



DM'S CHALLENGES™ HIGH-LEVEL OPTION

WAIL OF THE BANSHEE QUEEN DM'S CHALLENGE 1

A Two-Round DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® LIVING GREYHAWK™ DM'S CHALLENGES™ HIGH-LEVEL OPTION Adventure Packet for 16th- to 20th-Level Characters LIVING GREYHAWK™ DM'S CHALLENGE 1 for the WAIL OF THE BANSHEE QUEEN Story Arc (2007 -2008)

Development: Steven Conforti.

Resources: *Fiendish Codex I: Hordes of the Abyss* [Ed Stark, James Jacobs, Erik Mona], *Fiendish Codex II: Tyrants of the Nine Hells* [Robin D. Laws, Robert J. Schwalb], *Expedition to the Demonweb Pits* [Wolfgang Baur, Gwendolyn F.M. Kestrel], *Planar Handbook* [Bruce R. Cordell, Gwendolyn F.M. Kestrel], *Manual of the Planes* [Jeff Grubb, Bruce R. Cordell, David Noonan], *Drow of the Underdark* [Ari Marmell, Anthony Pryor, Robert J. Schwalb, Greg A. Vaughan].

A demon lord needs your assistance. What could he tell you that would make you want to offer your help? The balance of power on the Outer Planes may be in your hands. DM'S CHALLENGE 1 is Part One in the four part WAIL OF THE BANSHEE QUEEN Story Arc (2007-2008).

Based on the original DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® rules created by E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson and the new DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game designed by Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, Richard Baker, and Peter Adkison.

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This product uses material from the v.3.5 revision. This is an official RPGA® play document. To find out more about the RPGA and to learn more on how you can sanction and run DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game events of all sizes, visit our website at www.wizards.com/rpga.

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For LIVING GREYHAWK DM'S CHALLENGE HIGH-LEVEL OPTION campaign questions email rpgahq@wizards.com.

WHAT'S A DM'S CHALLENGE ADVENTURE?

DM'S CHALLENGE adventure packets are a part of the LIVING GREYHAWK DM'S CHALLENGES HIGH-LEVEL OPTION. Unlike other RPGA adventures, the DM'S CHALLENGE adventure is not something you download or buy and run as printed with little to no modification. Instead, you get basic guidelines, a special session tracking, and a basic Adventure Record (AR) for an adventure that you write or modify and run.

RPGA-SANCTIONED PLAY

Most likely you ordered this adventure as part of an RPGA event from the RPGA website, or you received it from your senior gamemaster. To play this adventure as part of the LIVING GREYHAWK DM'S CHALLENGES HIGH-LEVEL OPTION campaign—a worldwide, ongoing D&D campaign set in the GREYHAWK setting—you must sanction it as part of an RPGA event. This event could be as elaborate as a big convention, or as simple as a group of friends meeting at the DM's house.

To sanction an RPGA event, you must be at least a HERALD-LEVEL gamemaster. The person who sanctions the event is called the senior gamemaster, and is in charge of making sure the event is sanctioned before play, runs smoothly on the date sanctioned, and then reported back to the RPGA in a timely manner. The person who runs the game is called the table DM (or usually just DM). Sometimes (and almost all the time in the cases of home events) the senior gamemaster is also the table DM. You don't have to be a HERALD-LEVEL GM to run this adventure if you are not the senior GM.

By sanctioning and reporting this adventure you accomplish a couple of things. First, it is an official game, and you can use the AR to advance your LIVING GREYHAWK DM'S CHALLENGES HIGH-LEVEL OPTION character. Second, it allows the RPGA to track and record what characters did during the adventure, and future adventures will be written with what a majority of the players did in mind – in this way characters' actions shape the future of the campaign. Lastly, players and DMs gain rewards for sanctioned RPGA play if they are members of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS REWARDS program. Playing this adventure is worth two (2) points.

This adventure retires from RPGA-sanctioned play on October 31, 2007.

To learn more about the LIVING GREYHAWK DM'S CHALLENGES HIGH-LEVEL OPTION character creation and development, RPGA event sanctioning, and DUNGEONS & DRAGONS REWARDS, visit the RPGA website at www.wizards.com/rpga.

WHAT DO I RUN?

The simple answer to this, whatever you want! The DM'S CHALLENGE adventures are a chance for you, the DM, to let your creativity shine.

This might mean creating an adventure or a group of adventures totally from scratch, giving your home group an exciting sub-plot within the LIVING GREYHAWK DM'S CHALLENGES HIGH-LEVEL OPTION campaign where they can affect the outcome in ways no possible before in campaign-style play. It might mean that you have an interesting adventure idea to run at a show. Maybe a small sub-plot using NPCs or events detailed in published GREYHAWK or LIVING GREYHAWK adventures that have inspired you to build an adventure that will dazzle players and add depth to the campaign as a whole. Even still, it might mean that you have a favorite adventure from a published source that you twiddle with to fit into the GREYHAWK setting and LIVING GREYHAWK DM'S CHALLENGES HIGH-LEVEL OPTION campaign to create a fun and exciting session without hours upon hours of work. The choice is yours. The story is yours. Have fun with it!

WHAT CAN'T I DO WITH A DM'S CHALLENGE?

DM'S CHALLENGE adventure packets allow you to run your own adventure for a group of 4 to 6 players. It does not give you license to produce and distribute (for sale or for free) your own GREYHAWK adventures. Following the d20 System License (see www.wizards.com/d20) grants you the ability to write D&D compatible works, but all of the GREYHAWK setting, and many of the GREYHAWK specific rules are not covered in that license.

That said, the intent of the DM'S CHALLENGE is for you to create and present exciting GREYHAWK adventures to a small group of players, anything more than that is really beyond the scope of the DM'S CHALLENGES program.

ADVENTURE GUIDELINES

All of the standard rules for RPGA adventures also hold true for DM'S CHALLENGE adventures. DM'S CHALLENGE adventures have to be ordered and sanctioned just like other adventures, and thus must be played at RPGA-Sanctioned events if you are playing it as part of the LIVING GREYHAWK DM'S CHALLENGES HIGH-LEVEL OPTION campaign.

When running a DM'S CHALLENGE as part of an RPGA-Sanctioned event, you must follow the RPGA general rules, and the rules detailed in the LIVING GREYHAWK DM'S CHALLENGES HIGH-LEVEL OPTION Rules Document and other campaign documents.

When you design the adventure, design it for an eight-hour time slot – this is especially true if you are running it as part of a public event.

The *WAIL OF THE BANSHEE QUEEN* Story Arc (2007-2008) draws heavily from a number of sourcebooks dealing with planar adventures. In particular, you will find the following sourcebooks invaluable to your adventure design: *Fiendish Codex I: Hordes of the Abyss* [Ed Stark, James Jacobs, Erik Mona], *Fiendish Codex II: Tyrants of the Nine Hells* [Robin D. Laws, Robert J. Schwalb], *Expedition to the Demonweb Pits* [Wolfgang Baur, Gwendolyn F.M. Kestrel], *Planar Handbook* [Bruce R. Cordell, Gwendolyn F.M. Kestrel], *Manual of the Planes* [Jeff Grubb, Bruce R. Cordell, David Noonan], and *Drow of the Underdark* [Ari Marmell, Anthony Pryor, Robert J. Schwalb, Greg A. Vaughan].

LEVEL OF PLAY

Each DM'S CHALLENGE adventure packet (and all LIVING GREYHAWK DM'S CHALLENGES HIGH-LEVEL OPTION adventures) is optimized for a certain level. The optimized level determines the general levels you should design your adventure at. It also determines the general level of rewards granted for adventure success.

This DM'S CHALLENGE adventure is optimized for 16th-level play, so you should design your challenges for four 16th-level characters. You'll also want to scale the adventure for up to 20th-level characters, as there is a good chance that you will have a range of character levels playing in the adventure, and in those cases you'll want to increase the challenges.

That said, as DM you have discretion when it comes to fitting the challenges of the adventure to your group. If your group finds the challenges too easy or too difficult, feel free to increase or decrease the level of challenge appropriately. The goal is to challenge the PCs and entertain the players, not to overwhelm or even underwhelm them. The most enjoyable D&D games are ones where failure and character death are possible, but success and reward are attainable through daring and smart play.

HOW MANY ENCOUNTERS?

Some of this depends on your style as a DM, but here are some general guidelines crafted by Andy Collins from his "Craft (Adventures)" column featured on the RPGA website. Andy estimates in that column that the average RPGA round of play contains actually only 200 minutes of actual play time:

"At the highest levels of play, combat can become grindingly slow as characters search through their lists of equipment, spells, and abilities to find just the right choice. Even the most experienced players need time to evaluate a complicated battlefield, and less-experienced players can easily become overwhelmed by the options

available. Even the "basic fighter" becomes a complex character requiring many rolls. A full attack by a fighter of this level might include a dozen rolls or more, including up to four or five sets of attack rolls, miss chances, critical hit confirmations, and damage rolls. Spellcasters routinely cast two spells per round, control multiple summoned creatures or active spell effects, track durations on a half-dozen spells simultaneously, and so on.

You can expect each character's turn to take at least two minutes, and sometimes as long as five minutes. Even the number of rounds in a typical combat becomes difficult to anticipate. 10-round fights aren't terribly uncommon, especially against foes with the ability to teleport into and out of combat with ease. In the hands of an unprepared GM, a single encounter at this level can take up most of a slot, and even experienced, battle-hardened GMs find themselves hard-pressed to run more than a couple such encounters in the space of 200 minutes."

Since each DM'S CHALLENGE adventure packet is designed for two-rounds of play; you should estimate about 400 minutes of play time when you design this adventure. Each DM'S CHALLENGE adventure packet is designed to award a set amount of experience – 4,500 xp per PC. As a rough guideline to assigning this experience to challenges in the adventure, we recommend a ratio of 50% for combat challenges, 25% for traps, puzzles, skill, and class ability challenges, and 25% for roleplaying challenges.

You may want to check out all of the "Craft (Adventures)" columns by Andy Collins (www.wizards.com/default.asp?x=rpga/arch/articles) and the "Adventure Builder" columns by Wolfgang Baur (www.wizards.com/default.asp?x=dnd/arch/ab) for other good advice on creating adventures for RPGA events. These columns offer a wealth of good advice.

TREASURE

At the end of the adventure, all treasure is converted into gold pieces, and split between the PCs. As a basic rule of thumb, for a 16th-level optimized adventure don't stock your adventure with significantly more than 20,000 gp worth of treasure per PC. Be sure to include treasure the PCs can find useful during the adventure (such as healing magics and such).

If you are scaling the adventure for up to 20th-level characters, the amount of treasure per PC available in the adventure should increase as well. The following lists the gp cap on treasure an individual PC can receive in an adventure, based on their character level: 16th-level = 20,000 gp, 17th-level = 25,000 gp, 18th-level = 35,000 gp, 19th-level = 45,000 gp, 20th-level = 55,000 gp.

At the end of the adventure, you can also give out magic item access via the Adventure Record provided with this DM'S CHALLENGE adventure packet. Fill in the

blanks provide with items from LIVING GREYHAWK DM'S CHALLENGES HIGH-LEVEL OPTION campaign approved sources that the PCs have encountered during the adventure. List the name of the item and the approved source it is from. If you know the specific PCs who will be participating in your adventure, it is highly recommended to tailor the rewards (and thus the adventure) to their specific needs. If you know you are writing the adventure for a party of fighters, including treasure only usable by spellcasters is probably a bad idea!

WAIL OF THE BANSHEE QUEEN STORY ARC (2007-08)

The WAIL OF THE BANSHEE QUEEN Story Arc (2007-2008) deals with a threat to the balance of power in the Outer Planes. The threat is an Armageddon device of unknown capabilities, and the PCs are the only ones who can stop it from being activated. The arc takes place almost exclusively on the Outer Planes. The arc consists of four adventures, three of which are DM'S CHALLENGE adventure packets and one of which is a fully written adventure. The WAIL OF THE BANSHEE QUEEN Story Arc (2007-2008) is:

1. DM'S CHALLENGE 1 (released June 2007).
2. DM'S CHALLENGE 2 (released August 2007).
3. DM'S CHALLENGE 3 (released November 2007).
4. ASSAULT ON THE FORBIDDEN CITADEL (released February 2008).

It is best to run this DM'S CHALLENGE adventure packet first, before players participate in the second or third DM'S CHALLENGE adventures of this story arc and especially before they play ASSAULT ON THE FORBIDDEN CITADEL (the two-round LIVING GREYHAWK DM'S CHALLENGES HIGH-LEVEL OPTION adventure premiering at **D&D Experience** (formerly **Winter Fantasy**), February 2008). DM'S CHALLENGES 1, 2, and 3 lead into the conclusion of the story in ASSAULT ON THE FORBIDDEN CITADEL.

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE?

From *Fiendish Codex I* by Ed Stark, James Jacobs, and Erik Mona:

"...Centuries ago, the drow goddess Kiaransalee [called Kiaransali on Oerth] deposed Orcus [the demon lord], who had grown complacent with his endless campaign of stalemates with Graz'zt and Demogorgon. But even a treacherous death was not enough to destroy Orcus forever. A sliver of his essence survived, taking the name Tenebrous and forever changing the multiverse by discovering the Last Word, an utterance so powerful it could kill gods. As he scoured the Great Wheel searching for his infamous wand, Tenebrous used the Last Word to slay several deities, including the illithid god

Maanzecorian, the archomental Bwimb, and Camaxtli, Lord of Fate. Eventually, Orcus reassumed his previous name, form, and vigor and deposed Kiaransalee to once again command all of Thanatos [the Abyssal layer belonging to Orcus]...

...much work remains to remove the taint of Kiaransalee and her worshippers...A series of rust-red geysers that spurt steam and water into the River Styx makes Lachrymosa, the Cauldron of Tears, one of the most hospitable locations in all of Thanatos. It has long served as Orcus' nominal capital, although the demon prince spends most of his time brooding and plotting in the immense halls of Everlost, his place in the bone meal desert to the north...An unusual fortress near the center of the city, the so-called Forbidden Citadel, was the seat of Kiaransalee's power in Thanatos, and the bloated lord of the layer has not had the place destroyed despite its close tie to his hated enemy. The structure's shape resembles an enormous bust of the goddess herself, her calculating gaze looking ever southward, toward her "winter capital" of Naratyr. Adherents of Eldanoth [a demon lord currently on the 359th layer] whisper that Orcus has not acted against the citadel because he lacks the power to destroy and edifice constructed by an agency of divine power...

...an "Armageddon" device left by Kiaransalee in the depths of her abandoned Forbidden Citadel in Lachrymosa. Initiating the device, a vortex to the heart of the Positive Energy Plane, would have devastating repercussions for Thanatos and perhaps the whole of the Abyss..."

The Armageddon device does exist. If initiated, the vortex formed would destroy all of Thanatos. However, it also would destroy a large number of adjacent planes in the Abyss. The resulting destruction would tip the balance of power in the Outer Planes against the forces of Evil and Chaos. To many PCs, especially Lawful Good ones, this might seem like a good idea. However, the balance of power in the Outer Planes is essential to the survival of the multiverse. Should the Armageddon device be activated, the resulting shift in power on the Planes could eventually result in the destruction of everything.

ENTERING THE FORBIDDEN CITADEL

The PCs cannot enter the Forbidden Citadel until the ASSAULT ON THE FORBIDDEN CITADEL adventure. As a special construction of divine and planar magic, the Forbidden Citadel is inviolate to any but the most powerful magics. And any such use of magic would automatically trigger the Armageddon device, ending the adventure. PCs will need to find a more subtle way into the Forbidden Citadel, one which they will find during the course of this adventure.

HOW TO INTEGRATE

You are free to write the adventure you choose to write for this DM'S CHALLENGE with the following stipulations:

1. The initial story hook for the PCs revolves around information the PCs gain from a group of dark elves. It is left to you to devise the story which leads the PCs to this key encounter. Roughly the first half of this adventure should deal with whatever story you devised that leads the PCs to these drow.
2. It is from this encounter that the PCs learn that a group of drow, fanatically loyal to Kiaransalee, reside in the Forbidden Citadel on Thanatos and are in control of an Armageddon device which could unleash mass destruction on Thanatos. PCs should discover (by whatever means you choose) that the resultant destruction from the device would destroy far more than Thanatos and would likely lead to the destruction of the entire multiverse. This should lead the PCs to Thanatos to investigate further.
3. Once in Thanatos, the PCs should find themselves in a number of planar combats and encounters appropriate to this layer of the Abyss. This should take care of roughly the second half of this adventure. Through these encounters, the PCs gain the **Experience in the Abyss** AR effect.
4. Investigating of the Forbidden Citadel should make it clear that the PCs cannot enter the Forbidden Citadel by any means they currently possess and that any attempts to use high-level magics such as *wish*, *miracle*, or artifacts would result in detonation of the Armageddon device.
5. At the end of the adventure, the PCs need to find their way before an Aspect of the demon prince Orcus. Orcus wishes to speak personally to the PCs. PCs who played the HORRORS NEVER DIE Story Arc (2006-2007) may have an obvious path to this meeting via the **Act of Cooperation - Orcus** AR effect. In any case, the PCs may be brought before Orcus via capture, negotiation, trickery, or whatever means you choose to bring them forward. It is essential the meeting take place so the PCs can interact with an Aspect of Orcus.
6. The Aspect of Orcus explains that he cannot destroy the Forbidden Citadel without triggering the Armageddon device. He has also recently learned of the danger present in the citadel. He asks the PCs to assist him in ridding the Outer Planes of the threat this device entails. He offers the PCs assistance if they agree to help him on this task. One piece of information he can provide is the current

location of Kiaransalee, on the Material Plane world of Guldor, accessible only via a portal on the Demonweb of Lolth. Agreeing to cooperate with Orcus on this task earn the PCs the **Act of Cooperation - Orcus** AR effect.

ADVENTURE QUESTIONS

To enable the Campaign to track the results of this adventure and this apply these results to the development of future adventures in the story arc, please email your answers to the following questions to Steven Conforti, LIVING GREYHAWK Circle, at scon40@aol.com.

1. Did the PCs successfully complete the adventure objectives?
 - a. Yes, total success.
 - b. Yes, mostly successful.
 - c. No, mostly failed.
 - d. No, total failure.
2. Did the PCs successfully complete the adventure encounters?
 - a. Yes, total success.
 - b. Yes, mostly successful.
 - c. No, mostly failed.
 - d. No, total failure.
3. Did the PCs successfully recover the treasure in the adventure?
 - a. Yes, all of it.
 - b. Yes, most of it.
 - c. No, little of it.
 - d. No, none of it.
4. Did the PCs learn of the Armageddon device?
 - a. Yes.
 - b. No.
5. Did the PCs negotiate with the Aspect of Orcus?
 - a. No, they slew him.
 - b. No, they refused to speak with him.
 - c. Yes, they parlayed with him but did not agree to cooperation.
 - d. Yes, they parlayed with him and agreed to cooperation.

ADVENTURE RECORD

You'll want to print out a copy of the Adventure Record for each player.

Fill in the blanks provide on the Adventure Record with magic items from LIVING GREYHAWK DM'S CHALLENGES HIGH-LEVEL OPTION campaign approved sources that the PCs have encountered during the adventure.

Circle the correct gp cap amount for each PC based on their character level when they began this adventure.

If the PCs accepted the offer of cooperation with the Aspect of Orcus, they gain the **Act of Cooperation - Orcus** on the Adventure Record; otherwise, cross it off. If the PCs successfully survive their encounters on Thanatos, they receive the **Experience in the Abyss** AR effect.

