say whether the creators of the challenge intended the hay pyramid to add a potentially comedic element to the fight, but depending

on how things play out, that might be what they got.

This is slightly below a double-strength battle due to the delay in the Lich King's champion's appearance.

## BATTLE 3: ALL FOR ONE AND ALL AGAINST US

*As you have twice before, you enter the arena—this time for the final battle. As you enter, you see a group of elves emerge from another gate: the Elf Queen's champions. But then there's a creaking groan and a third gate raises. A huge blue-scaled dragonic warrior in heavy plate with a giant two-handed sword steps forth also.*

*The tower in the center of the arena is gone, but now a small pyramid of hay bales stands in its place. At the top is a small green banner.*

*The games judge declares, "Last champions standing, or whoever can hold the banner for the length of this timeglass wins" as he lifts a large hourglass on the edge of the arena wall before shouting "Begin!"*

### LOCATION DESCRIPTION

The arena has the same features as previously, except now instead of the wooden tower there's a 15-foot high, three-tiered pyramid of hay bales in the center of the arena.

The battle involves two known groups, the dark elf champions of the Elf Queen, and the dragonic warrior Kelm representing the Blue (the Three). But there's also a third entrant representing the Lich King who will make a late appearance.

**Lich King:** Once the escalation die reaches 2 (or the start of the 3<sup>rd</sup> round, if you prefer), the fourth gate will raise and a pale old human man in a faded black robe will shuffle out of the

### TERRAIN & TRAPS

**Hay Pyramid:** There are three levels to the pyramid each 5 feet high. The outer base is 20 x 20, the second level 10 x 10, and the top level 5 x 5. At the top is a short green pennant attached to a pole planted in the hay.

Climbing the pyramid to the top as a single move action requires a DC 25 Dexterity or Strength skill check, however. There are sodden weak spots within the bales that will cause limbs to sink into the hay, slowing progress. Failure means the creature loses the rest of its movement that turn as it has to extricate itself. (If you feel like letting the NPCs try to scale the hay pyramid in a single turn, it requires at least a hard save.)

The bales are tightly bound rectangular blocks of dried hay. Fire spells and effects will set them on fire easily. Anyone on the pyramid while it's burning takes 3d8 fire damage at the end of their turn. If the pennant burns, then the only way to win the battle is to be the final champions standing at the end.

**Pennant:** As soon as someone takes the pennant, the games judge will turn the hourglass. At that point, it must be held for 4 rounds by a team for those champions to win the prize. If the holder falls unconscious at any point, or loses control of the pennant, the hourglass is reset. A creature can use a standard action to try to wrest the pennant from another, or to hold onto it when someone else tries to take it. Doing so requires a DC 25 Strength check against Kelm, DC 20 against the drow, or DC 15 against Elastor. The wraiths can't hold it.



## MONSTERS

The dark elves are all female sword adepts; they begin to the PCs right. The dragonic warrior, Kelm, is a massive specimen of his race. He begins the battle opposite the PCs on the left. The necromancer Elastor Var will enter battle from the last gate on the third round (or Escalation 2) along with wraiths under his control that will rise up out of the ground to flank him.

**Additional Reinforcements:** If you want to challenge the PCs more, change one or more of the wraiths to specters (13 *True Ways*, page 201).

#/Level of PCs	Drow Sword Adept (D)	Kelm, Dragonic Champion (K)	Elastor Var (E)	Wraith (W)
4 x 5 <sup>th</sup> level	2	1	1	1
5 x 5 <sup>th</sup> level	3	1	1	2
6 x 5 <sup>th</sup> level	4	1	1	3**

## LOOT

The true prize goes to the PCs' patron, of course, probably a bureaucratic representative of the Emperor. But the PCs do gain a very nice silver and onyx spider necklace from the dark elves worth 700 gp, and a magic item offered up by Kelm (choose one that fits the PCs or as a default use a *duplicitous* weapon from the *Book of Loot*, page 58: When you hit an enemy with this weapon, you may instead choose to deal the damage to another enemy you're engaged with. Quirk: Lies about trivial matters. Feel free to add the weapon's effect to the fight when you wish.) Elastor's prize are three champion-tier *potions of healing*.

## Icons

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Elf Queen, Lich King, or the Three could use one or more of them to convince an enemy champion to attack the champion of one of the other icons for a round, or possibly longer with multiple advantages.

A PC with an advantage with any icon could convince the patrons and games judge to penalize the Lich King's champion for late arrival by either making him wait an extra round, or removing one of the wraiths from the battle.

A PC with an advantage with the Emperor could come up with a one-time "champion's advantage" bestowed upon them for this battle by the Emperor's representative similar to the abilities of the enemy champions. For example, that PC gets an attack reroll, can turn a hit into a miss, or a similar one-time benefit.

4 x 6 <sup>th</sup> level	3	1	1	3**
5 x 6 <sup>th</sup> level	3	2*	1	3
6 x 6 <sup>th</sup> level	4	2*	1	4**

\* There's a second dragonic champion named Balisanze.

\*\* The wraith uses its nastier special.

## TACTICS

The drow sword adepts will go for the pennant, and if they reach it first, will flee the pyramid into other parts of the arena while the squad intercepts anyone trying to reach the warrior carrying the pennant.

Kelm will try to win the prize by killing everyone else, starting with the PCs. If down to the last round or two of an enemy holding the pennant, he may try to wrest it away from someone.

Remember that Elastor and the wraiths don't enter the battle until later, and that the escalation die decreases by 1 when they do. Elastor will instruct at least one of his wraiths to attack a PC who claims the pennant. Meanwhile, he'll stay back to use ranged spells, keeping one wraith as an interceptor and sending the others to target weak-looking PCs.

While the PCs might think that the other champions would not only attack them, but also the others, there's one fact that they're not aware of. All the other champions hate the empire more than they hate anyone else. Add to that the fact that there are plenty of heroes, and the other icons' champions will focus solely on the PCs first, then try to win out over each other once the heroes are dead.

## DROW SWORD ADEPT

*Grace and movement and then you die.*

*Double-strength 6<sup>th</sup> level troop* [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +13

**Wicked longsword +13 vs. AC (2 attacks)—15 damage**

*Natural even hit:* The sword adept can pop free of the target after attacking and move as a free action.

**R: Poisoned throwing knife +11 vs. AC—30 damage, and 10 ongoing poison damage**

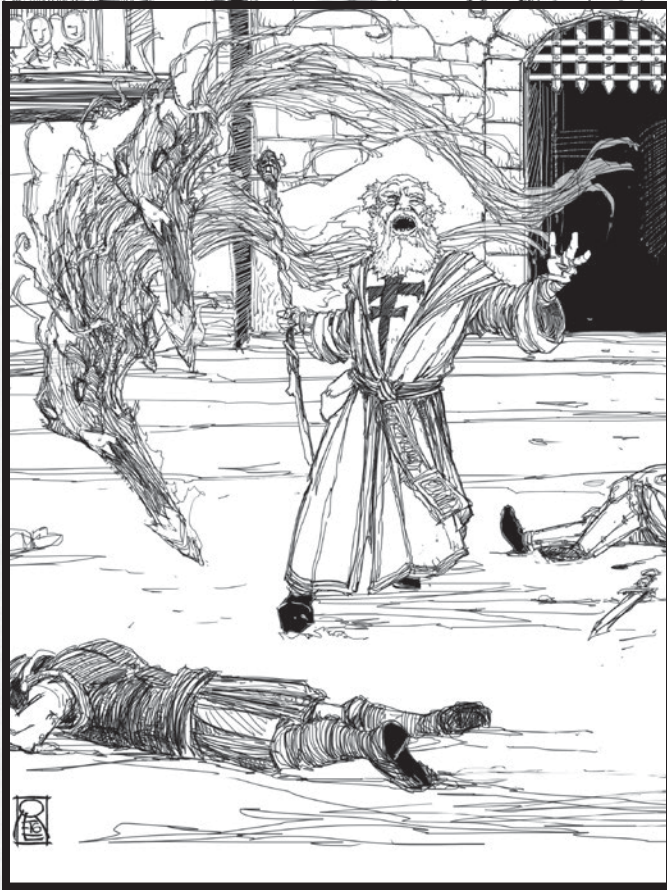
*Cruel:* Twice per battle when the sword adept hits one target with two wicked longsword attacks, that target also takes 10 ongoing damage (hard save ends, 16+) from bleeding wounds.

*Elf Queen's Champion:* When the escalation die is even, as a standard and move action the sword adept can make a *wicked longsword* attack (both attacks), pop free from all enemies and move, and then make another *wicked longsword* attack (both attacks).

AC 21  
PD 21  
MD 18

HP 160





## ELASTOR VAR, NECROMANCER

*The weird spirits hovering around the necromancer's shoulders aren't guardian spirits. They're all teeth and hunger, and when he sends them out to feed others take their place.*

7<sup>th</sup> level caster [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +10

Staff +11 vs. AC—20 damage

**R: Gnawing spirits +12 vs. PD (1d2 nearby enemies)**—5 negative energy damage and 10 ongoing negative energy damage (hard save ends, 16+)

*One step closer to death:* The first time the target fails the save, the ongoing negative energy damage increases by 5. The second and each subsequent time the target fails the save, the ongoing damage increases by 5 and the target must roll a death save. On the fourth failed death save, the target's spirit is torn from its body and absorbed by Elastor. The effect ends if Elastor drops.

*Limited use:* Elastor can only use this ability when the escalation die is odd.

**R: Ray of fatigue +12 vs. PD (one nearby or far away enemy)**—30 negative energy damage, the target loses all temporary hit points, and each time the target would heal using a recovery, it must successfully roll a save to do so (save ends).

*Champion of the Lich King:* When Elastor would drop to 0 hp, he can roll a save. On a success, he continues to fight on. Each time he takes damage from any source thereafter, he must succeed on a save to continue fighting. He drops permanently when he attempts to roll his fourth such save.

*I am a dread necromancer:* Once per battle as a quick action while Elastor is staggered, he can summon another wraith to the battle. He regains this ability each time he absorbs an enemy's spirit from *one step closer to death*.

AC 22  
PD 15  
MD 22

HP 90

## KELM, DRAGONIC CHAMPION

*The dragonic warrior is nearly as big as an ogre, and his massive blade knows how to deal death well.*

Double-strength 8<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +8

**Ferocious greatsword +12 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—35 damage

*First natural 5, 10, 15, or 20 this turn:* Kelm can make a lightning breath attack as a quick action this turn.

**C: Lightning breath +12 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies)**—9 lightning damage

*Champion of the Blue:* Once per battle as a free action when Kelm takes a critical hit, he can change it to a normal hit instead.

AC 24  
PD 23  
MD 15

HP 285



## WRAITH

For this mission, Elastor recruited spirits who'd fought in the arena in life. Who says the Lich King's servants can't be sentimental?

5<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +10

Vulnerability: holy

**Ice-cold ghost blade +10 vs. PD**—14 negative energy damage

*Natural 16+:* The target is also weakened (save ends).

**C: Spiraling assault +10 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies)**—10 negative energy damage, and after the attack the wraith teleports to and engages with one target it hit

*Limited use:* The wraith can use *spiraling assault* only when the escalation die is even.

*Flight:* The wraith hovers and zooms about.

*Ghostly:* This creature has *resist damage 16+* to all damage (yes, even holy damage) except force damage, which damages it normally.

A wraith can move through solid objects, but it can't end its movement inside them.

### Nastier Specials

*Drain life:* The wraith heals half the damage it deals when it hits with a *natural 18+* attack roll.

AC	19	
PD	14	HP 66
MD	17	

### Additional Reinforcements

## SPECTER

Double-strength 6<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +9

**Icy, life-draining touch +10 vs. PD**—30 negative energy damage

*Natural even hit or miss:* Each enemy engaged with the specter (including the target) takes 4 negative energy damage.

**R: Deathly stare +10 vs. MD**—20 negative energy damage

*Punishing aura:* When an enemy attacks the specter and misses, it takes 8 negative energy damage.

*Wrack and ruin:* While a specter is in the battle, the PCs don't add the escalation die to attack rolls, but it does. In the presence of a specter, mortals feel as though they are about to die, and they're generally right.

AC	19	
PD	15	HP 160
MD	19	

### NEXT STEPS

Once the battle ends, assuming the PCs won out, they collect their reward from the games judge and then those in the stands seem to lose interest in them as they move on to discussing what the winning icon will do with the prize. They are informed they can leave and return to their normal pursuits at that point. Of course a loss might incur other obligations, assuming the PCs are alive enough to regret it.

See story endings for what else might happen.





## AREPA GAMES STORY ENDINGS

Here are outcomes for each story opening, detailing what success or failure might mean.

If the PCs did face all four battles, remember to give them a full heal-up.

### A FAVOR CALLED

**Success:** You win the prize for the Emperor, putting him in a favorable position and fulfilling all those favors you've racked up. Time to ask for a few more. Also, the win might be worth a magic item for one of the PCs with a positive relationship, or that PC can change a conflicted relationship to positive with the Emperor. If it is a magic item, either choose something that isn't quite as useful in battle as some other items or play up the bureaucratic snafu that suggests that the item should probably have been awarded earlier to help the PCs win.

**Failure:** Assuming the PCs fled and weren't killed, the Emperor's champions fail to gain the prize. This gives another icon leverage over the Emperor in some important matter that will probably come back to bite the PCs. In addition, they lose face with the Emperor's people and all 6s rolled for the Emperor are now 5s until the PCs level up.

### CRIMES AGAINST THE EMPIRE

**Success:** The PCs win the prize for the Emperor, and in return their crimes are pardoned. They now have a clean slate, except others in the Empire might see an opportunity to frame them so they can be used in the same way again.

**Failure:** If they're not dead, then the PCs are either imprisoned for their failure, or now on the run with Imperial troops actively pursuing them. Until they level up, all 6s with the Emperor are 5s instead, since no one really wants to associate with them.

### FALSE CHAMPIONS

**Success:** The PCs win the prize "in the name of the Emperor." Of course, their contact claims that prize, and then uses it as leverage or blackmail against the empire, just as planned. What isn't planned is the fact that Imperial forces discover the PCs' part in the ruse and increase efforts to bring them in for questioning.

The PC with the conflicted or negative relationship gains a 6 with another icon they have a relationship with that lasts until they use it or level up.

**Failure:** The con is discovered by Imperial forces that show up to break up the illegal gladiatorial games. They throw everyone into jail until it can all be sorted out. The PCs have to figure out how to escape or convince someone to let them out, and the champions of a few other icons are there with them to talk to.

### IMPERIAL CHAMPIONS

**Success:** As Imperial champions, the PCs live up to their billing and remain in the good graces of the Emperor and his folk. They each gain a 6 with the Emperor until they use it or level up. The people speak of their glory. Agents of the defeated icons begin plotting their downfall.

**Failure:** The Emperor's champions have failed, and it's a heavy blemish upon the empire. Any PCs with positive relationships with the Emperor now have conflicted relationships until they can regain his favor. Agents of the Crusader approach the PCs about a job now that work is harder to find and their reputations are a bit soiled.

## BATTLE SCENE CONNECTIONS

The stories from this set of battle scenes can lead to other scenes:

- *The Lightning Station* (Archmage): One of the Archmage's Superiors was at the games and impressed by the PCs' performance. When the station falls and none of the Archmage's normal agents are able to get to it quickly, the Superior calls upon the PCs as "champions of the empire."
- *Conquer & Defend* (Orc Lord): As a reward for their victory, the PCs are given an estate in an outlying district (way out there) and travel to it to see if there's anything to it. At the local town, word arrives from Tenrock Hold Pass of barbarian attacks right as the PCs get into town.
- *Mad Wizard's Loot* (Prince of Shadows): Some of the Prince's people had a sizeable bet riding on the arena games, against the Emperor. They don't like losing, so the PCs will be repaying the debt by getting something from a wizard's vault.



# EMPEROR: GAMES OF POWER

LEVEL RANGE: 9-10



The themes of this set of battles are serving the good of the empire, dealing with traitors, and facing elite followers of the wannabe emperor—the Lich King. This set of battle scenes works best while the PCs are inside or just outside a major Imperial city, possibly even the capital.

The Emperor has many enemies, and not all of them are barbarians, monsters, and giants attacking from outside of the Empire. One of the Emperor's best spies recently discovered that one of the Dragon Empire's supposed pillars, a noble house that has been close to the Emperor for more than a century, has secretly aligned itself with the powers of evil. The traitorous noble House Ivrrhea seems to be seeking the throne. That can't be allowed to continue.

## GAMES OF POWER STORY OPENINGS

- **The Emperor's Right Hands:** One or more of the PCs with a positive or conflicted relationship with the Emperor are asked or ordered to serve, possibly directly by the Emperor. He has a problem with a powerful noble that he needs taken care of discreetly rather than publicly, which would expose him in many ways. A noble house of power close to his own has betrayed the empire, and they must be brought to him in chains (that's preferable) or slain and delivered to him as proof to make sure they're dead (acceptable, mostly).
- **Falsely Accused:** One or more PCs with a relationship with the Emperor discover they are being implicated in a terrible crime against the Empire that will surely see them executed or in chains if the accusation is allowed to play out. A powerful noble whose family is closely connected to the Emperor's family seems to be pulling these strings. The PCs must infiltrate or confront the noble and discover what the end game is while clearing their names with the Emperor.
- **Imperial Hounds:** While pursuing enemies of the empire for one reason or another, the PCs follow the trail to an unexpected source—a powerful noble house with strong ties to the Emperor. If the Emperor is involved, the PCs are in real trouble, so they must infiltrate the noble's estate and determine how deeply the plot goes, then act upon that knowledge.

- **Saving Their Own Skins:** One or more PCs with a negative or conflicted relationship with the Emperor is invited to join a plot to overthrow the Emperor. That's all fine and good, until the PCs learn who is actually behind the plot. An Imperial noble of a house closely linked to the Emperor? Assuming it's an Imperial ploy to discover traitors, the PCs must remove all traces of their involvement, which means going to the noble's estate and getting their hands dirty.

## ALTERNATE ICONS



**Lich King:** The story could be the same, but the PCs are either enemies of the Lich King rooting out his Imperial puppets. Or they serve the Lich and discover their supposed puppet wishes to move too quickly against the throne and an example must be made.



**Priestess:** Instead of an Imperial noble, the traitor is a powerful priestess and her consort who holds a high rank in the organization and has placed many acolytes across the Empire.

## GAMES OF POWER OVERVIEW

For one reason or another, the PCs travel to the estate of House Ivrrhea. The noble family has been staunch supporters of the Emperor and Empire for over a century, with many of its sons and daughters placed in important positions. The current heads of the house are Xavius and Pheliria, but they have crossed the Emperor and are playing dangerous games of power. In Battle 1, the PCs travel to the estate to infiltrate and/or confront the ruling couple. They must fight through many guards and servants of that house to do so.

Seeing the power of the PCs who have come for them, Pheliria flees to the lower levels of their estate, where the PCs must face her and her personal bodyguards. In Battle 2, the PCs learn that House Ivrrhea has pledged itself to another lord, and it will not go easily as Pheliria calls upon that power.

Finally, in Battle 3, the PCs catch up to ruling nobles of House Ivrrhea, who are waiting for them at a dark altar dedicated to the Lich King, their true icon. The PCs must overcome Pheliria, a necromancer, and Xavius, a death knight, to win out.

GM, feel free to expand upon these battles by including intrigue and battles for the PCs to discover the link to House Ivrrhea, additional battles on estate grounds, and encounters with servants of the Lich King residing at the estate.



## ICONS IN PLAY

Characters that have relationships (and story-guide advantages) with the Emperor, Lich King, Priestess, or possibly the Prince of Shadows should be able to shine in these battle scenes. More so than PCs with other icon relationships, feel free to give such PCs extra knowledge about the opposition, make checks to pull off fun actions the players might suggest, and use their advantages to particularly good effect, such as negating or bypassing some of the advantages or abilities of the enemies.

The battles outlined here can take place over a few minutes or hours, depending on whether you want this to be a quick strike or a prolonged set of scenes. The location is a rich Imperial estate, whether within Axis, in another major city, or a similar location.

See story endings after the final battle for options on what happens after the PCs finish the last battle.

## ENTERING THE ESTATE

Prior to starting the first battle, the PCs need to decide how they will get onto the estate grounds. There are plenty of options that will work. The key is that they manage to get near the primary estate without making Xavius or Pheliria aware of them and thus able to put up a stronger defense. Whatever the PCs choose, it should probably require a few skill checks to pull off. Use DC 25 as your baseline, with DC 30 for more risky maneuvers. If the PCs fail their first check, something bad happens. In that case they must try to fix that mistake with new actions and more skill checks, and so on. If they totally bungle it, feel free to make the first battle slightly more difficult. Here are a few options for getting in:

- **Subterfuge:** The PCs act like house servants, merchants making deliveries, new slaves, Imperial messengers, or similar figures to get to the estate.
- **Magic:** The PCs use a travel ritual, invisibility, illusion, or other magic to get to the estate.
- **Iconic Connections:** The PCs come as representatives of one of the icons to discuss politics or business. If they somehow determined the

Lich King connection ahead of time, they should get lower DCs with the checks until they reach those who will require the proper signs and passwords. This option could lead to more dialogue with Pheliria, possibly bypassing the first battle.

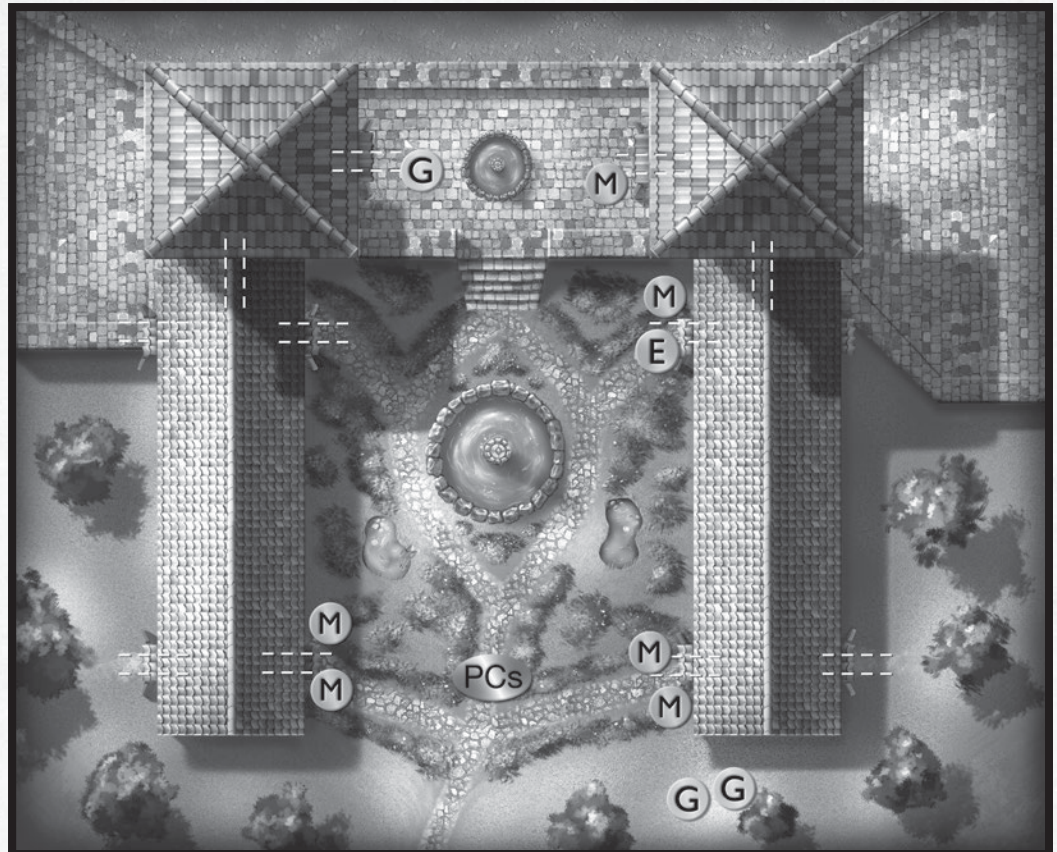
- **Stealth:** The PCs sneak in via the vineyard at night, ride in under wagons or hidden among goods, or use some other method to get to the estate secretly.
- **Might:** The PCs kill or capture guards, slaves, and servants in the surrounding estate lands while moving quickly to avoid calls of alarm when the missing are detected.

## BATTLE I: THE IVRHEA ESTATE

*You managed to reach the grounds of the main estate without rousing the place. The main building is just ahead with a wing for servants, slaves, and guards on either side. The courtyard you're in is a garden with fish pools, fountains, and gravel walkways. Then a rough voice from the right yells out, "You there! You're not supposed to be here. Who are you? Guards!" You see a young woman in a hardened leather cuirass with twin short swords who has just emerged from one of the side buildings, a sheen of sweat on her. Yells erupt from all around the courtyard followed by running footsteps.*

### LOCATION DESCRIPTION

The courtyard the PCs are in is 80 wide and 100 feet long, with one end open to the estate's entrance path and vineyards. Directly in front of them are marble steps up to the main estate, which has a





line of small pillars supporting an overhead deck that overlooks the courtyard. The far side of the estate backs up against a set of cliffs down. Long wood and brick buildings flank the PCs to the left and right, each with a pair of doors opening into the courtyard. The main estate is 40 feet high, and each outbuilding is 15 feet high.

The courtyard is flat and open, with a fountain, a few fish pools, and gravel walkways, small plants, and statuary.

The woman with the swords is Evra, the Master of Gladiators. She just emerged from a training room in the building to the right that houses slaves and gladiators of house Ivrrhea. A group of those she's trained will rush out to confront the PCs. In addition, estate guards will pour into the courtyard from the main estate, from the other side building (barracks), and from the estate grounds behind the PCs. Finally, Pheliria is just inside the main estate. If the PCs try to talk their way past Evra, Pheliria will step out and inform her people that they weren't expecting guests, that she doesn't recognize the PCs, and that these intruders must be shown that you don't trespass on House Ivrrhea. She will watch the battle without fighting, encouraging her people, before fleeing inside and screaming for Xavius once the PCs start to mop up (or sooner if a PC goes for her).

This battle assumes the PCs eventually enter the garden to approach the estate, but if they come up with another option, the GM will need to adjust accordingly for Battle 1.

## TERRAIN & TRAPS

**Courtyard, Pools, and Fountain:** The courtyard has numerous paths and is easy terrain in which to fight except for the fish pools. There are four doors into the courtyard from the outbuildings, plus the main entrance under the deck on the main estate.

Each pool is roughly a 10-foot oval that's 6 feet deep. The sides are curved and slippery, and anyone moving into them or on the edges must roll a DC 20 Dexterity check. On a failure, they slip and go into the pool, stopping movement. In addition, it takes a move action to climb out of a pool.

The fountain is circular and 15 feet in diameter with a 3-foot lip. The center feature is a marble statue of a wraithlike creature with water flowing from its upraised hand. Close inspection will reveal a single eye on a skeletal face under the shaded hood (a nod to their new icon).

**Estate & Outbuildings:** The estate is a two-story marble structure up against a cliff. It also has a few levels carved from its stone foundation where the family's dark devotions to the Lich King are performed. The roof is 40 feet high and flat. The stairs rise 10 feet to the shaded deck, which is a 40-foot open space between two sections of the main estate, with the cliff at the far side. A pair of bronze-inlaid wooden doors enter the main estate buildings on either side.

Each outbuilding is 100 x 30 and 15 feet high with two doors to the courtyard, another to the main estate, and a fourth to the outer grounds.

Climbing the smooth marble walls of the main estate requires a successful DC 30 Strength check. Climbing the brick walls of the outbuildings is easy, requiring a DC 20 Strength check.

**Rest of the Grounds:** If the PCs choose to move back away from the estate, there's the main path back to the road through the other estate grounds and buildings, as well as an extensive vineyard that offers concealment. You can place whatever other features you want that make sense to the scene.

## MONSTERS

The biggest threat in this battle is Evra, the Master of Gladiators, a human woman who trains the house guards and gladiators. She is in her mid-thirties with auburn hair, green eyes, and sleek but iron-hard muscles. She is fully aware of the house's true loyalties, and while she doesn't serve the Lich King personally, she serves the house no matter what.

The guards are well-trained and bear armor and livery of House Ivrrhea. They wield spears and shortbows. They are loyal, but may break and run rather than face death once Evra falls. They are all humans of both sexes.

The gladiators in training have raw strength and some skill. They wear simple hardened leather bracers, greaves, or shoulder guards and use a variety of weapons. They are a mix of races including human, dwarf, dark elf, halfling, and dragonic.

**Additional Reinforcements:** If you want to challenge the PCs more, make the gladiators double strength.

#/Level of PCs	Evra, Master of Gladiators (E)	House Guard (G)	Gladiator-in-Training Mook (M)
4 x 9 <sup>th</sup> level	1	1	5 (1 mob)
5 x 9 <sup>th</sup> level	1	2	7 (1 mob)
6 x 9 <sup>th</sup> level	1	3	8 (1 mob)
4 x 10 <sup>th</sup> level	1	3	7 (1 mob)
5 x 10 <sup>th</sup> level	1	4	10 (1 mob)
6 x 10 <sup>th</sup> level	1	5	14 (1 mob)

## TACTICS

Evra will order the gladiators to go after the spellcasters, using their natural dexterity to reach them. She instructs the guards to support her by engaging any ranged attackers. She will seek out a melee PC that's wearing the least heavy armor, trying to drop them as quickly as possible before moving on.

## LOOT

The guards and gladiators have a total of 50 gp in valuables on them, with another 200 gp in personal valuables or pay stored away in the outbuildings along with their other possessions.

Evra wears little jewelry, but she does have a pair of diamond stud earrings worth 100 gp, and each of her blades holds a black opal worth 100 gp.

## ICONS

A PC with a relationship advantage with the Emperor, Lich King, or Prince of Shadows could use one or more of them to trick the guards into thinking they shouldn't be attacking the PCs as representatives of one authority or another, causing one or more guards to hesitate for a round.

A PC with a relationship advantage with any icon could use one or more of them to recognize an old comrade among the gladiators who switches sides with a few of his or her comrades, provided the PC has a good story about the former comrade.





## EVRA, MASTER OF GLADIATORS

*The woman sizes you up for a moment, reading every weakness in your stance, weapon grip, and style. Then she's on you like a she-cat.*

**Triple-strength 11<sup>th</sup> level wrecker** [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +15

**Short swords +17 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—90 damage

*Natural even hit:* Evra's *short swords* attack deals 5 extra damage (cumulative, applies starting at the end of her turn).

*Natural odd hit:* Evra's crit range expands by 1 until the end of the battle (cumulative).

*First miss each turn that's not a natural 1:* Evra can reroll the attack.

**Vicious instructor:** Twice per battle as a free action when Evra hits one target with both *short swords* attack, she can deal half damage with the second attack and stun the target (save ends).

AC	26	
PD	25	HP 870
MD	24	

## HOUSE GUARD

*The guard is well-trained and works efficiently with her comrades.*

**11<sup>th</sup> level troop** [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +13

**Spear +16 vs. AC**—60 damage

*Natural 16+:* The target is also dazed until the end of its next turn from a haft blow to the head.

*Natural 20:* The target is stunned until the end of its next turn instead of dazed.

**R: Shortbow +16 vs. AC**—55 damage

**Team tactics:** For each additional house guard engaged with an enemy, the house guard's *spear* attack deals 10 extra damage (max +20).

AC	22	
PD	22	HP 225
MD	15	

## GLADIATOR-IN-TRAINING

*This pit fighter moves like a caged beast as he first feints before striking with his true blow.*

**11<sup>th</sup> level mook** [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +14

**Sword, axe, or mace +16 vs. AC**—40 damage

*First miss each turn:* The gladiator can make this attack again but takes a -2 penalty.

**C: Barbed net +15 vs. PD (one nearby enemy)**—15 damage, and the target is stuck (hard save ends, 16+)

*Each failed save:* The target takes 15 damage.

*Limited use:* The gladiator can't make another *barbed net* attack while a creature is stuck in the net.

**Net fighters (group ability):** For every three gladiators, one of them has a barbed net and can make an attack with it when the escalation die is odd.

AC	26	
PD	25	HP 75 (mook)
MD	20	

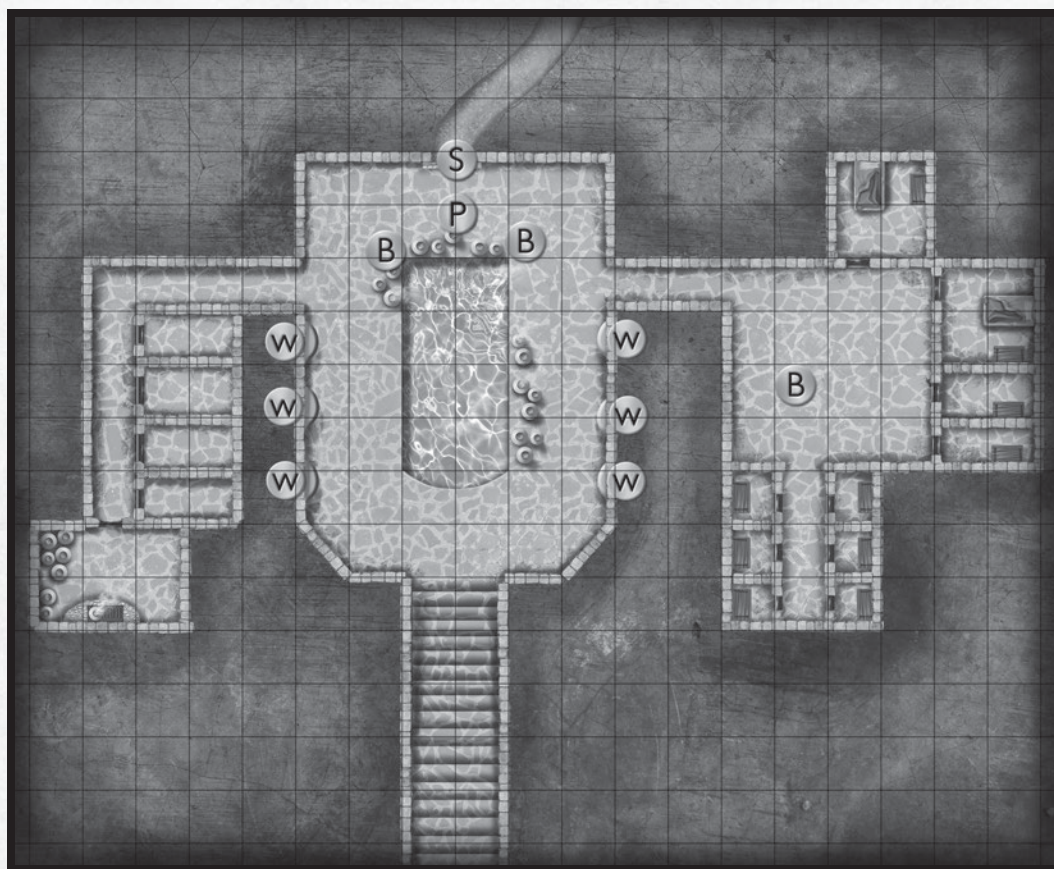
**Mook:** Kill one gladiator in training mook for every 75 damage you deal to the mob.

## NEXT STEPS

As the battle with Evra and the guards and gladiators winds down, Pheliria will scream for Xavius and flee into the estate through the doors on the right. When the PCs enter, there will be many rooms and slave quarters to investigate, but the noblewoman's screams should draw them down a set of back stairs. Below is a pleasure lounge where Pheliria will make her first stand against the PCs, along with her personal bodyguards and some undead servants she has standing around.

When the PCs are ready to go after her, go to **Battle 2: Pheliria's Lounge**.





## BATTLE 2: PHELIRIA'S LOUNGE

*You follow the woman (or at least her yells and commands), who must be Pheliria, the noblewoman of the house, down into the tunnels below the estate. The stairway enters into a large rectangular chamber tiled with marble panels that has an archway exiting each side wall. A long rectangular pool fills the center of the room, with a number of large water urns along the walls. At the far end, Pheliria stands before a mosaic-tile wall with the Emperor's emblem on it in golds and silvers. Decorating the walls of the chamber are many curved false columns of smooth plaster. Flanking her are a few large men holding vicious-looking weapons and wearing spiked armor meant to terrify—full gladiators, not like the trainees upstairs.*

### LOCATION DESCRIPTION

Pheliria has lured the PCs to her trap, she believes. Not only does she now have her gladiator champion bodyguards with her, but she also has a group of undead allies waiting, because she is, in truth, a necromancer dedicated to the Lich King.

Hidden in the fake plaster columns are a group of alchemical wights, special creations she constructed using toxins and components within the bodies of ritually killed house gladiators. At her command they will tear their way through the plaster to attack.

The chamber is 80 x 60, with an arched 8-foot-wide exit in each side wall. The fake columns run floor to ceiling on either side of the arches. The pool is 40 feet long, 20 feet wide, and between 5 and 12 feet deep. It is kept warm by slaves with heated urns and has a drainage

system. Scented oils coat the top, giving the place a strong but not unpleasant odor. If drained, the pool shows the Lich King's symbol in tile work on the floor.

The Emperor-emblem mosaic at the back of the room serves two purposes. First, the artwork isn't correct—small adjustments to color and placement actually show the artist's disdain for the Emperor (which only someone familiar with Imperial iconography who looks closely would notice). Second, it conceals a secret door that Pheliria can escape through if needed.

As she fights, Pheliria will question the PCs about who they work for and suggest that her house could pay better, or provide better rewards if they would relent. If the PCs are unswayed, she will call forth the wights at the start of the second round. At that point, her features will appear more gaunt and

her flesh more pale as her makeup begins to run, and the truth will become apparent; she is a necromancer with power over the undead.

### TERRAIN & TRAPS

**Pool:** The pool is merely an obstacle to move around, until someone goes in and Pheliria reveals her true colors. When she calls forth the wights, she'll also tap into the power of the sigil on the pool bottom. At that point, any enemy that enters the pool must deal with the dark magic within as spectral arms and hands seek to pull the PC under.

When a PC starts their turn in the pool while it's active, they must roll a save. On a failure, the hands grab them and pull them under. They lose their turn and must start making last gasp saves each turn. On the fourth failure, they become unconscious and drown.

The pool slows movement somewhat, and swimming in the deep end while the hands are active requires a move action and a successful DC 25 Strength or Dexterity check to get to an edge and climb out.

**Fake Columns:** Anyone closely inspecting the columns before Pheliria calls forth the wights will notice they have odd markings and strange architecture, seemingly false, with a successful DC 25 Intelligence or Wisdom check.

**Side Rooms:** The archway to the left leads to slave quarters and a boiler room where a huge vat sits above a stove for heating water. It holds a pile of urns, along with a handful of scared human slaves.

The archway to the right leads to a handful of small cells (for the champions), two pleasure rooms with soft divans and cowering sex slaves, a toilet, and a wall with a drain and a set of blood-stained shackles, complete with an array of punishment devices for unruly slaves.



**Emperor Mosaic:** When the battle seems lost, Pheliria can activate the secret door, spinning the wall so the Emperor's emblem rotates and a Lich King's symbol appears from the back side. As part of the move, the door locks in place on the far side, which should slow the PCs down a bit (see Next Steps; if a PC tries to bash it, tell them after one attempt that the door is protected by magic and won't easily break).

## MONSTERS

Pheliria Ivrrhea, wife to Xavius and head of the estate is also a necromancer dedicated to the Lich King. She and her husband have performed many dark rituals in the icon's name, many in this chamber. Pheliria wears pale cream silks and carries a needle dagger within her coiffed blond hair. She has sharp, almost elven-delicate bone structure in her face but a grim smile ruins any beauty there. Once the PCs show their intent to fight, she will reveal her true power. If the PCs look open to negotiation, she will invite them back upstairs until she can get more guards and troops to have the upper hand.

The gladiator champions are dedicated to the house and take their roles seriously as Pheliria's personal bodyguards, among other duties. Each has a signature weapon and unique set of armor in the pit fighter theme.

The alchemical wights are humans and dwarves with gladiator bodies but flesh gone black that oozes yellow slime, a byproduct of the toxins and chemicals flowing through their bloodless veins. Each reeks of an iodine-like odor and has no clothing. Their eyes are yellowed ovals with black slits.

**Additional Reinforcements:** If you want to challenge the PCs more, have one of Pheliria's house guests show up from behind the PCs, a vampire (core rulebook, page 248) named Varstad Mol. He will look to engage a divine healer or arcane spellcaster and attack with surprise (DC 25 Wisdom check or he gets +2 to attacks first round).

#/Level of PCs	Pheliria, Necromancer (P)	Gladiator Champion Bodyguard (B)	Alchemical Wight (W)
4 x 9 <sup>th</sup> level	1	1	2
5 x 9 <sup>th</sup> level	1	1	4
6 x 9 <sup>th</sup> level	1	2	4
4 x 10 <sup>th</sup> level	1	2	3
5 x 10 <sup>th</sup> level	1	2	6
6 x 10 <sup>th</sup> level	1	3	6

## TACTICS

Once she knows the PCs can't be bribed or cowed, she'll summon forth the wights and activate the pool. Then she focuses on weakening and hurting whichever enemies disturb her sensibilities the most (those with symbols of the Emperor or Priestess are high on her list). Once she's down to 100 hp or less and most of her allies have dropped, she'll use the secret door. Even if the PCs managed to drop her to 0 before then, thanks to her familiarity with death and the power granted her by the One-

eyed Lord, she still manages to sneak through the door while the PCs are distracted—she wasn't as dead as they thought! (GM, sure it might be a little forced, but hey, she's a necromancer; those folks are half-dead already. If you really don't want to use that ploy, just have Pheliria flee once staggered to make sure.)

The gladiator champions will protect anyone from getting to their mistress, arraying themselves on either side of the pool and intercepting (making the pool approach seem viable). They can also attack someone attacking Pheliria to let her pop free from engagement, which they will do even at the cost of opportunity attacks.

The alchemical wights attack the nearest enemy. Their chemical vomit eats away at flesh and the fumes can cause disorientation. When staggered, they spew forth their internal juices upon all around them.

## LOOT

Neither the wights nor the champions are allowed anything of value. Pheliria has jewelry, but she should escape this battle (her jewelry is covered in battle 3 if not).

## ICONS

A PC that has relationship points with the Archmage, Lich King, or Priestess could use one of them to identify what the wights are and a weakness in their construction that allows the PCs to attack them without triggering their *spray of yellow juices* ability.

A PC that has relationship points with the Emperor, Diabolist, Lich King, Priestess, or maybe the Crusader or High Druid could use one of them to calm the foul spirits in the pool so that an ally can escape without a save, or so they won't grasp at anyone for 1d2 rounds.





## Pheliria, Necromancer

With each wave of foulness that rolls off her, she seems to grow stronger.

13<sup>th</sup> level caster [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +14

**Poisoned needle dagger +17 vs. AC**—75 damage, and 25 ongoing poison damage

*First failed save:* The target is also weakened (save ends both).

**R: Weakening ray +18 vs. PD**—85 negative energy damage, and the target is weakened (save ends)

**R: Negative energy burst +18 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies)**—50 negative energy damage

**C: Wave of decay (each nearby creature; no hit roll)**—20 negative energy damage, and Pheliria heals 20 hp total (not 20 per creature!)

*Limited use:* 1/round, as a quick action.

**Dread necromancer:** Twice per battle as a free action when one of her living allies drops to 0 hp, Pheliria can rip the bones from that ally. She can choose to have the bones encase her, so that the next attack that hits her only deals half damage instead. Or she can direct the bones to encase a nearby enemy, who becomes stuck (save ends).

### Nastier Specials

**Terrorizing aspect:** Pheliria takes on the aspect of the Lich King, bringing terror to her enemies. She can make the following attack once during the battle as a standard action.

**C: Face of death +18 vs. MD (1d3 nearby enemies)**—The target runs far away during its next turn, taking no other actions. It will provoke opportunity attacks to do this.

AC	27	
PD	23	HP 400
MD	27	

**Mostly dead:** When Pheliria drops to 0 hp, she's not truly dead. She has enough life in her to make an escape (see **Tactics**).

## Gladiator Champion Bodyguard

"Fight me you filthy dog!"

Double-strength 10<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +12

**Vicious weapon +15 vs. AC**—110 damage

*Natural 18+:* The target is stunned until the end of its next turn from a vicious headbutt, elbow, or knee

*Miss equals escalation die or less:* The champion bodyguard can reroll the attack since the first miss was only a feint.

**Smash and shove +15 vs. PD**—50 damage, and the bodyguard pops the target free from all enemies and shoves it 10 feet in any direction it wishes (including into the pool; GM, give the target a save to avoid going in if you wish)

**Give up the body:** Once per battle when the bodyguard would take a critical hit, it takes a normal hit and is dazed until the end of its next turn instead.

AC	26	
PD	25	HP 440
MD	19	

## Alchemical Wight

The dark flesh of the oozing, undead thing looks like it's ready to burst.

10<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +13

Vulnerability: holy, lightning

**Poison-laced claws +15 vs. AC**—30 damage, and 10 ongoing poison damage

*Natural even hit:* The wight can make a **burning vomit** attack as a free action this turn.

**C: Burning vomit +14 vs. PD (1d3 enemies engaged with it)**—10 ongoing acid and negative energy damage and the target is vulnerable (save ends both)

**Spray of yellow juices:** When the wight is staggered, its wounds spray yellow slime on each enemy engaged with it. Those creatures take 20 ongoing acid damage and are vulnerable (save ends both).

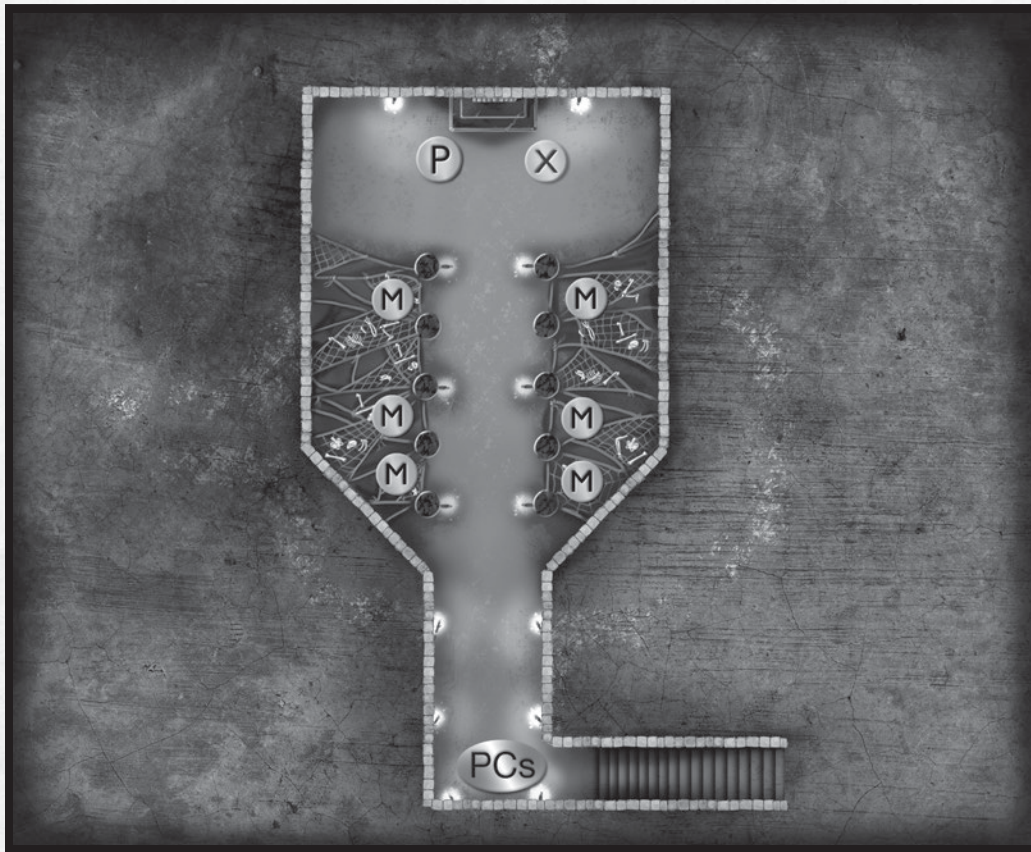
AC	25	
PD	24	HP 210
MD	21	

### Next Steps

After a quick rest, the PCs will want to follow Pheliria through the secret door. If the PCs try to pursue without resting, it takes some time to get after her, since the door is now locked and bashing it in is slow work because of the marble and magic wards. Pheliria will have time to escape.

Once they get through the door, a stairwell leads them down to House Ivrrhea's dark altar to the Lich King. A quick rest on the stairs would be wise, because this next fight is a killer. Head on down to **Battle 3: The Lich King's Faithful**.





## BATTLE 3: THE LICH KING'S FAITHFUL

Beyond the secret door is a circular stairwell leading down. You follow it for perhaps 100 steps before it opens into a short corridor that enters a large chamber lit by flickering torches. The room is flanked by a row of narrow black marble columns on either side supporting the low ceiling. Stretched between the columns and walls are nets filled with yellowing bones of all types. At the far end, a table made from a single piece of black obsidian with a slight oval impression in the top rests before another mosaic tile pattern on the wall behind, but this emblem shows the double cross with a one-eyed skull above it of the Lich King. Pheliria and a tall, regal-looking man who must be her husband Xavius stand on either side of the table. She says, "We accept your sacrifice in the name of our master!" and throws her arms wide. The bone piles begin to move.

### LOCATION DESCRIPTION

Pheliria has lead the PCs to the dark altar hidden in the crypts of the Ivreha family estate, where she plans to offer their bleeding remains to her icon and the powers of death. Her husband, Xavius, stands ready as well, but he is more than just a human noble of an Imperial house. He has undergone dark rituals and been transformed into an undead creature that still looks mostly human—a death knight.

In addition to the two servants of the Lich King, Pheliria is calling forth a group of deathshard skeletons to help them defeat the PCs. The bones, which are from all those she has ritually sacrificed, begin to assemble themselves into humanoid form and rise from the nets around the room.

The chamber itself is 60 x 80 and 15 feet high. The walls, columns, and even floor tiles are all crafted with scenes of death terror. But none hold the dread power within the mosaic at the back of the room, which was created specifically for the Ivreha family by the Lich King. The PCs start far away from the altar and traitorous nobles.

### TERRAIN & TRAPS

**Lich King Mosaic:** The mosaic displaying the Lich King's power is filled with dark magic that will help his servants. At the end of

each round, a tendril of shadow will lash out at one random PC in the room. Make the following attack:

**Tendril of death's caress +20 vs. PD (one random PC)**—25 negative energy, and the target is stuck until the end of its next turn

**Natural 20:** The target also takes 25 ongoing negative energy damage and is stuck (save ends both) as the tendril remains grasping the PC.

Due to the magic infused in the mosaic, it is somewhat resistant to damage and magic that would destroy it. The mosaic tiles have 400 hp and an AC and PD of 25, and any attempts to disrupt the magic requires a successful DC 35 check (for 1d3 rounds).

**Dark Altar:** The altar is 7 feet long, 5 feet wide, and 4 feet high, with an oval basin in the middle (for a body). The entire surface of the obsidian is carved with images and runes of death and dark magic. The altar holds power from all those sacrificed upon it, and it is fueling the animation of the deathshard skeletons through Pheliria (it will flare with darkness and shadows each time a new group of skeletons rises).

A PC could attempt to disrupt the altar's magic either through magic or by damaging the stone. Damaging the stone with an attack or feat of strength is difficult and requires a DC 35 Strength check. Interfering with the magic through divine or arcane means is slightly easier, requiring a DC 30 check. On a success, the deathshard skeletons don't animate at the start of the next round (see Bone Nets below).

**Bone Nets:** There is a triangular net strung between each pillar and hooks in the chamber wall, creating four "bone hammocks" on each side of the chamber. The deathshard



skeletons animate and assemble from the bones in each net each round (starting numbers based on monster chart). At the start of each following round, a number of skeletons animate equal to the starting number minus the escalation die (so for 8 starting skeletons, it's 7 on esc 1, 6 on esc 2, etc.). This lasts until Pheliria and Xavius are both defeated or the altar is destroyed.

It is possible to reduce this number by destroying the nets. Each net requires a standard action attack to rip out of the hooks, cut down, or magically neuter, breaking the animation effect.

The nets hang low, from 4 feet near the edges to about 2 feet above the ground near the center. Moving through the area where the nets are located requires a successful DC 20 Dexterity check or the creature gets hung up on netting and bones poking through and loses the rest of their movement.

## MONSTERS

Pheliria used some of the dark magic stored within the altar to restore her flesh when she arrived in this chamber, so she's at full strength again.

Xavius handed his life over to the Lich King years ago, removing his heart and replacing it with a shadow-filled crystalline orb from which he draws life and power. He is a capable warrior, but can also call upon arcane power from the orb to defeat his enemies. He is a tall, pale skinned human with jet black hair who wears a segmented cuirass of white exoskeleton plates of a basilisk. He wields a greatsword forged from a single piece of obsidian (though magically reinforced for strength). He can pass for human for a time, but someone speaking with him will soon begin to notice his limited facial movements, stiff posture, and cold affect.

The deathshard skeletons assemble into roughly humanoid shape, but instead of hands, their arms end in sharp bone points. The skull of each is filled with dark shadows that spill out of the sockets to impart its pain and suffering on others.

**Additional Reinforcements:** If you want to challenge the PCs more, Pheliria can summon a dread specter out of the dark altar as a quick action (see stats).

#/Level of PCs	Pheliria, Necromancer (P)	Xavius, Death Knight (X)	Deathshard Skeleton Mook (M)*
4 x 9 <sup>th</sup> level	1	1	6
5 x 9 <sup>th</sup> level	1	1	7
6 x 9 <sup>th</sup> level	1**	1**	8
4 x 10 <sup>th</sup> level	1	1	5***
5 x 10 <sup>th</sup> level	1**	1**	6***
6 x 10 <sup>th</sup> level	1**	1**	8***

\* This is how many deathshard skeletons start the battle and are animated each round (minus escalation die). For example, five 9<sup>th</sup> level PCs could face 28 skeletons in a battle that goes to esc. 6 if they don't destroy the nets or disrupt the altar.

\*\* This creature can use its nastier special.

\*\*\* Each deathshard skeleton is double strength: its *piercing bone arm* attack deals 80 damage, and it has 120 hp.

## TACTICS

Pheliria has some different abilities than she had in the first fight. This time she won't come back from death, though she will linger a bit! She'll command the skeletons to intercept anyone who tries to attack her, with the rest going after any PC who's attacking freely. She counts on the fact that the altar will continue to animate the skeletons.

Xavius will try to catch the PCs with an early fireball, then move to engage a melee type, preferably one who has icon relationships with the Emperor or Priestess (he can sense it). When he scores a crit with his sword, he will regain his *fireball* and use it the next turn. He tries to stay close to Pheliria and the altar to attack anyone attacking them. He will ignore an enemy stuck by the tendrils.

The skeletons try to intercept anyone attacking Pheliria, or go after PCs who are attacking freely, unless the necromancer gives them other orders.

## LOOT

Pheliria wears a fine silver and onyx necklace worth 500 gp. She and Xavius both wear a platinum and emerald ring as the rulers of House Ivrrhea each worth 300 gp. If the PCs search the estate, they can find another 400 gp in mixed coins used for house expenses.

Xavius' sword is a +3 *Soulblade* (*recharge 16+ and special*): Heal using a free recovery if the blade has dropped a living creature to 0 hp since this power was last used.

Whether Xavius' basilisk armor is magical or not is up to the GM. Maybe it gets damaged in the fight so that it's not much use afterwards. If you are interested in making it part of the PCs' rewards, see the white basilisk on page 10 of the *13<sup>th</sup> Age Bestiary* for inspiration.

Xavius' shadow-filled orb heart could be an implement, or a special story item the PCs need to thwart the Lich King or another icon.

## Icons

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Emperor, Lich King, or the Priestess could use one or more of them to disrupt the magic of the Lich King mosaic for 1d2 rounds without a check.

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Emperor, Diabolist, Great Gold Wyrms, Lich King, Priestess, or maybe the High Druid could use one or more of them to disrupt the dark power of the altar without a check, keeping it from animating skeletons for a round.

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Emperor could use one or more of them to negate or reduce an effect created by Pheliria or Xavius.



## Pheliria, Necromancer

*With each wave of foulness that rolls off her, she seems to grow stronger as an aura of shadow envelops her body.*

13<sup>th</sup> level caster [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +14

**Poisoned needle dagger +17 vs. AC**—75 damage, and 25 ongoing poison damage

*First failed save:* The target is also weakened (save ends both).

**R: Weakening ray +18 vs. PD**—85 negative energy damage, and the target is weakened (save ends)

**R: Negative energy burst +18 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies)**—50 negative energy damage

**C: Wave of decay (each non-undead creature in the battle; no hit roll)**—20 negative energy damage, and Pheliria heals 20 hp total

*Limited use:* 1/round, as a quick action.

*Intimate with death:* When Pheliria drops to 0 hp, she doesn't die, even if she continues to take more damage (some part of her remains "alive" long enough for one last moment of defiance). During her next turn, she screams out and her form pulls apart as a hundred agonized spirits of those she's killed stream out of her and rush about seeking warm bodies to try to possess. Pheliria dies and make the following attack:

**Swarm of tortured souls +16 vs. MD (each living creature in the battle)**—The target is filled with an agonized spirit and is confused until the end of its next turn. While the spirit is in a PC, that character experiences a memory from the spirit's life, and the player must relate what that is. (GM, enjoy this future adventure material).

### Nastier Specials

*Terrorizing aspect:* Pheliria takes on the aspect of the Lich King, bringing terror to her enemies. She can make the following attack once during the battle as a standard action.

**C: Face of death +18 vs. MD (1d3 nearby enemies)**—The target runs far away during its next turn, taking no other actions. It will provoke opportunity attacks to do this.

AC 27  
PD 23  
MD 27

HP 400

## Xavius, Death Knight

*He has gained raw power but lost most of what makes someone human.*

Double-strength 13<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +15

Vulnerability: holy

**Obsidian greatsword +18 vs. AC (3 attacks)**—70 damage, and 15 ongoing negative energy damage

*Natural even hit:* The target is vulnerable until the end of Xavius' next turn.

*Miss:* 20 damage.

**R: Fireball +17 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies in a group)**—160 fire damage

*Limited use:* 1/battle, but he regains it when he scores a crit with *obsidian greatsword*.

*Death's champion:* Xavius' crit range expands by an amount equal to the escalation die.

*Touched by the Lich King:* Once per battle as an interrupt action, Xavius can partially deflect a spell attack that targets him and take only half damage from that attack. The attacker must make another attack roll for a nearby target that Xavius chooses. On a hit, that target also takes half damage, plus any effects.

### Nastier Specials

*Unescapable doom:* The knight is surrounded by an aura of death and doom that worms its way into the hearts and minds of his enemies. While engaged with the knight, enemies are vulnerable and can't use the escalation die.

AC 29  
PD 28  
MD 25

HP 870

## Deathshard Skeleton

*Each one is the remains of multiple creatures, all taken by darkness and pain.*

11<sup>th</sup> level mook [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +16

Vulnerability: holy

**Piercing bone arm +16 vs. AC**—40 damage

*Natural 16+:* The skeleton can make a *shadows of pain and suffering* attack against the target as a free action.

[Special trigger] **C: Shadows of pain and suffering +15 vs. PD (one enemy hit by piercing bone arm)**—5 ongoing negative energy damage and the target is vulnerable (hard save ends both, 16+).

*Resist weapon damage 14+:* When a weapon attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 14+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

AC 26  
PD 24  
MD 20

HP 60 (mook)

*Mook:* Kill one deathshard skeleton mook for every 60 damage you deal to the mob.



Additional Reinforcements**DREAD SPECTER***Triple-strength 9<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [UNDEAD]*

Initiative: +12

**Icy, life-draining touch +12 vs. PD—110** negative energy damage*Natural even hit or miss:* Each enemy engaged with the specter (including the target) takes 20 negative energy damage.**R: Deathly stare +12 vs. MD (up to 2 nearby enemies)—75** negative energy damage*Phantom movement:* As a move action when the escalation die is odd, the specter can teleport anywhere nearby, dematerializing from its location to materialize in another.*Punishing aura:* When an enemy attacks the specter and misses, it takes 24 negative energy damage.*Wrack and ruin:* While a specter is in the battle, the PCs don't add the escalation die to attack rolls, but it does. In the presence of a specter, mortals feel as though they are about to die, and they're generally right.**AC 22****PD 18****MD 22****HP 550****NEXT STEPS**

If the PCs want to return the traitors to the Emperor in chains, it's possible with Xavius, but more difficult with the necromancer due to the souls within her trying to burst free when she loses control. With the use of advantages, magic, or good skill checks, it should be *possible*. Instead of killing blows, the final blow knocks them unconscious or brings them down in some way.

While there are more guards and servants within the rest of the estate and outer grounds, they will either break and flee when they realize their masters have been defeated or they will fall easily to our heroes' spells and swords, if that's the type of scorched-earth story your PCs enjoy.

**GAMES OF POWER  
STORY ENDINGS**

Here are outcomes for each story opening, detailing what success or failure might mean.

If the PCs did face all three battles, remember to give them a full heal-up.

**THE EMPEROR'S RIGHT HANDS**

**Success:** You defeat the heads of house Ivrrhea, Pheliria and Xavius, and victoriously return them (or their bodies) to the Emperor. When he learns of their desertion to the Lich King, he is doubly thankful. In addition to riches or positions of authority granted, each PC gains two 6s with the Emperor that last until used.

**Failure:** The PCs fail in their attempt to bring House Ivrrhea to justice. The nobles, now aware that the Emperor wants them, go underground. With their connections and wealth, they are able to cause a lot of trouble for the Emperor. They also hire mercenaries and assassins to finish the PCs, who could make certain unsupported accusations about who their true master is.

**FALSELY ACCUSED**

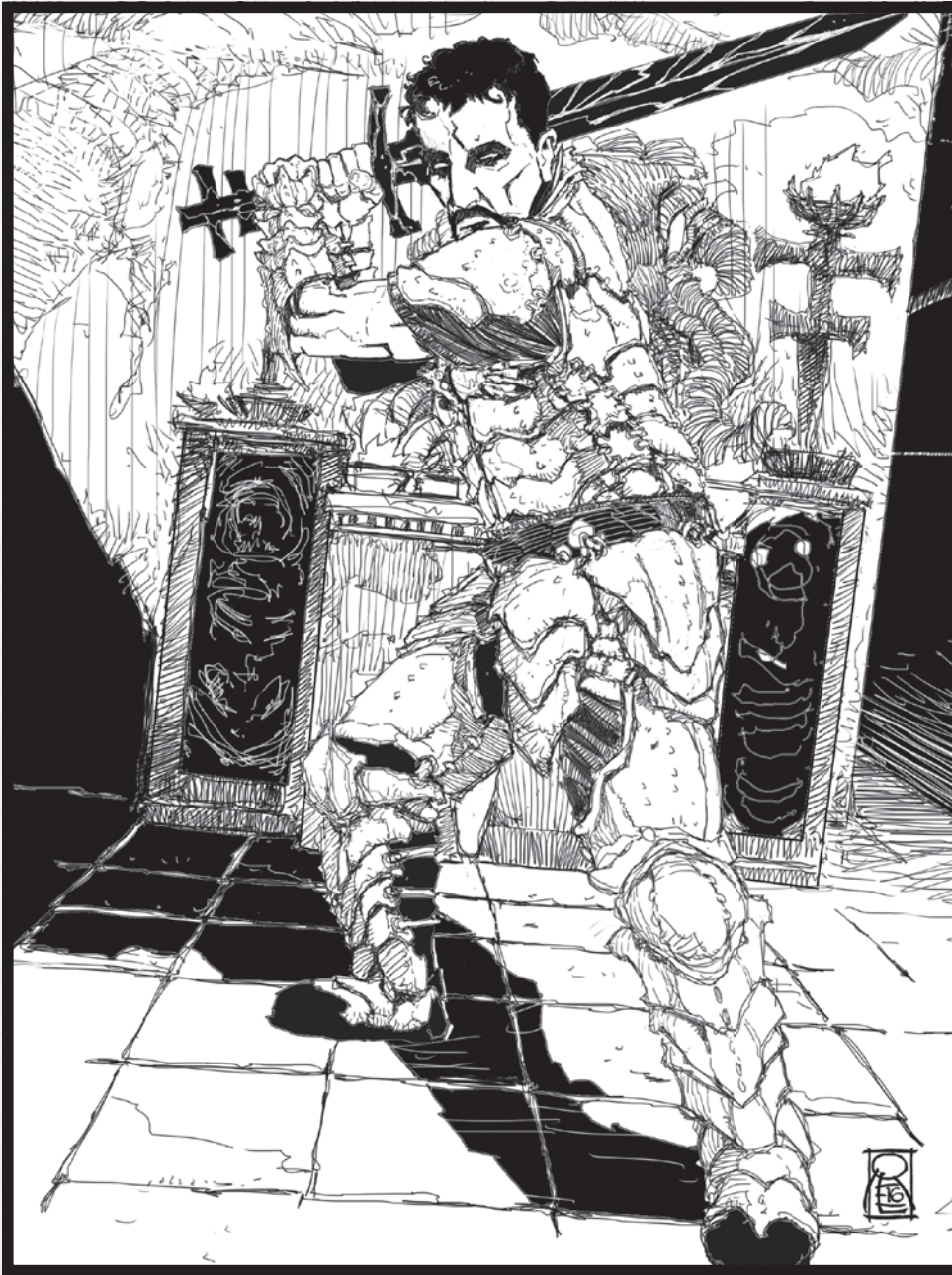
**Success:** The PCs managed to enter the Ivrrhea estate and confront the nobles who are setting them up, Pheliria and Xavius. And not only that, but they learn the truth of the nobles' allegiance to the One-eyed Lord. With such proof, they're able to clear their names and the Emperor's people begin looking into all who've associated with them. The next two times the PCs roll icon dice, they can reroll any dice with one of those icons.

**Failure:** The PCs fail to gain proof of House Ivrrhea's manipulations. Now, not only are the nobles after them, but they are also wanted by Imperial officials for questioning about rumors linking them to a horrible crime and must go on the run until they can clear their names.

**IMPERIAL HOUNDS**

**Success:** The PCs manage to discover how deep the plots go and the fact that the Emperor's "supporters" in House Ivrrhea are actually Lich King followers who wish to see the throne change





### SAVING THEIR OWN SKIN

**Success:** The PCs manage to remove the Imperial nobles who they believed were luring them to an execution. But in the process they gained valuable information about House Ivrrhea's allegiance to the Lich King. And that information can be used by the Emperor's enemies. Each PC gains a 6 with one of their existing icons of their choice that lasts until they use it.

**Failure:** The PCs' attempt to foil the plot against them turns bad when they learn that it had merit. Unfortunately, the nobles of House Ivrrhea didn't want the throne for themselves, but for their dark master the Lich King. Now both the Empire (through House Ivrrhea's connections) and the Lich King's people are after them, because they must be kept from talking. The next time the PCs are in a normal battle, a group of Imperial agents or Lich King followers will also ambush them.

### BATTLE SCENE CONNECTIONS

The stories from this set of battle scenes can lead to other scenes:

- *Night Hunters* (Lich King): House Ivrrhea is an old Imperial family, and they keep many secrets. One of those secrets, found within the chamber with the dark altar, is the location of a hidden realm of night and mist where another ancient Imperial line, House Navernos, resides. That house completely serves the One-eyed Lord and has been untouched and unseen

hands. The PCs are well rewarded for the efforts and word gets around. Each PC gains a 6 with the Emperor that lasts until used. Each PC with a positive or conflicted Lich King relationship has the next two 6s rolled for the icon become 5s instead.

**Failure:** Knowing that the PCs are on to their schemes, House Ivrrhea removes all signs of their true allegiance. They also use their political clout to discredit the PCs among the movers and shakers of the empire. The next 6 each PC rolls for a non-villainous icon the next time they roll icon dice is a 5 instead.

by the Empire for an Age.

- *Bad Geometry* (Priestess): During the battle with Pheliria, the power of death hung thick. And it touched one or more of the PCs, who now show a dark swelling on the flesh over their heart. Magical healing doesn't cure the affliction, so the PCs must travel to the Cathedral to get a powerful priestess of light and healing to use a ritual to remove the curse. During that time, a call for help goes out at the Cathedral.



# LICH KING: THE SECRET CRYPT

LEVEL RANGE: 2-3



The themes of this set of battles are death and magic, especially of the type the Lich King likes. This set of battle scenes can work almost anywhere, since the crypt is hidden. It might be in civilized areas, the wilds, or the middle of the dungeon.

This crypt was built by followers of the Lich King many years ago. Thanks to their desecrations over the years, it still seethes with dark power and holds deadly magical traps and terrible undead guardians, some of whom were the original death priests who wielded the power of death in the name of their lord and thought they had found a way to beat death.

## SECRET CRYPT STORY OPENINGS

- **The Dark Rune:** A PC with a Lich King relationship recognizes a rune carved into a stone wall as a secret sign of entrance to a place meant to hold something valuable to the Lich King, and also protected by his power. A simple command word opens a door to the crypt.
- **A Mysterious Seeker:** A gaunt, robed and hooded figure approaches a PC. In a raspy feminine voice, it/she says it/she knows the location of something the PCs want or need (probably something they're currently looking for), within an old crypt nearby, but they must promise to retrieve an item from the place before it/she will reveal the crypt's location.

That item should be something that's difficult or a challenge for at least one of the PCs to live with handing over.

- **Magic Skull:** The mouth and eye socket of a one-eyed skull mortared into a wall, brick walkway, or old moss-covered cairn suddenly blazes with purple eldritch fire. A haunting, high-pitched voice says, "Name the lord of death and enter." Naming the Lich King (or even saying the "One-eyed Lord") causes a secret entrance to open.
- **Death's Mask:** A glass mask depicting a skeletal face rests upon a wall, a pedestal, on a table in an old hut, or someplace that fits the PCs location. It calls to one of the PCs, but it's also magically trapped. When a PC touches it, picks it up, or even just moves near it, it shatters and the floor/ground where the heroes are at suddenly collapses, dropping them down a short chute to the entrance to the crypt.
- **Opening Old Tomes:** The PCs find a rune-covered book of indeterminable slate-gray leather (within a library, lying in a corner under some rags, hidden in a secret alcove, etc.). When a PC opens the book, looks at one of the magic runes on the cover, or just touches it, a burst of magic flares and there's a noise like the exhalation of a long, dusty breath. Then a portal opens in the air nearby, leading to the secret crypt. The portal seems stable, but it will close after the PCs enter, requiring them to make some sort of sacrifice using an item from the crypt as outlined in the book to re-open the portal again.

## ALTERNATE ICONS



**Dwarf King:** You could re-theme this crypt as a dwarven vault dedicated to protecting lost treasures of the Dwarf King guarded by undead dwarves sworn to protect the hoard. The final room holds the bodies of those who failed the King. A bit grim for the Dwarf King, but those were dark ages.



**Archmage:** It could also work as a lost repository of knowledge belonging to a former Archmage who dabbled in necromancy to protect her holdings. Move the flavor away from darkness and more toward magical fury and the corruption of power.

## SECRET CRYPT OVERVIEW

The crypt is composed of four main locations connected by mortared-stone hallways that have the bones of humanoids encased within the mortar. Each location holds a battle with those connected to or who serve the Lich King.



## Icons in Play

Characters that have relationships (and story-guide advantages) with the Archmage, Emperor, Priestess, and Lich King should be able to shine in these battle scenes. Moreso than PCs with other icon relationships, feel free to give such PCs extra knowledge about the opposition, make checks to pull off fun actions the players might suggest, and use their advantages to particularly good effect, such as negating or bypassing some of the magical traps scattered throughout the scenes.

No matter how the PCs found it, the entrance to the crypt is a set of old stone stairs that lead down to the first chamber. Each chamber holds a mix of undead guardians and magical traps created by the death priests who once used the crypt for their unholy practices, and now call it home.

GM, feel free to expand upon these battles to add additional chambers, burial preparation rooms, meditation nooks, and other rooms to give the crypt the feel you want.

The battles outlined here can take place over a few tens of minutes or even hours of searching and moving if you prefer to stretch things out. Since the Lich King is in play, we suggest flavoring descriptions and battle scenes with the sense of impending death, and the cost to those who would cheat it.

See story endings after the final battle for options on what happens after the PCs finish the last battle.

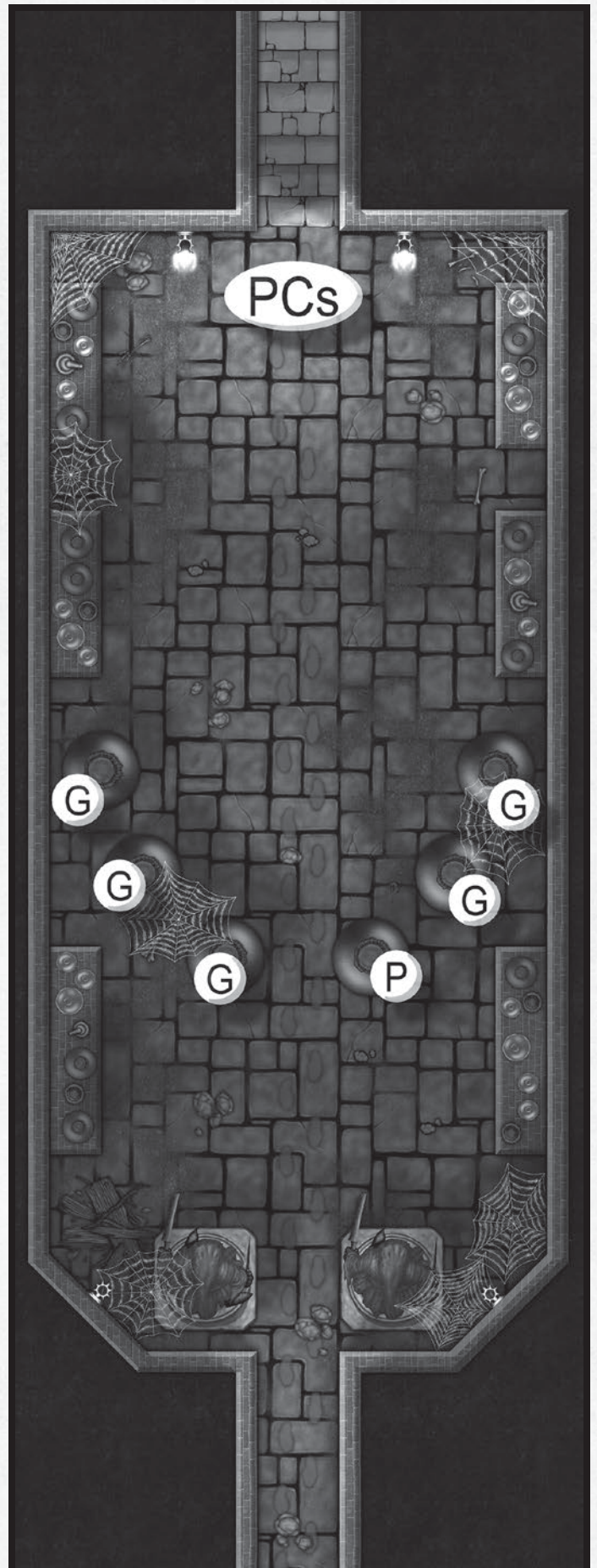
## BATTLE I: ENTRANCE AND SKELETAL GUARDIANS

*A set of old stair stairs leads down into the darkness. After a short descent, the stairs end at a mortared-stone chamber that smells of age and death. A handful of large clay urns sit upright in the center of the room, with additional smaller urns resting on shelves around the room.*

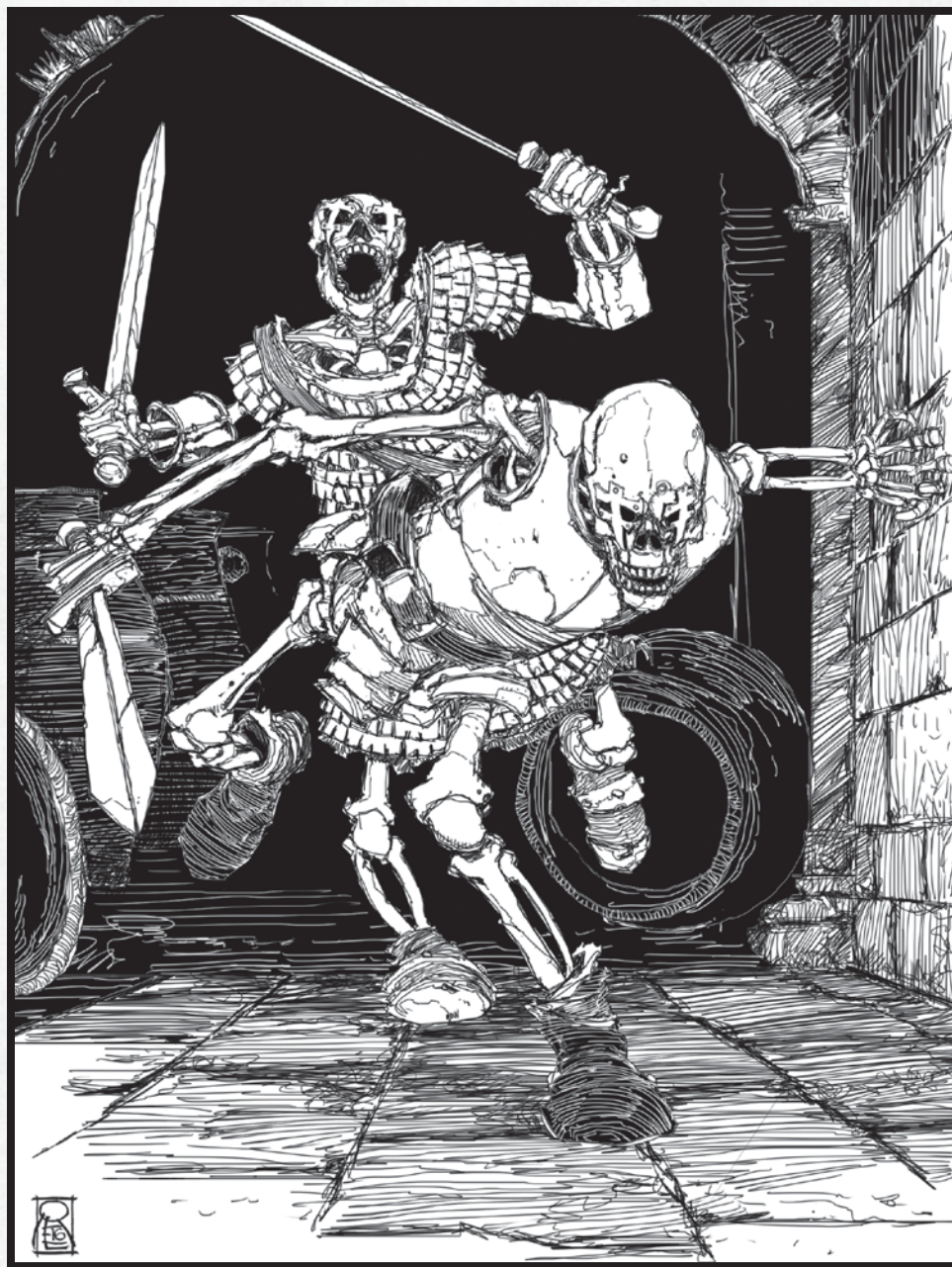
### Location Description

This battle probably has the PCs facing off against skeletal guardians and exploding magical statuary, unless the PCs manage to use the proper words and observances to seem like allies.

The chamber is rectangular, 20 feet high, 50 feet long, and 25 feet across with gray-white brick walls of mortared stone. Six (or more) tall clay jars three feet in diameter are set in a half circle from left to right facing the stairs, with a narrow corridor exiting from the opposite wall behind them. In addition, many short stone shelves extend from the walls to the right and left, holding perhaps fifty smaller glazed clay jars covered with runes. One has fallen sideways, spilling dark ash into a pile onto the shelf and ground.







Flanking the opposite exit and built into its archway is a pair of human-sized, discolored marble statues of robed and hooded figures that remind one of a certain icon of death. Each is outstretching one skeletal hand, pointing a bony finger toward the stairs. Something sparkles from the shadows under the hoods.

## TERRAIN & TRAPS

**Warded Statues:** The statues are a warning to any who would seek to enter the crypt unwanted, but they are harmless in their own right. They are part of a ward whose magic protects the archway the statues are built into. Anyone passing through the arch without making the proper observances to the Lich King will activate the trap in the Long Hall beyond (see next battle) without being aware of it. Detecting/disarming the ward requires a DC 20 check, and doing so reveals it to everyone as the Lich King's symbol suddenly blazes with blue fire on the chest of each statue as the ward's energy burns away.

The sparkle under the statues' hoods comes from cheap glass eyes that look like rare gemstones to casual inspection, which are glued to each statue; anyone who removes them automatically trips the ward (no check allowed, and the PCs are unaware of the trap they've now activated).

**Urns & Jars:** The urns and jars on the shelves are part of a magical trap (DC 15 to detect the magic; there are too many to counteract the foul magic within easily). They hold the ashes of those killed during horrific rites conducted by the Lich King's followers. They are also charged with dark magic. Once the skeletal guardians emerge from the large jars, a few of the urns will explode with shards of sharp pottery during the battle as the corrupted spirits within emerge. The spirits seek the target's lifeforce even as they dissipate into nothingness with howls of despair.

When a PC heals using a recovery or is staggered, make the following attack:

**C: Spirit shards +6 vs. PD (the PC who triggers the attack)**—1d6 damage (shards), and 1d6 negative energy damage. In addition, if the target is using a recovery to heal, it must roll an immediate save; if it fails, the target can't use the highest recovery die rolled as the corrupted spirit steals their lifeforce.

Attacking an individual jar will only cause a small magical explosion that sends ash everywhere, but there are too many urns to effectively end the *spirit shards* attack.

## MONSTERS

The tall clay jars hold the bones of those compelled to protect the crypt, even beyond death. When the PCs enter the chamber, the skeletons here will assemble and leap out of the jars to confront the heroes, pushing themselves through the army and torso holes of ancient breastplates that unfold from rust! (You'll want to adjust the number of jars depending on how many skeletons there are based on the fight chart.) As if you didn't know already, the skeleton's allegiance has been bolted to their eyesockets.

Any PCs bearing obvious symbols of the Lich King's enemies (the Priestess, Archmage, or Emperor, mostly) will bring an immediate attack from the guardians. Otherwise, the guardians will wait in silence a moment for the newcomers to make the proper observances, since the undead believe the heroes have come to offer themselves as new guardians of the entrance chamber.



If one or more PCs (probably with ties to the Lich King) realizes what the skeletons are waiting for and wants to make the proper observances, they can attempt it, but the check is ridiculously hard (DC 25) because it's been a long time since anyone living has done so. Success means the undead will let down their guard, but they will also expect the PCs to prepare themselves as new guardians of the chamber. The heroes can surprise the skeletal guardians at this point automatically. Failing the check, waiting too long, or any PC attempting to cross the archway to the Long Hall causes the skeletal guardians to attack immediately.

A PC attacking a jar or urn from the stairway will also draw the skeletons out to attack.

**Additional Reinforcements:** If you want to challenge the PCs more, have one of the urns contain an ochre jelly (core rulebook, page 241) held in magical stasis. A skeletal priest will knock over the urn as a quick action, and the jelly will seek out living flesh first.

#/Level of PCs	Skeletal Guardian (G)	Skeletal Priest (P)
4 x 2 <sup>nd</sup> level	4	1
5 x 2 <sup>nd</sup> level	5	1
6 x 2 <sup>nd</sup> level	6	1
4 x 3 <sup>rd</sup> level	6	1
5 x 3 <sup>rd</sup> level	6	2
6 x 3 <sup>rd</sup> level*	6	3

\* Also increase trap damage to 2d6 negative energy.

## TACTICS

The skeletal guardians have only a basic intelligence, and their orders are to kill anyone who enters the crypt and doesn't belong. They will pursue intruders beyond this chamber as well. Once engaged with an enemy, they continue to beat on that foe. They take orders, however, from a skeletal priest; though no longer flesh, the former priest's spirit still animates its skeletal frame, giving it very limited intelligence and allowing it to rasp out orders in a voice that seems to come from deep underground.

The guardians attempt to intercept any PCs that try to bypass the room and get through the far archway.

A priest stays back and uses its *repel living* attack to force opportunity attacks from its allies, while the guardians press forward to engage enemies. They all fight to the death (their final death hopefully!).

Once the last skeleton drops, the vases around the chamber stop exploding.

## LOOT

The small jars are obviously funerary jars. They contain bone dust and are inscribed with magic runes that contain the spiritual essence of the remains placed inside. The skeletons in the tall jars each had one item of value (mostly jewelry) placed in the jar with them, to tie their spirits to the world. Each item

is worth 1d4 x 10 gp. Alternately, you could replace one or two of those items with a +1 *Rune* with the Lich King's symbol on it.

## Icons

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Lich King or Priestess could use one or more of them to override a skeleton priest's orders to the guardians, perhaps making one guardian do something different with a DC 20 check as a move action (once per round).

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Lich King, Archmage, Elf Queen, Priestess, or the Three could use one or more of them to keep the spirit shards from exploding for 1d3 + 1 rounds.

## SKELETAL GUARDIAN

2<sup>nd</sup> level troop [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +7

Vulnerability: holy

**Rusty sword +7 vs. AC—6 damage**

**Resist weapon damage 12+:** When a weapon attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 12+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

AC 17  
PD 15 HP 32  
MD 11

## SKELETAL PRIEST

3<sup>rd</sup> level spoiler [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +7

Vulnerability: holy

**Curved dagger +7 vs. AC—8 damage**

*Natural even miss:* 2 damage.

**R: Repel living +8 vs. MD (1d2 nearby enemies)—5 psychic damage,** and the target is repelled by the priest (save ends). While under this effect, at the start of its turn, the target must roll a DC 15 Wisdom check; on a failure, the target uses its move action that turn to move away from the priest (and takes opportunity attacks for doing so).

*Natural roll is above target's Wisdom:* The DC is 20 instead.

**Resist weapon damage 16+:** When a weapon attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 16+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

## Nastier Special

**Draw living:** The priest's attack can draw the living to it instead, if the priest chooses. A target drawn to it will take opportunity attacks, if possible.

AC 19  
PD 12 HP 40  
MD 17



## NEXT STEPS

There's only one obvious exit from this chamber (unless you want others, GM). If you want the final location of this set of battles to connect back to this chamber, there might be a secret door here, but it will be very difficult to find (DC 25).

The archway with the statues opens into a narrow corridor of mortared stone that stretches away into the darkness. It leads to an empty chamber and then continues to the long hall in **Battle 2: Long Hall and Ghoul Ambush**. If the ward on the statues/archway isn't detected/disarmed (see **Terrain & Traps**), the next scene will be more difficult for the PCs.





## BATTLE 2: LONG HALL AND GHOUL AMBUSH

*The narrow corridor widens ahead, opening into a hall with carved stone walls and ceiling depicting various death scenes, usually with a familiar-looking skeletal figure with only one eye standing majestically over the living and the dead, who are acknowledging his dominion.*

### LOCATION DESCRIPTION

Hungry ghouls are locked in small cells behind marble panels. When a PC triggers the trap, they will emerge to attack. The panels might also be firing negative energy rays at the PCs if they didn't disable the ward in the entrance chamber.

The hall is 15 feet high, 30 feet wide, and nearly 100 feet long. The brick walls hold well-crafted 3-foot wide and 5-foot tall rectangular white marble slabs carved with various death scenes. The scenes are all depressing, however, unless you believe that being ruled over by an undead lich is fun. If the PCs trigger the trap, the wall slabs open to allow ghouls to attack while firing rays of negative energy at the PCs.

Another narrow corridor exits the opposite end of the hall after a hundred feet, but that won't be apparent to the PCs until

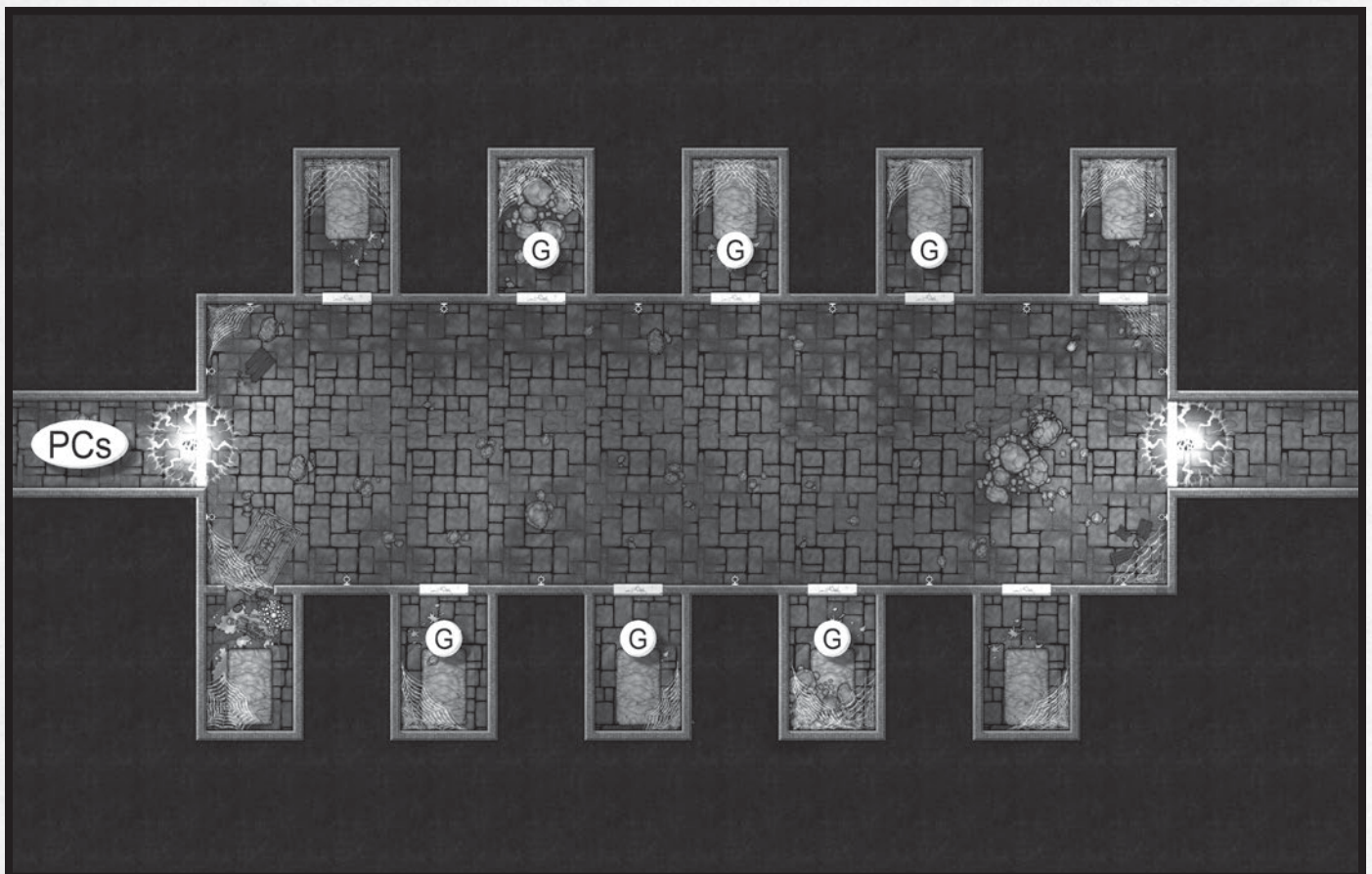
they move down the corridor or have a way of extending their light. They also won't be able to see the censer made from a polished human skull and strands of ligament lying on the floor in the corner near the far exit until they move at least halfway down the hall. (During the battle, if the PCs are having a tough time, feel free to give them each a free DC 20 check to notice it lying there, or DC 15 when they are closer to the exit.)

### TERRAIN & TRAPS

**Marble Slabs & Cells:** There is a small cell behind each marble slab. The cells hold ghouls that haven't fed in some time and are extremely hungry. When at least one PC is 40 feet into the hall (or if someone touches a slab), the marble slab panels will suddenly rotate sideways, creating exits from the cells.

This magical effect/trap will trigger unless those traveling the hall are carrying a magical censer that's burning the proper unholy incense, which of course, the PCs probably won't have, or if the PCs disabled the ward. With howls, the ghouls charge out of their cells to attack. If the PCs attempt to detect magic on the slabs, a successful DC 15 check will do so, as well as indicate that the magic makes the slabs move. A successful DC 20 check will reveal strong necrotic magic within each panel.

When the slabs rotate open, have each PC roll a DC 15 Wisdom check (or other check that makes sense for the character) to detect the danger. If at least half of the group succeeds, they aren't surprised. If not, two ghouls get to attack before the PCs roll initiative.







**Force Walls & Magic Rays:** If the PCs didn't detect/disarm the ward on the archway in the entrance chamber, a second magical trap in the hall activates when the slabs rotate open. First, a wall of magical force blocks off both exits from the hall (DC 20 check to dispel a wall). Then rays of negative energy blast at the PCs from different Lich King images carved in the panels, which are now facing down the hall toward them. A panel that fires a ray can rotate so it can fire into opposite cells, though you could allow cover bonuses for some angles. At the start of each round, choose a random PC in the hall and make the following attack from any marble panel.

**R: Negative energy ray +10 vs. PD (one random PC)**—The target takes a –2 penalty to all defenses and is vulnerable (save ends).

**Escalation die 4+:** The attack now targets two different random PCs.

## MONSTERS

There is one hungry ghoul per cell (though some cells may be empty). The ghouls are exceedingly hungry and will fight to the death as they seek nourishing flesh. Having been malnourished for so long, they are weaker than normal ghouls, and they show more signs than normal of having feasted on their own flesh. In addition, each one is missing its left eye.

**Additional Reinforcements:** If you want to challenge the PCs more, include a ghoul pusbuster (*Bestiary*, page 97) in one of the cells.

#/Level of PCs	Hungry Ghouls (G)
4 x 2 <sup>nd</sup> level	5
5 x 2 <sup>nd</sup> level	6
6 x 2 <sup>nd</sup> level	8
4 x 3 <sup>rd</sup> level	7*
5 x 3 <sup>rd</sup> level	8*
6 x 3 <sup>rd</sup> level	10*

\*Use the *paralyzing bite* nastier special for ghouls facing 3<sup>rd</sup> level characters as shown in the chart above.

## TACTICS

The ghouls are cunning and will only give up opportunity attacks to reach a vulnerable and staggered enemy. An evil GM will have them all try to reach and attack such an enemy, piling on to get their pound of flesh even at the expense of opportunity attacks.

The censer lying at the end of the hall still holds some power over the ghouls, even though the incense it once held is long gone. The hungry ghouls won't attack anyone holding the censer unless that creature attacks them first (and no, the PCs can't all put a hand on it; randomly choose one PC to gain the protection in that case). A cleric, paladin, or necromancer might even be able to use it to drive a ghoul away for 1d3 rounds with a DC 15 Charisma check as a standard action.

If a PC with the skull has icon relationships with the Priestess or the Lich King, they can include one ally in the protection the censer provides.

## LOOT

The cells contain a few coins and trinkets, which hold little meaning to the ghouls. There's a total of 40 gp in valuables to be had for anyone willing to spend a few minutes searching.

The *unholy censer* is made from a polished human skull and thus a bit grim, but it also holds remnants of the magic imbued within it from decades of dark rituals. Anyone displaying it while attempting to make a skill check against or to influence undead creatures gains a +2 bonus to their check. This item isn't intelligent like a true magic item, but it does emanate darkness and pain to anyone open to such psychic impressions.

If you feel like making the unholy censer into a permanent magic item, come up with an appropriate quirk. Otherwise, its magic doesn't last long after this adventure.

## ICONS

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Lich King, Archmage, or Elf Queen and who is an arcane spellcaster could use one or more of them to deflect an *energy ray* attack against them toward a ghoul by using a shield of magic. If a player suggests something like that, make it a DC 15 check, or just allow it.

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Lich King, Great Gold Wurm, or Priestess could use one or more of them to utter a holy (or unholy) prayer to imbue someone's weapon to deal holy damage (one weapon per advantage).



## HUNGRY GHOUL

2<sup>nd</sup> level spoiler [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +8

Vulnerability: holy

**Claws and bite +7 vs. AC—5 damage**

*Natural even hit:* The target is vulnerable (*attacks vs. it have crit range expanded by 2*) to attacks by undead until the end of the ghoul's next turn.

*Exceedingly hungry:* The ghoul gains a +1 attack bonus against a staggered enemy.

*Pound of flesh:* The ghoul's *claws and bite* attack deals +5 damage against vulnerable targets.

*Infected bite:* Any creature that is slain by a ghoul and not consumed will rise as a ghoul the next night.

### Nastier Specials

*Paralyzing bite:* When the hungry ghoul hits a vulnerable target with a natural even attack roll, the target is also stunned (save ends). If the target was made vulnerable from the *negative energy ray* attack from the panels, any hit will stun it instead.

AC	17	
PD	15	HP 30
MD	12	

### Additional Reinforcements

## GHOUL PUSBUSTER

4<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +7

Vulnerable: holy

**Feeble claws +8 vs. AC—9 damage**

**C: Vomit comet +8 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies)—10 ongoing damage, and the target is vulnerable (save ends both)**

*Natural even hit:* The target is hampered (save ends).

*Natural odd hit:* The target is dazed (save ends).

*Self-diminishing:* The ghoul pusbuster takes 2d6 damage for each creature it targets with this attack.

AC	19	
PD	16	HP 60
MD	13	

### NEXT STEPS

The magical walls of force around the exits dissipate after about a minute, allowing the PCs to press onward. The hall beyond narrows back down to a dark corridor that ends at a set of stone stairs leading downward beyond the edge of the PCs' light.

The stairs continue down some 120 feet, ending at the entrance to a large chamber. See **Battle 3: The Dark Altar and the Death Priests**.





## BATTLE 3: THE DARK ALTAR AND THE DEATH PRIESTS

*The stairs end at the entrance to a large octagonal chamber whose walls are decorated in bas-relief stonework depicting scenes of death and the superiority of the One-eyed Lord. At the back of the room, a large altar bearing the Lich King's symbol and visage looms over a white marble block stained black with the blood of countless sacrifices, and it almost physically emanates darkness and power. There are four archways exiting this unholy place, but the two nearest the altar are draped in shadows your light can't penetrate.*

### LOCATION DESCRIPTION

Lurking in the side passages off the main chamber are a group of wights, former death priests of the crypt, led by one named Martuk. They will know the PCs for intruders to their crypt and attack, even as the dark altar in this chamber blasts their enemies with pain.

The walls of the chamber are 80 feet across from each other with a 40-foot arched dome ceiling. The marble block is obviously a sacrificial table, as the stains and the channels cut into its surface for blood flow make clear.

There are two exits on the opposite walls from the entrance that flank the dark altar, and they are draped in unnatural

shadows. Beyond those exits are smaller prayer rooms, but the shadows block the PCs from seeing into them.

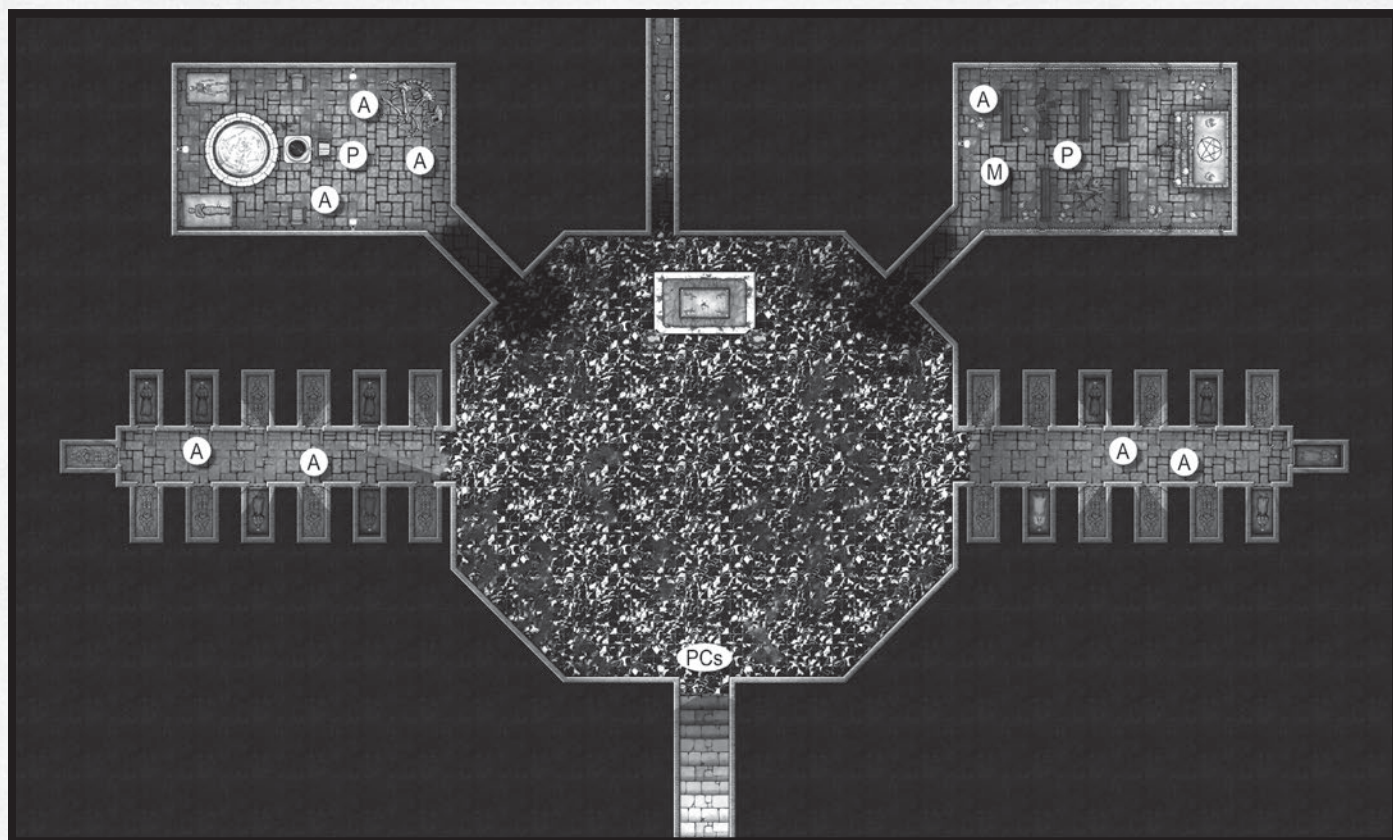
There are two more exits through marble block archways carved with scenes of the dead and dying. Down each 70-foot corridor are numerous crypts built into the walls on either side, floor to ceiling. A few have been opened and are empty, but the rest only hold old bones and dust.

There is also a fifth exit that isn't readily apparent—a narrow opening in the wall slightly behind the altar that is hard to see at a casual glance connects to a passage behind that wall that leads deeper into the crypt.

### TERRAIN & TRAPS

**Walls & Shadows:** Due to the stonework, the walls of this room offer relatively easy access to anyone who wants to climb them (DC 12 Strength or Dexterity check). The unnatural shadows can be pierced with a spell or magic that creates light that has a force of will behind it, but it requires a DC 18 check as a move action. The master of this crypt, a wight named Martuk, and his minions are in the prayer rooms and long crypts when the PCs enter the altar room.

**Hidden Wall Trap:** There is also a raised stone wall hidden in the stonework of the archway into the chamber from the stairs (DC 20 to detect). It will lower at Martuk's command (free action) as he enters the altar room. Anyone in the archway or near it must decide whether to move inside the chamber or stay out. Anyone further up the stairs must roll a normal save to get through safely; on a failure they take 3d6 damage from crushing but manage to get inside. Once it lowers, it's too heavy to lift without good handholds (make it clear to any PC thinking of staying outside that it will





probably take a while to get through). It takes 100 damage to break through the wall enough to enter the chamber.

**Dark Altar Trap:** During the battle, Martuk and the former death priests will each use a quick action during their turns to chant a song of death. While they are droning, at the start of each round (beginning on round 2), they channel the magic within the dark altar toward one PC of their choice. Make the following attack against that character:

**C: Blast of pain and suffering +8 vs. PD (one enemy in the chamber)**—The target is dazed (hard save ends, 16+).

*First failed save:* The target is weakened instead (hard save ends, 16+)

*Second failed save:* The target also begins making last gasp saves as the power of the altar attempts to draw their life force into it. On the fourth failure, their spirit is absorbed into the altar.

The target gains a +1 bonus to the save (and last gasp save) for each wight or acolyte mob that drops to 0 hp (so if 2 are slain, for example, the save is 14+).

## MONSTERS

Meditating in one of the prayer rooms are some of the former death priests who used the secret crypt but, in the end, succumbed to the Lich King's power and ended up cheating death only by becoming undead. The priests' leader, Martuk, is now a wight. The others are death priest wights. In the second prayer room and lingering in the two crypt corridors are the death acolyte mooks, those who served the crypt's keepers hoping to learn the secrets of death. They too are wights, although they have not fared well over the years. In the end, they all found the fate they deserved. Each wears tattered black robes bearing the Lich King's symbol.

**Additional Reinforcements:** If you want to challenge the PCs more, give Martuk a pair of human zombie (core rulebook, page 251) bodyguards who keep melee attackers off him.

#/Level of PCs	Martuk the Wight (M)	Death Priest Wight (P)	Death Acolyte Mook (A)
4 x 2 <sup>nd</sup> level	1	2	4 (1 mob)
5 x 2 <sup>nd</sup> level	1	2	8 (1 mob)
6 x 2 <sup>nd</sup> level	1	3	10 (2 mobs of 5)
4 x 3 <sup>rd</sup> level	1	3	8 (2 mobs of 4)
5 x 3 <sup>rd</sup> level	1	4	11 (mob of 6 and 5)
6 x 3 <sup>rd</sup> level	1	5	13 (mob of 6 and 7)

## TACTICS

Once at least half the PCs enter the chamber, or if anyone attempts to touch or defile (cleanse?) the altar, the wights and acolytes will scurry out of the prayer rooms and crypts to attack. Although the shadows hide the creatures from the PCs, the undead creatures' clawed toes and bare feet echo from the stone floors, so the PCs may hear them coming. Have the PCs roll DC 15 Wisdom checks to detect the wights' approach; as long as one PC succeeds the undead won't surprise them. When the undead enter the octagonal chamber, Martuk will say something disparaging to the PCs and

## COUNTERACTING THE DARK ALTAR

PCs with a background in arcane or divine magic, especially wizards and clerics, could choose to try to counteract the altar's attacks in a contest of wills. As a standard action, a PC can roll a DC 25 check to negate the altar's death magic for 1d3 rounds. Failure results in the altar absorbing some of the PC's magic and life force and they lose a recovery.

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Lich King, Archmage, Elf Queen, Great Gold Wurm, or Priestess could use one or more of them to make the check easier, or even automatic. One advantage can decrease the DC to 20; a second to DC 15; and a third guarantees success. But the advantages used must come from a single PC for each try, along with a story about why they have an advantage in the situation.

Since the death dirge the priests are singing is fueling the dark altar's magic, a bard who sings one of their songs can also attempt to create disharmony in the dirge (let bard players know this). Each time they roll to sustain a bard song, they can also make a DC 15 check using a music background to disrupt the dirge. On a success, roll twice for the dirge's next attack and take the lower result.

lower his hand. As he does this, the hidden wall lowers sealing off the stairs back (see **Terrain & Traps**). Then roll initiative.

Martuk and the death priest wights will allow the acolytes to engage the PCs, delaying if they need to. Then the death priests will enter combat, targeting the most dangerous foes to them (clerics of the Priestess, Wurm, or Crusader, then arcane spellcasters). They move into the dark altar chamber ahead of Martuk so they can intercept any PCs that try to get to him before they are able to act on their turn. Martuk will stay back to use his ranged abilities, but if a creature engages him, he will dig his claws in while he calls to the acolytes or death priests to assist him. They all fight to their true death.

Throughout the battle, all of the wights and acolytes will spend quick actions to chant their death song, which is a horrible droning dirge that makes living creatures' skin crawl.

## LOOT

If the PCs are in the crypt searching for something, that item or thing is resting upon the bloodstained marble table or upon the dark altar. If they weren't looking for anything, this is a good opportunity to introduce something a PC with a Lich King, Priestess, Archmage, or Emperor (in that order) relationship might find interesting or disturbing (for example, a cloak bearing the crest of some prominent family in line for a position of power; did it belong to a victim or member of the death cult?). There is little else of value in the octagonal chamber.

The prayer rooms, however, hold some wealth. There are a number of gold and silver chalices coated with dried blood worth 400 gp total (600 gp for 3<sup>rd</sup> level PCs).





There is also a +1 *Symbol of Dodging Doom* (page 292 of core rulebook) hanging on the wall from a peg.

## Icons

See the Counteracting the Dark Altar sidebar.

## DEATH ACOLYTE

*"We serve! Even beyond death we serve our master. His call allows nothing else."*

2<sup>nd</sup> level mook [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +9

Vulnerability: holy

**Death blade +7 vs. AC**—5 damage

*Lich King's loyal servants:* The first time the last mook of the mob drops to 0 hp, roll 1d3. That many mooks rise up to continue the fight during their next turn at full hit points.

*Song of death:* See Terrain & Traps above.

AC	17	
PD	15	HP 9 (mook)
MD	13	

*Mook:* Kill a death acolyte mook for every 9 damage you deal to the mob.

## DEATH PRIEST WIGHT

*"Such pretty lights. Come pretty lights. Shine bright for us."*

2<sup>nd</sup> level spoiler [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +5

Vulnerability: holy

**Draining claws +7 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—3 damage

*Natural 14+:* The target also takes 3 negative energy damage.

*Those who know the Gray:* Twice per battle, the death priest wight can let a target's life force guide its attack. As a move action before a *draining claws* attack, the wight expands the crit range of that attack by 4.

*Song of death:* See Terrain & Traps above.

AC	18	
PD	15	HP 35
MD	13	

## MARTUK, DEATH PRIEST WIGHT

*"There is an answer beyond death. And I know the secret!"*

4<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +7

Vulnerability: holy

**Corpse wand +9 vs. AC**—10 damage

*Natural even hit or miss:* Unless Martuk is staggered, the attack also deals 8 ongoing negative energy damage.

**R: Lifedrain ray +8 vs. PD**—7 negative energy damage, and 5 ongoing negative energy damage

*Master of death:* Once per battle when Martuk hits with an attack, he can attempt to drain the life force from the target as a free action. The target must roll an immediate save; on a failure, Martuk heals 10 hp and the target loses a recovery.

*Barrow-touch:* Martuk's attacks against enemies taking ongoing negative energy damage are against PD instead of AC and their crit range expands by 2.

*Song of death:* See Terrain & Traps above.

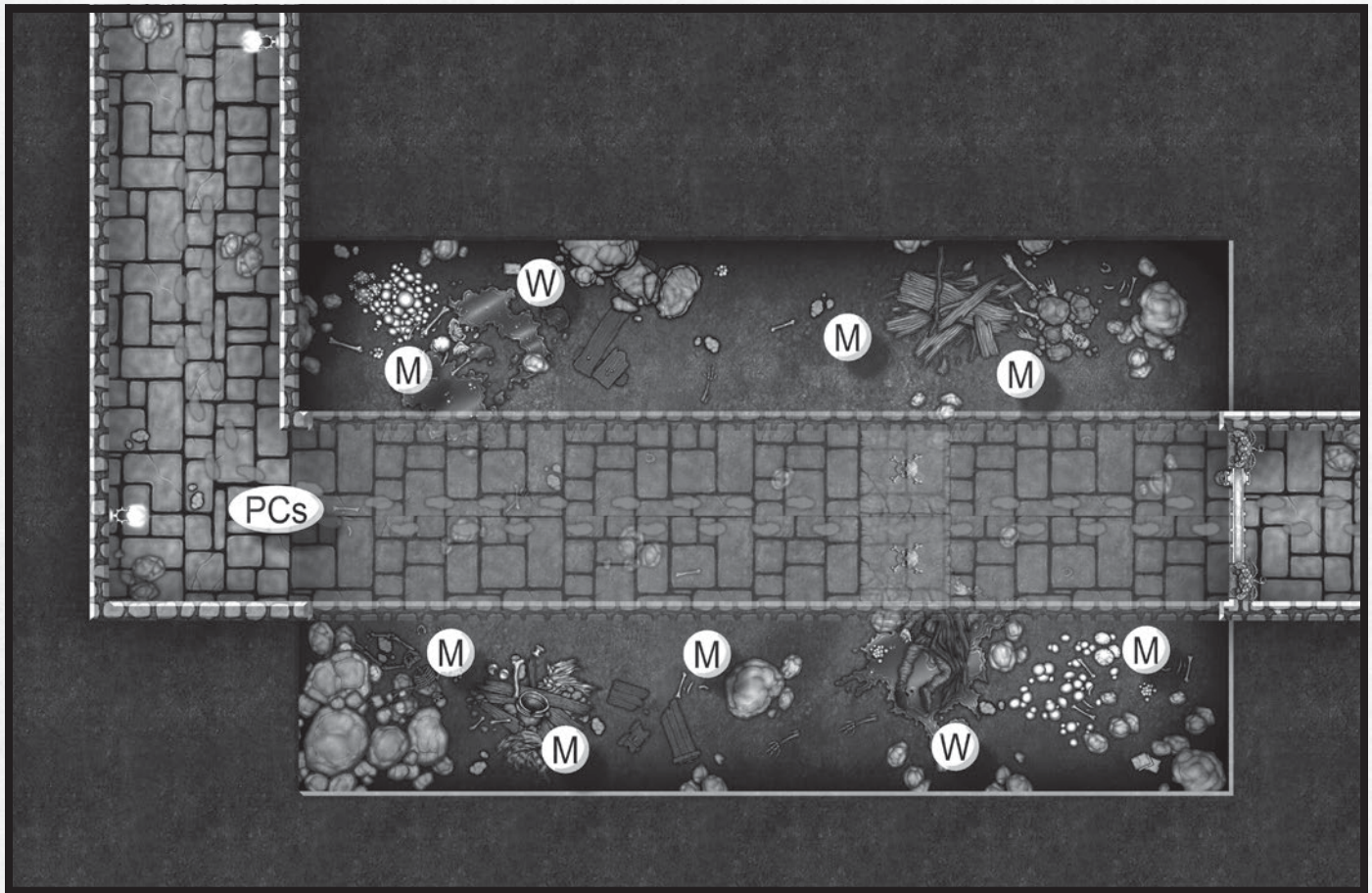
AC	20	
PD	17	HP 48
MD	15	

## NEXT STEPS

Once the wights and acolytes are put down and the area searched, the exit behind the altar becomes obvious. Beyond, there is another 10-foot wide brick and mortar corridor leading off into the darkness, but there seems to be a slight breeze coming from ahead that carries a stench with it. The way back is probably blocked by the stone wall; although the PCs could break through it, make moving forward seem like the easier route.

Before the PCs can leave the crypt, they'll have to deal with one last set of enemies. See **Battle 4: Zombies and the Annoying Skull**





## BATTLE 4: ZOMBIES AND THE ANNOYING SKULL

*The stench in the air doesn't improve, but the corridor you're in begins ramping upward at right angles. After a short climb, the corridor straightens out before finally ending at large iron door some fifty feet distant with a white humanoid skull attached to it where a handle might be. A pair of bas-relief gargoyle heads flank the door on either side, staring back down the corridor.*

### LOCATION DESCRIPTION

Before the PCs can leave, there's one final confrontation for them in the form of an annoying undead skull, a trapped floor pit, and a pack of zombies waiting below to tear the flesh off them. The talking skull might be the worst of it.

The corridor is 10 feet high and wide and 50 feet long. Although the door and statues might seem to be the challenge here, the true battle will take place below the corridor. The thin flagstone floor is built atop thick wooden doors hinged to drop those in the corridor to a larger chamber beneath. The drop is short (20 feet), but the hinged ceiling doors will be out of easy reach from below (15 feet up).

The chamber beneath is 30 feet wide and 50 feet long. When the floor parts, the reek of decay will fully assail the PCs as they (potentially) fall. The source of the odor will be obvious to the

PCs as they recover from their fall—standing around the edges of the chamber are numerous rotting corpses.

The gargoyles framing the door in the corridor above are harmless atmospheric decoration. The iron door has a single pull ring, upon which the skull rests. But the skull is more than only ornamentation.

The skull holds a spirit inside like a haunted skull, but less deadly. The spirit, however, belongs to a death priest named Korthas who was willing to undergo the skull ritual to try to attain lichdom. He found a form of immortality, just not the one he was hoping for.

### TERRAIN & TRAPS

**False Floor Trap:** The main trap in this final chamber is the false floor, hinged so that the middle parts and drops those standing on it to the chamber below. Two things trigger the floor's collapse. The first is a wide pressure plate under the flagstone floor two-thirds of the way down the corridor that a PC walking down the corridor will step on unless it's detected. The second is Korvas the skull; when a PC gets within about 10 feet, it will fly into the air with eyes blazing eldritch energy. The release of weight from the pull ring triggers the trap, and Korthas will cackle out something along the lines of "have a nice fall" in a horrid magical voice as the still-attached jawbone mouths the words.

Detecting the floor panel trigger or the trapped floor requires a DC 20 check, since this trap is well made. Disarming or bypassing the floor trigger once the PCs know it's there is easier, requiring only a DC 15 check (though failure results in the floor trap triggering). Anyone with a magical background can detect the dark magic



infusing Korthas' skull with a DC 15 check from nearby, but the nature of the magic (undead animation) won't be obvious.

When the floor trap triggers, the floor splits in the middle and each side slams to the wall on hinges. Anyone in the middle of the corridor (or who didn't say that they were staying close to the walls of the corridor) will fall. Those next to the walls, near the entrance to this area, or close to the iron door have a chance to grab something to keep from falling if they can succeed on a DC 18 Dexterity check (though they might be in a precarious position requiring further checks each round to avoid falling).

PCs who fall take 2d6 damage.

**Annoying Skull:** Korthas will float down to the chamber below, hurling curses and insults at the PCs. It will do annoying things each round such as sit on a zombie's shoulder and hurl insults as the zombie attacks, direct wormtongue zombies to pick off those above, and flit through the air out of reach. It can also cause a bit of real trouble. Each round, Korthas picks one PC to pester. That character must roll a DC 15 Wisdom check at the start of their turn; if they fail, they take a -2 penalty to attacks and skill checks that turn.

Korthas is a terrain feature rather than a monster. He's more fun if he sticks around until the end of the battle. If some PC decides he's worth an attack, he has the following stats: **HP 30; AC 22; PD 22; MD 22**. When he takes 30 or more damage, he's not slain, but will simply fly up out of the pit and leave, unless the killing blow is a critical hit, in which case that shatters the skull.



## MONSTERS

The chamber below is filled with the restless dead, zombie mooks whose spirits fueled many of the rites performed in the secret crypt, while their bodies were discarded in this chamber if they weren't fed to the ghouls. The death priests used a dark ritual to greatly slow down the decomposition of flesh in this chamber, and while some of the zombies have been here for some time, they are still mostly intact.

Among the restless dead, some of them were infused with death magic when they were created, which warped them in strange and (even more) unnatural ways. Those creatures, called wormtongue zombies due to their extending appendage made from intestine, now rule the roost so to speak.

**Additional Reinforcements:** If you want to challenge the PCs more, include a big zombie (core rulebook, page 251) of an ogre among the others. If it's too tough, you could reduce its hit point by 40 to show it is older than the others and has rotted more.

#/Level of PCs	Restless Dead Mook (M)	Wormtongue Zombie (W)
4 x 2 <sup>nd</sup> level	10 (1 mob)	1
5 x 2 <sup>nd</sup> level	7 (1 mob)	2
6 x 2 <sup>nd</sup> level	12 (2 mobs)	2
4 x 3 <sup>rd</sup> level	10 (1 mob)	2
5 x 3 <sup>rd</sup> level	9 (1 mob)	3
6 x 3 <sup>rd</sup> level	15 (2 mobs)	3

## TACTICS

The restless dead aren't intelligent, but they have been commanded to destroy any living flesh that comes among them, and they will do so doggedly without attempting to disengage once they have an enemy within their grasp.



The wormtongue zombies will follow Korthas's directives to use their tongue attack to good effect—namely lashing onto PCs who might still be clinging to walls above the battle to yank them from their perches. Beyond that, their tactics will be simple: kill the living.

### LOOT

The zombies have little of value; what they had was taken when they were killed. You could sprinkle a few coins around the room, usually stuck in the rotting corpses, for fun.

You could also add one marginally valuable trinket that identifies one of the bodies in some way. After finding it, perhaps the PCs seek to return a charm bracelet with a picture inside to a loved one who knew the zombie in life, or perhaps a loved one from the zombie's former life sees a PC carrying the item and confronts them.

Of course, if the PCs want to try to capture Korthas so they can have a talking skull, feel free to roll with it. But while Korthas might provide some useful information about the undead (like a lore bottle), he will also employ subtle means of making life difficult for the PCs carrying him (calls to undead to attack that PC, or every once in a while change one of the 6s to a 5 on icon dice rolls, especially with the Lich King or Priestess).

### Icons

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Lich King could use one or more of them to get Korthas to stop pestering people and relate something useful with a DC 15 check as a move action, or with no check by using an icon advantage. He knows secret information that the PC is seeking, or possibly the location of a hidden panel in the corridor above by the door that holds a one-use magic item. Failure means that Korthas will direct more of the zombies to attack that character.

Any PC could use an advantage to convince Korthas to travel with them once the battle is over....

## RESTLESS DEAD

*3<sup>rd</sup> level mook* [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +3

Vulnerability: holy

**Rotting fist +7 vs. AC**—5 damage

*Natural even hit:* The restless dead can make a *bite* attack against the target as a free action.

[*Special trigger*] **Bite +6 vs. PD**—1 damage, and the target is dazed until the end of its next turn

*Headshot:* A critical hit against a restless dead deals triple damage instead of the normal double damage for a crit.

<b>AC</b> 18	
<b>PD</b> 16	<b>HP 12 (mook)</b>
<b>MD</b> 11	

*Mook:* Kill a restless dead mook for every 12 damage you deal to the mob.

## WORMTONGUE ZOMBIE

*Double-strength 2<sup>nd</sup> level archer* [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +5

Vulnerability: holy

**Grasping claws +7 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—5 damage

*Natural 16+:* The target is partially blinded by the zombie's claws (save ends). While blinded, it takes a -2 penalty to attacks and defenses.

**C: Snaking, entrail tongue +7 vs. PD**—10 damage, and the zombie grabs the target with its tongue and tries to pull the target to it (DC 15 Strength check to resist; failure mean it engages the target, plus possible falling damage)

*Natural even hit:* The target takes 3 acid damage and is automatically pulled next to the zombie (no Strength check), who engages it.

*Headshot:* A critical hit against a wormtongue zombie deals +40 extra damage to it.

<b>AC</b> 18	
<b>PD</b> 13	<b>HP 80</b>
<b>MD</b> 16	

### NEXT STEPS

Beyond the iron door is a set of stairs that leads wherever the GM wants, either back to the entrance chamber, out of the crypt, or someplace else fun (if the PCs entered the crypt through a portal, a new portal opens and takes them somewhere else if they perform the proper ritual as outlined in their book).

Feel free to have the first PCs to open the iron door get marked by the Lich King's magic, giving them a 1-point conflicted relationship die with the Lich King until their next full heal-up.

## SECRET CRYPT STORY ENDINGS

Here are outcomes for each story opening, detailing what success or failure might mean.

If the PCs did face all four battles, remember to give them a full heal-up.

### THE DARK RUNE

**Success:** When the PCs exit the crypt, someone is waiting for them. It might be a servant of the Lich King and its minions who detected the intrusion into the crypt and have come to punish the heroes. More likely it's a representative of another icon that is enemies with the Lich King; they have an offer for such capable heroes....

**Failure:** The PCs are each cursed with a "Death Mark" as they exit the crypt—the magic rune appears on their flesh somewhere. While they have the mark, each time they heal using a recovery, they must subtract 1 from each recovery dice roll (minimum 1). Only a living non-PC death priest of the Lich King can remove the curse (probably for a favor), or maybe a lot of icon advantages with the Priestess.



### A MYSTERIOUS SEEKER

**Success:** After leaving the crypt, when the group next levels up or takes a full heal-up, the gaunt, robed and hooded figure with the feminine voice will seek them out. It/she asks the PCs for the item they agreed to retrieve in exchange for revealing the crypt. If the PCs deliver the item, it/she will chuckle and thank them. Then it will tell them of another item it seeks, offering in exchange some knowledge or item that the PCs wish to have. And so on.

**Failure:** When the PCs don't succeed, or if they fail to deliver the promised item after successfully exiting the crypt, nothing seems to happen at first. Eventually, when the robed figure finds them again, it will quickly move close and touch one of the PCs, placing a curse upon them that draws the attention of the Lich King's servants, or that allows undead to more easily harm them (undead attacks against them gain a +1 bonus) until the item is retrieved/delivered. Or it will have a much-higher level undead ally attack them to try to take the item by force.

### MAGIC SKULL

**Success:** As the PCs leave the crypt, purple eldritch fire erupts again from the one-eyed skull mortared into the stone. It laughs maniacally and cackles that there will be more jobs in the future for graverobbers such as them, and it delivers on that promise from time to time, showing up in the oddest places.

**Failure:** The skull marks them as enemies of the Lich King doomed to die in the near future (-2 penalty to death saves until they level up, they must each succeed on a hard save or be afflicted by a wasting sickness, or another fitting option of your choice).

### DEATH'S MASK

**Success:** A strange, glowing spirit waits for the PCs outside the crypt. It wears a glass skull mask similar to the one that shattered,

which obscure its features. If it's the same mask, there's no sign of the damage that previously occurred to it. In an otherworldly voice it/he commends the heroes for their work and its/his freedom. Whether the figure now has good or ill intentions in the world is unclear, as it becomes ethereal and fades into the wind (possibly after a conversation with the PCs).

**Failure:** The masked figure appears and invades the body of one PC (probably one with a Lich King relationship), possessing it. To the PCs, it looks like the figure passes through them and out the back, fading away with a scream. The figure subtly asserts its influence (but has total control) to have the PC seek out and find a companion glass mask (with female features) that's held someplace else dangerous, without revealing the possession directly. Exorcising the spirit is a task as difficult as gaining the mask.

### OPENING OLD TOMES

**Success:** If the PCs kept the book that opened the portal, at some later point within the next few full heal-ups, a very old halfling in simple gray robes will approach the group. He's missing most of his teeth and moves slowly with age, but he holds out his hands and asks for the rune-covered secret crypt book, saying the work is now done. He won't say who he is and only repeatedly asks for the book. Once he gets it, he lets out a death rattle and fades to ghostly form as he starts to walk away. One of the PCs dreams of the book often, perhaps finding it again in the near future with some secret inside.

**Failure:** If the PCs don't succeed, or fail to hand over the book, when the halfling finally appears, he either becomes a wraith that attacks them, or becomes a ghost that haunts them (with disturbing and penalizing effects such as scaring people who the PCs are trying to talk to) until they hand over the book AND perform some difficult service that serves the Lich King.





# LICH KING: THE LICH'S SPIRE

LEVEL RANGE: 5–6



The themes of this set of battles are death magic, elven corruption, and the madness that comes with being a lich. This set of battle scenes works best in uncivilized or scarcely populated areas within or near a forest.

Some years ago, the high elf wizard Cornellion Galifazius finally combined his fear of death with his love of magic and himself. He chose to make contact with the Lich King's 'people' to gain the secret of becoming a lich. He got what he needed, and the Lich King gained another thrall, though Cornellion thinks of himself as free.

In the time since, Cornellion completed the ritual and passed into undeath. With his newfound magic and knowledge, he gained powerful undead servants from his icon and from the surrounding lands near his forest spire, an ancient fossilized goldenwood tree of immense size riddled with tree-root caves below. Soon the elves and other people in the area became fearful of the region, especially at night when Cornellion's undead packs roamed the woods seeking humanoids for the lich to experiment upon.

Recently, Cornellion joined the Undying Peerage (*13<sup>th</sup> Age Bestiary*, page 134) and became a lich count. Buoyed by his title, his plots have grown bolder, partly because his newfound brothers and sisters of the Peerage chide him for lacking truly powerful servants. Cornellion has overreached, sending his creatures into the village of Dheirone on the edge of his domain.

The lich gained new servants from the raid, but also brought attention to himself from a number of icons who wish to see his evil snuffed out before it can grow any further.

## THE LICH'S SPIRE STORY OPENINGS

- **Overstepping Bounds:** The PCs are approached (or ordered) by the servants of the one of the icons to rid the world of Cornellion the Lich. The creature has been sending undead raiders from its forest spire to the village of Dheirone and must be stopped. The PCs are encouraged to act quickly.
- **An Idiot Upstart:** One of the PCs with a positive or conflicted relationship with the Lich King is approached through intermediaries of someone on the Undying Peerage. Cornellion is a fool with no understanding of the long game and is trying to gain power too quickly. This rival, a countess

named Amelia Velassin, wishes to see the upstart eradicated. She would also be willing to pay well, in magic, for any of his spellbooks and scrolls.

- **Culling the Peerage:** One or more PCs with a negative or conflicted relationship with the Lich King is passed information about Cornellion by those who seek to see all liches given their final rest. The PCs gain directions to his lair, an old tree within a dark wood near the village of Dheirone. As usual, they will be compensated for completing the job.
- **Enemies of Death Magic:** A servant of either the Priestess or the Archmage approaches the PCs. She offers them knowledge about something they seek, gold, or a cache of one-shot magic items to cleanse the lair of a lich dedicated to the One-eyed Lord. The creature has been sending undead raiders into the local area to acquire prisoners for some foul reason, and the thing needs to be slain permanently.

## ALTERNATE ICONS



**Archmage:** Most of the details could remain the same, with servants of the Archmage wanting to destroy the lich, or perhaps wanting to reverse the ritual to regain their comrade. Use more constructs and less undead as guardians, including a live naga.



**Priestess:** Cornellion was actually a priest of some importance to the Priestess' organization, but he went mad after reading some dubiously holy scrolls. High-ranking clerics who serve the Priestess wish for the priest, who turned himself into a lich, to be put to rest and the scrolls retrieved and returned to them at all costs. Or maybe just destroyed, but they'd want to see definite proof of that destruction, so returned is better.

## ICONS IN PLAY

Characters that have relationships (and story-guide advantages) with the Lich King, Archmage, Priestess, and maybe the Elf Queen should be able to shine in these battle scenes. More so than PCs with other icon relationships, feel free to give such PCs extra knowledge about the opposition, make checks to pull off fun actions the players might suggest, and use their advantages to particularly good effect, such as negating or bypassing some of the magical traps scattered throughout the scenes.



## THE LICH'S SPIRE OVERVIEW

The first battle occurs while the PCs are traveling to the lich's spire, along a forest path that passes through an old battlefield. Cornellion controls undead warriors from an ancient battle that guard the approach to his place of power. Note that this battle is a little easier than most, but the lich fight later on is a bit tougher to balance it out.

When the heroes reach the spire, the only obvious entrance is through a cave mouth set among the roots of the massive fossilized tree. The opening leads among and around the roots, where a zombie drider will rise to attack while a group of dark elf wights slink down from the shadows among the ceiling roots to strike.

Half way up the spire, the PCs will enter one of the lich's studies that he used when still living. In Battle 3, a bone naga and a pair of flaming skulls who were former rivals of Cornellion guard the chamber.

At the top of the spire, Cornellion is busy making plans, doing magical research, or performing some other evil mastermind operation. A guardian mirror golem watches over him, and it will absorb attacks directed at the lich. The lich can also call upon a group of spire skeletons—undead with fossilized bones that step out of the walls—to defend him.

GM, feel free to expand upon these battles to add fights in the woods leading to the spire, or within in the spire itself. Meetings with weird undead connected to the Lich King or other icons would also fit in well.

The battles outlined here can take place over a few hours or days if you prefer to stretch things out. Since the Lich King is in play, we suggest flavoring descriptions and battle scenes with the corruption of undead, ancient magic, and secrets best left unexplored.

See story endings after the final battle for options on what happens after the PCs finish the last battle.

## BATTLE I: ANCIENT FOREST BATTLEGROUND

*The path you're following through the dark wood to the lich's spire passes into a more open area of thick turf with few trees but plenty of small piles of stones. You're a third of the way through it when you realize it must have been some ancient battlefield. The stones mark the graves of those who fell in battle. Then a light mist rises and you see ghostly forms emerge: on one side a drow champion leading many warriors, and on the other a mixed group of wood elves, gnomes, and halflings. In the space of a few heartbeats you see the dark elves overcome the opposition but at heavy cost, as "slain" combatants sink back into the ground. As the battle ends, the drow champion turns her burning eyes upon you and points as she commands in a hollow voice, "They are the last. Slay them and we are victorious." The drow wraiths turn toward you, aided by a band of emaciated, sallow-skinned wood elves and halflings that rise from the turf nearby.*

### LOCATION DESCRIPTION

Unless the PCs come up with some creative way to get the undead to return to their graves (probably involving a number



of icon advantages for each "side" (wights/wraiths), these undead will attack until destroyed.

The battlefield is an open area of turf, with a scattering of small hazelnut trees. The only other significant terrain is a few old stumps, a couple of rotting logs, numerous small stone piles, and one wet area where a mucky pool has formed in the turf.

The wraiths start far away from the PCs, and the wights are nearby between the wraiths and the PCs. Where each wight rose from the turf, there's a shallow depression.

### TERRAIN & TRAPS

**Hazelnut Trees:** These three trees are only 15 to 20 feet high, with trunks about a foot in diameter, providing little cover, if any, to normal-sized creatures. Climbing one only requires a DC 15 Dexterity check, with failure resulting in broken branches but no real damage as the creature plummets back to the turf.

**Mucky Pool:** A 20 x 15 foot pool of muddy water about 4 inches deep fills an area halfway between the PCs and wights, on the right. Any creature moving through the pool, or fighting while standing in it, risks losing their balance and must roll a DC 20 Dexterity check. On a failure, they fall and/or stop moving (no effect for undead). When this happens, blackened hands and arms of undead flesh will burst forth to grab the creature, and they are stuck (save ends). The hands aren't an actual enemy, just a terrain hazard.

GM, if you like, you could have this effect happen any time a PC rolls a natural 1 with an attack or skill check, anywhere on the battlefield.



## MONSTERS

The champion is a greater wraith, and the other dark elves are wraiths. They begin the battle far away. The nearby group of wood elves and halflings are wights.

If the PCs try to convince these undead not to fight, the wights will be more easily influenced since the dark elf spirits started nastier and more cruel and haven't improved with age.

**Additional Reinforcements:** If you want to challenge the PCs more, have the battlefield come alive with spectral arms that emerge from the ground, trying to reach the PCs. At the start of each round, make an *ice-cold ghost blade* attack (wraith) against a random PC. On a hit, in addition to damage, the target is stuck (save ends) as grasping undead hands try to pull them into the turf.

#/Level of PCs	Greater Wraith (G)	Dark Elf Wraith (D)	Wight* (W)
4 x 5 <sup>th</sup> level	1	1	4
5 x 5 <sup>th</sup> level	1	2	5
6 x 5 <sup>th</sup> level	1	4	5
4 x 6 <sup>th</sup> level	1	3	6
5 x 6 <sup>th</sup> level	2	3	6
6 x 6 <sup>th</sup> level	2	4	9

\* Each wight uses its nastier special.

## TACTICS

The wraiths will follow their elven nature and attack enemies singly, unless there's a staggered enemy, in which case they'll swarm it using *spiraling assault*, if possible.

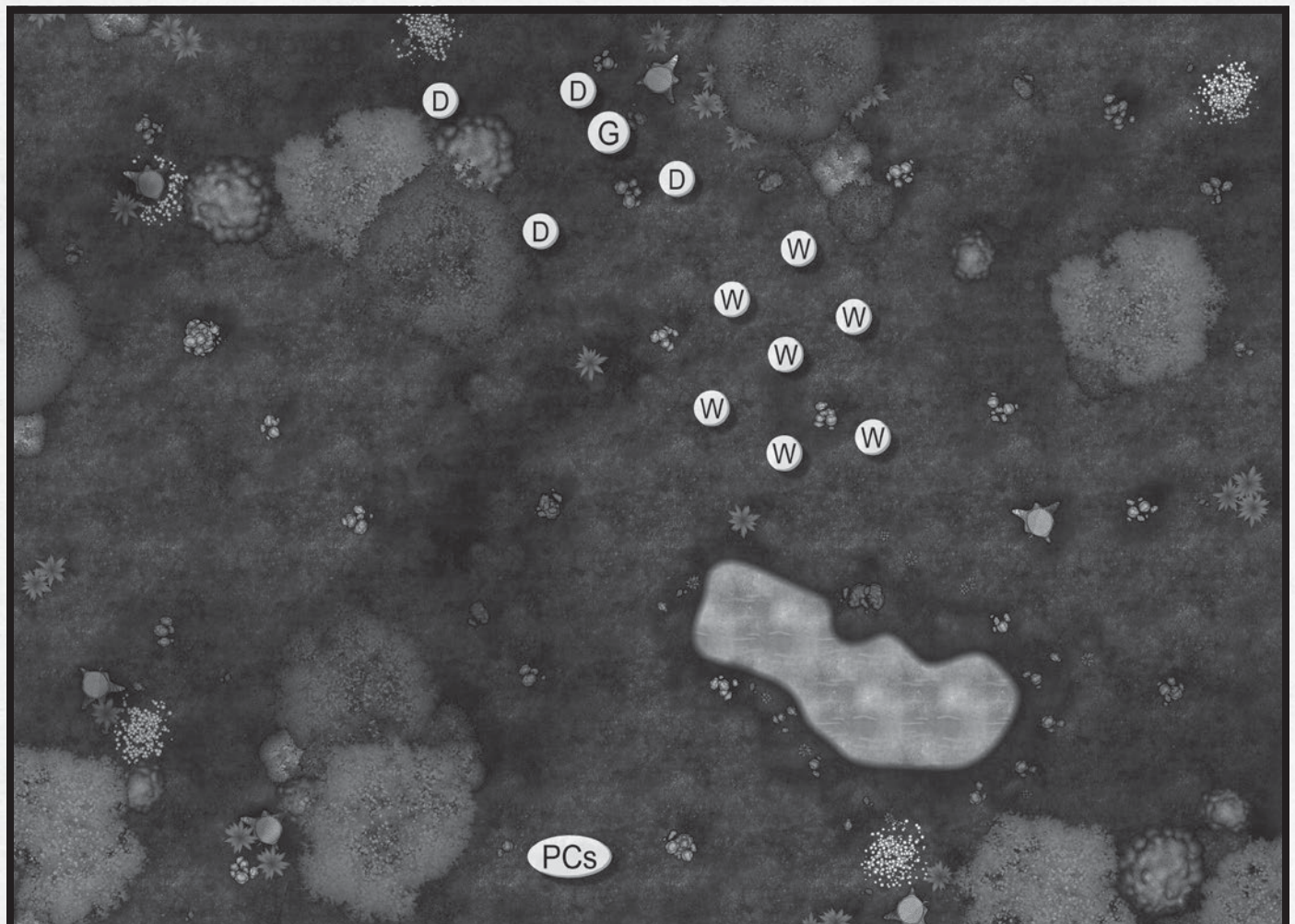
The wights attack as a pack, seeking dark elf PCs first, and then whoever is closest.

## LOOT

A few of the wights have pieces of simple jewelry embedded in their husk-like flesh. There's a total of 80 gp in valuables that can be pried out of them this way.

## ICONS

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Lich King, Elf Queen, Priestess, Emperor, or maybe the Archmage or High Druid could use one or more of them to convince some of the undead to return to their rest (most likely the wights). Doing so would require a Charisma check, with the number of undead leaving the battle depending on the roll and number of advantages used (minimum 1). The story behind them leaving might have something to do with knowing who fought this battle and why.





## GREATER WRAITH

7<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +12

Vulnerability: holy

**Ice-cold ghost blade +12 vs. PD**—20 negative energy damage

*Natural 16+:* The target is also weakened until the end of its next turn.

**C: Spiraling assault +10 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies)**—15 negative energy damage, and after the attack the wraith teleports to and engages with one target it hit

*Limited use:* The wraith can use *spiraling assault* only when the escalation die is even.

*Drain life:* The wraith heals half the damage it deals when it hits with a *natural 18+* attack roll.

*Flight:* The wraith hovers and zooms about.

*Ghostly:* This creature has *resist damage 16+* to all damage (yes, even holy damage) except force damage, which damages it normally.

A wraith can move through solid objects, but it can't end its movement inside them.

AC 21	
PD 16	HP 94
MD 19	

## WRAITH

5<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +10

Vulnerability: holy

**Ice-cold ghost blade +10 vs. PD**—14 negative energy damage

*Natural 16+:* The target is also weakened (save ends).

**C: Spiraling assault +10 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies)**—10 negative energy damage, and after the attack the wraith teleports to and engages with one target it hit

*Limited use:* The wraith can use *spiraling assault* only when the escalation die is even.

*Flight:* The wraith hovers and zooms about.

*Ghostly:* This creature has *resist damage 16+* to all damage (yes, even holy damage) except force damage, which damages it normally.

A wraith can move through solid objects, but it can't end its movement inside them.

### Nastier Specials

*Drain life:* The wraith heals half the damage it deals when it hits with a *natural 18+* attack roll.

AC 19	
PD 14	HP 66
MD 17	

## WIGHT

4<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +7

Vulnerability: holy

**Sword +9 vs. AC**—10 damage

*Natural even hit or miss:* Unless the wight is staggered, the attack also deals 8 ongoing negative energy damage.

### Nastier Specials

*Barrow-touch:* The wight's attacks against enemies taking ongoing negative energy damage are against PD instead of AC and have an expanded crit range of 18+.

AC 21	
PD 17	HP 48
MD 13	

### NEXT STEPS

Once the undead are defeated, the PCs reach the lich's spire after a few more hours of travel. They see the massive goldenwood tree, branchless and discolored from fossilization, rising above the rest of the forest from a small wooded hillside. At the base is a cave mouth among the exposed roots, with no other obvious entrances.

When the PCs are ready to enter the spire, go to **Battle 2: Entering the Spire**.

## ADD A LITTLE SPIRIT TO THE BATTLE SCENES

For a bit of fun, or as a way to add more story to the game, consider this option. After the battle, a spirit will rise from one of the small halfling wight bodies. This spirit is clearly a halfling. He will get up, look around, and say, "I feel odd. What happened?" His name is Rolly Folger III, a halfling from Dheirone from many years past.

Rolly remembers going with the group of wood elves and other villagers to try to put a stop to a band of raiding drow. There was a fight and... now he's in the field, and a spirit. Why he didn't pass on is a mystery.

Play Rolly as funny, annoying, or mysterious. He'll follow the PCs around asking questions. How they treat this lost spirit will define his actions. If they are nice to him, try to explain his situation, and even maybe help him pass on (he won't, at first), then he continues to follow them, popping in and out of existence, and helps them. At the GM's discretion, twice total during the rest of these battle scenes, he helps out in some way, giving a PC a reroll on a d20.

If they treat him poorly, ignore him, or try to harm him (they probably can't), Rolly gets vindictive. He follows the PCs, popping in and out, commenting on their failures. At the GM's discretion, twice total during the rest of these battle scenes, he hinders the group in some way, forcing a PC to reroll a successful d20 roll once (like on a crit or successful skill check or save).

When the PCs destroy the lich, Rolly can pass on to the afterlife... or not, if you like him and want him to trail the PCs for a while. Perhaps a new adventure involves actually finding a way for him to gain his final rest.



## BATTLE 2: ENTERING THE SPIRE

*The thick, fossilized roots of the huge tree form around a cave opening at its base. As you enter, the light quickly fades, though ahead you can see a bit of dim phosphorescence. The strong smell of rotting fungus assails you as you round a bend that opens into a mid-sized hollow directly under the tree among its roots. In the center of the chamber is a thick patch of mushrooms and fungal growths, sprouting from a shallow pool formed from water dripping from the roots. On the far side of the chamber, a ramp cuts upward toward the spire.*

### LOCATION DESCRIPTION

The chamber is roughly circular, 40 x 40 with plenty of nooks and crannies (and shadowy areas) created by the roots that form its walls. The ceiling rises to about 15 feet. The pool at the center with the fungal blooms is very shallow, holding only an inch or two of liquid, with lighter and darker spots where it looks like it has soaked into the ground covering of fungus.

The chamber does contain enemies, however. The fungal patch is real, and harmless, but it conceals a nasty foe. A large undead drider is lodged into a depression there, with its torso lying flat and almost completely hidden by the mushrooms and

its legs bent under its abdomen. Actual fungus and mushrooms grow from its rotting back, which lies under the pool of water (showing a darker spot). It will unfurl to attack anyone who comes near it (see Ambush in **Terrain & Traps**).

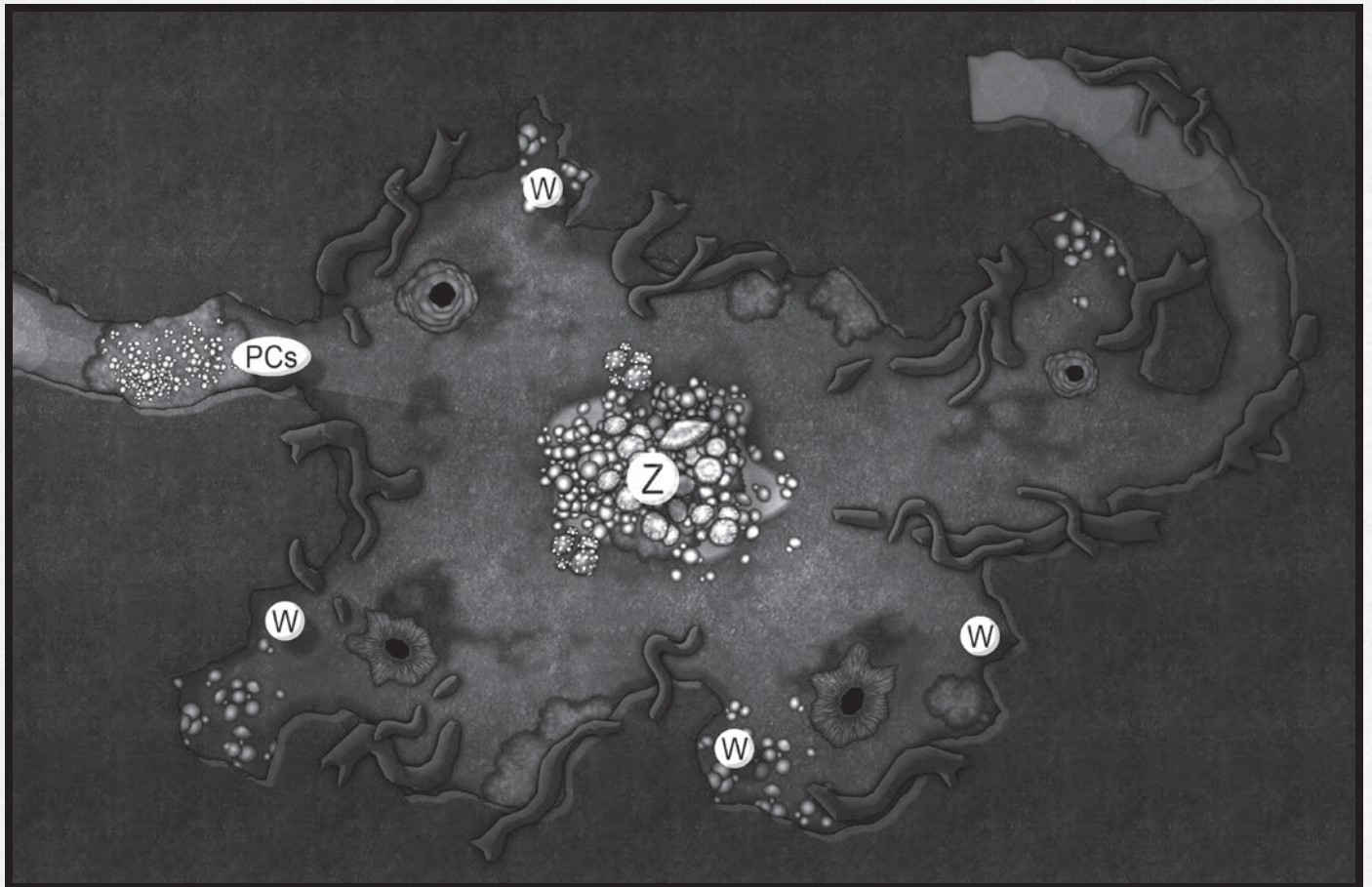
When that happens, the drow wights that are lodged into ceiling cavities among the semi-fossilized roots around the edges of the chamber will lower themselves to the ground behind those dealing with the zombie.

### TERRAIN & TRAPS

**Ambush:** The drider has been instructed to not attack until an enemy gets next to it (the pool). At that point it will suddenly lunge upward and strike, then the wights will move up behind the PCs at the end of the round. To avoid being surprised, have each PC investigating the chamber roll a DC 25 Wisdom check. If more than half succeed, the PCs aren't surprised as they spot a telltale sign. If they are surprised, the drider zombie gets to attack before initiative is rolled.

**Central Pool:** The pool is only 6 x 8 feet, and really only an inch or two deep where dripping water from the ceiling pools around the drider before draining through cracks under its body. The "stone" is discolored in and around the pool, being darker where the drider's body is, and lighter where the fungus grows out of the fossilized rock. If the PCs noticed the ambush, they'll see the outline of the drider's body and the water seeping into the ground around it.

**Walls & Nooks & Crannies:** The walls of this chamber are made out of soil and fossilized tree roots. The roots are as hard as stone.







There are many small hiding spots among the fossilized roots, especially near the ceiling. If the PCs notice the ambush, those looking at the walls or ceiling will see wights hidden among the shadows of these places.

**Fungus:** The fungus is harmless though a bit odd.

## MONSTERS

The zombie drider is not intelligent and no longer has any of its spellcasting abilities. It's simply meant to take the attention (and attacks) of intruders until the wights can get their hands on them.

The wights are all dark elves, former enemies of Cornellion who tried to sneak into the tower to murder him. Now they only serve in undeath. They are spread around the chamber among the shadows.

**Additional Reinforcements:** If you want to challenge the PCs more, include a live drider (core rulebook, page 223) named Nenome that assists the lich with his studies and provides

protection for the spire that comes from a living guardian. She emerges from the tunnel up one round after the battle starts.

## TACTICS

If the PCs are surprised, the zombie drider gets one attack in before initiative is rolled. If not, it lunges upward revealing itself with a spray of water and fungus, then initiative is rolled. It focuses attacks on the enemy engaged with it who damaged it last.

The wights go last in the round, waiting for the zombie drider to attack and then the PCs to move forward and engage it. Spellcasters and others on the periphery are their preferred targets.

## LOOT

These undead have been stripped clean of all valuables. If you want to throw the PCs a bone here, perhaps some of the mushrooms growing from the back of an undead drider could be valuable to necromancer types.

## Icons

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Lich King, Elf Queen, Prince of Shadows, the Three (the Black), or maybe the Diabolist could use one or more of them to avoid the ambush by having some knowledge of the spire, undead driders, or the drow wights.

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Lich King, Elf Queen, or High Druid could use one or more of them to craft a potent potion against undead using the fungus from the drider's back.

#/Level of PCs	Zombie Drider (Z)	Drow Wight (W)
4 x 5 <sup>th</sup> level	1	2
5 x 5 <sup>th</sup> level	1	4
6 x 5 <sup>th</sup> level	1	6
4 x 6 <sup>th</sup> level	1	3*
5 x 6 <sup>th</sup> level	1	4*
6 x 6 <sup>th</sup> level	1	5*

\* Each wight is double strength: its *elven blade* attack deals 40 damage, and it has 130 hp.



## ZOMBIE DRIDER

*Just yuck.*

Large 7<sup>th</sup> level troop [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +8

**Rotting fist or leg +12 vs. AC**—40 damage

*Natural even hit:* The drider zombie can make a *bite* attack as a free action.

[*Special trigger*] **Bite +11 vs. PD**—10 damage, and the drider grabs the target unless it's already grabbing a creature; the drider automatically hits an enemy it's grabbing when it gets to make a *bite* attack against it.

*Multi-legged attacker:* When an enemy engaged with the zombie drider misses it with a natural attack roll of 1–5, it smashes them for 10 damage with a leg strike.

*Spray of rotten juices:* When the zombie drider is staggered, rotten juices and fungal spores inside its bloated body spray outward as a free action. Make a *rotten juices* attack.

**C: Rotten juices +11 vs. PD (1d4 nearby enemies)**—The target is weakened (hard save ends, 16+).

AC	21	
PD	20	HP 240
MD	15	

## DROW WIGHT

*It moves with much of the grace it had in life, and its cruelty has been replaced by a need to drain the life out of you.*

5<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [UNDEAD]

Initiative: Last in round (or +8)

Vulnerability: holy

**Elven blade +9 vs. AC**—20 damage

*Natural even hit or miss:* Unless the wight is staggered, the attack also deals 11 ongoing negative energy damage.

*Touch of the grave:* The wight's attacks against enemies taking ongoing negative energy damage are against PD instead of AC and their crit range expands by +3.

AC	21	
PD	19	HP 65
MD	14	

### NEXT STEPS

The ramp exits the chamber and spirals upward through the spire, which is mostly hollowed out (the outer wood became fossilized while the inner portions rotted out). There are a handful of dusty old chambers that Cornellion no longer uses. Feel free to describe them to add flavor and to lull the PCs before their next problem.

Once the PCs reach the halfway point, the ramp enters a large chamber with only one exit. See **Battle 3: The Bones Above**.





## BATTLE 3: THE BONES ABOVE

*The ramp upward enters a large chamber about halfway up the tree spire. Your attention is drawn to a smaller spire constructed of bones and skulls and clear glistening mortar that rises into the air like a small tower, wide at the base and narrow at the top. The rest of the room has smaller piles of bones scattered about and numerous fossilized stone shelves extending from the walls. A closed door is set in an archway on the far side of the room. You hear a rattle and see a skeletal snakelike creature with a humanoid skill that was coiled at the top of the bone spire rise up with magic flaring.*

### LOCATION DESCRIPTION

The chamber is roughly circular and 50 feet in diameter with a 20-foot ceiling. The bone spire is 10 feet in diameter at the base and rises 12 feet to a 5-foot diameter flat top. A narrow ramp 3 feet wide circles the outside of the spire to the top.

A bone naga currently resides atop the bone spire. It guards against unwanted intruders bothering the lich. It also has allies in the room. Each bone pile is a skeletal guardian previously constructed by the bone naga that will animate to defend the creature. In addition, there are two unique enemies hidden on a shelf over the archway that leads into this room (above the PCs).

Ladoris (male) and Calithia (female) were high elf wizards and two of Cornellion's biggest rivals. Now they are a pair of flaming skulls that he uses to guard his lair. They will buzz the PCs as they attack and deride the heroes as idiots for coming to the spire.

All the enemies are nearby in this battle.

### TERRAIN & TRAPS

**Bone Spire:** The naga stays on the spire, which makes it difficult for PCs to engage in melee because the 12-foot high spire only has room on the ramp up for one PC at the top. Anyone else will need to climb the sides or use ranged attacks. The problem with climbing the spire is that it has been enchanted. Climbing the spire doesn't require a check, but when anyone tries to do so, some of the bones animate and lash outward.

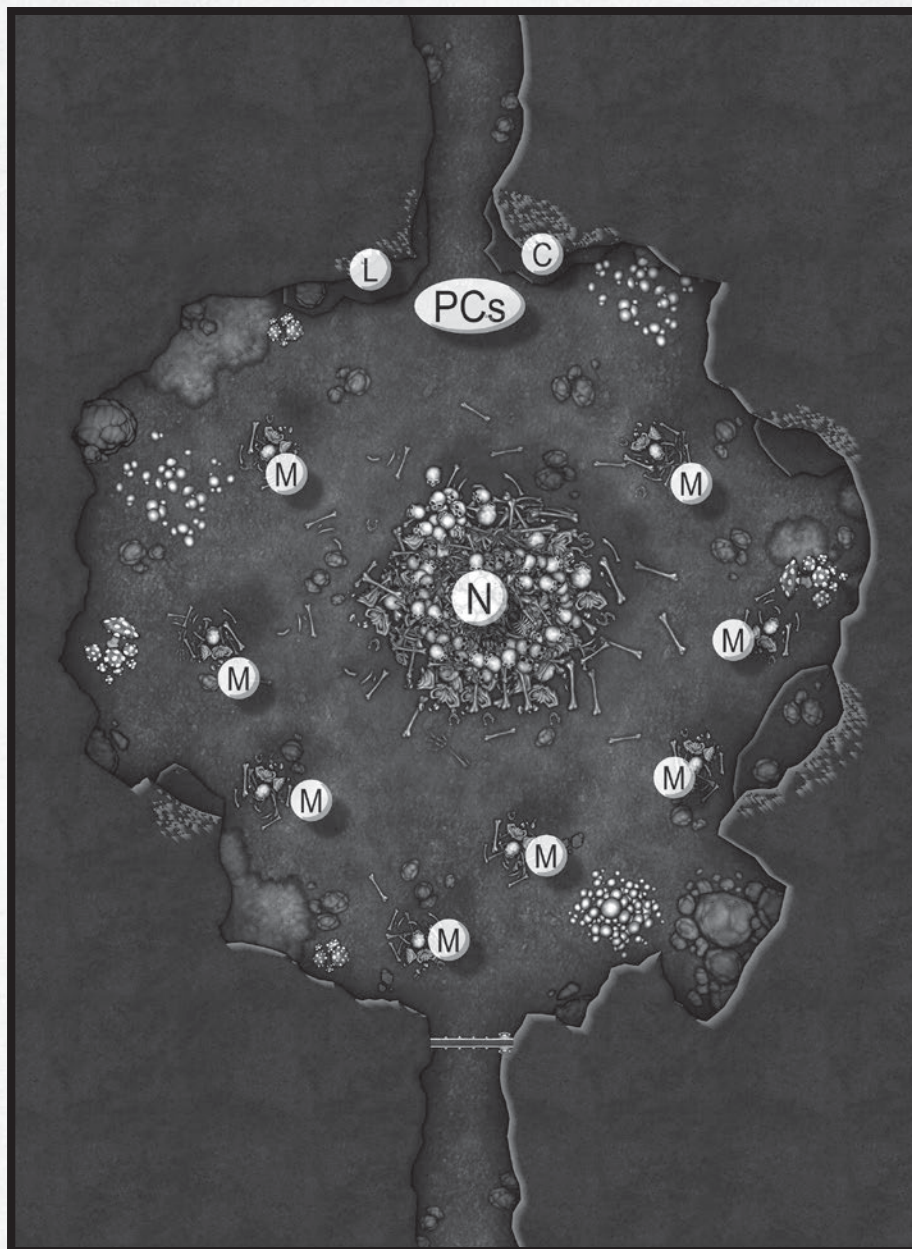
**Piercing bones +10 vs. AC (one enemy climbing the bone spire)—10 damage,** and the target must make a DC 20 Strength check or fall back to the ground, losing the rest of that move action

**Wall Shelves:** Each shelf is 1 foot wide and 8 to 12 feet long, scattered about the walls. They are strong enough to hold a decent amount of weight and make climbing the walls easy (no check). If more than one person is on any one shelf, however, it snaps and sends the creatures back to the ground.

**Door Out:** The door in the far archway is inscribed with the Lich King's symbol with a visible wizard's mark in purple glowing energy. There's no trap, but when the door is opened, it sends a warning to Cornellion that unwanted guests are coming. Determining what the rune is requires a DC 20 Intelligence check using a magical background. Negating the rune long enough to pass through the door without it sending a warning requires a DC 25 check.

### MONSTERS

The bone naga was once a sparkscale naga named Kythiss'nar. The creature looked to necromancy to expand its powers, and the Lich King took it. Now it serves the lich as a gift for his initiation



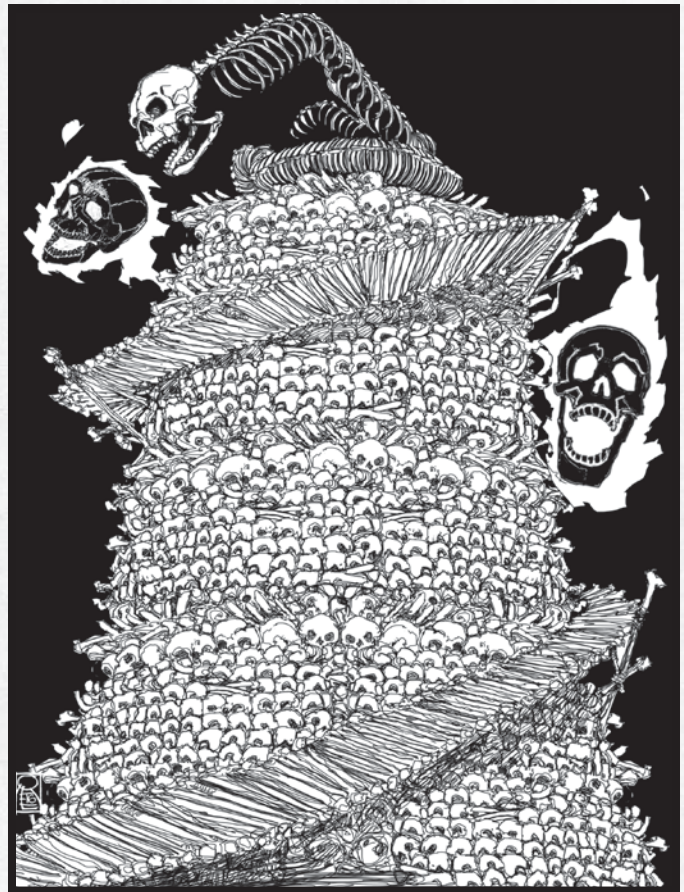


## LADORIS AND CALITHIA

You could play these two flaming skulls as haughty high elves who like to blast people with fire and leave it at that. But for creative PCs, there's a lot of gold here. Those who talk, taunt, or perhaps even show admiration of the skulls might be able to get them to reveal information about the lich. They aren't his biggest fans, and as intelligent undead, they have some leeway in what they can relate to the PCs.

Reward good roleplaying (or good Charisma checks) with hints about the lich. For example, perhaps one of them mentions how terrible Cornellion's guardian golem is, or mentions that the walls are crawling with old fossils up there, or even suggests a clue about Cornellion's phylactery (he keeps it closer than you think, or one's a fake).

Either or both of these undead could also become interesting NPCs who travel with a PC as magic items (like a lore bottle but more flammable, though unlikely to help during battle). It would probably take some icon advantages and a good story to have this happen, but a death priest, necromancer, or elf wizard could possibly do it.



into the Undying Peerage (and it's a little bitter about that). It is intelligent and has free will otherwise. Unlike a normal naga, it no longer has its *sparkling aura* and instead has a *death rattle* attack.

The two flaming skulls start as normal-looking polished bone skulls above the doorway on a shelf. They will light up and begin flying around and making snarky comments as soon as the battle starts.

Each bone pile is a skeletal guardian created by Kythiss'nar. They will assemble and rise before initiative is rolled.

**Additional Reinforcements:** If you want to challenge the PCs more, include 1d3 Blackamber skeletal legionnaires (core rulebook, page 246) that are elven warrior skeletons, which rise from the piles.

### TACTICS

The naga remains at the top of spire if it can and uses its *bloom of lightning* attack. When targeted by spells, it uses its *death rattle* in reaction. If an enemy moves up the ramp to engage it, it has a *necrotic bite* attack it will gladly use.

The flaming skulls can't really fly up out of reach, so they try to drop as much fire damage as they can. If staggered and close to dying, a flying skull might beg for its life. It also might even agree to terms to stop fighting.

A few skeletal guardians try to keep anyone from moving up the ramp. Any extras will move to engage the nearest enemies.

### LOOT

Each flaming skull has a pair of 100 gp fire opal eyes.

Bone naga bones have to be valuable to a necromancer, right?

#/Level of PCs	Kythiss'nar, Bone Naga (N)	Ladoris & Calithia (L) (C)	Skeletal Guardian Mook (M)
4 x 5 <sup>th</sup> level	1	1 of each	3 (1 mob)
5 x 5 <sup>th</sup> level	1	1 of each	9 (1 mob)
6 x 5 <sup>th</sup> level	1	1 of each	20 (2 mobs)
4 x 6 <sup>th</sup> level	1	1 of each*	10 (1 mob)
5 x 6 <sup>th</sup> level	1	1 of each*	11 (1 mob)**
6 x 6 <sup>th</sup> level	1***	1 of each*	15 (2 mobs)

\* The flaming skulls are double strength: *burning gaze* deals 20 fire damage, *smoldering flames* deals 28 fire damage, and each has 108 hp.

\*\* The skeletal guardians are double strength: *bone club* deals 16 damage on a hit, 4 on a miss, and it has 34 hp.

\*\*\* The bone naga is double strength: it can attack twice with *necrotic bite*, *bloom of lightning* deals 45 damage and targets 1d3 + 1 enemies, and it has 392 hp.

### Icons

A PC that has relationship advantages with any icon could use one or more of them to befriend or coerce one of the flaming skulls to stop attacking, and perhaps even join the PC as an advisor. Of course, it might all be part of some plan the Lich King has...



A PC that has relationship advantages with the Lich King, Priestess, Archmage, or maybe the Prince could use one or more of them to try to break the naga from its bond to the Lich King once its staggered. If this happens, the naga will disappear in a cloud of magical smoke, leaving behind a champion-tier magic item in thanks for bringing it to its senses.

## KYTHISS'PAR, BOPE NAGA

*It's got spells, a vicious bite, and a death rattle that will just kill you.*

Large 7<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +10

**Necrotic bite +12 vs. AC**—35 damage, and 15 ongoing negative energy damage

*Natural 16+:* The target takes 20 ongoing negative energy damage instead, and it's hard save ends (16+).

*Miss:* The naga gains a +2 bonus to its next *bite* attack this battle (cumulative).

**R: Bloom of lightning +11 vs. PD (1d3 nearby or far away enemies)**—50 lightning damage

*Natural 16+:* Each nearby enemy takes 10 thunder damage.

*Limited use:* 1/battle, but it recharges when the naga hits with its *bite* attack.

*Mirror of magic and death:* When an enemy targets the bone naga with a spell, the naga can roll a save. On a success, the spell is negated and it can make a *death rattle* attack as a free action, preferably against the caster.

**C: Death rattle +10 vs. PD (one nearby enemy)**—The target must begin making last gasp saves as its spirit is drawn out of it. On the fourth failure the target dies.

*Natural even roll:* One nearby undead ally per point on the escalation die gains temporary hit points equal to 2 x the escalation die.

**Resist weapon damage 14+:** When a weapon attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 14+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

AC	22	
PD	19	HP 184
MD	19	

## FLAMING SKULL

*Beings whose great passions anchor them to their mortal remains can become flaming skulls. Evil skulls gravitate toward the service of other undead beings or evil necromancers.*

5<sup>th</sup> level caster [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +10

Vulnerability: holy

**R: Burning gaze +12 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies or one far away enemy)**—10 fire damage

*First natural even hit each battle:* The target is confused (easy save ends, 6+).

**C: Smoldering flames +11 vs. PD (one nearby enemy)**—14 fire damage, and each time the target fails a save this battle, it bursts into flames and takes 5 ongoing fire damage

*Limited flight:* The haunted skull can glide and hover, always within seven or eight feet of the ground.

*Lost opportunity:* This creature can't make opportunity attacks.

**Resist fire 16+:** When a fire attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 16+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

AC	20	
PD	12	HP 54
MD	20	

## SKELETAL GUARDIAN

*These humanoid skeletons are thick-boned, constructed from orcs. Mostly.*

5<sup>th</sup> level mook [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +8

Vulnerability: holy

**Bone club +10 vs. AC**—8 damage

*Miss:* 2 damage.

*The mob grows stronger:* For every two skeletal guardian mooks that drop, the remaining members of the mob deal 1 extra damage with attacks, hit or miss.

**Resist weapon damage 16+:** When a weapon attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 16+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

AC	20	
PD	18	HP 16 (mook)
MD	14	

*Mook:* Kill one skeletal guardian mook for every 16 damage you deal to the mob.

## NEXT STEPS

Once the PCs have taken a quick rest, they are a short distance from Cornellion's main laboratory at the top of the spire. If they didn't bypass the ward on the door, he'll be aware of them and prepared. If they did, they might be able to catch him off-guard if they're stealthy.

The ramp leads upward to another door, this one made of iron. Getting it open stealthily requires a DC 20 Dexterity check; otherwise it open easily but noisily. See **Battle 4: Cornellion's Lair**.



# BATTLE 4: CORNELLION'S LAIR

The top of the spire is one single chamber spread out over two levels. Opposite the door you entered is another tier that rises 10 feet higher than the rest of the room, with a short stair on either end of it. The raised area holds various tables filled with magical equipment and a large, gilded mirror standing upright on the ground. To the left of the tier is a ladder that climbs upward to a small platform with a view of the open sky. Scattered around the chamber on your level are more tables of equipment, a few bookshelves, and various other paraphernalia. A tall, thin figure in midnight blue robes stands upon the upper tier.

## LOCATION DESCRIPTION

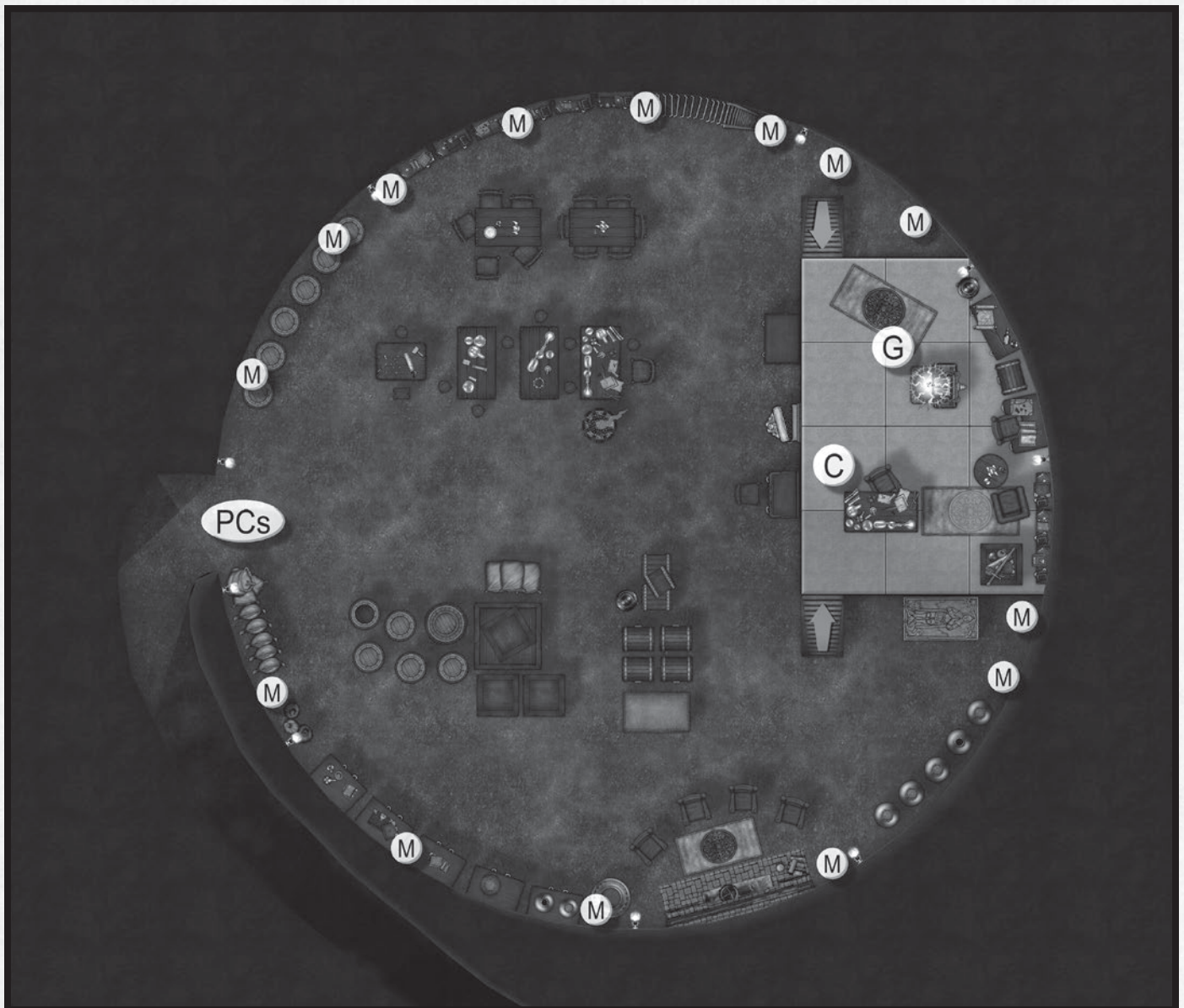
The chamber is roughly circular and 100 feet in diameter with a 40-foot ceiling. The higher tier, a 20 x 40 foot section of the

room rises 10 feet higher than the rest. The ladder to the left of it climbs 40 feet up to a platform there that gives access to an opening in the roof of the spire (for celestial viewing at night).

The place smells musty and is filled with old tomes, alchemy equipment, components for rituals, and various other spellcasting items.

Cornellion will be on the raised section of the room, either working at one of the tables on a magical process if he isn't aware of the PCs, or standing there facing the PCs if he is aware of them. Note, to have a chance to sneak up on him, the PCs must have bypassed the ward on the door in the last battle and successfully opened the door to this chamber silently.

If he is aware of them, he'll say something about being tired of dealing with meddlers and then speak a few words of power. When he does, two things happen. First, the standing mirror seems to shatter and then reforms into a mirror golem that moves beside him. Second, a group of skeletons made from the same material as the fossilized spire wood emerge from the walls of the place.





If not aware, Cornellion will have to spend a quick action to summon his golem on his turn, and the fossilized skeletons will emerge from the walls on their own at the end of the first round.

Note, if you want Cornellion to have more of a wizardly feel, see the sidebar after the monster stat blocks. This fight is slightly harder than normal since the first few battles were a little easier (and hey, it's a lich).

Cornellion also has a trick in place regarding his phylactery in case he's killed. See **Loot**.

## TERRAIN & TRAPS

**Tables of Equipment:** Various arcane equipment of all sorts, most of it weird but not overly valuable, lies scattered among the tables in the chamber. The tables are made from goldenwood, are relatively sturdy, and could provide some cover to PCs that use them that way. Some of the equipment and alchemical components are unstable also. Anytime a table's contents are disturbed (or a fireball goes off around them), have the closest PC roll an easy save (6+). On a failure, there's a small explosion that hits that creature and 1d3 random nearby creatures for 8 fire, thunder, acid, or poison damage (GM's choice).

The more valuable equipment is on the raised section of the room. Disturbed tables up there require a normal save to avoid explosions.

**Book Shelves:** Cornellion has enchanted the various bookshelves of musty tomes with magic to protect them from fire, safeguarding the books from his *fireball* attack. The book shelves are heavy enough to climb or pull down on someone.

**Ladder & Viewing Platform:** Climbing the ladder requires no check, but anyone trying to fight from it (like making ranged attacks) or who takes damage while on it, must roll a DC 15 Dexterity check. On a failure, they fall (taking 2d8 damage if more than half way up). The viewing platform at the top doesn't actually have line of sight back into the chamber (the ladder goes through the roof to the platform), so PCs can't make ranged attacks from it without being partially on the ladder.

**Standing Mirror:** The mirror is actually the mirror golem, but a strike against it in mirror form before the golem shifts will damage the golem (the PC makes a normal attack). The golem will immediately transform at that point.

**Raised Tier:** Wide stairs offer access to the tier on either side. Thanks to tables and bookshelves, it's also easy to climb the wall to the raised area (DC 15 check), but failure results in an explosion from a table that's jostled.

## MONSTERS

Cornellion is confident in his ability to destroy any fools that attack him. If he is aware of the PCs and has his allies in place, he is willing to first talk to the PCs to try to discover who sent them and why. If the PCs are undead hunters, it might be an opportunity for him to reveal the names of his rivals—liches within the Undying Peerage that might have it out for him—as he talks to himself about his foes. If he gets surprised, he'll just try to kill the PCs as quickly as possible.

The high elf lich wears a robe of blue silk that has seen better days and wields a fossilized goldenwood wand. His paper-thin flesh looks glued to his skeletal frame, but he still has golden

locks of hair attached to his skull. He also wears a few gold and platinum rings on his fingers, plus one simple wooden ring with a leaf pattern (his last tie to mortality, given to him by a lost love).

The mirror golem is a construct of hundreds of shattered mirror parts that take roughly humanoid shape (same size as the lich). It's also Cornellion's phylactery and holds his soul. The reflective surfaces portray enemies' forms back to them a hundredfold (the backs of the pieces are a dull black). It will hover in the air, staying close to Cornellion. When it drops, the pieces fly back to reform the mirror with a crunching and tingling noise, but the golem is now destroyed.

The fossilized skeletons are the bones of former enemies that the lich magically implanted into the spire. Now their bones are also becoming fossilized, but they haven't had enough time yet and are still brittle, easily shattering.

**Additional Reinforcements:** If you want to challenge the PCs more, add one or two drow wights (as statted up in Battle 2) that climb down from the platform to join the battle.

#/Level of PCs	Cornellion, Lich Count (C)	Mirror Golem (G)	Fossilized Skeleton Mook (M)
4 x 5 <sup>th</sup> level	1	1	4 (1 mob)
5 x 5 <sup>th</sup> level	1	1	10 (1 mob)
6 x 5 <sup>th</sup> level	1	1	20 (2 mobs)
4 x 6 <sup>th</sup> level	1	1	16 (2 mobs)
5 x 6 <sup>th</sup> level	1	2*	11 (2 mobs)**
6 x 6 <sup>th</sup> level	1	2*	16 (2 mobs)**

\* The mirror deploys into 2 golems, and doesn't reform as a mirror until both are destroyed.

\*\* Make the skeleton mook double strength: its *fossilized blade* attack deals 18 damage and it has 32 hp.

## TACTICS

Cornellion will lead with the *empowered fireball* attack to try to get as many enemies as possible. Then he will rely on *shadow rays* attacks to weaken his foes, saving the second *fireball* for when it will drop some enemies. When enemies engage him, he'll try to disengage, but if that fails he has a strong melee attack he can use. He also relies upon the mirror golem to make enemies pay if they attack him.

The mirror golem stays close to the lich, interposing itself in front of attacks meant for him and possibly reflecting damage back at the attacker.

The fossilized skeletons follow Cornellion's orders. They will try to block the stairs leading to him, or attack the closest enemy.

## LOOT

The various equipment, books, and components in this chamber might be worth upwards of 500 gp if the PCs are able to haul it out. There's also a small wooden chest stashed between bookshelves on the upper tier. It holds coins and gems for the times when Cornellion must make purchases from far-off places





lightning damage (epic: 6d10 damage). Quirk: Twitches uncontrollably at the worst times.

**Phylactery:** Cornellion's phylactery is the gilded mirror (which reforms after the golem is destroyed). But the lich is tricky and has tried to throw off would-be murderers with a powerful illusion ritual. Inside the chest in a wood box is a glass heart about the size of an elf's. It glows with inner light and radiates magic. Cornellion has enchanted it to slowly glow in brightness when the box is opened and a magical essence seems to swirl around inside. If shattered, there will be screams and magic lights that explode away from it, then nothing.

In reality, his spirit begins to reform within the mirror, very faint at first, but slowly gaining clarity over a few days until he can step forth from it. Someone with a magical background can make a DC 25 check to realize the lightshow for what it is with the heart. Likewise, anyone studying the mirror that succeeds on a DC 25 check will see the lich's faint outline forming. Smashing the mirror destroys the phylactery.

## Icons

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Lich

King, Archmage, Elf Queen, the Diabolist, or maybe the Three or Priestess could use one or more of them to counteract the link between the mirror golem and Cornellion for 1d3 rounds, so it can't absorb damage for him.

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Lich King (or any icon with a good story really) could use one or more of them to realize the truth about the Lich's phylactery.

for his magic. There's 120 trines, 300 sp, a pouch of small mixed gems worth a total of 200 gp, and a +2 *rune*. Also, there's a wood box with a glass heart in it (see Phylactery below).

Cornellion has five 50 gp rings on his fingers. In addition, either Cornellion's wand or one of his rings is magical. If a ring, it's a *Ring of Defense* (core book, page 291). If a wand, it's a *Wand of Zapping* (recharge 11+): When you damage an enemy with an arcane spell that hits, that target also takes 4d10 extra



## CORPELLION, LICH COUNT

*The withered body, dressed in once-fine silk, floats inside a thrumming field of magic. It's hard to tell if he's smiling or if the death rictus has set his face that way.*

*Double-strength 8<sup>th</sup> level spoiler* [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +11

**Touch of the grave +13 vs. AC**—50 cold damage, and the target is dazed (hard save ends, 16+)

*Natural even hit:* The target is weakened instead of dazed (hard save ends, 16+)

*Miss:* 25 cold damage.

**R: Shadow rays +12 vs. PD (2 attacks)**—35 negative energy damage

*Natural 16+:* The target is encased in shadows (save ends).

While under the effect, it's weakened and takes 10 ongoing cold damage.

**R: Empowered fireball +12 vs. PD (1d3 + 1 nearby creatures in a group)**—35 fire damage, and 10 ongoing fire damage

*Natural even hit:* The target takes 20 ongoing fire damage instead of 10.

*Miss:* 15 fire damage, and 5 ongoing fire damage.

*Limited use:* 2/battle.

*Thank you for the best ten years of your life:* When the lich count scores a critical hit, the target loses a death save until it gains a level (effectively, it now dies after failing three death saves, and the effect is cumulative). In addition, the crit range of attacks by the lich against the target expands by the escalation die and the lich heals 40 hit points.

*Immortality:* When the lich drops to 0 hit points, it crumbles to dust but does not die. It begins to reform near its phylactery, taking a number of days to regain its full strength equal to its level. If the phylactery has been destroyed, the lich dies when it drops to 0 hit points.

### Nastier Specials

**C: Look upon your doom +13 vs. MD (up to 3 nearby enemies)**—The lich gains a *fear* aura against the target until the end of the battle

*Fear aura:* While engaged with this creature, if the target has 48 hp or fewer, it's dazed (–4 attack) and does not add the escalation die to its attacks.

AC 24

PD 18

MD 22

HP 270

## ADDING MORE MAGIC TO CORPELLION

Since Cornellion was a high elf wizard before he became a lich, some GMs might want to give him more of a spellcaster feel. One way to do this is to reduce the damage his attacks deal by 5 (but don't change the ongoing damage amounts). Then, as a quick action once per turn, the lich can use one of the following abilities:

- Teleport somewhere nearby that the lich can see.
- Cast a *magic missile* as a ranged attack that automatically hits for 10 damage.
- Gain a +2 bonus to AC and PD until the start of his next turn from a magic shield.
- Cast any wizard cantrip.

## MIRROR GOLEM

*6<sup>th</sup> level blocker* [CONSTRUCT]

Initiative: +7

Vulnerability: thunder

**Slashing shard +10 vs. AC**—12 damage

*Natural 16+:* The target takes 5 ongoing damage from bleeding wounds.

*Golem immunity:* Non-organic golems are immune to effects. They can't be dazed, weakened, confused, made vulnerable, or touched by ongoing damage. You can damage a golem, but that's about it.

*Soul guardian:* When an attack hits a nearby ally, as an interrupt action, the golem can take half the damage of the attack and the attacker must roll a save. On a failure, the attacker takes the remainder of the damage as it's reflected back on them. On a success, the original target takes the rest of the damage. The golem can use this ability twice per round when the escalation die is 3+.

AC 20

PD 20

MD 15

HP 120

## FOSSILIZED SKELETON

*5<sup>th</sup> level mook* [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +10

Vulnerability: holy

**Fossilized blade +10 vs. AC**—9 damage

*Resist weapon damage 12+:* When a weapon attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 12+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

AC 21

PD 18

MD 15

HP 16 (mook)

*Mook:* Kill one fossilized skeleton mook for every 16 damage you deal to the mob.



## NEXT STEPS

Once the lich is destroyed (or assumed destroyed if they got the wrong phylactery), the PCs are free to explore the spire without trouble. If the PCs do shatter the mirror but you want to add some fun to the game, have Cornellion's spirit remain partially intact and reforming in a shard of the mirror, if any PC collects a piece. The lich could whisper secrets to the PC as it slowly regains strength, and the shard might act like a rechargeable magic item holding a spell.

## THE LICH'S SPIRE STORY ENDINGS

Here are outcomes for each story opening, detailing what success or failure might mean.

If the PCs did face all four battles, remember to give them a full heal-up.

### OVERSTEPPING BOUNDS

**Success:** The PCs put an end to the lich Cornellion and stop further raids against Dheirone. Word of the PCs' deed spreads. The next time the PCs roll icon dice, each PC can reroll each die once.

**Failure:** The PCs fail to destroy the lich, or perhaps they thought they had succeeded but destroyed the wrong phylactery. Soon enough, the undead raids grow worse and Dheirone is destroyed. Cornellion gains more undead followers, and he sends a group to trail the PCs, attacking at the worst possible time.

### AN IDIOT UPSTART

**Success:** Cornellion is destroyed and Countess Velassin is pleased. She rewards the group with gold and a magical potion each. The PC with the Lich King relationship gains a 6 with the Lich King that lasts until they use it or level up.

**Failure:** Not only is Cornellion still alive and looking for the PCs, but the countess is unhappy too. Not wishing for the PCs to reveal her involvement, she sends out minions to destroy them as

well, and talks bad about the PC with a Lich King relationship. The next time that PCs rolls icon dice, each 6 with the Lich King is a 5 instead.

### CULLING THE PEERAGE

**Success:** Cornellion is destroyed, and the PCs' contact pays them well for the service, including a few *healing potions*.

**Failure:** The lich is not pleased about being attacked in his home. He roots out the source that put the PCs on his trail and forces that person to set the PCs up, walking them into an ambush with his undead raiders.

### ENEMIES OF DEATH MAGIC

**Success:** The lich Cornellion is destroyed and the icon's (Archmage or Priestess) people are pleased. The PCs are rewarded with whatever they were promised.

**Failure:** Whether the party was forced to flee or the lich's phylactery wasn't destroyed, Cornellion is displeased with those involved. He sets the PCs up to unknowingly betray the servants of the icon opposing him, putting them in bad favor for the next two icon dice rolls.

## BATTLE SCENE CONNECTIONS

The stories from this set of battle scenes can lead to other scenes:

- *Danger in Darkwood* (Elf Queen): There's a journal in the tower that discusses how Cornellion has entered an agreement with a witch in Darkwood named Ulla to hold his phylactery, or perhaps a portion of his spirit as a safeguard.
- *Corrupted Nature* (High Druid): Among the lich's possessions is a letter from someone named Xantip Nos thanking Cornellion for his help with the Ritual of Taking to steal the High Druid's power. The lich's notes reveal how horrible the ritual is and that it could have lasting repercussions on the region if used the way Xantip hopes.





# LICH KING: NIGHT HUNTERS

LEVEL RANGE: 8-9



The themes of this set of battles are facing creatures of the night and the dark magic of unholy alliances. This set of battle scenes works best on the outskirts of civilization, or in places where the dead are entombed such as graveyards or crypts and death magic is strong.

Near the start of the Age, a noble of some power from the lands to the south beyond the maps traveled to the Dragon Empire as a bride of a political marriage to a well-known general of the empire. The noble, Rahlia Navernos, soon found herself mistress of an estate of some wealth after her husband was killed during one of the many Imperial expansionist wars. Rahlia grew powerful in her own right, but found herself limited within the male-dominated Empire of that time. So she turned to one who didn't care about her sex to gain immortality the way many of the great rulers of her homeland did—vampirism.

The Lich King accepted her and she turned. Over the decades and then centuries, her mighty estate became a refuge of darkness hidden by her power from the light of the Priestess and the paladins of the Emperor and Great Gold Wurm. Due to her cunning and ingenuity, and the fact that her lands provide refuge to servants of the Lich King, that icon granted her increased power. Where the dead rest, in places dedicated to the Lich King, on battlefields, and similar areas, Rahlia can create a thick magical fog as an extension of her will. When it envelops unwary living creatures, it transports them to her estate lands where she and her spawn can indulge their bloodlust.

The PCs find themselves transported to this dark locale, where they become the hunted. Once they fight past the vampire spawn and other undead hunting them, they can challenge Rahlia directly in her home to see who is prey and who is predator.

## NIGHT HUNTERS STORY OPENINGS

- **Unfriendly Rivals:** One of the PCs with a positive or conflicted relationship with the Lich King is contacted by one of his currently favored lieutenants (a necromancer, or other corporeal undead like a lich or vampire). One of the contact's rivals, a vampire, has been maneuvering to replace them. The contact thinks it's time to end the game and instructs or bribes the PC to destroy their vampire rival. They are given a certain phrase to utter in a certain place that will call a fog to

transport them and their allies to the vampire's lair. The PCs might or might not know the name of their target.

- **Hunting the Night Hunter:** One of the PCs with a negative or conflicted relationship with the Lich King learns of a dark refuge where a powerful servant of the One-eyed Lord resides. Destroying this creature, whatever it is, will be a major win for the enemies of the Lich King. Finding its lair is the problem, but the PC gets hold of a time and location; if they go there, the creature will magically bring them to it as it hunts.
- **A Rising Fog:** As they travel or finish up an adventure near an old graveyard, battlefield, or other place where unconsecrated dead lie buried, a fog suddenly rises. The fog engulfs the PCs and they find themselves... somewhere else, with different terrain and geography. It's night, and as the fog begins to recede to the periphery, there are horrible noises in the darkness.
- **On the Trail of the Night Hunter:** People have been going missing from the nearby town of Volin's Gate for the last month at alarming rates. As heroes of the land, the PCs are called upon to help find out who or what is taking people. Their investigations have led them to an old battlefield a few miles outside town that's also the site of an ancient magical ritual enacted by Diabolist cultists some years after the battle. At first, the fog rolling in doesn't seem that odd for the moors, but it moves quickly, and envelops the PCs in thick, inky darkness before they can avoid it. Soon they find themselves elsewhere.

## NIGHT HUNTERS OVERVIEW

After being transported by the dark fog to Rahlia's realm, the PCs must get their bearings. They find themselves in the woods with old, untended fields just beyond. That's when they realize they are being stalked by something from the shadows in Battle 1. Vampire spawn and their undead servants soon show the PCs what they are up against.

Soon enough, the PCs are drawn toward the heart of the darkness in the realm, a manor house atop a hill among fallow farmland. In Battle 2, the PCs are invited inside to join a feast

### WHAT FLAVOR IS YOUR HORROR?

These battle scenes default toward the style used in many classic *Ravenloft* adventures and similar stories. If that's not your preferred flavor of vampire story, you'll want to reseason to taste.



among a group of nobles who seem very interested in them, and who are, of course, spawn of Rahlia. The spawn seek to have the PCs as the feast, but the tables are turned, though Rahlia is not present for the event, instead sending a stand-in.

In Battle 3, the PCs finally catch up with Rahlia, who has moved outside into her ancient garden where she keeps her family tomb and resting place. There, she calls forth undead servants to fight with her against the PCs.

Rahlia was testing the PCs' capabilities in Battle 3. In Battle 4, she has fled to her place of power. The PCs must enter Rahlia's tomb to face the vampire, her favored spawn, and the spirits of her husband's ancestors.

GM, feel free to expand upon these battles to add encounters in the fog while traveling to Rahlia's realm, battles with undead and other night creatures during the approach to her manor house, and other situations fitting the flavor of these battle scenes.

The battles outlined here can take place over a few hours or days (or even weeks) depending on how long the PCs spend in the fog. Since the Lich King is in play, we suggest flavoring descriptions and battle scenes with ancient Imperial trappings, living thralls dedicated to Rahlia as their master, and the darkness of bloodlust and never-ending violence.

See story endings after the final battle for options on what happens after the PCs finish the last battle.

**No alternate icons:** Unlike most of our other battle scenes, we're not providing options for replacing the Lich King with another icon. This feels like a Lich King situation to us. If your campaign is better set up for someone like the Prince of Shadows or the Diabolist to have stolen a portion of the Lich King's power, leading to a problem like Rahlia, you'll know that better than us.

## BATTLE I: FIRST THE PREY

*The fog envelops you. This isn't normal, it feels like it's trying to smother you, and everything goes cold and gray. Suddenly it relents, and it's just normal fog again, lifting quickly. You'd swear you hadn't moved, but the terrain around you is different now. Although dark, you see that you're on a trail through a lightly wooded area. Up ahead is a wood fence that seems to separate the forest from more open land, possibly fields, though it's hard to tell in the dim starlight. As you begin moving in that direction, you feel as if you're being watched. You've been in spots like this before. There's something in the shadows and it thinks it's hunting you.*

### LOCATION DESCRIPTION

The PCs have arrived in Rahlia's lands via the fog, and now they have attracted one of the realm's hunting parties that scours the land for enemies (and food) that she pulls into the realm. A group of Rahlia's spawn and their undead mounts and servants will ambush the PCs if not detected (see **Tactics**).

The terrain is fairly normal—the edge of unused fields and forest—but the fog still lingers here and there, and in this realm, it's a danger in itself. Each round, it may envelop one of the PCs, making the battle more difficult for that character.

## ICONS IN PLAY

Characters that have relationships (and story-guide advantages) with the Lich King, Archmage, Emperor, Priestess, and perhaps the Great Gold Wyrn should be able to shine in these battle scenes. Moreso than PCs with other icon relationships, feel free to give such PCs extra knowledge about the opposition, make checks to pull off fun actions the players might suggest, and use their advantages to particularly good effect, such as negating or bypassing some of the magical traps scattered throughout the scenes.

In addition to the trail, there are clumps of young alder trees off the path to the right, a shallow bog on the left, and a fence line ahead with a narrow gap in it. In general the ground is open with a thick grass covering. It is nighttime, sometime after dusk (no matter what time it was when they entered the fog), but the fog is keeping most of the moonlight away.

### TERRAIN & TRAPS

**Enveloping Fog:** The thick fog still remains in places, and it has a dark will that reflects Rahlia's soul. At the start of each round when the escalation die is 1+, the fog will attempt to envelop one random PC. An enveloped PC can't see any of their allies or enemies and can't be target of attacks or effects created by other creatures, or attack enemies. They are able to hear their allies' muted shouts and cries, however, allowing them to rally. Or cast a spell on themselves, for that matter.

**C: Enveloping fog +16 vs. PD (one random PC)**—The target is removed from play until the end of their next turn.

**Shallow Bog:** The 60 x 20 foot mucky bog fills the area to the left of the trail. It is between 1 and 5 feet deep (near the center) and filled with leeches and muck. Moving through it requires a DC 22 Strength check due to the foot of muck and creeping tendrils and plants in the water.

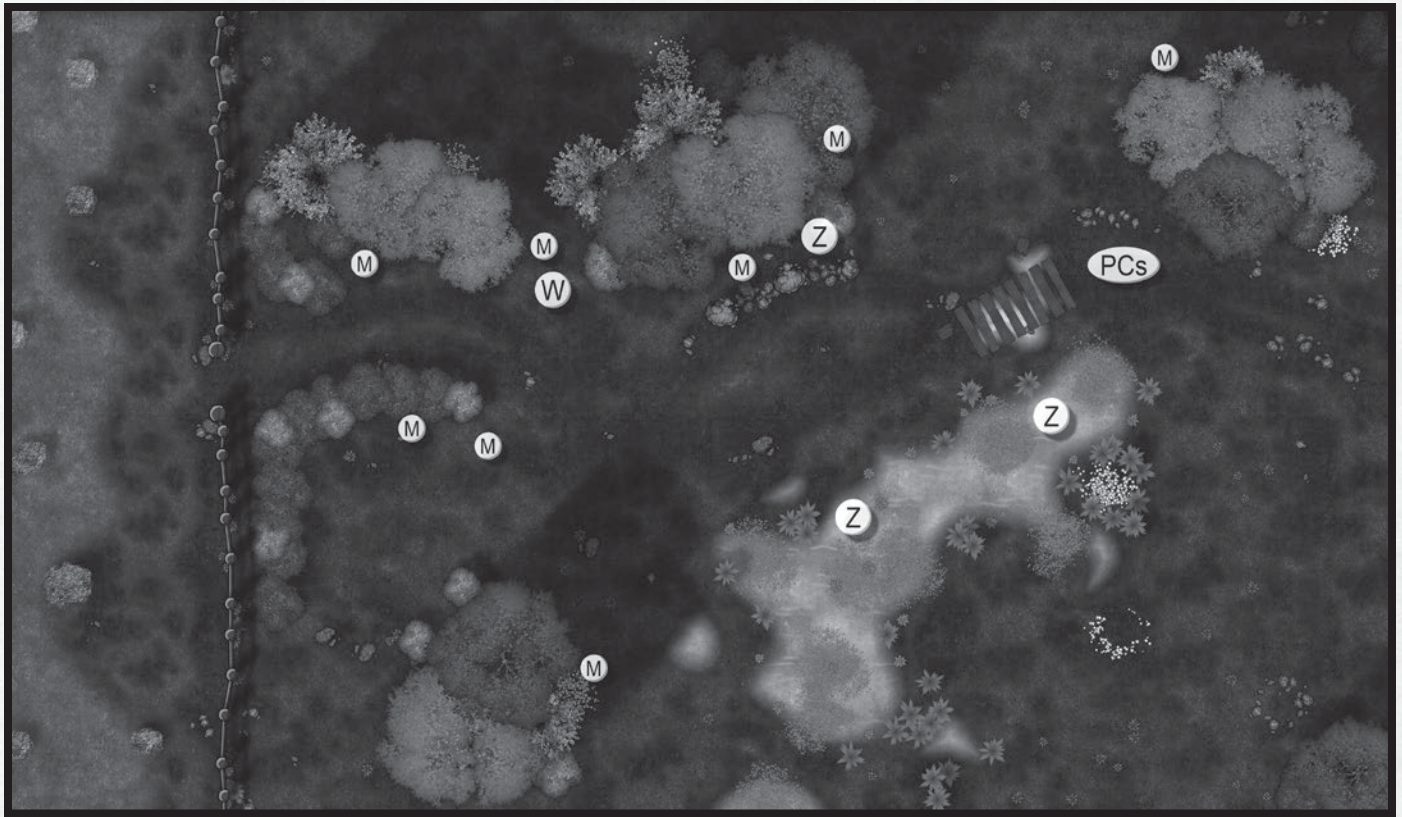
**Alder Trees:** Most of the trees are too thin to allow easy climbing, but they do grow closely, providing a good place for concealment. Anyone attempting to climb one of the larger trees must succeed on a DC 15 Strength check, but the narrow branches will make their stability questionable each round.

**Fence:** The 8-foot high fence is made from thick timbers and seems well constructed (and not that rotted). Rahlia has kept it maintained as a symbol of her estate border. There's a 5-foot wide gap for the trail to pass through, potentially making it a good defensive spot, except that it lies on the far side of the ambushers. Climbing over the fence during combat requires a DC 15 Dexterity check (or easy save for monsters) as the fog seems to pull at the climber.

### MONSTERS

This group of vampire spawn is out hunting. Some ride wyvern ghouls that have been trained to be mostly obedient (they only eat undead flesh when truly hungry). Others simply run along the ground (or flow like the fog at times). The spawn are a mix of





mostly adult humans of both sexes, but there are also two teenage half-elves, a brother (Ros) and sister (Yasil) who were turned.

The wyvern ghouls are the real threat in this battle. They are powerful and have the ability to paralyze the PCs. The wings of each one have rotted (or been eaten) away, so they now only have stumps and can't fly. They still run quickly, however.

Finally, zombie slaves follow the spawn. The spawn have them carry any victims they happen to capture, and also serve whatever other needs the vampires have. The slaves are mostly big humanoids like bugbears and orcs.

**Additional Reinforcements:** If you want to challenge the PCs more, make the spawn double strength.

#/Level of PCs	Zombie Slave (Z)	Ghoul Wyvern (W)	Spawn of the Master Mook (M)
4 x 8 <sup>th</sup> level	2	1	8 (1 mob)
5 x 8 <sup>th</sup> level	3	1	11 (1 mob)
6 x 8 <sup>th</sup> level	3	2	7 (1 mob)
4 x 9 <sup>th</sup> level	2	2	7 (1 mob)
5 x 9 <sup>th</sup> level	3	2	12 (2 mobs)
6 x 9 <sup>th</sup> level	3	3	10 (1 mob)

## TACTICS

**Ambush:** The spawn and their undead servants are hiding behind the patches of trees, having been informed by their master that living prey was coming through the fog. The fog also helps hide the hunters, making them more stealthy than they might

normally be. The PC with the best Wisdom score (or whoever is scouting out front) must roll a DC 30 Wisdom check. On a failure, the group is surprised as a wyvern ghoul and its vampire spawn rider leaps out to attack a PC.

This hunting party hasn't faced anything dangerous to them in a while, so they'll be overconfident, certain that they're apex predators. As they attack they'll laugh and hoot and expect the PCs to run screaming. These spawn are debauched Imperials from earlier times, led by a corrupted and evil vampire of great power who has delusions of grandeur, so they're not likely to realize their peril quickly.

The spawn focus on attacking staggered enemies and those who are paralyzed by the wyverns, attempting to use a coup de grace when possible. They will avoid constructs or non-living enemies. The vampire lord's will over them is strong, so attempts by a necromancer or other in the Lich King's service to control them will be more difficult than normal.

The wyvern ghouls will seek out the nearest living enemy and attack. Once an enemy is paralyzed, the wyvern will try to tear off as much flesh as possible, but a rider might be able to force it to attack another enemy (roll a d6: on a 1–4 it follows orders).

The zombies just try to swarm the nearest enemies.

## LOOT

The vampire spawn wear worn but fine clothing (especially for being out hunting) including some nicer pieces of jewelry. They have a total of 300 gp in such valuables.

## Icons

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Lich King, Priestess, Emperor, or maybe the Great Gold Wyrms could use one or more



of them to try to force the spawn to reveal who their master is and to provide information about her. Even with an advantage, it will still require a DC 32 Charisma check or great roleplaying, and the spawn will try to lie or misdirect as much as possible.

## WYVERN GHOUL

*Large 10<sup>th</sup> level wrecker* [UNDEAD]  
Initiative: +13

**Tearing jaws +15 vs. AC—90 damage**

*Natural odd hit:* The wyvern can make a *deadly tail stinger* attack during its next turn.

*Natural even hit:* The target is vulnerable (*attacks vs. it have crit range expanded by 2*) to attacks by undead until the end of the ghou's next turn.

*Miss:* 20 damage

[*Special trigger*] **Deadly tail stinger +15 vs. PD—75 damage**, and the target is stunned (save ends) as it becomes paralyzed  
*Miss:* 35 damage

**Pound of flesh:** The wyvern ghou's *tearing jaws* attack deals 20 extra damage against vulnerable targets.

**Infected bite:** Any creature that is slain by a ghou and not consumed will rise as a ghou the next night.

AC	26	
PD	23	HP 440
MD	19	



## ZOMBIE SLAVE

*9<sup>th</sup> level troop* [UNDEAD]  
Initiative: +10  
Vulnerability: holy

**Club-like fist +14 vs. AC—42 damage**

*Natural even hit or miss:* Both the zombie and its target take 4d10 damage.

*Natural 16+:* The zombie slave can also make a *fog breath* attack as a free action.

[*Special trigger*] **C: Fog breath +13 vs. PD (1d2 nearby enemies)—20 negative energy damage**, and the target is weakened (save ends) as the fog forces its way into their eyes, mouth, and lungs

**Headshot:** A critical against the zombie drops it to 0 hp.

**Filled with death fog:** When this creature is staggered, it can make a *fog breath* attack as a free action.

AC	23	
PD	21	HP 220
MD	17	

## SPAWN OF THE MASTER

*Many are bit, but few are bidden to join the ranks of the true vampires.*

*10<sup>th</sup> level mook* [UNDEAD]  
Initiative: +16  
Vulnerability: holy

**Claws and fangs +15 vs. AC—30 damage**

*Natural 18+:* If the target is staggered, it is also hampered (*makes only basic attacks*) until the end of its next turn.

AC	25	
PD	23	HP 54 (mook)
MD	20	

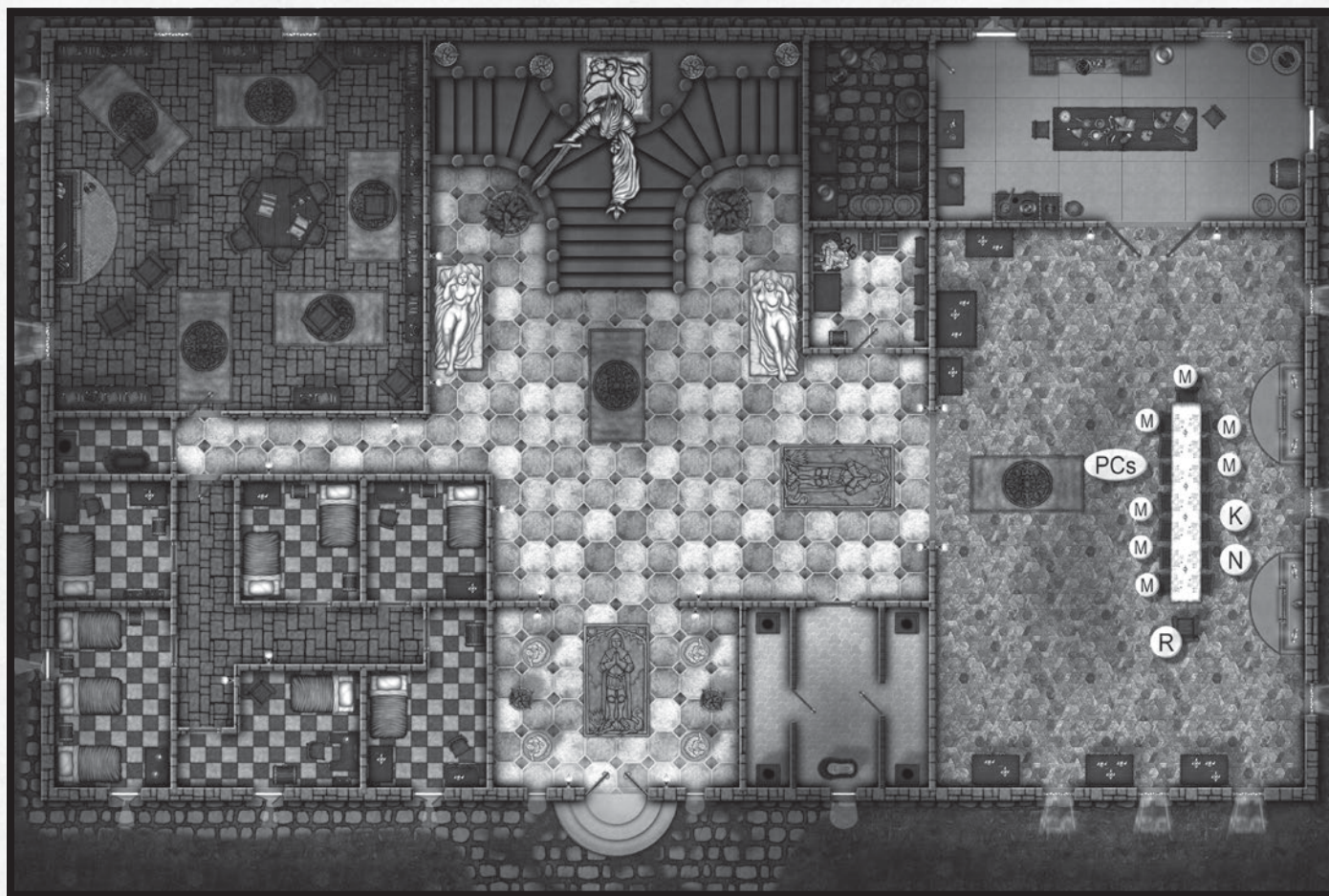
**Mook:** Kill one spawn of the master mook for every 54 hp you deal to the mob.

### NEXT STEPS

The PCs should be able to take a quick rest while they get their bearings. Whether they get a spawn to talk or not, it shouldn't be hard for them to find the manor house on this estate because the feelings of despair grow stronger the nearer they get to it. The unused but still obvious farmland shows more signs of civilization as the PCs go, until the hill with the manor comes into view. Lights in the windows should draw the PCs to the place like moths to a flame as well. (GM, if you want to expand these battle scenes, this would be a great point to have the PCs enter the village of Hob's Crossing, which has living humans, but they are attired and act like those from centuries past. If you do, it's all free-form.)

When the PCs are ready to approach the manor house, go to **Battle 2: And Now the Predators.**





## BATTLE 2: AND NOW THE PREDATORS

*The structure you saw on the hill through the fog is indeed a manor house. As you approach, you see a gravel walk leads from the dirt road you've been following up to the house. A few horseless carriages sit on the lawn, ready to be hitched. From inside the structure there's candlelight... and laughter. Someone seems to be having a party!*

### LOCATION DESCRIPTION

The manor house is a large two-story structure with shuttered and sealed windows on the top floor. The lower floor windows are sealed but unshuttered and light spills out from one side of the home through the glass panes. A path leads to the front door, and also around the back of the manor to an extensive garden that has been managed. The garden holds a lot of odd fauna that seems to thrive with low light, including one or more large rose bushes.

This is the home of Lord Rahlia Navernos, and she's having a dinner party. In addition to her spawn, she has a few special guests who are staying with her and using her realm as safe haven for the time being—Kolaris, a medusa noble, and her consort Nalfazar, a Knight of the Crimson Rose. Also in attendance are a handful of human thralls who obediently serve the lord; they

have no vampiric characteristics, other than being charmed to serve her.

If any PC approaches the front door, one of these thralls, an old, wizened human man named Yates, will open the door and welcome them in. In a weak voice he says, "We weren't sure you were coming to the party, masters. The hour is getting late." Yates and everyone in the place is aware that the PCs are intruders, but they've been instructed by Rahlia to play her game and treat them as guests while she learns about them. Yates will answer questions and continue to invite the PCs (and anyone lingering in the background) inside out of the chill (see **Terrain & Traps**). If the previous attack is mentioned, Yates will say there have been some attacks of late that are distressing, to be sure, and leave it vague.

The lower floor of the manor house holds an entryway, cloak room, large dining hall, kitchen and larder, toilet, study, and servant's quarters. Windows from outside show the entryway, dining hall, and study lit up with lanterns and candles, and a group of people, mostly human but with a few half-elves, sitting at the table eating, drinking, and making merry while a few servants move to the kitchen and back with trays of drinks and food. One woman with auburn hair and pale skin in a party dress sits at the head of the table and seems to be deferred to by the others (a fake Rahlia). It should all look normal from outside, and no stealth checks are required (though you could have spying PCs roll them) to pick up those details.

Anyone climbing to the second floor will find outside shutters closed in front of sealed glass windows, meaning accessing them requires breaking glass.



Lord Rahlia waits upstairs, aware of the intruders in her realm and curious as to their purpose. The players could decide the whole thing is setup and go in swords blazing, but for groups that like a bit of intrigue, the bloodbath won't start right away and the partyers will welcome them into their fold. See **Monsters** for more information on the guests.

## TERRAIN & TRAPS

**Structures & Walls:** The brick and wood manor house is 200 feet long, 120 feet wide, and 50 feet high (two floors). There's the main door (unlocked) with Yates standing just inside looking through a peephole for guests. A second door allows access from the kitchen outside, but it's locked (DC 20 Str or Dex).

It's easy to see inside the ground floor everywhere except the servants' quarters and larder, which have no windows. Getting to the second floor requires a successful DC 20 Strength check to climb the outer walls; it's not difficult because there are creepers and latticework on two sides. Shutters can be opened to see inside, but getting inside quietly requires magic or real skill since the windows don't open (DC 35 check). If the PCs go this route, the party guests will simply attack the PCs once they reveal themselves (as the vampire avoids them among the shadows).

The roof only holds a few chimney stacks and has no entrances. In addition to a few small shacks near the edge of the garden, there's a small stable where a handful of horses are kept for the carriages. A young stablehand, Corby (a thrall), sleeps there.

**Dining Hall & Kitchen:** The 90 x 60 dining hall holds a long dining table set with platters of food and goblets of drink. There are two large fireplaces on the outer wall putting out heat in the otherwise cold room. Stone tile floors with aging carpets cause the voices of the dinner guests to carry. Four middle age thralls serve the guests: two women who cook and two men who wait the tables. They will act like servants and say nothing bad about the lord, though the fear and horror beneath their smiles might be evident to those who look for it (DC 30 Wisdom check).

The kitchen has an iron stove built into the fireplace and various dishes cooking and being prepared by the two cooks. There's a door to the outside (locked, DC 20) and also to the larder. Nothing seems out of the ordinary here.

The larder is a separate room off the kitchen that runs under the grand staircase. The door has a simple padlock (DC 20 Strength or Dexterity to avoid making noise opening it; the lead cook has the key). Inside are various normal foodstuffs and lots of alcohol, but there's also an upside-down dead dwarf hanging from hooks by his ankles slowly dripping blood from a neck slash into a sealed barrel (for some blood pies for the lord).

**Entrance Hall, Study, Servant's Quarters, and Stairs:** The ground floor holds the entrance hall, a study, servants' quarters and toilet, and the grand stairs up to the second level. The entrance hall is well-adorned with paintings and ancient tapestries showing house Navernos' triumphs. To the left is a hall to the servants' quarters: four small, windowless rooms with simple beds. The walls of two are covered with scratches of mad ramblings from thrall servants.

The study houses a fireplace (dim coals) and a few comfy chairs. There are a number of old, flaking paintings of the Navernos

family line, showing mostly men. The last painting in the line is in better condition and shows a golden-skinned raven-haired woman with a cold beauty that has Rahlia's name under it. There are none after it in line. Anyone who views the painting carefully will know the woman acting as Lord Rahlia in the dining hall looks similar to the painting in only a very general sense.

The stairs go up to the second level. If the PCs enter the manor house to attend the party, Yates will offer to take their cloaks and point them to the right. Anyone trying to go upstairs will be sternly directed to the dining hall, where the lord of the house waits for them.

**Haunted Shadows:** Once the PCs engage the partygoers in battle, Rahlia will use her house against them. The candle flames will all snuff out, leaving only the fire in the hearth and many shadows. At the start of each round when the escalation die is 1+, the house will make a *draining shadows* attack against one random PC.

**C: Draining shadows +16 vs. PD (one random PC)**—The target is vulnerable and takes a -5 penalty to disengage checks (save ends both) as shadows wrap around them and cling to them.

## MONSTERS

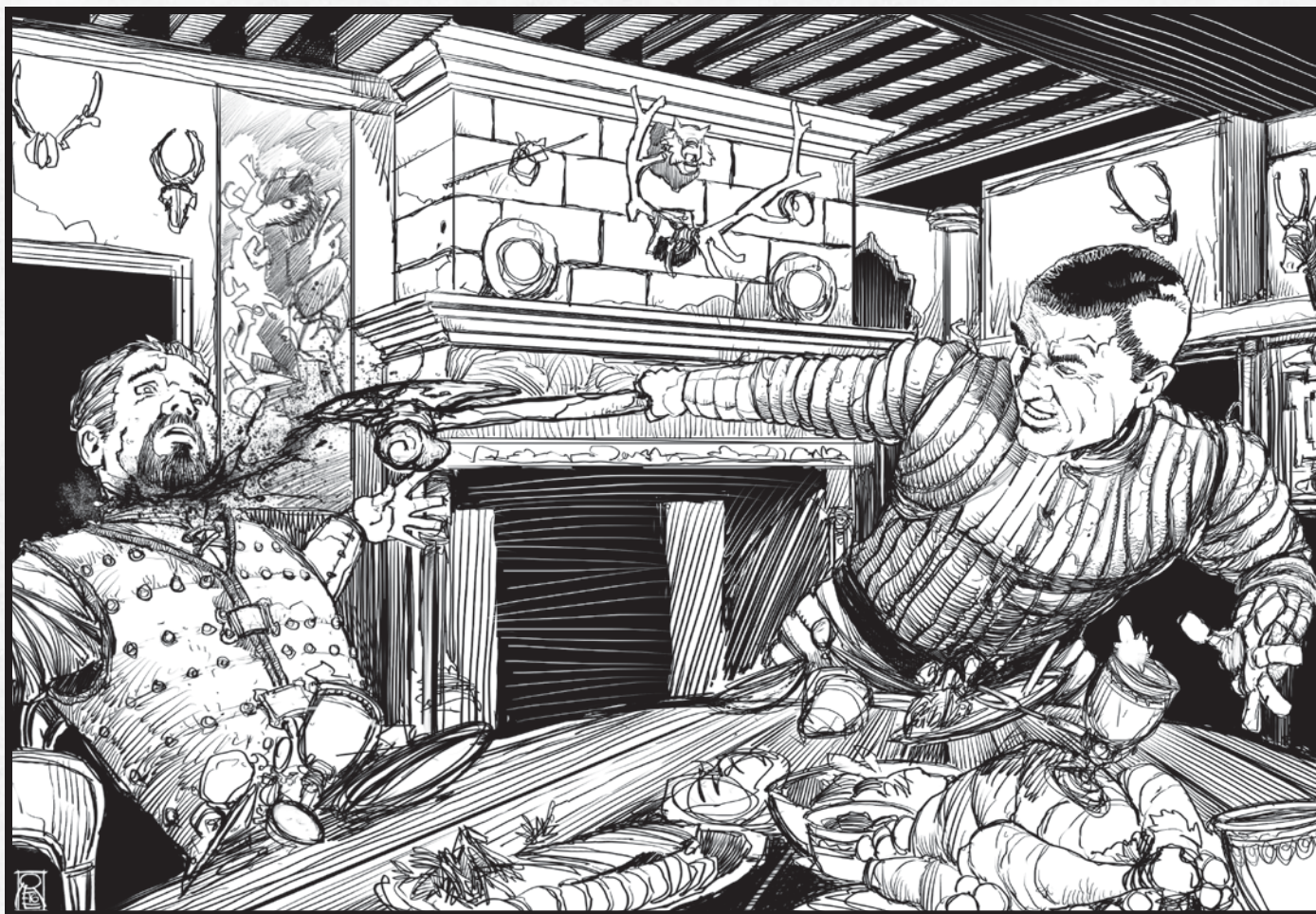
The party guests will play their role as long as possible, unless the PCs come inside looking for violence or sneak upstairs. If they come through the kitchen door, some of the spawn will make jokes about surprise arrivals through the servants' door and then welcome them to sit. They will play their game until someone slips up or the time feels right to attack.

**Additional Reinforcements:** If you want to challenge the PCs more, have the fake Rahlia be a full vampire (core rulebook, page 248), but one who was created by the true lord of the estate. Fake Rahlia turns to mist, which moves upstairs. There they find her coffin, but Rahlia is also there playing cat and mouse with them.

If the PCs choose to interact with the guests, here's a breakdown on the cast of characters. The beginning of this scene will require some free-form roleplaying on the GM's part.

- **Kolaris (medusa noble):** The medusa wears fine green and gold silks including an elaborate headdress that only shows her stunning blue eyes, no snakes. Introduce her as human. She sits close to the fire. Kolaris has a southern accent (whatever that means to you!) and uses refined speech. She doesn't speak too much and will stare at any PC directing conversation her way.
- **Nalfazar:** The human man is the consort of Kolaris, and he is both her lover and bodyguard. He's also a Knight of the Crimson Rose, a small order of which all members have been turned into undead. He seems human to casual observation (close observation might reveal he doesn't breathe except to draw breath to speak), and speaks quite a bit, also with a southern accent. He often refers to Kolaris as "my love."
- **Domner Rols (spawn):** A human noble who laughs too long and too loudly, he drinks continually from a pitcher of dark red wine and offers it to the PCs.
- **Allisa Rols (spawn):** Domner's wife and also human. She picks one or two PCs of which to ask intimate questions. She





also makes suggestions to male PCs about taking a tour of the study and subconsciously licks her lips.

- **Garstad Vellin (spawn):** Human male constable of the nearby village of Hob's Crossing (he claims). He speaks in short clipped sentences and mentions that the PCs are new faces in the area, wondering where they are from. If asked about the attacks, he will say there has been some dark trouble of late in the district, but that his people are taking care of it.
- **Lady Polns (spawn):** A half-elven widower (she killed her husband) who is pretentious and conceited. She will argue against the virtues of organized religion with any clerics among the PCs. She also encourages the PCs to try various dishes.
- **Lander McFinn (spawn):** Half-elven second son of the McFinn family and most eligible bachelor. He is charming and a bit drunk, so is most likely to make a comment about blood or feasting that will set off the PCs. He focuses on the most attractive PC and wishes to hear of their adventures, perhaps someplace private.
- **Targun Silversmith (spawn):** Human merchant and jeweler with red hair and a thick accent who wears an intricate gold lens eyepiece. He will comment on the PCs' items and ask where they acquired the pieces.
- **Rahlia Navernos (spawn fake):** A pale human woman with dark hair and the supposed ruler of the district. She doesn't speak too much, and isn't fully successful in talking in a "noble" manner. She has a distinctly non-Imperial accent, which might set off any PC who is familiar with such things. She will ask each PC to tell the group about themselves.

- **Other spawn:** Other NPCs you want to add to fit your PCs, or some of the thralls could be spawn instead.

#/Level of PCs	Kolaris, Medusa Noble (K)	Nalfazar, Crimson Rose Knight (N)	Spawn of the Master Mook (M)
4 x 8 <sup>th</sup> level	1	1*	7 (1 mob)
5 x 8 <sup>th</sup> level	1	1	7 (1 mob)
6 x 8 <sup>th</sup> level	1	1	12 (1 mob)
4 x 9 <sup>th</sup> level	1	1	10 (1 mob)
5 x 9 <sup>th</sup> level	1	1	9 (1 mob)**
6 x 9 <sup>th</sup> level	1	1***	11 (1 mob)**

\* Nalfazar only gets one attack with his *bone axe*.

\*\* Each spawn is double strength: its *claws and bite* attack deals 60 damage and it has 108 hp.

\*\*\* Nalfazar gets a third attack with his *bone axe*.

## TACTICS

The thralls (cooks, waiters, Yates) will flee from the room.

Once the partygoers decide to attack, Kolaris will remove her headdress and draw a rapier from her silks, then focus on her more dangerous opponents, arcane spellcasters and clerics with high MD and lower PD and use her *lightning fork*.



## FOOD AND DRINK

If any of the PCs actually partake of the wine or food offered by the spawn, it is, of course, tainted. Most likely they are drinking blood or vampire blood. What effect this has is up to the GM, but one likely effect is that sometime during the battles with Rahlia, she calls to them (or the blood running through them) to succumb to her will. That might mean an automatic hit, a failed save, or some small effect that lasts the battle. Make it clear when you spring this that it's due to eating or drinking from a vampire's table.

Nalfazar will laugh and slap his hands together as a bone battle axe suddenly appears in his hands. He then intercepts the first enemy trying to reach Kolaris, or will attack anyone attacking her, taking an opportunity attack to do so if need be.

The spawn will leap upon the nearest enemies, trying to claw and bite them. If any spawn had a PC separated from the group when battle starts, consider allowing them a free surprise attack before initiative unless the PC was being wary and trying to lure them away on purpose. The fake Lady Rahlia stands back and laughs maniacally for the first round, keeping up the ruse. If attacked, even though she's a spawn, have other spawn drop first if they are nearby as they "get in the way."

### LOOT

The spawn wear rings and jewelry worth a total of 200 gp. Kolaris's rapier is well-made and has a large opal in the hilt; it's worth 200 gp. Targun's eyepiece is worth 50 gp (and could be magical in some way, like a +1 bonus to skill checks to see things, or it possibly allows the wearer to see into another dimension, a wondrous item with story implications).

### Icons

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Lich King, Diabolist, High Druid, Priestess, or the Prince could use one or more of them to sense the taint within the food and drink, or even to see telltale signs that the spawn are actually vampires.

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Lich King or Emperor could use one or more of them to be aware of the history

of the Navernos family, how they supposedly disappeared, and to know that the partygoers attire and language is very archaic (as might checks using backgrounds in History or Social Customs).

## KOLARIS, MEDUSA NOBLE

*It's been a fabulous party and you mortal 'heroes' are not going to cramp her style for long.*

*Double-strength 11<sup>th</sup> level caster* [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +17

**Snakes and swords +17 vs. AC (3 attacks)**—30 damage, and 15 ongoing poison damage

*Natural 18+:* The medusa can make a *petrifying gaze* attack against the target as a free action.

*Miss:* 5 ongoing poison damage

**R: Lightning fork +17 vs. PD (one nearby or far away enemy)**—80 lightning damage

*Natural odd hit or miss:* The medusa deals 1d6 x 10 lightning damage to each nearby enemy (to her).

*Natural even hit or miss:* The medusa can make a *lightning fork* attack against a different target as a free action; keep making *lightning fork* attacks until you run out of targets that have taken damage from *lightning fork* or roll a natural odd attack.

*[Special trigger]* **C: Petrifying gaze +17 vs. MD (one enemy)**—70 psychic damage, and the target must start making last gasp saves as it turns to stone

*Caught by an eye:* Whenever a nearby enemy attacks the medusa noble and rolls a natural 1–5, the medusa can make a *petrifying gaze* attack against that attacker as a free action.

*Serpent wardings:* Thrice per battle, as a free action, the medusa noble can force an enemy to reroll a spell attack that targeted it. The attacker can't use the escalation die for the reroll.

*Skilled sorcerer:* If lightning isn't working against her target, the medusa noble can take a –1 attack penalty to change the energy type of her ranged attack to fire or thunder.

AC 27

PD 21

MD 25

HP 500



## NALFAZAR, KNIGHT OF THE CRIMSON ROSE

The man moves with supernatural speed, lashing out with his bone axe. Even as you duck away, he reaches out for your chest with his free hand.

Double-strength 10<sup>th</sup> level blocker [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +18

Vulnerability: holy

**Bone axe +16 vs. AC (2 attacks)—50 damage**

*Natural even hit or miss:* Nalfazar can make a *weakening touch* attack against the target as a free action.

[Special trigger] **Weakening touch +15 vs. PD (one enemy attacked by bone axe)**—The target is weakened (save ends)

*Knight of the Crimson Rose:* When an enemy that is weakened by Nalfazar's *weakening touch* takes a critical hit, as a free action Nalfazar can stop its heart. The enemy must start making death saves, but doesn't fall unconscious. On the fourth failed save, the target's heart explodes and it dies.

*Knightly protector:* When Nalfazar attacks an enemy engaged with one of his allies, that ally can pop free from the attacked enemy. The enemy takes a -5 penalty to disengage checks while engaged with Nalfazar.

In addition, once per battle as a free action when Nalfazar is next to an ally that is hit by an attack, he can take the hit instead, but it becomes a critical hit (or x3 if a crit already).

AC 24  
PD 24  
MD 20

HP 496

## SPAWN OF THE MASTER

Many are bit, but few are bidden to join the ranks of the true vampires.

10<sup>th</sup> level mook [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +16

Vulnerability: holy

**Claws and fangs +15 vs. AC—30 damage**

*Natural 18+:* If the target is staggered, it is also hampered (*makes only basic attacks*) until the end of its next turn.

AC 25  
PD 23  
MD 20

HP 54 (mook)

*Mook:* Kill one spawn of the master mook for every 54 hp you deal to the mob.

### NEXT STEPS

When the PCs defeat the partygoers, they will hear a scream of frustration from upstairs echo through the house. A feminine, southern-accented voice will say, "*You dare attack me and mine in my house. I shall gut every single one of you!*"

Feel free to play some shadow games with the PCs as they investigate the house, with them following shadows and whispers, encountering thralls, and dealing with other distractions, but they won't find Rahlia (if you need a reason why, she is hiding as mist in a space in the rafters). Eventually, they'll hear glass breaking and see a bedroom with broken windows, open shutters, and a pale figure in silks quickly moving into the garden below.

The PCs should get a quick rest after the battle downstairs. Once they're ready to face Rahlia, go to **Battle 3: Blooding the Roses**.





## BATTLE 3: BLOODING THE ROSES

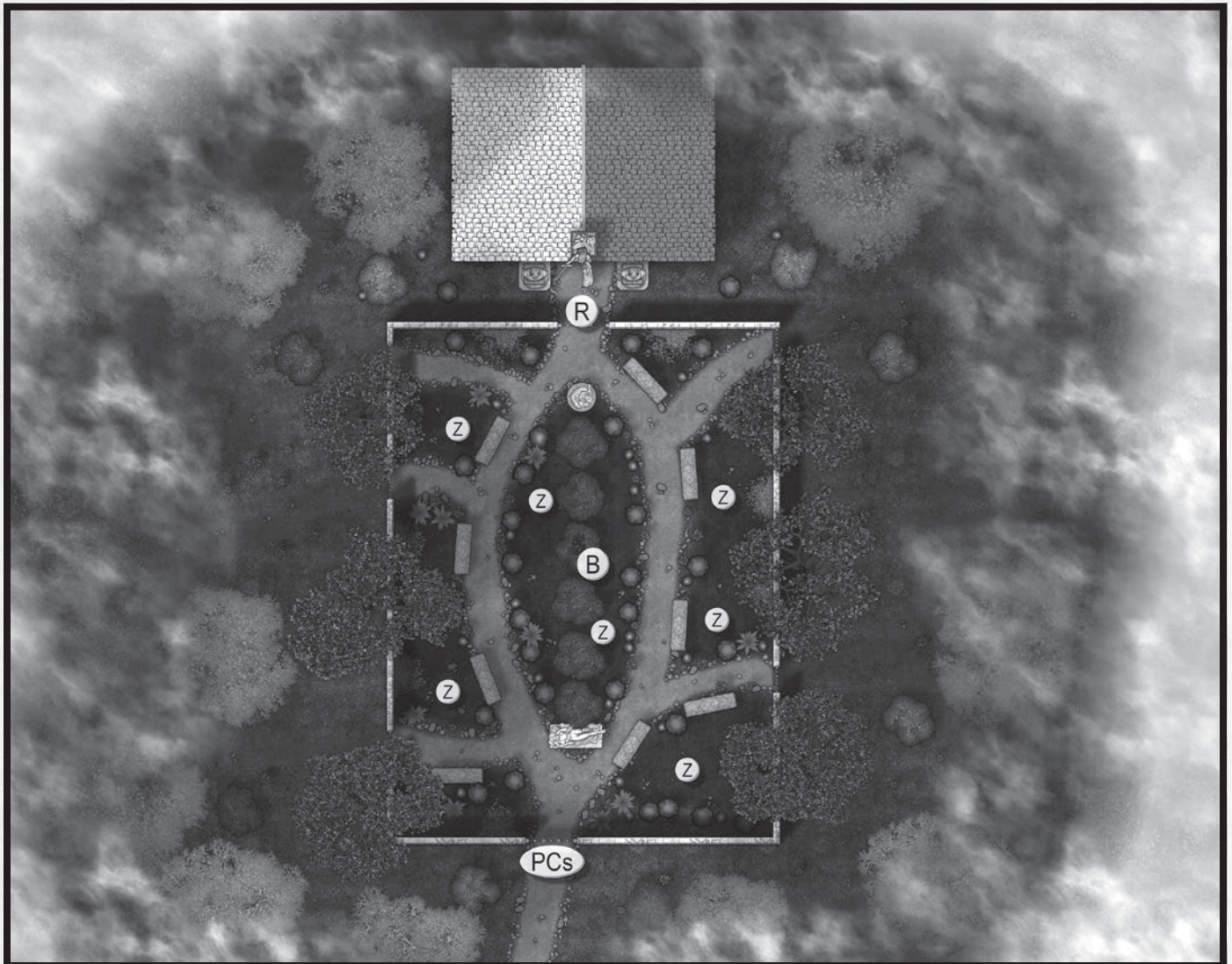
*You exit the manor toward the garden as a thick fog begins to rise. In the darkness, the garden looks well-maintained in places, and completely overgrown in others, with many narrow walking paths through it. After a short distance, the path enters a small courtyard with stone benches and what looks like an ivy-overgrown marble mausoleum at the back. Fruit trees line the courtyard, their fruit fallen and rotting upon the ground, and flowerbeds fill the space between. One holds a very large rosebush with huge red roses in full blossom, even though night is well under way. In front of the mausoleum is a golden-skinned, raven-haired woman in regal purple silks. She says, "Whatever the real reason for your presence in my realm, you shall now become my thralls. Take them!" The earth of the flowerbeds shifts and the fog swirls closer.*

### LOCATION DESCRIPTION

The garden courtyard is 80 feet long and 60 feet wide, with four different paths leading out of it. There are four 15 x 5 flower beds, but only the one on the left closest to Rahlia holds the rose bush. The mausoleum sits at the back of the courtyard among the foliage and creepers, and it's sealed with a heavy iron door. Plum trees border the courtyard on either side, and the rich fragrance of rotting plum fills the area.

Rahlia Navernos, vampire lord of this estate, waits for them far away in front of the crypt door, but she's not alone. She's planted a few bodies in the other flowerbeds, which are zombie slaves that will rise up to defend her. In the flowerbed closest to her, she's also cultivated an elder blood rose that transforms into an elder death blossom.

Once Rahlia becomes staggered, she will turn to mist and flow down a clay pipe set among bricks in the corner of the courtyard (the PCs will see this happen), setting up the final confrontation within the Navernos tomb.







## TERRAIN & TRAPS

**Poison Fog:** The thick fog that hides Rahlia's realm has returned and lies thick through the courtyard and garden. Following her will, poisonous fog will pool in areas during the battle. At the start of each round when the escalation die is 1+, make a *poison fog* attack against a random PC.

C: **Poison fog +16 vs. PD (one random PC)**—20 ongoing poison damage (hard save ends, 16+).

**Fruit Trees:** The trees are thick with cobwebs, dead leaves, and fog, making them a good place for concealment. They average 15 feet in height and 12 feet in diameter. Climbing the trees requires a successful DC 25 Dexterity check; it's difficult due to the small branches, which snap on a failure and send the climber back

to the ground with noisy cracking. Small creatures gain a +5 bonus to the check.

**Mausoleum:** The building is 30 x 40 and 13 feet high with a peaked roof. It leads to a set of crypts below. Getting through the door isn't easy though (see **Next Steps**). Climbing it isn't hard either, requiring a successful DC 18 Strength check.

**Garden Paths:** The five gravel paths meander through the garden, moving past many small hidden places to sit on a bench and intertwining with each other. It's a good place to try to draw an enemy into a one-on-one confrontation. It's also a good place to throw a few more spawn at any PCs deciding to go it alone.

## MONSTERS

Rahlia waits for the PCs, making them come to her through the zombies and rose. She is regal yet egotistical, and anyone insulting her will draw her attention (and enmity).

The zombie slaves, bodies of former victims drained to the last drop, rise from the open earth in the flowerbeds around Rahlia. Some have become very rotten and dirt-encased, obviously there for some time, with worms crawling out of their orifices.

The elder blood rose is part of a large bush with many thorny vines that try to wrap up enemies. The creature does have roots in the flowerbed, but also has many tendrils that allow it to move anywhere in the courtyard to attack. Rahlia tries to stay close to it.

**Additional Reinforcements:** If you want to challenge the PCs more, add 2d6 spawn of the master (see Battle 2 for stats) to the battle. They hide in the fog off the edges of the courtyard, trying to slip behind the PCs.

#/Level of PCs	Rahlia, Vampire Lord (R)	Elder Blood Rose (B)	Zombie Slave (Z)
4 x 8 <sup>th</sup> level	1	1	2
5 x 8 <sup>th</sup> level	1	1	3
6 x 8 <sup>th</sup> level	1	1	4
4 x 9 <sup>th</sup> level	1	1	5
5 x 9 <sup>th</sup> level	1	2	5
6 x 9 <sup>th</sup> level	1	2	7



## TACTICS

This battle is all about Rahlia, who will try to isolate one PC to attack solely while the zombies and rose keep the others busy. If a PC drops and goes unconscious, she's perfectly willing to deliver a coup de grace, or even better, grab the body (move action) and flee into the garden with it (another move), where she can drain the unfortunate freely. At that point, the battle might break down into a series of skill checks to find her (use hard checks, since she knows the garden well).

Once the elder blood rose drops to 0 hp, the elder death blossom rises in its place the next turn.

Remember, this battle is designed to have Rahlia flee when she's staggered. If you keep her in the fight, it will be tougher on the PCs. Also, in this realm, only two things can truly kill her: cutting off her head while she's in her tomb, or exposing her to sunlight after she's fled to her tomb to regenerate. That solves potential issues with sun exposure during this fight (it would only make her flee), but as always, a GM could adapt the story based on PC capabilities.

## LOOT

Since Rahlia will flee this battle, none of the zombies have any valuables. The death blossom might be a valuable component to the right herbalist or necromancer.

## Icons

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Lich King, Archmage, High Druid, Priestess, or maybe Diabolist could use one or more of them to try to keep the blood rose or death blossom from attacking them.

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Lich King, Priestess, Great Gold Wrym, High Druid, or maybe the Emperor could use one or more of them to have a way to cause harm to Rahlia to repel her from attacking that PC or even drive her off to her lair (stored sunlight, consecrated holy symbol, or the equivalent).

## RAHLIA, VAMPIRE LORD

*The woman moves with supernatural speed as she reaches toward you with clawed hands, her eyes crimson with bloodlust.*

*Double-strength 11<sup>th</sup> level spoiler* [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +16

Vulnerability: holy

**Deathly touch +16 vs. PD (2 attacks)**—60 negative energy damage

*Natural even hit:* The target is also weakened until the end of its next turn (−4 attacks and defenses). In addition, the target expends one unused limited trait (a spell, power, or talent with a once-per-battle or daily use, but not magic item powers) of its choice.

*Natural odd hit:* Rahlia can make a *blood-draining bite* attack against the target as a free action.

*[Special trigger]* **Blood-draining bite +16 vs. PD (one engaged enemy)**—5 damage, 20 ongoing damage and the target is vulnerable (hard save ends both, 16+).

**R: Grasping fog +16 vs. PD (up to 2 nearby enemies in a group)**—40 negative energy damage, and the target is stuck (save ends)

**C: Vampiric compulsion +16 vs. MD (one enemy; see below)**—The target is confused and vulnerable (save ends)

*Limited use:* The vampire can use *vampiric compulsion* as a free action only when a nearby enemy attacks the vampire and misses with a natural attack roll of 1–5.

*Vampiric regeneration:* The vampire regenerates 1 hit point per level at the start of each round indefinitely, but it turns to mist if it drops to 0 hp (see below).

*Mist form:* Unless it is slain in a manner appropriate for truly killing vampires in the campaign, a vampire that drops to 0 hp drifts away to return and fight some other day.

AC 27  
PD 22  
MD 27

HP 580





## ZOMBIE SLAVE

9<sup>th</sup> level troop [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +10

Vulnerability: holy

**Club-like fist +14 vs. AC**—42 damage

*Natural even hit or miss:* Both the zombie and its target take 4d10 damage.

*Natural 16+:* The zombie slave can also make a *fog breath* attack as a free action.

[Special trigger] **C: Fog breath +13 vs. PD (1d2 nearby enemies)**—20 negative energy damage, and the target is weakened (save ends) as the fog forces its way into their eyes, mouth, and lungs

*Headshot:* A critical against the zombie drops it to 0 hp.

*Filled with death fog:* When this creature is staggered, it can make a *fog breath* attack as a free action.

AC	23	
PD	21	HP 220
MD	17	

## ELDER BLOOD ROSE

*This glorious twining red rose tangle glows even brighter as it feeds.*

Double-strength 10<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [PLANT]

Initiative: +14

Vulnerability: fire

**Fangs in the blossoms +15 vs. AC**—55 damage

*Natural odd hit:* The target takes 15 ongoing damage.

*Natural odd miss:* 10 ongoing damage.

*Bristling thorns:* When a creature makes a melee attack against the blood rose, that creature takes damage equal to its natural attack roll.

*Black-gray resurgence:* When the blood rose drops to 0 hit points, it is destroyed until the start of its next turn. At the start of its next turn, it returns to life as an elder death blossom or lich flower that lacks the *red-yellow resurrection* ability but is otherwise undamaged and whole.

AC	26	
PD	24	HP 250
MD	24	

## ELDER DEATH BLOSSOM

*Huge black flowers on twitchy undead stalks. They look brittle but if you know anything about necromancy you can see through that lie.*

Double-strength 10<sup>th</sup> level caster [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +14

Vulnerability: holy

**Sapping touch +15 vs. AC**—50 negative energy damage

*Natural 4, 8, 12, 16, or 20:* The target is weakened (save ends).

**R: Unlife ray +15 vs. PD**—60 negative energy damage

*Natural odd hit:* The target takes 1d6 extra negative energy damage for each unexpended recovery it has.

*Natural odd miss:* If the target currently has less than its maximum recoveries, it gains a recovery! Gaining a recovery is not healing, but it can use that recovery later to heal as normal.

*Red-yellow resurrection ability canceled because elder death blossoms only enter this fight when elder blood roses have been dropped to 0 hit point....*

AC	25	
PD	23	HP 240
MD	21	

### NEXT STEPS

When Rahlia is staggered, she turns to mist and flees down the clay pipe to her vault. The PCs may think she's been defeated, but unless they have some way of immediately following her down the pipe, she will be at full strength for the final battle thanks to her regeneration.

The iron door to the mausoleum is heavy and barred from the inside, requiring a few minutes of work to either bash it open or flip the bar with lockpick tools. But it's also warded with dark magic. When someone touches the door, a negative energy ward will explode. Detecting the ward requires a DC 25 check using a primary spellcasting ability, and another DC 25 check to fully disable it once it's been detected (partial success might limit targets or damage).

**Negative energy ward +18 vs. PD (each nearby creature)**—

4d12 negative energy damage, and it resets up to two times.

Once the door is bypassed, there is an interior sarcophagus that must be opened to reveal the stairs going down inside it. Beyond that are a few burial preparation chambers. Finally, at the end of a short corridor is a set of large iron double doors with the Lich King's symbol inscribed upon them. When the PCs open the doors, go to **Battle 4: Rahlia's Crypt**.



## BATTLE 4: RAHLIA'S CRYPT

*You broke through the outer mausoleum door to the Navernos family crypts, found the stairs down through a tomb, and have passed through a few preparation chambers of this crypt. Ahead are a pair of large iron double doors; the One-eyed Lord's symbol is etched upon them. If you were lesser heroes, the waves of despair flowing out of the eye would overwhelm you, but you're not lesser heroes, are you?*

### LOCATION DESCRIPTION

The crypt beyond the doors is where the Navernos family members are entombed, including Rahlia's resting place. It's also a den for Rahlia and her spawn, who wait for the PCs to enter so they may finally have their blood feast.

The crypt is 60 feet long and 40 feet wide, with two side chambers through ornate marble archways carved with images of death. The room holds seven tombs, six in two rows of three along the walls, and a single large sarcophagus at the back of the chamber. Each has the carved likeness on the lid of the one

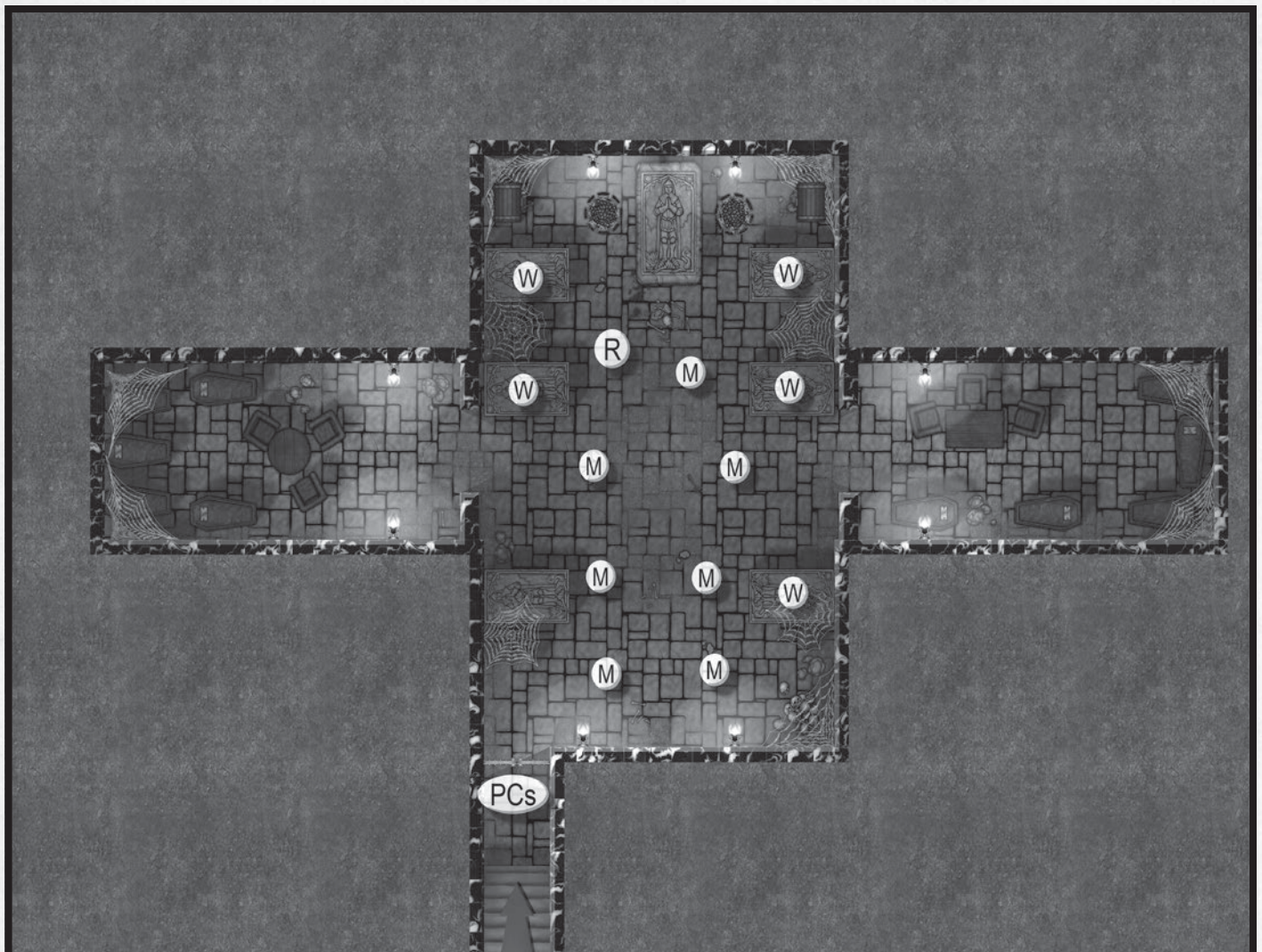
buried within; there are four males and two females among the six, with Rahlia's likeness carved into the lid of the one at the back wall. Of course, it doesn't currently hold Rahlia's body, but the PCs won't know that.

Each side chamber is 20 x 40 and holds a row of simple wooden coffins along the back wall for the spawn, along with old but nicely cushioned chairs and divans. The ever-present fog hangs in a bank along the ceiling, trailing the occasional wisp toward the ground but not sinking as the PCs might expect.

Rahlia and her favored spawn are all transformed into the fog that fills the ceiling, waiting to strike at the right time, which is probably when the PCs try to open Rahlia's sarcophagus. She's also summoned forth the spirits of her husband's ancestors to fight with her. See Ambush in **Tactics**.

### TERRAIN & TRAPS

**Iron Double Doors:** The doors have a single keyhole lock set into the right door within a grinning skull face with jagged teeth. While it looks like it's probably a nasty trap, it's only decoration. Getting the doors open requires a successful DC 30 Strength check, or a DC 25 Dexterity check to pick the lock. Failure only means it takes more time.





**Ceiling Fog:** The vampires in the chamber are in fog form thanks to some special powers granted to Rahlia by the Lich King's lieutenants. Other than not sinking, it acts like normal fog, swirling and drifting. While in fog form, the vampires can't be hurt by physical attacks or anything short of strong magic like a fireball. Of course, if anyone looks like they're going to blast the fog, the vampires will descend, solidify, and attack.

In addition, since the fog is a part of Rahlia, it will fight with her during the battle. As before, at the start of each round when the escalation die is 1+, the fog makes a *draining fog* attack against one random PC in the crypt.

**C: Draining fog +17 vs. PD (one random PC)**—10 negative energy damage, and 10 ongoing negative energy damage (hard save ends, 16+)

*Each failed save:* Rahlia heals 11 hp.

**Side Chambers:** Each chamber has a row of ten simple wooden coffins where the spawn can rest. All are empty.

In addition, each chamber holds tables, cushioned chairs, and even a divan for Rahlia and the spawn to lounge upon as they wish. The chamber to the left also holds a strange device mounted halfway up the wall. It appears to be an iron maiden, but there are tubes at the bottom that drain into reservoirs coated with old blood. The inside has needle-sharp spikes that would pierce a body at key points to bleed it out (it's their version of a blood tap).

**Sarcophagi (main chamber):** The seven tombs in the main chamber are reserved for Navernos family members. The six along the walls are sealed and still hold the bones of Rahlia's husband and ancestors; she is depraved in many ways, but she still honors her husband's memory and family. Even so, she's called forth the spirits of her husband and others to aid her, and those wraiths will emerge from the sarcophagi to attack as well.

Rahlia's sarcophagus is the one at the end with her image carved into the top. It has vents in the bottom connected to short clay tubes that come up through the floor a few feet away from it to allow her access without removing the heavy marble lid. It requires a DC 35 Strength check to lift the lid of any of the tombs, with a +4 bonus for each additional person helping up to four.

## MONSTERS

Rahlia and her spawn wait to strike as part of the fog. Those attuned to the undead or who are very perceptive might be able to detect their presence there (DC 35 Wisdom check) through heightened senses. The spawn are nobles from Hob's Crossing and others who wandered into her realm; Rahlia enjoys acting like a queen among her followers.

The wraiths look like regal men and women with strong Imperial features in archaic clothing.

When Rahlia enters this battle, she'll be a bit less haughty and overconfident, having been beaten once already. As she attacks, she'll try to intimidate the PCs, saying things like, "*Don't you understand, the One-eyed Lord has been my guest. You are outclassed.*" and "*I have killed your kind before, and you won't be the last.*"

**Additional Reinforcements:** If you want to challenge the PCs more, have one or more of the Navernos wraiths instead be a dread specter (*13 True Ways*, page 201).

#/Level of PCs	Rahlia, Vampire Lord (R)	Navernos Wraith (W)	Spawn of the Lord Mook (M)
4 x 8 <sup>th</sup> level	1	1	7 (1 mob)
5 x 8 <sup>th</sup> level	1	2	8 (1 mob)
6 x 8 <sup>th</sup> level	1	2	15 (2 mobs)
4 x 9 <sup>th</sup> level	1	3	10 (1 mob)
5 x 9 <sup>th</sup> level	1	4	15 (2 mobs)
6 x 9 <sup>th</sup> level	1	5	20 (2 mobs)

## TACTICS

**Ambush:** If the PCs aren't able to detect the vampires in the fog, once they try to open any of the seven primary sarcophagi in the main chamber, Rahlia and her spawn will descend, transform back into flesh, and attack. Each PC must roll a DC 28 Wisdom check. If less than half succeed, Rahlia and one spawn can make an attack before initiative is rolled.

Having fought the PCs once already, Rahlia has a good idea of their capabilities and she is an ancient and cunning enemy. She will have instructed her spawn about which PCs to take down first. She and a few spawn will focus on any clerics or leaders who can provide healing, trying to drop that PC quickly. The others will swarm any arcane spellcasters. Once the healing and spellcasting is down, they can focus on the rest, swarming one or two PCs each round.

The wraiths will try to protect Rahlia or harass any PCs fighting freely. They can move through solid objects as long as they don't end their turn in them, so they can come through walls into the side chambers as necessary.

Once staggered, Rahlia is not above threatening to slay a helpless or unconscious enemy if the PCs don't agree to leave immediately, keeping that PC as insurance.

Once she drops to 0 hp, she turns to mist, flows to her tomb, and coalesces inside, where she needs to rest for a day to fully regenerate. At this point she is vulnerable to being permanently destroyed by sunlight or having her head removed from her body (or another option you prefer, like staking).

## LOOT

Each Navernos tomb holds a few pieces of jewelry on the skeletal bodies; there's a total of 500 gp worth.

Rahlia keeps a few of her favorite items in her own tomb, including a 500 gp gold and diamond necklace, a pair of 300 gp sapphire earrings, and one of her most prized possessions given to her by the Lich King: an *Imperial Book of the Dead* (*Book of Loot*, page 40).

## ICONS

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Lich King, Archmage, Elf Queen, Diabolist, Priestess, or maybe the High Druid or Orc Lord could use one or more of them to understand what the fog is and that the vampires are hidden within it.







A PC that has relationship advantages with the Lich King or Priestess could use one or more of them to convince one of the wraiths to go back to its rest.

## RAHLIA, VAMPIRE LORD

*She moves with supernatural speed as she reaches toward you with clawed hands, her eyes crimson with bloodlust.*

*Double-strength 11<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [UNDEAD]*

Initiative: +16

Vulnerability: holy

**Deathly touch +16 vs. PD (2 attacks)**—60 negative energy damage

*Natural even hit:* The target is also weakened until the end of its next turn (−4 attacks and defenses). In addition, the target expends one unused limited trait (a spell, power, or talent with a once-per-battle or daily use, but not magic item powers) of its choice.

*Natural odd hit:* Rahlia can make a *blood-draining bite* attack against the target as a free action.

*[Special trigger]* **Blood-draining bite +15 vs. PD (one engaged enemy)**—5 damage, and 20 ongoing damage, and the target is vulnerable (hard save ends, 16+).

**C: Vampiric compulsion +16 vs. MD (one enemy; see below)**—The target is confused and vulnerable (save ends)

*Limited use:* The vampire can use *vampiric compulsion* as a free action only when a nearby enemy attacks the vampire and misses with a natural attack roll of 1–5.

*Vampiric regeneration:* The vampire regenerates 1 hit point per level at the start of each round indefinitely, but it turns to mist if it drops to 0 hp (see below).

*Mist form:* Unless it is slain in a manner appropriate for truly killing vampires in the campaign, a vampire that drops to 0 hp drifts away to return and fight some other day.

AC	27	
PD	22	HP 580
MD	27	

## PAVERPOS WRAITH

*This regal-looking human stares at you in anguish, right before it tries to freeze your heart.*

*9<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [UNDEAD]*

Initiative: +14

Vulnerability: holy

**Ice-cold ghost blade +14 vs. PD**—40 negative energy damage

*Natural odd hit:* The wraith can make a *freezing touch* attack against the target as a free action.

*[Special trigger]* **Freezing touch +14 vs. PD (one enemy engaged with it)**—20 cold damage, and the target is stuck (save ends) as its body goes numb with cold

*Drain life:* The wraith heals half the damage it deals when it hits with a *natural 18+* attack roll.

*Flight:* The wraith hovers and zooms about.

*Ghostly:* This creature has *resist damage 16+* to all damage (yes, even holy damage) except force damage, which damages it normally.

A wraith can move through solid objects, but it can't end its movement inside them.

AC	23	
PD	19	155
MD	21	

## SPAWN OF THE MASTER

*They're aware that no one is supposed to get this far. Desperate times....*

*10<sup>th</sup> level mook [UNDEAD]*

Initiative: +16

Vulnerability: holy

**Claws and fangs +15 vs. AC**—30 damage

*Natural 18+:* If the target is staggered, it is also hampered (*makes only basic attacks*) until the end of its next turn.

AC	25	
PD	23	HP 54 (mook)
MD	20	

*Mook:* Kill one spawn of the master mook for every 54 hp you deal to the mob.

### NEXT STEPS

When Rahlia is destroyed, her body burns with an intense white-blue fire as her screams echo through the area. The fog roils and burns too, then the feelings of despair throughout the area begin to lift. The fog protecting/guarding the region also lifts and soon people begin to discover this forgotten area of the empire.



## NIGHT HUNTERS STORY ENDINGS

Here are outcomes for each story opening, detailing what success or failure might mean.

If the PCs did face all four battles, remember to give them a full heal-up.

### UNFRIENDLY RIVALS

**Success:** The vampire lord Rahlia is put down, opening a power vacuum for the PC's contact to move upward. Each PC gains a 6 with the Lich King that lasts until they use it or level up.

**Failure:** The PCs fail to take down Rahlia. The PC's contact suddenly goes silent, and wherever the PCs go, vampire spawn trail them and ambush them at inopportune times. The PC who initiated the hunt has all 6s with the Lich King become 5s until they level up.

### HUNTING THE NIGHT HUNTER

**Success:** Another refuge for the evil creatures that serve the Lich King is removed, and the enemies of the One-Eyed King rejoice. Each PC can reroll each icon die once the next two times they roll dice.

**Failure:** The PCs manage to get taken in to the dark realm where the hunter rules. The only problem is that they are unable to kill Rahlia. Now they're trapped in her dark realm by the fog, and she's hunting them. They must face terrible undead foes and find a way to escape. Time passes, and their allies write them off as dead since they've been missing for so long.

### A RISING FOG

**Success:** The PCs defeat Rahlia and the fog lifts, allowing them to escape the nightmare realm. Each gains a 6 with one of their icons that lasts until they use it or level up, in part due to their accounts of the dark realm.

**Failure:** See Hunting the Night Hunter failure.

### ON THE TRAIL OF THE NIGHT HUNTER

**Success:** The PCs are taken by the fog and manage to defeat the one whose will controls it, Rahlia the vampire lord. With her gone, Volin's Gate is safe again. Its people rejoice and name the PCs heroes of the town. Each PC gains a 6 with the Emperor, Great Gold Wyrn, or Priestess (their choice) that lasts until they use it or level up.

**Failure:** Eventually the PCs manage to escape the fog of Rahlia's dark realm, but when they return to Volin's Gate, the town is in shambles. Many have died, sucked dry in the night, and more than half fled after that. Now those few who remain have to deal with undead and other creatures that have moved into the area. The survivors ask the PCs to help.

## BATTLE SCENE CONNECTIONS

The stories from this set of battle scenes can lead to other scenes:

- *Games of Power* (Emperor): Among Rahlia's belongings in the crypt are a stack of letters showing correspondence between her and someone named Pheliria Ivrrhea discussing Imperial family politics, mostly which houses are on the rise and who controls what. The PCs recognize House Ivrrhea as one that is close to the Emperor's, and the correspondence leads toward disturbing thoughts of allegiances. Many of the letters speak of treasonous plans.
- *The Overworld Vault* (Archmage): The PCs find a journal among Rahlia's belongings. In it are notes about something called the "overworld vault" and an item of power that she wanted to acquire. She had determined that the vault held magic from the Wizard King's time. She didn't know how to bypass the wards for the longest time, but within the last two weeks gained a clue about there being a gate of some sort in the vault's outer mural. The fact that outside agents of the Lich King knew about one of the Archmage's vaults is disconcerting in the least, and the PCs probably should investigate to see if the vault has been opened.





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