DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

TYRANNY OF DRAGONS™



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ON THE COVER

The final sight of many overconfident heroes, the calamitous countenance of Tiamat, Queen of Dragons, exudes draconic majesty in this ferocious illustration by Hydro74.

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Introduction

Dragon fire threatens to consume Faerûn! Do you dare oppose the Cult of the Dragon and resist the might of Tiamat, Queen of Dragons?

Welcome to *Tyranny of Dragons*. This book collects two thrilling tales, *Hoard of the Dragon Queen* and *The Rise of Tiamat*, combining them into a single campaign-spanning Dungeons & Dragons adventure. This adventure is designed for a party of four to six 1st-level characters, who should advance to approximately 15th level by the time they reach the final showdown with the goddess Tiamat herself.

In the course of this adventure, you'll face an evil alliance intent on unleashing a draconic apocalypse upon Faerûn. The Cult of the Dragon, the Red Wizards of Thay, and a conspiracy of other villains plot to reshape the world, making it ready for the coming of Tiamat. As events unfold, dragons rampage across the Sword Coast, serving at the vanguard of a legion of cultists, fiends, and worse. To oppose these forces, new heroes must rise and resist them—yet they need not do so alone. Groups like the Harpers, the Lord's Alliance, and even the wicked Zhentarim might be rallied to oppose the Cult of the Dragon, but only if clever souls convince them to put aside their age-old rivalries. Will the people of the Realms stand and oppose the forces of dragonkind, or will they fall amid waves of dragon breath?

Tyranny of Dragons tells the complete tale previously presented in the adventures *Hoard of the Dragon Queen* and *The Rise of Tiamat*. The result of a collaboration with Kobold Press, those adventures comprised the first fifth edition Dungeons & Dragons campaign, launching the edition with a threat of legendary magnitude. Just as with the original works, this collection would not exist without the experience and creativity of Kobold Press's veteran designers. Now, years after *Hoard of the Dragon Queen* and *The Rise of Tiamat*'s releases, these adventures remain fan-favorite tales in the wider Dungeons & Dragons library—stories well worth revisiting.

Within these pages you'll find *Hoard of the Dragon Queen* and *The Rise of Tiamat* woven together into a complete campaign. While the original adventures remain as their own distinct sections, *Tyranny of Dragons* accounts for the feedback of thousands of Dungeons & Dragons players. You'll find a revised, campaign-spanning overview, as well as compiled appendices that collect the characters, magic items, and monsters from both adventures into comprehensive references. Additionally, an entirely new concept art gallery reveals a glimpse behind the scenes at the work that went into bringing several of D&D's most ferocious foes to life..

As *Hoard of the Dragon Queen* and *The Rise of Tiamat* numbered among the first fifth edition Dungeons & Dragons products, an online supplement for these adventures can be found at DungeonsandDragons.com. This supplement's campaign-specific contents now feature within this collection's appendices. However, these digital resources also present material from the *Player's Handbook*, *Dungeon Master's Guide*, and *Monster Manual* for ease of reference, as well as a print-ready version of the council scorecard that appears in appendix B. DMs might still find these references valuable, and as a result they are still referenced in the following pages. Together with a host of other updates, this compilation presents the definitive version of this thrilling campaign.

Whether this is your first time testing your mettle against the Cult of the Dragon or you're prepared to take on Tiamat once more, *Tyranny of Dragons* promises a challenge like no other. Do you have what it takes to call yourself a true dragon slayer? The fate of the Realms hangs on your answer.

Running the Adventure

To run this adventure, you need the fifth edition core rulebooks: *Player's Handbook*, *Dungeon Master's Guide*, and *Monster Manual*. The *Sword Coast Adventurer's Guide* is also helpful, but not necessary. The map of the Sword Coast on the following page provides context for the majority of locations featured in the campaign.

> Text that appears in a box like this is meant to be read aloud or paraphrased for the players when their characters first arrive at a location or under a specific circumstance, as described in the text.

The *Monster Manual* contains stat blocks for most of the monsters and NPCs found in this book. When a creature's name appears in bold type, that's a visual cue pointing you to its stat block in appendix D or in the *Monster Manual*. If a stat block appears in appendix D of this book, the text tells you so.

Spells and nonmagical equipment mentioned in the book are described in the *Player's Handbook*. Magic items are described in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, unless the adventure's text directs you to an item's description in appendix C.



JARED BLANDO

Campaign Overview

Tyranny of Dragons tells an epic story spanning two adventures, *Hoard of the Dragon Queen* and *The Rise of Tiamat*—the two tales contained within this collection. Both adventures are introduced here, outlining their backgrounds, plots, and fundamental ties, followed by details on allies and villains relevant to both adventures. Regardless of which adventure you're running, this overview provides useful information, applicable to the wider campaign and helpful for foreshadowing the threats unleashed by the Cult of the Dragon.

Tyranny of Dragons is set in the Forgotten Realms on Faerûn's western shore—the Sword Coast. A thin strip of civilization stretches down this coast, where widely spaced cities are arranged like beads on a string. Roads loosely connect the cities that stretch from Luskan in the north to Calimport in the south, passing through Neverwinter, Waterdeep, Baldur's Gate, and other ports along the way. The bulk of this adventure takes place on the stretch between Baldur's Gate and Neverwinter.

Adventure Supplements. You can play this adventure with just the Dungeons & Dragons basic rules and the *Tyranny of Dragons* appendix online, which contains all the monsters and magic items not described in this book. Both of these supplements are available as free downloads on DungeonsandDragons.com.

Hoard of the Dragon Queen

Tyranny of Dragons tells an epic story across two adventures, of which *Hoard of the Dragon Queen* is the first. Characters begin this adventure at 1st level; by the end of it they should be 7th or 8th level and ready to continue with *The Rise of Tiamat*. The ideal party size is four characters. If your group is larger or smaller, you can adjust the adventure's difficulty by adjusting the number of enemies in each encounter.

Character Advancement. At your option, you can use the milestone experience rule. Under this rule, you pick events in the campaign that cause the characters to level up. In *Hoard of the Dragon Queen*, the characters gain a level after completing each chapter except chapter 5.

Background

The Cult of the Dragon has been active in Faerûn for centuries. It has focused on making undead dragons to fulfill a prophecy most of that time, but that's changing.

Dragon Masks

The new leader of the cult is a Calishite named Severin Silrajin, who believes that real draconic knowledge and power belongs to living dragons, not undead ones. Severin's ambition amused Tiamat, so she revealed the existence of five dragon masks to him—one for each chromatic dragon color. Individually, these ancient masks allow wearers to communicate with dragons. More importantly, a person who is erudite in draconic lore becomes a wyrmspeaker while wearing the mask, which allows the wearer to think like a dragon, gain favor among dragons, and subtly influence their behavior. When all five are brought together, they magically merge into a single *Mask of the Dragon Queen*. With the assembled mask, the cult can release Tiamat from her prison in the Nine Hells.

After Severin (subtly guided by Tiamat) discovered that secret, he bent all the cult's resources to finding the long-lost dragon masks in their secret hiding places. When he recovered the red mask, Severin became the first of the wyrmspeakers, but others soon followed.

Secrets

The Cult of the Dragon has kept secret its goal to bring Tiamat into the world thus far. Many know of the cult's increased activity along the Sword Coast, especially in the north, but the reasons behind the resurgence are unknown.

Besides his cultists, Severin has forged an alliance with a splinter faction of the Red Wizards of Thay. This small and secretive group, led by an outcast named Rath Modar, plots to unseat the lich Szass Tam from his position over the Red Wizards. Rath believes that in exchange for his help in releasing Tiamat, she will grant him the power he needs to overthrow Szass Tam.

Cult Organization

The Cult of the Dragon is organized in cells, which vary in size from just a handful of members to scores. Leaders in the cult are known as Wearers of Purple, and they outrank normal cultists, but no formal grades exist within the ranks of the Wearers of Purple.

Although the cult uses regalia in its rituals and its distant camps, members who operate in public places dress and act no differently from anyone else.

The cult is not above hiring mercenaries when it has special jobs to fulfill. Indeed, many of the "cultists" that characters encounter in the first three chapters of this adventure are working for pay.

Overview

During the time covered by the first half of this adventure, the cult already has several of the five dragon masks. While the cult works to gain more, Severin initiates the second part of his plan to release Tiamat: recruiting dragons and assembling a treasure hoard worthy of the queen of evil dragons. These efforts draw the characters' attention to the cult.

The action begins when a town comes under attack by a dragon and its allies. Characters can intervene to save townsfolk, but not before attackers carry away an important scholar. While rescuing that captive from the raiders' camp, characters learn they are up against the Cult of the Dragon, and they have the chance to destroy a subterranean dragon hatchery that the cult guards.

The hatchery provides clues to the cult's operation and sends the characters on a long journey northward. During that trip, they face threats from the cult and gain some unexpected allies within the Zhentarim, a shadowy organization with an unsavory history. North of Waterdeep, the cult's contraband is offloaded at a smuggler's den for shipment to a castle long ago abandoned.

A portal beneath the castle connects to the stronghold of one of the cult's most powerful and most disgruntled members, Talis the White, who can become either a deadly enemy or a crucial collaborator to the characters. With or without Talis's help, the characters must get into a flying citadel that a cloud giant placed at the cult's disposal and prevent it from reaching its destination at the Well of Dragons.

The Rise of Tiamat

The Rise of Tiamat continues the tale of *Tyranny of Dragons*. Characters begin this adventure at 8th level, likely having attained that level through the events of the first volume, *Hoard of the Dragon Queen*. By this adventure's conclusion, the characters should reach approximately 15th level. Four characters is the ideal party size. If your group is smaller than that, consider removing a few opponents from combat encounters. If the group is bigger, add opponents to the fights. Consider altering encounters for smaller groups to avoid overly tough battles.

Character Advancement. This adventure uses the milestone experience rule. Under this rule, completing certain events in the campaign causes the characters to level up. See "Advancement" later in this introduction.

Background

The time of dragons dawns. Calling upon ancient magic and a host of draconic allies, the Cult of the Dragon seeks to unleash Tiamat from her prison in the Nine Hells. By bringing the Queen of Dragons bodily into the world, the cult plans to scour away their foes and usher in a new age of draconic dominance. So far, they've gathered great stores of treasure, forged an alliance with Thay to assist with performing the required summoning ritual, gathered the five dragon masks central to the ritual (see "Dragon Masks," below), and persuaded or cajoled many of the oldest and strongest evil dragons of Faerûn into supporting them.

However, not everything has gone according to the cult's plans. The discovery of an alliance between the Cult of the Dragon and the Red Wizards of Thay has shaken the various factions aligned against both organizations. The Harpers view any such alliance as an abomination, as does the Order of the Gauntlet. The Lords' Alliance recognizes the obvious threat to the lands and rulers of the Sword Coast and the North, while the Emerald Enclave suspects that anything Thay promotes is likely against the natural order. Even the Zhentarim fear the union of two such powerful forces.

News of the alliance has thus brought the various factions of the Sword Coast together. The leaders of those factions understand that they must gather and rally forces to fight the cult, even as the situation in Faerûn grows more dire. Abductions and raids undertaken by the Cult of the Dragon increase daily, and refugees are fleeing from burned-out regions under cult attack to major cities and fortresses. Villagers have abandoned their homes, fleeing the constant predation of dragons.

In many cities, all-out panic has created a growing movement in favor of agreeing to the cult's demands in the hope of winning concessions in return. It is difficult to muster troops when people are afraid they will be burned by dragonfire. This is a time for heroes to inspire the people of the Sword Coast with a great victory or two. Fortunately, the Forgotten Realms has just such a group of heroes.

Secrets

In the first volume of *Tyranny of Dragons*, the Cult of the Dragon gathered up a hoard for Tiamat—then lost a portion of that hoard when Skyreach Castle fell. All the while, the cult kept secret its goal of bringing back Tiamat and its alliance with an exiled group of Red Wizards of Thay. The cult now needs only to gather enough sacrifices to power the ritual by which the dragon masks will open a portal to the Nine Hells, allowing Tiamat to travel to the Material Plane.

These plans continue to move ahead as the Thayan exile Rath Modar and his Red Wizards bring expertise in summoning magic to the cult, preparing a tremendous blood sacrifice to empower the ritual. The alliance between wizards and cultists is fragile, however, since neither side entirely trusts the promises of the other.

Allied Forces

This second volume of *Tyranny of Dragons* assumes that the factions of good-aligned adventurers and the people of the Sword Coast are aware of the threat posed by the cult. What's unclear is how to deal with it. Depending on the nature of the characters and their relationships with the factions, different groups might recommend different courses of action to the heroes. It falls to the players to figure out how they want to proceed.

Overview

At the start this adventure, representatives of groups and factions from across the Sword Coast meet to discuss their concern about the Cult of the Dragon, and to draw up plans for opposing the cult. The adventurers are summoned to Waterdeep for a summit that will come to be known as the Council of Waterdeep (see chapter 9 for details).

Four council sessions take place over the course of the adventure, naturally dividing events into four stages. Between the council gatherings, the characters undertake missions to thwart the cult's plans. Some of these missions will be proposed by NPCs (nonplayer characters) during council sessions. Others can be proposed by the characters. The adventurers understand that thousands of lives depend on their actions. The characters are among the greatest heroes of the Sword Coast, and the Council of Waterdeep looks to them for wise guidance and swift action.

Many of the power groups represented on the council don't trust each other, and some even have conflicting goals. Over the course of the council's four meetings, the players and characters need to forge this disparate, feuding group into a coordinated force. Only with all factions working together and contributing to the overall effort can enough power be brought to bear against the cult to prevent Tiamat's return. The more successful the characters are in their actions against the cult, the more esteem and influence they gain with the council.

Events are arranged in this book in a logical sequence for staging *The Rise of Tiamat*, and the chapters are numbered for ease of reference. You can even add more chapters of your own devising, or which expand on ideas the players generate.

Outline

The events of *Hoard of the Dragon Queen* lead directly into *The Rise of Tiamat*. The shape of this adventure is defined by the meetings of the Council of Waterdeep, which divide the adventure into four stages.

Stage 1

First Council of Waterdeep. The characters are invited by NPCs they know and trust to the first session of the Council of Waterdeep. (If you played *Hoard of the Dragon Queen*, Leosin Erlanthar or Ontharr Frume are likely candidates.)

Varram the White. The adventurers learn the location of one of the cult's highest-ranking leaders—Wyrmspeaker Varram. After discovering that Varram is held captive by yuan-ti in the Serpent Hills, the characters can fight the yuan-ti and negotiate to take custody of the cultist.

The Sea of Moving Ice. Maccath the Crimson, a tiefling sorcerer of the Arcane Brotherhood, is an acknowledged expert on the *Draakhorn*—an ancient relic being used by the cult to summon dragons to their cause. She disappeared three years ago in the Sea of Moving Ice, where she is presently a prisoner of the white dragon Arauthator. The characters must make their way to Arauthator's iceberg lair and convince Maccath to join them. By driving away the dragon and carrying off valuable dragon lore, they deal a blow to the cult and might gain the Arcane Brotherhood as allies in the process.

The Cult Strikes Back (Part 1). The cult's leaders aren't oblivious to the damage being caused by the heroes. Assassins try to stop the characters' interference, but the cultists misjudge the strength needed to complete the job.

Stage 2

Second Council of Waterdeep. The characters regroup with the leaders of the Sword Coast's factions at the Council of Waterdeep, assessing their victories over the cult and planning the factions' next moves.

Neronvain. The Emerald Enclave requests that the adventurers help them investigate the aftermath of cult raids led by a green dragon in the Misty Forest—a dragon possibly controlled by one of the cult's wyrmspeakers. That investigation leads to a showdown against the green dragon Chuth and Wyrmspeaker Neronvain, who has a surprising connection to the council.

Metallic Dragons, Arise. The metallic dragons of the Sword Coast send word to the Council of Waterdeep that they wish to participate in the coming struggle. The adventurers are chosen to attend a council of dragons in the Sunset Mountains, pleading the humanoid factions' case to some of the oldest and most powerful creatures in Faerûn.

The Cult Strikes Back (Part 2). After a first attempt to assassinate the heroes failed, the Cult of the Dragon tries again. With a better idea of what they're up against, they have a better chance to succeed.

Stage 3

Third Council of Waterdeep. At the third meeting of the Council of Waterdeep, the characters take lead roles in shaping the fight against the cult.

Xonthal's Tower. The Cult of the Dragon is not without its own internal strife, as the adventurers discover when a cultist contacts them with the offer to turn over one of the dragon masks essential to Severin's plans. The characters must infiltrate a cult stronghold and claim the mask, then save a nearby village from the blue dragon that means to take the relic back.

Mission to Thay. The ritual that will bring Tiamat to Faerûn is too complex for the cult's spellcasters to perform without their Red Wizard allies—all Thayan exiles. The adventurers travel to Thay to forge an alliance with the Red Wizards, whose lich lord Szass Tam hungers for revenge against the exiles. The Red Wizards of Thay are evil to the core, though, and the delegates must tread carefully as they present their case.

The Cult Strikes Back (Part 3). The Cult of the Dragon now knows the adventurers' strengths and methods. If the characters don't take precautions to safeguard themselves, the cult stands a good chance of killing them all with a third attack.

Stage 4

Fourth Council of Waterdeep. At the final meeting of the council, the characters must work to unite the factions of the Sword Coast for the final battle against the Cult of the Dragon. Severin is ready to fulfill his plans, and the combined forces of the Sword Coast must strike now if the cult is to be stopped.

Tiamat's Return. At the Well of Dragons, a battle unfolds that will decide the fate of Faerûn. The factions of the Sword Coast fight alongside new and unexpected allies, facing off against the assembled might of the dragon cultists, flights of chromatic dragons, other monsters, and mercenaries. The adventurers choose their own role during the battle, and might rescue sacrificial prisoners, shut down the *Draakhorn*, or take the lead in disrupting the magical ritual that will allow Tiamat to enter the world.

Advancement

Tyranny of Dragons: The Rise of Tiamat was designed around the milestone system of advancement. At the start of the adventure, the characters should be 7th or 8th level. Instead of tracking specific experience awards, characters can level up at the completion of significant chapters of the adventure. The characters level up after every chapter listed below. As some chapters occur in discrete parts or might be divided up to improve the adventure's pacing, these advancements are organized in the following, optional order:

- Chapter 11: Death to the Wyrmspeakers (Varram)
- Chapter 10: The Sea of Moving Ice
- Chapter 13: The Cult Strikes Back (First Attack)
- Chapter 12: Death to the Wyrmspeakers (Neronvain)
- Chapter 13: The Cult Strikes Back (Second Attack)
- Chapter 15: Xonthal's Tower
- Chapter 16: Mission to Thay (level gain at DM's option)
- Chapter 13: The Cult Strikes Back (Third Attack)

Leveling up after seven milestones should bring the characters to 14th or 15th level in time for the final battle at the Well of Dragons.

Adventure Hooks

For characters who have not played *Hoard of the Dragon Queen*, the adventure can also begin by playing out another chapter before the Council of Waterdeep. The party could be summoned by a factional leader seeking aid against the Cult of the Dragon, with the characters asked to undertake the "Varram the White" portion of "Chapter 11 and 12: Death to the Wyrmspeakers." Seeking to capture a high-ranking cult leader is a great step in the fight against the cult. Once they return to Waterdeep, the adventurers then become embroiled in the first session of "Chapter 9: Council of Waterdeep."

Recurring Villains

The Rise of Tiamat makes use of certain NPCs from *Hoard of the Dragon Queen*, and makes the assumption that those NPCs escaped any conflict with the adventurers. In the event that important nonplayer characters such as Wyrmspeaker Rezmir or the Red Wizard Rath Modar were killed or captured, simply replace them with new nonplayer characters here—or assume that they were resurrected between the previous adventure and this one. NPCs returning from the dead show the level of magical power the cult and its Red Wizard allies wield—and their dedication to seeing Severin's plans brought to fruition.

Additional Encounters

The Rise of Tiamat is an open-framework adventure designed for higher-level characters. As such, not all your game sessions need to stick to the main track of the adventure narrative. Additional events, rumors, and encounters can be used as needed or added as side treks or distractions. The following encounter seeds are meant to be used when you want to break up the narrative or if the players get off track. Each can be expanded as you like, and is meant to tie into one of the main chapters in the adventure (or to let you gently guide the players in that direction). Each additional encounter also provides a sense of the wider scope of the setting.

Monstrous Uprising

A charismatic **half-red dragon veteran** leads a band of 21 **kobolds** and 7 **lizardfolk**, taking advantage of the unrest along the Sword Coast. The group might besiege a village the characters are staying at, raid and enslave another settlement, or start charging tolls along one of the trade roads of the Sword Coast. This band isn't organized enough to attack all at once and provide a significant challenge to the party. Instead, it shows the increasing anarchy of the region, and the way that Tiamat's rise has emboldened evil creatures that aren't directly serving the Dragon Queen.

Power of the Cult

The Cult of the Dragon expands its operation in larger and bolder ways. Its leaders send diplomatic missions to Berdusk, Triel, and other settlements demanding tribute—and offering protection from dragon raids for those who comply. Cultists shake down caravans seeking protection money, and have been burning caravans that belong to the rivals of those who do pay. Less scrupulous merchants are finding it easier to do business with the cult than to fight against them. Any Zhentarim contacts of the adventurers are understandably worried about these developments.

Elite bands of cultists have been charged with establishing the cult's control from the Gray Peaks to the Sunset Mountains. They seek out allies in the area, with an eye toward choosing friendly territory for a capital city and a seat of power for the cult's Inner Circle. Such bands are led by a **dragonsoul** defended by 4 **dragonclaws** and a pack of 3 **guard drakes**. The dragonsoul rides a **warhorse**, but the other cultists are on foot. See appendix D for the cultists and drakes.

Devilish Demands

Though the Cult of the Dragon and the Red Wizards are making use of diabolic allies as they plan the ritual that will free Tiamat, not all devils are on their side. Some fiends not wanting to see Tiamat gain worldly power seek to break the alliance between the cult and Thay. This encounter can be used to reveal to the characters the divisions already present among the evil factions.

The devils who are aligned against Tiamat send a delegation of 5 **cultists** and 2 **cult fanatics** (devil worshipers) and a **bone devil** named Lord Volmer to treat with the party. The cultists lead the characters to a large tent, inside which Lord Volmer awaits.

Using telepathy, Lord Volmer tells the adventurers about the so-called "Thayan Resurrection" (the attempt by Thayan exiles to supplant Szass Tam), as well as the fact that Szass Tam intends to destroy Rath Modar and his splinter sect for their impudence. The bone devil assures the characters that they can earn the Red Wizards' favor by providing him with information leading to Rath Modar's capture.

Lord Volmer also tells the party that the lords of the Nine Hells are divided when it comes to the matter of Tiamat's release. He tells the party that if Tiamat is prevented from escaping, the party will earn "powerful friends" in the Nine Hells. If the characters attack Lord Volmer, he and his allies retaliate. The devil is not worried about dying, since he reforms at full strength in the Nine Hells upon his demise.

Captive Cultist

A group of dwarf miners has captured a high-ranking member of the Cult of the Dragon—a Wearer of Purple named Cheela Flegsteel who got a little too greedy while leading a group of cultists that was terrorizing the dwarves. Having killed Cheela's drakes and subordinates, the dwarves bring their prisoner to the adventurers hoping for a reward.

Cheela has useful information about the cult's activities, which could be used to lead into any chapter of your choice. However, she also knows that a rescue party is not far behind her. The adventurers need to help the dwarves fend off an attack by 4 **ogres** and a **half-red dragon veteran** named Yggran. The dwarves are hopelessly overmatched and flee rather than fight. If her fellow cultists can't save Cheela, they might kill her rather than leave her in the adventurers' hands.

Fallen Hero

The adventurers meet a seriously injured elf ranger—a well-known hero named Cylanestriel. She speaks of her capture by the Cult of the Dragon and her escape from the stronghold at the caldera of the Well of Dragons. (If possible, make Cylanestriel an associate, mentor, or relative of someone in the party.)

Use this encounter to make the players aware of the dangers presented by a direct assault against the Well of Dragons. The army of the cult is huge and powerful enough to have destroyed a major adventuring group. The Well of Dragons is on alert, and its defensive forces include flights of dragons that prowl the skies above the site. The characters should be made to understand that attacking with a large allied force is their only option for defeating the cult.

Death at the Council

During the second or third session of the Council of Waterdeep, rumors spread of an aide from Neverwinter who killed an aide from Mithral Hall and then hanged himself. In truth, the Cult of the Dragon sent a **succubus** spy to Waterdeep. She charmed the Neverwinter aide into collecting information for her, but the other aide discovered their meetings. The succubus forced her victim to slay the other aide, then to kill himself.

If the characters investigate, they can obtain the body to question it using *speak with dead*, or they might use *commune* to discover the spy. The succubus has gained another victim by that point—a knight of the Order of the Gauntlet who regularly goes to meet her at her slum dwelling in the Field Ward of Waterdeep. This pattern of murder and suicide continues unless the spy's true identity is discovered.

Running the Adventure

Tyranny of Dragons covers many levels of play and a huge swath of the Forgotten Realms. This book outlines the overall structure of the adventure and presents many chapters and events with which to challenge the characters as they investigate the nefarious plots of the Cult of the Dragon. This is not, however, a script to be read aloud with stage directions that must be followed. *Tyranny of Dragons* does not hold your hand and guide you step-by-step from the story's beginning to its inevitable conclusion. Instead, it presents people, creatures, locations, and situations for the adventurers to explore and interact with in a constantly changing, lively way.

You, the Dungeon Master, play a vital role. The creators of *Tyranny of Dragons* have tried to foresee the most likely courses of action that the characters might take in the adventure. However, D&D players are curious and unpredictable, and Faerûn is immense and filled with possibility. In a scenario as open-ended as this one, it is all but guaranteed that at some point during the adventure—and possibly at many points—the players will develop their own ideas about how to handle a situation or how to deal with the cult. And just like that, they'll be off and running in directions that aren't covered by this book. Those kinds of situations put a DM's skill to the test—but they also produce some of the greatest gaming moments and memories.

Campaign Villains

The plot to return Tiamat to the mortal realm has brought some of Faerûn's most sinister organizations and most powerful monsters into deadly alliance.

The Cult of the Dragon

The Cult of the Dragon has existed for centuries. During most of that time, its members have focused on the creation and worship of dracoliches, based on a prophecy translated by the cult's founder, Sammaster. However, those goals changed with the rise of a young cultist named Severin.

Inspired by Tiamat, Severin reexamined the texts translated by Sammaster and discovered a different interpretation, believing that "naught will be left save shattered thrones, with no rulers but the dead. Dragons shall rule the world entire ..." Severin's quest to reshape the cult led him to the dragon Hoondarrh, "the Red Rage of Mintarn." The fact that Severin not only survived this encounter but befriended the dragon impressed Tiamat in her exile in the Nine Hells. As a reward and further test, she allowed Severin a scrap of knowledge regarding the existence of the five dragon masks. Severin took that bit of information and did what few others could have accomplished, searching for and finding all five masks. The task took years to complete, and it led directly to the crisis that Faerûn now faces.

Severin kept the red mask for himself. As other masks were found, he presented them to his closest allies in the Cult of the Dragon, granting each the power of a wyrmspeaker. Using the magic of the dragon masks, this Inner Circle of Wyrmspeakers helps Severin prepare the way for Tiamat's return.

Daily Operations

The plots of the Cult of the Dragon are secret, but its existence is not. Most folk of the Sword Coast have heard of the cult, but know only that its members revere evil dragons. The cult recruits new members in major cities, and word quickly gets around. Moreover, many cultists engage in legitimate business or are assigned to ordinary academic research. Only a relative few serve as thieves, assassins, and spies.

Dragon-themed symbolism and iconography pervade the cult's official regalia—black clothing that features a cape or cloak cut to resemble dragon wings, and festooned with jewelry and draconic imagery reflecting the wearer's favorite type of dragon. Masks are common at cult gatherings.

Cultists avoid this regalia in public, but a character who knows what to look for can often pick an incognito dragon cultist out of a crowd. Cultists sometimes greet one another with the sign of Tiamat: right hand extended, palm forward, with all five fingers spread in imitation of Tiamat's five heads. Characters trying to pass as cultists might find this sign useful if they don't overdo it.

Cult members venerate dragons as powerful icons and masters, but their worship is reserved for Tiamat. They look forward to the Dragon Queen's return, believing that she will destroy mortal civilization and usher in a glorious reign of dragons—and of those who helped bring about draconic rule. The complex plot dedicated to bring Tiamat to Faerûn has so far seen the cult recover the five dragon masks and collect an immense treasure worthy of the Dragon Queen. All that now remains is to raise her temple in the Well of Dragons, sacrifice hundreds of victims whose souls will power an ancient ritual, and then use that ritual to open a portal through which Tiamat will emerge from the Nine Hells.

Cult Structure

The cult has a simple hierarchical structure, consisting of initiates on the bottom, four ranks for cultists, and one highest rank for "Wearers of Purple"—the lords, leaders, and cult masters of particular locales. The cult is ruled by a secretive inner group led by Severin and four other wyrmspeakers—a term of respect given to those whose bond with dragons is supernaturally strong.

Rank in the cult is based on merit and fanaticism. As raw recruits, initiates (represented by **cultists** and **cult fanatics**) have no rank and follow the orders of their superiors. Only initiates that prove their worth are allowed to advance. A Wearer of Purple can promote an initiate along the track of **dragonclaw** (first rank), **dragonwing** (second rank), **dragonfang** (third rank), and **dragonsoul** (fourth rank). Statistics for those four ranking cultists are found in appendix D.

Cult operation groups are assembled to match their assigned tasks. They vary in size, from a few low-ranking cultists operating on their own to hundreds of cultists of various ranks under the control of multiple Wearers of Purple.

Wearers of Purple

The Wearers of Purple stand at the top of the cult's humanoid hierarchy, and their word is law for the cultists in the cities, strongholds, and lairs they command. They are the only members of the cult to wear purple, and most are proud enough to flaunt the color. The Wearers of Purple have an affinity for talking to and negotiating with dragons—the gift of wyrmspeaking. Dozens of Wearers of Purple are spread throughout the Cult of the Dragon, and all are able to marshal the cult's resources.

Only Severin's inner circle can promote a dragonsoul to a Wearer of Purple, granting that character a base of operations and funds. Most new Wearers of Purple have already developed a working relationship with a dragon as part of their power and authority. Those who do not cultivate and expand this relationship are sometimes demoted. A number of priests of Tiamat have recently been made Wearers of Purple, and have been charged with establishing temples for her open worship in Faerûn. This aspect of the cult's plans is still in the early stages, and the inner circle remains divided on how the Cult of the Dragon should interact with the faithful of Tiamat.

The Inner Circle

These four Wearers of Purple are the keepers of the dragon masks and Severin's most devoted servants in the effort to summon Tiamat. Each of these wyrmspeakers bears one of the dragon masks, which they never part with except under the direst circumstances—and

then only at the request of Severin or a draconic ally. The members of the inner circle each have an affinity for a particular color of chromatic dragon. They treat with dragons of those colors to recruit more dragons to the cause, and plan cult missions that advance Severin's plots.

In addition to Severin, the Red Wyrmspeaker, the members of the inner circle are: Galvan (male human), the Blue Wyrmspeaker; Neronvain (male moon elf), the Green Wyrmspeaker and son of Melandrach, King of the Misty Forest; Rezmir (female half-black dragon), the Black Wyrmspeaker; and Varram (male dwarf), the White Wyrmspeaker.

If any wyrmspeakers are killed or captured in your campaign—including Rezmir, who the characters might have defeated in *Hoard of the Dragon Queen*—Severin appoints new followers to his inner council.

Dissent in the Ranks

Under Severin's leadership, most cultists are devoted to Tiamat—but not all. Some of the old guard dislike the cult's new direction, and long for the established traditions and the rise of the dracoliches. A common thought among the dracolich loyalists is that Severin is being played by the fiendish Tiamat. Notable among these members of the old guard are Naergoth Bladelord, the former commander of the stronghold at the Well of Dragons, and Jorgen Pawl and Iskander, two high-ranking cultists in command of Xonthal's Tower.

Using the Cult of the Dragon

Cultists are suitable foes for the adventurers in most situations. They keep a low profile in public, so characters are unlikely to see cultists in full regalia on the streets of Waterdeep or Scornubel. As their plots near fruition, however, the cultists grow bolder and might engage the adventurers openly.

By the start of *The Rise of Tiamat*, the effects of the cult's activities are visible across the Sword Coast. The scorched ruins of farming communities pillaged by cultists for Tiamat's hoard are a common enough occurrence that travelers know something is amiss.



SEVERIN

Red Wizards of Thay

The Red Wizards hail from Thay, over two thousand miles east of the Sword Coast. A grim, dismal region spread across a towering plateau, Thay is defended by an army of undead warriors and ruled by the lich Szass Tam and the zulkirs he appoints to rule over the eight schools of magic. The Red Wizards of Thay are known across Faerûn, and are easily recognized by their distinctive crimson robes and the arcane sigils tattooed onto their shaved heads. Because of their evil reputation, Red Wizards are arrested or killed on the spot in many lands. For that reason, they often travel in disguise, invisibly, or by magical means.

For many years, Szass Tam's grip on absolute power in Thay has been weakened by internal strife. Mortal Red Wizards have risen against their undead masters, destroying some of Szass Tam's lich zulkirs and thinning the ranks of other undead. Little is known of the conflict beyond Thay's borders, however. In this quiet civil war, both sides fear that too much attrition will make Thay a target for its long list of enemies. Szass Tam questions the allegiance of all living Red Wizards outside Thay, and has made it clear that death and worse await any who oppose him.

Rath Modar's Ambition

One such Red Wizard exile is Rath Modar, an illusionist of great skill who long ago made the Sword Coast his home. Having a natural interest in dragons, it wasn't long before Rath Modar came into contact with the Cult of the Dragon and Severin. The young, ambitious cult leader sought powerful magic to locate the scattered dragon masks and to perform the ritual that would summon Tiamat from the Nine Hells. Rath Modar dreamed of an army that could confront and defeat Szass Tam. Out of mutual need, their alliance was born.

The secret cornerstone of this union is Rath Modar's belief that once Tiamat returns, she will see that the Red Wizards are more useful allies than the devoted but

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magically weak cultists. Rath Modar hopes that Tiamat will show her gratitude for the pivotal role he and his fellow Red Wizards played in her return, granting them an army of dragons with which to assault Thay. After unseating Szass Tam, Rath Modar plans to take his place at the head of all Red Wizards. Whether Tiamat will grant such a reward—or have any further use for the Red Wizards at all—remains unknown.

Not all members of the Cult of the Dragon are happy about the Red Wizards' involvement in the cult's plans. Wyrmspeaker Varram foresees trouble in the cult joining forces with Rath Modar's splinter sect. He has warned Severin about the potential danger, to no avail.

Using the Red Wizards

Red Wizards can be encountered anywhere on the Sword Coast (use **mage** stats if necessary), whether operating alongside cultists or on their own. They most often work alone, but two or three Red Wizards might join forces for an important assignment. In a public area where their appearance could put them at risk, Red Wizards favor deep hoods and scarves to hide their faces. Their undead **wight** bodyguards are usually nearby—and often invisible. Each Red Wizard specializes in a single school of magic, but all learn spells outside their specialty schools.

Red Wizards don't share the cultists' fanaticism for Tiamat. For them, bringing the Dragon Queen into the world is just one stage of what they call the Thayan Resurrection—the larger plan to destroy Szass Tam and reclaim Thay. They tolerate the dragon cultists but do not acknowledge them as equals.

Not every Red Wizard on the Sword Coast is working for Rath Modar or the Cult of the Dragon. Some pursue their own interests, while others are spies for Szass Tam. The adventurers might thus find themselves making uneasy alliances with characters they would normally never trust, since the easiest and surest way to eliminate a Red Wizard in service to the cult is to betray that wizard's location to an agent of Szass Tam. However, characters who get too close to Szass Tam's servants and his paranoid vendetta against the Red Wizard exiles might find themselves at the mercy of the Thayans. This possibility is explored more fully in chapter 16.

Hosts of the Nine Hells

Tiamat has long threatened Faerûn, often appearing in lands such as Chessenta and Unther to drive mortals to worship her awesome power. Although mortals don't know it, the end of the Sundering and the Era of Upheaval also put an end to such direct meddling by the gods. Without powerful magic and mortal aid, Tiamat cannot travel from her home in Avernus into the world.

Avernus is a boulder-strewn desolation where fiery comets streak across the sky and devil aristocrats rule from dismal iron fortresses. The River Styx saws a jagged course through Avernus's basalt cliffs, winds its way across ashen plains, and eventually plunges through a yawning pit into the eight levels of the Hells below. All the rivers of Avernus feed into the Styx, each one flowing red with blood beneath a roiling cloud of flies.

Despite her power as ruler of the first layer of the Nine Hells, the archdevil Zariel cannot kill the dragon goddess, and she sees the summoning of Tiamat as a way to be rid of her. Zariel has directed her mortal agents to assist those who seek to free Tiamat, and her power has made it easier for the Red Wizards to summon devils and for the Cult of the Dragon to find more adherents. However, just as Zariel wants Tiamat out, other devils would be happy to see the Dragon Queen stay in Avernus. Foremost among them is the deposed pit fiend Bel and the devils still loyal to him.

Ordinarily, the Cult of the Dragon has nothing to do with devils. However, releasing Tiamat into the world is a massive undertaking, and Severin has called on every resource he can. Though many of his allies among the Red Wizards are well schooled in summoning and commanding devils, doing so is never a straightforward process. Devils cannot leave the Nine Hells of their own accord, and though Asmodeus can bend these laws, he seldom does. Most devils in the Material Plane were summoned there by mortal mages who expended tremendous amounts of magical power to breach the barriers that separate the Nine Hells from other planes.

Using Devils

Devils aren't numerous in *The Rise of Tiamat* until the final showdown at the Well of Dragons, but their presence elsewhere in the adventure (including the additional encounter "Devilish Demands") should make attentive players wonder at the connection between devils and dragons. Devils are supreme manipulators, and if the characters have the opportunity to speak with devils that aren't working for the cult, don't be afraid to offer them diabolical assistance. Such an offer should put all characters—not just those of good alignment—in a bind. Bargaining with devils is a fool's game, but if the alternative is the end of the world, it might be the adventurers' only option.

Devils in the adventure should always be one step ahead of the adventurers. Characters who like to charge in and decide on strategy later will find that their diabolical foes have well-executed plans. If the characters plan two steps ahead, the devils are one step beyond that. Nothing mortals do should ever surprise them.

Chromatic Dragons

Severin and his supporters intend to use the ancient draconic artifact known as the *Draakhorn* to rally the chromatic dragons to Tiamat's cause. However, chromatic dragons are notoriously arrogant, territorial, greedy, and suspicious of any creatures begging favors—especially if those creatures might be a threat. Getting dragons to cooperate is a monumental task, even when bringing the Queen of Dragons into the world is the ultimate goal.

The Cult of the Dragon has a secret weapon for dealing with chromatic dragons, in the form of the five dragon masks. Even with a dragon mask, the process of influencing a dragon remains arduous and dangerous—though the payoff is enormous. These relics give their wearers the ability to communicate with dragons, but more importantly, they impart a subtle influence

over dragons that cannot be detected. Dragons cannot be controlled by the masks, but they can be swayed by ideas and proposals that they would not normally find persuasive.

Using Chromatic Dragons

The power of the chromatic dragons is a motif running through every aspect of *Tyranny of Dragons: The Rise of Tiamat*. As the events of the adventure unfold, more and more dragons respond to the *Draakhorn's* rumbling moan and journey to the Well of Dragons—a migration that inspires alarm and panic in people across Faerûn.

Characters and players should seldom be allowed to forget that the evil dragons are on the move. Whenever the adventurers are outside, they might see a dragon winging overhead in the distance. The shadow of a dragon could fall across the adventurers in the daytime, and dark draconic wings might momentarily blot out the moon at night. When the characters arrive in a settlement, they should hear stories about dragon sightings and attacks. When they travel, burned-out hamlets and demolished caravans line the road.

Dragons are among the oldest, most intelligent, and most powerful monsters in Faerûn and the Dungeons & Dragons game. Chromatic dragons are evil and merciless, and every battle against these creatures should be a life-or-death struggle. No dragon should ever fall without the heroes suffering during the battle. Chromatic dragons use every possible advantage with no regard for fairness, and their chief advantage is flight. A dragon never fights on foot where enemies might hack at it when it can soar majestically out of reach and slaughter foes with its breath weapon. Only in its lair will a dragon typically engage in melee, and then only if its hoard is threatened.

Characters who can tackle the challenges of this adventure are high enough level to have allies raised from the dead when those allies fall to a draconic foe. If the characters can't do so themselves, their allies in the Order of the Gauntlet or the Harpers should be willing to help out.

With lifetimes of a thousand years or more to lose, chromatic dragons have no interest in dying in battle against mere humanoids, and they don't sacrifice themselves nobly for any cause—Tiamat included. A dragon caught in a losing battle takes any escape that presents itself, most often simply soaring away. This changes during the final showdown at the Well of Dragons, however, when Tiamat can be seen clawing her way through the portal from the Nine Hells.

Giants

If the characters claimed Skyreach Castle in *Hoard of the Dragon Queen*, they might well hear from a frost giant diplomat who shows up to reclaim it as property of the giants who built it. A frost giant named Harshnag lives on Mount Sar north of Waterdeep, and he is sometimes called upon when the Sword Coast faces dire threats. The player characters could fly the citadel to him or—in a more dramatic interlude—he might come to a council meeting and demand the citadel's return on behalf of his kin so that he might rally them against their ancient foes.

If the player characters did not claim the citadel (or crashed it), this option is not available to them.

Using Giants

Giants are unlikely to appear side by side with dragons anywhere before the final showdown at the Well of Dragons. However, characters who gain any insight into the giants' alliance with the dragons should understand its apocalyptic significance.

Campaign Allies

Several powerful organizations battle the Cult of the Dragon even as the party does. The characters are key players in the drama, but everyone in Faerûn has a stake in the outcome of the battle against Tiamat and her allies. Each faction has a presence in the Council of Waterdeep, and all factions are ultimately on the adventurers' side—even if some of them occasionally hinder the characters more than they help.

This section describes each faction's goals and driving concerns, its leading delegate or delegates to the council, and what resources it can contribute to the final battle against the Cult of the Dragon.

The Harpers



The secret society known as the Harpers has been disbanded and rebuilt several times over its long history. The latest incarnation of the group retains its focus on gathering information, keeping a close watch on the balance of power in Faerûn, and promoting fairness and equality in quiet, unobtrusive ways. Harpers try to keep out of the public eye, preferring secrecy to fame and using knowledge to win the day over brute force.

However, as the Cult of the Dragon grows more brazen and destructive, the Harpers are forced to act more openly in their opposition.

If the characters played through *Hoard of the Dragon Queen*, they've already met one of the most influential of the Harpers: Leosin Erlanthar, a male half-elf monk from Berdusk.

Using the Harpers

Harper agents operate most effectively alone or in small groups, much like adventurers. When on a mission, they are independent and self-reliant. The ideal Harper is a keen observer, persuasive, and able to go almost anywhere without arousing suspicion.

NPC Harpers are the kinds of characters who consistently pop up when they're least expected and most useful. If the characters need a safe house in a strange city, are unable to locate an elusive foe, or have been captured by the cult and need inside help to escape, a Harper can offer up a secure hideout, a whispered clue, or a smuggled knife. Bards, rogues, and wizards are the most common character types in the Harpers, but characters of every class can be found in the organization.

Remallia Haventree

Chaotic good female moon elf fighter

Ideals: Freedom, respect ("Our failure would spell an end to all beautiful and honest things.")
Interaction Traits: Honest, friendly
Pledged Resources: Harper mages and scouts

The elf noble Remallia—"Remi" to her friends—is the Harper's leading delegate to the Council of Waterdeep. She is quiet, speaking only after others have had their turn, and is content to let events unfold until she feels a need to offer intervention and guidance. This embodies her attitude about combating the cult as well.

Remi is convinced that the rumors of Tiamat's return are true, and she is frustrated by the unwillingness of the other Harpers to commit to fighting the Cult of the Dragon. She understands their hesitation, however. The Harpers' have only recently been reformed, and the cause of their near-destruction was the decision to act more openly and aggressively.

The Harpers measure success in the value and quantity of intelligence gained by a course of action, as well as how that knowledge can be used to leverage an enemy into submission. Remallia wants the party to succeed using such tactics, knowing that this will sway the conservatives in her faction.

The Harpers are willing to cooperate with unsavory types and leverage evil assets, but not if doing so endangers others unnecessarily. They can respect the deftness and skill needed to make such an arrangement, even if they do not like the arrangement itself. The Harpers are always dissatisfied if the characters kill important cultists rather than capturing them—or at least trying to extract information from them beforehand.

The Order of the Gauntlet



The Order of the Gauntlet shares the Harpers' dedication to justice and equality, but their methods and attitude are quite different. Bearers of the gauntlet are holy warriors on a righteous quest to crush evil and promote justice, and they never hide in the shadows. Evil must be opposed openly and vanquished in the light of day, so that all can see and be emboldened by its destruction.

Members of the order are driven by religious fervor and by devotion to the principle of justice for all. Whether a member places more emphasis on one or the other of those ideals is an individual choice. Camaraderie and esprit de corps run high within the order, and an individual member will risk anything to save a fellow member or to complete an important mission.

The Order of the Gauntlet is a young organization, and it is eager and restless for action. It does not take orders from any government or temple, although the opinions of holy figures are greatly esteemed within the order. When evil threatens, the gauntlet strikes.

Using the Order of the Gauntlet

The Order of the Gauntlet is an invaluable asset at the final showdown at the Well of Dragons. No other faction can muster more paladins and priests to heal the wounded and combat Severin's devil allies directly.

Before the final battle, members of the order make interesting NPCs for roleplaying encounters because of their outgoing ways and strong opinions. Sharing a roadside inn with twenty paladins from the Order of the Gauntlet, or joining their march for a few days when headed in the same direction, should be a memorable experience.

Clerics, paladins, and monks make up the majority of the Order of the Gauntlet, but any character of a righteous mind is welcome in the order's ranks.

Ontharr Frume

Lawful good male human paladin

Ideals: Responsibility, greater good ("The strong must defend the weak, whatever the cost.")
Personality Traits: Friendly, hot-tempered
Pledged Resources: Paladins and healing clerics to support the fight against Tiamat's forces

Boisterous and gregarious to a fault, Ontharr is the leading delegate for the Order of the Gauntlet. He has all the justification he needs to support the party (especially if the characters played through *Hoard of the Dragon Queen*). However, the rest of the order is not yet convinced. In particular, the order does not tolerate evil, and if the characters are known to have committed acts of a dubious moral nature, Ontharr Frume will be pressured to withhold his support. Members of the order will seek proof that the party is righteous or has divine

guidance, for it is only with the blessing of Torm and the other gods that Tiamat can be defeated.

Just as good deeds must be performed in the light for all to see, evil must be shunned and fought at every turn. Members of the order can be won over by heroic and righteous deeds, but they will turn against characters who cooperate with or tolerate evil. The order can best be swayed by actions that demonstrate heroism and divine providence—uniting the metallic dragons to fight Tiamat's brood, for example. Slaying a wyrmspeaker will also serve the party well, while capturing and delivering such a villain to justice will raise them even higher in the order's sight.

Ontharr Frume's dedication to heroic justice creates a strong connection between him and the paladin Sir Isteval. However, Ontharr has difficulty reconciling the heroic Isteval of legend with the diplomatic and retiring figure of the Council of Waterdeep. It's incomprehensible to him why Sir Isteval does not take to the field himself in this great conflict.

The Emerald Enclave



The Emerald Enclave is dedicated to maintaining balance in the natural order and combating the forces that threaten that balance. Members of the enclave live in the wilderness or in small communities, and the order has almost no representatives in towns and cities. They are not opposed to civilization, however. Rather, they seek to prevent civilization and wilderness from harming one another. Those who serve the Emerald Enclave are masters of survival and living off the land, of navigating through the wilderness, and of reading the signs that indicate approaching weather, the passage of creatures, and the general weal of the natural world.

Severin's plan to release Tiamat from the Nine Hells represents a grave threat to the natural order. The Dragon Queen's reign and the ascendancy of chromatic dragons would trigger a continent-wide catastrophe that the Emerald Enclave cannot allow.

Using the Emerald Enclave

Members of the Emerald Enclave operate alone or in small groups. Their primary focus is places where the natural world and civilization intersect, because that's where the natural order is most easily upset. Humanoids and monsters alike can become a threat to nature when they are thrown out of balance with their environment or their role in the world.

Whenever characters are traveling through the wilderness—and especially if they get into trouble in a remote area—they can encounter agents of the Emerald Enclave. If the adventurers need someone to guide them safely across a mountain range or lead them through trackless, monster-infested forest, there is no better choice than a member of the order.

Druids, rangers, and barbarians make up most of the Emerald Enclave, but any character with a strong affinity for nature can find a place in the order.

Delaan Winterhound

Neutral good male half-elf ranger

Ideals: Balance, life ("In all good hearts is a spot of darkness, and in all tragedy is a glimmer of light.")
Interaction Traits: Quiet
Pledged Resources: Druids, treants, and good- and neutral-aligned lycanthropes

Delaan has come to the Council of Waterdeep as the lone representative of the Emerald Enclave. Even his regular companion, a winter wolf named Loska, remains on patrol outside the city. Delaan spends much of his time wandering the northern wilderness, and although he visits friends in Nesmé once a year, he otherwise shies away from large settlements. He is clearly uncomfortable in Waterdeep.

There is no question that Tiamat must be stopped, but the Emerald Enclave wants to see the world restored to order. This sometimes means taking a middle ground in battles between good and evil. Delaan is acutely aware of the destruction accompanying the recent activities of the Cult of the Dragon. He knows the cult must be destroyed for upsetting the balance of nature, and he knows that many dragons supporting the cult will die before the end. He would rather not kill unnecessarily, however.

Delaan is initially reserved in his support of the party. To earn his respect, the characters must recognize that their battle is not just to save civilization but to preserve the natural order. He thus objects to many actions that good or neutral characters might not think twice about—including destroying chromatic dragon eggs and other acts that disrupt the natural cycle.

Delaan's oldest friend and mentor is a mighty treant named Turlang who resides in the High Forest. With Delaan's support, many treants will join the fight against Tiamat.

The Lords' Alliance



"The Lords' Alliance" is not a metaphor. This organization was created and is led by leaders and nobles from across Faerûn. Although many of its members have conflicting goals and long-standing rivalries outside the alliance, they band together in the face of events that are too big for any of them to handle on their own. The rulers of Waterdeep, Silverymoon, Baldur's Gate, and other cities, families, and trading houses of the Sword Coast might never set aside their differences, but they can pull together when the survival of all depends on it.

The Lords' Alliance represents the richest interests and the most powerful armies on the Sword Coast. The order controls wealth that can hire mercenaries, ensure the loyalty of wavering princes, and possibly even bribe a few chromatic dragons to switch sides or break from Tiamat's cause. Without the help of the alliance against the Cult of the Dragon, the Dragon Queen's victory might be assured.

Using the Lords' Alliance

Even while they are working together, members of the Lords' Alliance are always advancing their own interests. Everyone knows and expects it—it's a fact of dealing with the alliance. That doesn't mean member cities don't cooperate and help each other in times of crisis. But if a crisis rearranges the power structure of the Sword Coast, all the players involved hope that the new order leaves them better off. For anyone to move up, someone else must move down.

Whenever a military campaign is underway, the Lords' Alliance is likely to be in command. Even if it isn't, alliance representatives will be on hand to observe and advise. If the characters find themselves in legal trouble, a councilor might come to the party's aid with a writ of pardon.

Fighters and sorcerers are plentiful in the Lords' Alliance, but the order takes on any character who feels at home in civilized lands. Barbarians, rangers, and druids are seldom involved with this faction, which sometimes leads to strained relations with the Emerald Enclave.

On the Council

Because the Lords' Alliance is a confederation, the order sends seven delegates to the Council of Waterdeep, each effectively representing his or her own faction. Their diverse character, motivations, and obligations ensure that they are not in agreement about the current threat facing Faerûn. Moreover, the standing of certain delegates changes from one council to the next.

Although it is not necessary for all delegates to back the adventurers, without at least some support from the Lords' Alliance, there is almost no way for the party to marshal enough forces to win the day.

Lady Laeral Silverhand

Chaotic good female human wizard

Ideals: Creativity, respect ("We cannot stop what we do not understand.")
Interaction Traits: Quiet, curious
Pledged Resources: Waterdeep's army and conscript troops

Lady Laeral is present starting with the second council, at which point she becomes the Open Lord of Waterdeep. She is one of the Seven Sisters—legendary, nigh-immortal figures known to have been blessed by Mystra. (Some even say they are the goddess's daughters.) Her spellcasting ability is impressive but is beginning to wane, and she focuses more on political power than on the arcane these days. The Masked Lords of Waterdeep choose her as the successor to Dagult Neverember between the first and second sessions of the Council of Waterdeep, making her the leader of the Lords' Alliance.

Laeral Silverhand brings centuries of leadership experience and an impressive reputation to the negotiations. A consummate diplomat, she can wield words that wound or soothe with equal ease. As the Open Lord of Waterdeep, she holds great sway with all the delegates except Dagult Neverember, who believes that she engineered his removal from the position of Open Lord.

Laeral's primary concern is keeping all parties at the negotiating table, and making sure that concrete actions result from each council's discussions. However, she is leery of committing troops to battle. No stranger to the horrors of war, she is keenly aware that the lands represented by the Lords' Alliance need their soldiers for the protection of their own people. Only when convinced that the Cult of the Dragon is likely to succeed in summoning Tiamat does she change her mind. However, she doesn't trust the adventurers with leadership unless their deeds in the field and at the negotiating table have impressed her.

If the adventurers sway Laeral to their side, she speaks highly of the party in the periods between council sessions. Having the support of the leader of the Lords' Alliance increases the party's stature in the eyes of all other factions, granting additional bonuses. See "Chapter 9: Council of Waterdeep" and the Council Scorecard (appendix B) for more information.

Lord Dagult Neverember

Lawful neutral male human fighter

Ideals: Moderation, responsibility ("The commoners need strong leaders to protect them—and to do what must be done even when it is distasteful.")
Interaction Traits: Honest
Pledged Resources: Neverwinter conscript troops, and mercenaries from around the world

Lord Neverember holds many titles and wears several crowns. During the first council, he is the Open Lord of Waterdeep, the Lord Protector of Neverwinter, and leader of the Lords' Alliance. He looks the part of such an impressively titled figure: tall and broad-shouldered, with a thick beard, a wild mane of hair, and a forceful manner. Rarely seen without his hand around a glass of strong spirits, he is a master manipulator and looks and behaves as a king should.

Strong and decisive, Dagult acts always for the good of his subjects and realm—and in doing so, has consistently built up his own power and wealth. Unfortunately for him, the Masked Lords of Waterdeep have recently chosen to replace him as Open Lord. Laeral Silverhand, his successor, claims her title in the second council meeting.

Dagult demands order and rewards discipline, but he is pragmatic and driven by results above all else. He knows that nothing comes without effort, and sacrifices must be made when necessary. Tireless in his actions, he never stops until he has achieved his goals. He will use any means at his disposal, as long as those means are legally justifiable—even when such justification must be "rediscovered" from long-forgotten or ignored laws.

In the first council meeting, Lord Dagult's resources have been spread thin between the massive investments he's made in rebuilding Neverwinter and in maintaining dominance in Waterdeep. He strongly supports the members of the Lords' Alliance pooling resources, because he worries that neither of his investments can survive the coming catastrophe without assistance. This changes by the second council. Though losing Waterdeep allows him to consolidate his strength, Dagult resents Laeral for taking his position. He avoids letting his feelings cloud his judgment, however, intent on showing that he is a more fitting leader by backing the adventurers and taking a firm leadership role in the council.

Ambassador Connerad Brawnanvil

Lawful good male shield dwarf fighter

Ideals: Honor, respect ("A sturdy axe, a strong hand to hold it, and a straight fight are all we dwarves need to end this little problem.")
Personality Traits: Hot tempered, suspicious
Pledged Resources: Dwarf soldiers and dwarf-forged armaments and siege weapons

Son of Banak Brawnanvil and a former king of Mithral Hall, Connerad has made the long journey from Mithral Hall to act as the Lords' Alliance delegate for the dwarves of the North, including Citadel Adbar and Citadel Felbarr.

Even though Connerad hates dragons, devils, and cultists alike, he is as stubborn as a mule about committing troops anywhere but his homeland. The dwarven kingdoms in the North have lost many people in recent years, and the dwarves that remain are struggling to retain ancient lands only recently reclaimed. He knows the adventurers only by reputation, and desires tangible proof that they have the mettle and wits to lead soldiers and dwarves before he'll make a serious commitment. Like Ontharr Frume of the Order of the Gauntlet, Connerad responds well to bold demonstrations of heroism. However, he is personally and deeply insulted by any slight against dwarves or intrusions by the characters into dwarven affairs. His reactions to the adventurers' exploits determine how he votes in the fourth council.

Marshal Ulder Ravengard

Lawful neutral male human fighter

Ideals: Responsibility, glory ("I am trusted with protecting thousands of lives, and I will not betray that trust no matter what my personal desires.")
Interaction Traits: Honest
Pledged Resources: Flaming Fist warriors and expert advisers to train conscript troops

Ulder Ravengard is the leader of the Flaming Fist—the military might of Baldur's Gate. He has the greatest martial acumen of anyone at the council (and probably in the whole Lords' Alliance). He can also muster more soldiers than any other delegate, and he is not bashful about saying so. His place is at the head of the war council and the front of the battle—but he will take that place only if the party proves worthy of his trust.

Ravengard is a stern warrior dedicated to discipline and results. Having risen through the ranks of the Flaming Fist by the might of his blade and the sharpness of his wits, he sometimes lacks sophistication and tact, but he possesses an unwavering commitment to the law. More comfortable working with soldiers than adventurers, Ravengard is used to giving orders and having them obeyed without question.

Though Baldur's Gate is still recovering from the havoc caused by the resurrection within the city of Bhaal, god of murder, the metropolis remains one of Faerûn's most populous, wealthy, and powerful cities. Ravengard recognizes his duty to protect the city above all else, and the Flaming Fist's tired reserves are desperately needed for reconstruction and policing. However, he would love to see the Flaming Fist take a leading role in the fight against the Cult of the Dragon, if only to give the defenders of Baldur's Gate a stature befitting the greatest city in Faerûn. This opportunity for glory makes Ravengard receptive to the adventurers' overtures, as long as their plans and decisions promise stability and discipline.

King Melandrach

Neutral male wild elf fighter/druid

Ideals: Balance, nation ("We elves were once the greatest civilization to grace Faerûn, and my people are heir to that history. I will not squander our waning strength.")
Interaction Traits: Quiet, arrogant
Pledged Resources: Elven eldritch knights

The King of the Misty Forest is the delegate for the elves of both the Misty Forest and the High Forest. Whereas his sons Alagarthas and Neronvain always rushed headlong into their own pursuits, Melandrach is more circumspect. He has led the elves of the Misty Forest since before most of their kind abandoned their lands in the Retreat. Despite the years of discussion and meditation that preceded it, Melandrach considered the Retreat a rash decision, and he is understandably hesitant to commit to any sudden course of action.

During meetings of the council, Melandrach consistently argues for caution and more information, and nothing the adventurers say seems to make any difference. That changes when it is revealed that his lost son Neronvain has become the cult's Green Wyrmspeaker.

Taern "Thunderspells" Hornblade

Lawful good male human wizard

Ideals: Logic, greater good ("Calculated risks are necessary to win this war, and no one is likely to emerge unscathed.")
Interaction Traits: Ponderous, curious
Pledged Resources: The army of Silverymoon (the Knights in Silver) and Silverymoon conscript troops

Taern Hornblade has lived an unnaturally long life by consuming *potions of longevity*. The wizard led Silverymoon for many years as high mage, but eventually ceded control to Methrammar, leader of the city's army and son of its most famous ruler, Alustriel. Though Methrammar remains leader of Silverymoon and a member of the Lords' Alliance, he is too forthright and earnest

to succeed as a diplomat. As such, Taern was sent to the Council of Waterdeep in his stead.

Silverymoon has a large army and many wizards who would greatly assist in the coming battle, but Taern has not lived this long by being rash. He is one of the most cautious delegates, knowing that Silverymoon's great wards of protection have stood against dragons before. Fearing that committing soldiers to the effort against the Cult of the Dragon might leave the city weakened, Taern needs to know that the party will protect any troops he lends to the coalition. As such, he seeks to gather as much information as possible about the adventurers and other potential allies.

Sir Isteval

Lawful good male human paladin

Ideals: Tradition, honor ("Against Tiamat, we either stand together or fall alone. Who will stand with Cormyr?")
Interaction Traits: Honorable, wise, dour
Pledged Resources: The might of Cormyr, including Purple Dragon Knights and War Wizards

Sir Isteval is a former adventurer and Purple Dragon Knight of Cormyr. Though not an actual member of the Lords' Alliance, he is present at the Council of Waterdeep as the alliance's nominal representative for Daggerford. That small settlement can contribute little to the effort to defeat the Cult of the Dragon, however, and in truth, Isteval has been drafted by Cormyr to gain insight into what looks to be a war brewing on its western border.

Isteval has too much respect for the other delegates to hide this information from them, and he assures those present that his loyalties—to Daggerford, to Cormyr, to the Lords' Alliance, and to all good folk—are not at cross-purposes. This forthright approach nevertheless causes an uproar among other delegates, and the adventurers must take a hand in insuring that Isteval is not expelled from the council meetings.

A veteran dragon slayer, Isteval bears a wound in his leg that resists magical healing, and he walks with a cane made from a bone of the green dragon that dealt him the injury. The paladin can be a helpful source of dragon lore, but his advice is always guarded. He sees his infirmity as a reminder from his god Lathander of the dangers of hubris. As befits his deity's ethos, Isteval has chosen to treat his injury as a reason to encourage the heroics of others even as his own legend fades. Still, at times like these when the world needs heroes, he doesn't like being reminded that he must watch the fight from the sidelines.

Isteval believes in heroes as the spark that can ignite the flames of righteousness in others and the light that chases away the darkness of evil. Seeing this spark in the adventurers makes the paladin one of the party's strongest advocates at the Council of Waterdeep, as long as they pursue a principled path.

Sir Isteval has much in common with Ontharr Frume of the Order of the Gauntlet. The two are potential allies in all things, which worries some of the other Lords' Alliance members.

The Zhentarim



The Zhentarim—also known as the Black Network—is a loose affiliation of merchants, mercenaries, and malefactors. Common folk know the Zhentarim as the people to talk to when you need the best guards or mercenaries money can buy. And if the cargo is shady or the cause you're fighting for is questionable or even unjust, the Zhentarim don't mind.

Affiliation with the Zhentarim can be profitable to sellswords, thieves, and rogues of every stripe. It's plausible that adventurers in your campaign might become members of the organization—but like most residents of Faerûn, they won't know the full extent of the Zhentarim's operations and goals.

Unknown to all but a few, the heart of the Zhentarim is a cabal of evil and sometimes monstrous leaders who seek to extend the Black Network's blood-soaked reach into every assassination, black market, and illegal deal that happens in Faerûn. The order's criminal connections burrow into every major city and thieves' guild in the Western Heartlands and along the Sword Coast. Wherever a city's coinage is disastrously undermined by counterfeiting, wherever an up-and-coming business runs roughshod over its established competitors, and wherever a political struggle turns to widespread intimidation, it's a safe bet that the Zhentarim are involved.

However, engaging in mainstream corruption and wanting to see Tiamat ascendant are two different things. The Zhentarim have no illusions about what the Dragon Queen's return would mean for their plans. Wanting to secretly rule the world from the shadows for themselves, the leaders of the Black Network have no desire to become agents and errand-runners for some petty god and her dragon cohorts.

This viewpoint makes the Zhentarim an interesting addition to the characters' possible allies. Under normal circumstances, the Harpers, the Lords' Alliance, the Order of the Gauntlet, and the Emerald Enclave would shun ties to the Black Network—and possibly arrest its emissaries. However, the crisis created by the Cult of the Dragon is unprecedented. Every resource that can be mustered will be needed in the final showdown against the cult, and the Zhentarim's network of spies, assassins, and mercenary armies cannot be ignored.

Even with the fate of the world and the Zhentarim's own future hanging in the balance, the order demands payment for services—and where need and risk are greatest, the pay is expected to be equally great. This mercenary attitude does not sit well with the Lords' Alliance, however, and they are the only group with the resources to pay the Black Network's price. The heroes can attempt to sway the opinions of the other factions—and have a chance to buy the Zhentarim's allegiance outright in the follow-up to chapter 15.

In the end, too much is at stake to sit this fight out, and the Zhentarim pitch in against the cult regardless of whether their price is paid. However, if the other factions want a voice in how the Zhentarim go to war against the cult, it will cost them. If the Zhentarim fight on their own, they strike when and how they choose.

At least one Black Network mission is carried out regardless of payment. Without the knowledge of anyone outside the Zhentarim, one of their agents has infiltrated the cult and gets close enough to Wyrmspeaker Varram to steal the *White Dragon Mask*. This theft sets off a sequence of events that culminates in Varram's portion of the "Death to the Wyrmspeakers" chapter.

Using the Zhentarim

Black Network agents are useful NPCs that you can introduce at appropriate times during the adventure. Characters who played *Hoard of the Dragon Queen* have already met one member of the Black Network—the female gnome Jamna Gleamsilver. If the characters need information or gear they can't obtain any other way, seeking out or being approached by a Zhentarim agent is an easy way for you to provide it.

A typical Black Network agent is a highly capable adventurer with no scruples. Some Zhentarim have winged snake companions that carry messages on scrolls as they fly, allowing agents to keep in contact with one another.

Although the Zhentarim as a whole oppose the cult's plans, not everyone in the Black Network shares that view. A number of Zhentarim agents believe that the cult's victory is inevitable, and that by standing against the cult, the Zhentarim risk losing everything. If events are going too smoothly for the heroes, you can introduce a few rogue Black Network agents to throw a wrench into the characters' plans at the worst possible moment.

Rian Nightshade

Lawful evil female tiefling warlock

Ideals: Logic, greed ("I'm certain we can come to an agreement that all parties will favor. But if not, we have other means of settling the issue.")
Interaction Traits: Polite, mercantile, ruthless
Pledged Resources: Assassins and mercenaries

Rian is a member of the Zhentarim and the Black Network's envoy during the third Council of Waterdeep. She is seated at the table as a special adviser to Lord Neverember, and her affiliation with the Zhentarim will not be mentioned. However, neither she nor Lord Neverember try to deny or conceal that affiliation if the characters question why Rian is present.

The Black Network backs any plans that increase the likelihood of defeating the cult. Any and all alliances are fine, as are any outcomes that add to the council's strategic resources. Rian doesn't have any particular interest in morality, and dark acts have no impact on her attitude toward the party. She disapproves of taking any wyrmspeakers alive, though, fearing the power of such dangerous figures and questioning the chance of success for attempts to turn or interrogate them. She favors discreet execution, interrogation of the corpse with appropriate rituals, and destruction of the body to prevent resurrection.

The Black Network remains uncommitted until the final council when pledges are made. If the party has earned the Zhentarim's respect, they provide their services at only a nominal cost. However, such action almost certainly alienates most of the other factions from the adventurers. Unlike the other factions, the Zhentarim's loyalty can be purchased regardless of their respect for the characters, if the party can negotiate terms to be paid by the other factions.

Metallic Dragons

The good dragons of Faerûn hear the *Draakhorn*'s call and know what it portends. With the fate of the world hanging in the balance, the good dragons will take action to oppose the return of Tiamat. However, it remains to be seen whether they do so in concert with the humanoid factions of the Sword Coast, or whether they strike on their own with no thought or concern for the fate of the lesser races.

Using Metallic Dragons

The metallic dragons will strike against the cultists at the Well of Dragons, but they are much more effective if their attacks are coordinated as part of the overall plan of battle. Moreover, if they can be brought into the alliance represented by the Council of Waterdeep, they can help defend humanoid territories from the cult's devastating raids. This is covered in greater detail in chapter 14.

Giants

Though many giants have thrown their lot in with the Cult of the Dragon, most remember the ancient dragon-giant wars with bitterness and hatred. Tales of feuds, bloodletting, and death fuel the giants' hatred of dragons, but the giant races are their own masters. As such, they don't easily cooperate with the small races. Even when good giants see the need and wisdom in joining forces with lesser folk, they often resist the idea out of pride until someone or something can command their respect.

Using Giants

Engaging the giants in an alliance against the Cult of the Dragon can be handled by NPCs (most likely by members of the Harpers or the Emerald Enclave). If the characters completed *Hoard of the Dragon Queen* in possession of Skyreach Castle, offering to return it to the giants (either behind the scenes or in a side trek chapter of your own creation) is sure to guarantee their support of the factions against the Cult of the Dragon. The presence of giants at the final showdown will be an enormous advantage for the forces fighting against the cult.

TYRANNY OF DRAGONS™

HOARD OF THE DRAGON QUEEN™



BRYAN SYME

By Steve Winter and Alexander Winter



Chapter 1: Greenest in Flames

The town of Greenest was founded by the halfling Dharva Scatterheart, a rogue who fancied herself the queen of the Greenfields. Scatterheart passed away without ever achieving that level of eminence, but her town grew into a thriving community. Its success isn't surprising, since Greenest is the only town of any size astride the Uldoon Trail, the most direct road between the eastern cities of the Dragon Coast, Cormyr, and Sembia with the Coast Way running south to the great cities of Amn, Tethyr, and far Calimshan. The trade caravans that pass through Greenest bring gold to the town's merchants and craftsfolk, and Governor Nighthill runs the town at the behest of the inhabitants.

The adventurers might be on the road from one town to another or returning to their homes after a trip away. Alternatively, they could be accompanying a merchant or wealthy traveler as bodyguards. Many restless young people of Faerûn have had their first taste of travel and adventure as caravan guards.

You can adapt *Tyranny of Dragons* to different regions of the Realms or to a different setting with a bit more preparation on your part. Change the names and locations to suit your campaign.

Character Hooks

To tie the characters' backstories to the *Tyranny of Dragons* campaign more closely, see appendix A.

The Approach

As characters approach Greenest, they see that a blue dragon and its Cult of the Dragon allies are attacking the town. The cultists seek to collect treasure that they hope to present to Tiamat upon her arrival in the world. The cult has assembled a powerful force for this raid by gathering bandits, kobolds, sellswords, and other mercenary types into a small army. A monk named Leosin Erlanthar was also in town. Through diligent research and interviews conducted during his travels between Berdusk and Candlekeep, Leosin became convinced that the cult is engaged in a big operation, but he doesn't yet know what it is. Leosin uses the raid as an opportunity to infiltrate the cult so that he can learn more about the cult's plans. He is discovered and captured, however, and needs the characters' help to escape from captivity.

Characters can engage in several encounters while cultists and kobolds rampage through Greenest.

GUIDO KUIP

For the past several days, you have been traveling a road that winds lazily across the rolling grasslands of the Greenfields. Sundown is approaching when you top a rise and see the town of Greenest just a few short miles away. But instead of the pleasant, welcoming town you expected, you see columns of black smoke rising from burning buildings, running figures that are little more than dots at this distance, and a dark, winged shape wheeling low over the keep that rises above the center of the town. Greenest is being attacked by a dragon!

The sequence of events that follow is up to you and the characters. You can present them with as many of the encounters as you want, in any order. The only exception is "Seek the Keep," which should be the first encounter after characters enter Greenest.

General Features

The sun has set by the time characters reach the edge of town (the area shown on the Greenest map).

Light. Burning buildings and a half moon provide dim light throughout the town. The inside of the keep is brightly illuminated.

Fires. The cultists tried to set buildings ablaze as they moved through town, but thatch isn't as flammable as it looks. When characters arrive, most of the flames come from haystacks and barns, not from homes or shops.

The Stream. The stream that flows past Greenest is shallow (seldom more than 3 feet deep) with a gravel bottom, so characters can move along it without difficulty. Where the banks are clear, the stream is easy to get into or out of. Brush by the stream is dense, and the banks are steep where brush grows. Characters can move only 5 feet per turn through the brush.

Important Characters

Some of the most prominent personalites in Greenest include the following characters:

Governor Nighthill

The man who runs Greenest is Tarbaw Nighthill, a human male of sixty years. If characters ask who's in charge, they are directed to Nighthill. He is pacing atop the parapet of the keep when the sky is clear, or inside the keep if the dragon is attacking. If the characters don't seek out the governor when they reach the keep, he finds them. Either way, Nighthill welcomes them and takes them to the parapet. From there, they have the best view of Greenest.

The right side of Nighthill's face and head are bandaged, his right arm hangs in a sling, and his light blue tunic is stained with his own blood. He received these wounds during the early stages of the attack and hasn't spared the time for more than cursory first aid.

Castellan Escobert the Red

Escobert is a shield dwarf with knotted, tangled, bright red hair. As master of the keep, Escobert is in charge of its defense and is the best source of information on the tunnel and the sally port (see "The Old Tunnel" and "The Sally Port" below). He carries an enormous ring of iron and brass keys to the many locks in the keep.

Stolen Treasure

The cultists and their kobold lackeys are in the midst of looting Greenest and collecting the spoils for transport back to their camp (see chapter 2). Any marauding group that the party encounters has a 50 percent chance of having stolen treasure in its possession. Roll a d6 and multiply the result by 10 to determine the total value of the stolen items, in gold pieces (gp).

Wandering Encounters

The streets of Greenest are overrun by forces consisting of **cultists** and **acolytes** accompanied by monstrous allies: **kobolds** with **ambush drakes** (see appendix D) and **giant lizards**. These raiders move through town without fear, pillaging as they go. As characters travel through the embattled village, they can run into raiders and townsfolk. Use these guidelines to determine if characters have an encounter.

If characters use cover and stealth to avoid encounters, have each character attempt a DC 10 Dexterity (Stealth) check. For every two individual checks that fail, the characters have one encounter on the way to their destination. Roll a d8 on the Chapter 1 Encounters table to determine each encounter. If characters use the stream bed for cover for most of the trip, these characters have advantage on their Dexterity checks.

If characters don't use cover and stealth to avoid encounters, roll a d8 for every 100 feet they move in town. If the roll is 4 or lower, they didn't attract attention with that move. If the roll is 5 or higher, they run into something; roll a d8 again and check the Chapter 1 Encounters table to see what the characters meet.

Chapter 1 Encounters

d8	Encounter
1	6 **kobolds**
2	3 **kobolds** and 1 **ambush drake** (see appendix D)
3	6 **cultists**
4	4 **cultists** and 1 **guard**
5	2 **cultists** and 1 **acolyte***
6	3 **guards** and 1 **acolyte***
7	1d6 townsfolk being hunted by raiders (roll a d6 to determine the raiding group)
8	1d6 townsfolk hiding

*Acolytes have *command* prepared instead of *sanctuary*.

Most of the cultists, guards, and acolytes are human. You can include a few dwarves, half-elves, half-orcs, or halflings without altering any game statistics.

Seek the Keep

Characters have random encounters with raiders when they enter Greenest, but this one should be their first mission of the chapter. It begins when a terrified human family (father, mother, and three young children) dash across their path, hounded by seven **kobolds**.

> Without warning, five humans dash out from between two buildings on your left. A limping man and three young children race across the street into more shadows, and a woman carrying a round shield and a broken spear turns and faces back in the direction from which they came. Eight kobolds stream out of the alley on the family's heels and fan out around the woman, who looks determined to delay the creatures for as long as possible.

The woman is Linan Swift, and her husband is Cuth. Linan is a **commoner** but with 8 hit points. Her attack with the spear is +2 to hit for 1d6 piercing damage. Her husband is down to 2 hit points from an earlier fight. The children move at speed 20. They can be carried, but a character carrying a child has disadvantage on attack rolls and cannot wield a two-handed weapon.

Unless characters interfere, the kobolds assume the characters are cultists and ignore them. Assuming characters intervene and save the family, Linan explains that they must make their way to the keep (area 1); it's the only safe place in Greenest. The raiders haven't set up an effective cordon around the keep, so it's still possible to move through the front gate—but not for long.

To reach the keep, the characters must make it past three groups of raiders. A group consists of 1d6 **kobolds** and 1d4 **cultists**. If the group contains six kobolds, one is a **winged kobold (urd)**.

Characters can fight these enemies, sneak past them, retreat to avoid them entirely, or try something clever such as bluffing. If they fight, run the combat normally. When enemies must make a check to notice sneaking or bluffing, make a check with advantage for the group.

Each time the party retreats from an enemy group, they run into 1d6 more townsfolk headed for the keep. For every four townsfolk in tow, the group must move past one more enemy group to reach the keep.

At the keep, the characters are the last group through the gate before it is closed and barred. After characters enter the keep, raiders encircle it in increasing numbers.

Rewards

Besides earning experience points (XP) for raiders fought on the way to the keep, characters earn a bonus of 50 XP per nonplayer character (NPC) brought alive into the keep. Divide this bonus equally among the party members. Alternatively, if you are using the milestone experience rule, the characters reach 2nd level once they arrive at the keep.

Missions

Events in Greenest are divided into missions. Missions don't need to involve combat, but most do.

The characters reach the town at sundown, or about 9 p.m. The sun comes up again at 6 a.m. the next morning, but the last of the raiders are gone by 4 a.m.

For time-keeping purposes, assume that each mission takes an hour. Time during the hour that isn't spent fighting or slipping through town is spent tending gear, bandaging minor wounds, patrolling the keep's walls, briefing Nighthill on the situation, and other mundane tasks. If characters take a short rest, they can't undertake any other mission that hour.

If players need guidance, Governor Nighthill can give the characters a quick briefing on the tactical situation. The raiders have isolated the keep from the town with encircling groups of guards, but they haven't organized an attack. Nighthill thinks the raiders don't intend to attack the keep; they seem interested only in loot. The real danger is to the town and to those people who didn't make it into the keep before it was cut off. Nighthill wants the characters to slip back into the town and help people who are cut off or harass the raiders. A stealthy group can make it out of the keep and back in again without drawing the raiders' attention.

The Old Tunnel

A narrow tunnel runs from the cellar beneath the keep to the bank of the stream (area 2). The tunnel is wide enough to allow warriors to pass through it in single file. In the keep, the tunnel is sealed with a locked ironbound door, and the stream exit is covered with a locked iron grate made to look like a sewer outlet. The tunnel's main function was as a secret means of collecting water from the stream during a siege, but it can double as a sally port. Since the keep has never been besieged, the old tunnel has never been used. Barrels and crates are piled in front of the door. The keys for the locks are on the ring that Escobert carries with him everywhere.

At some point, Escobert recommends the tunnel as a means of sneaking townsfolk into the keep without running the gauntlet of attackers watching the gates.

Locks

Characters can clear the cellar door with a few minutes' work. The lock is stiff but opens with the key; without the key, the character can open the lock with a successful DC 10 Dexterity check and a set of thieves' tools. The disused tunnel is choked with webs but is otherwise clear. A few yards inside the stream end is a nest of two **swarms of rats**. The rats attack when disturbed, and the surviving rats flee when half their number die.

Years of exposure and neglect have corroded the lock on the exit grate. Even with the key, a successful DC 10 Dexterity check is needed to open the lock. Without the key, the DC increases to 20. If the roll misses by 5 or more, the key or thieves' tools break off in the lock so that unlocking it becomes impossible. Then only a successful DC 15 Strength check can force the grate open.

Foes

A group of cultists is searching the stream banks for hiding townsfolk when the characters emerge from the tunnel. If characters open the lock with the key or with thieves' tools, the first one to exit notices the raiders approaching without being spotted in return; the characters can keep out of sight in the tunnel or try to ambush the raiders after they pass. If the check fails, the raiders spot the character; roll initiative and proceed with combat. If the grate had to be broken open with a Strength check, the raiders hear the noise and find cover; they wait for the characters to exit the tunnel, then gain a

surprise round. The raiders' group consists of two **cultists** and six **kobolds**. If any cultists are still alive at the beginning of the fourth round of the fight, one of them runs to fetch help. Ten minutes later, two **cultists**, ten **kobolds**, and one **ambush drake** (see appendix D) arrive to guard the tunnel.

Rewards

Award standard XP for defeated foes. Aside from that, the chief reward for this mission is the tunnel itself. As long as it remains secret, characters can use it to enter and exit the keep safely. Each time they use the tunnel exit, roll a d6. On a 1, raiders see and attack the characters (use the Chapter 1 Encounters table). On a 2, they are seen but not attacked. Instead, the raiders set an ambush and attack the next time the characters return to the tunnel exit.

The Sally Port

The keep has a sally port along the west wall for counterattacking foes who bring a battering ram against the gates. During the night while characters are in the keep, raiders approach the old gate, force it open, and rush through. Escobert discovers them and races into the courtyard to sound the alarm ahead of the infiltrators.

Enough defenders are available to deal with the immediate threat from raiders loose in the keep, since it's more a probe that got out of hand rather than a full-scale assault. Escobert is most concerned about resealing the sally port, and he seeks out the characters for that job.

To secure the sally port, characters must battle through two groups of foes. The first fight occurs against three **acolytes**, three **kobolds**, and one **ambush drake** (see appendix D), which are guarding the sally port's 10-foot-by-20-foot ready room against exactly this type of counterattack. After characters seize the room, they discover that the door is heavily damaged. The fastest repair is with five castings of *mending* (taking 5 minutes). If none of the characters can do this, an NPC in the keep knows the cantrip. Someone must find and fetch her to the ready room.

Before the door can be repaired, a second group of raiders consisting of two **guards**, three **cultists**, and three **kobolds** attacks. These foes can come from outside the keep, or they might be a group of infiltrators trying to fight its way back outside. If characters barricade the door with barrels or other heavy objects while awaiting repairs, they might hold off attackers until the repairs are finished and avoid this fight entirely.

Rewards

Award standard XP for defeated foes.

Dragon Attack

The **adult blue dragon** Lennithon accompanied this raid but is not an enthusiastic participant. His chief contribution has been his Frightful Presence, but that becomes less effective as the night wears on and defenders overcome their fear. Shortly before midnight, the dragon launches a final assault against the citadel. Frulam Mondath orders the attack, knowing that the adventurers are in the keep at the time. Lennithon doesn't consider this to be his fight, and he isn't keen on tangling with adventurers for another's benefit.

During this attack, Lennithon flies over the keep and uses his breath weapon without moving closer than 25 feet from the parapet. The defenders on the walls have mastered their fear of the dragon's Frightful Presence from earlier attacks. There are twenty NPC defenders on the walls at the beginning of the mission, and more can arrive between attacks to take the place of those who fall. The dragon doesn't target the adventures at first, and every breath attack not directed at them kills 1d4 NPC defenders and injures 1d6 more. Adventurers who happen to get caught in the area make normal saving throws and take standard damage. The NPCs' attacks are ineffective against Lennithon. Bear in mind that the dragon's breath weapon will kill a 1st-level character outright, so be sure to demonstrate its destructive power to the players before turning the dragon against the party.

After each attack, Lennithon swoops away until his breath weapon recharges, then swings in for another attack. He repeats this pattern until he has taken 24 damage or more, or a single critical hit. After that happens, Lennithon leaves for good.

Rewards

Characters earn 50 XP each for driving away Lennithon, but reduce that award to 25 XP if 10 or more defenders were killed during the attack. For their role in driving off the dragon, the characters receive four *potions of healing* from the grateful Governor Nighthill.

Prisoners

Governor Nighthill would like to interrogate some of the raiders.

> "I'd give anything to know what we're up against, and why. For that, we need prisoners. A commander, even a low-ranking one, is best."

If the characters haven't run into any cult leaders yet, Nighthill takes them onto the parapet and points out what he means. This is an ideal time for everyone to catch a glimpse of **Frulam Mondath** (see appendix D) in her purple robes, accompanied by a dozen guards. Even the governor cautions characters against attacking such a formidable force, especially when any lower-level officer can answer his questions.

Leaving the keep through the front gate is out of the question—too many raiders watch it. Other options are waiting for a cloud to cover the moon before climbing down ropes tossed over the back wall of the keep, or using the old tunnel that exits into the stream bed.

This mission can be combined with another mission, such as saving the mill or rescuing villagers from the temple of Chauntea. All characters need to do is bring a live cultist or Cult of the Dragon initiate back to the keep. Or characters can go into the town hunting for one specifically.



Prisoners brought back to the keep are interrogated by Governor Nighthill and a few of his picked guards. Characters can participate if they want to.

- Captured kobolds are terrified; they say whatever they think the questioner wants to hear. They know that they're working for the Cult of the Dragon and for the "dragon lady" (Rezmir), and that they're after loot.
- Captured mercenaries or bandits talk freely; they have no special loyalty to the Cult of the Dragon. They reveal that they've been raiding communities around the Greenfields for loot, and they've heard rumors in the camp about dragon eggs.
- Cultists and initiates are the most tight-lipped. A successful DC 10 Charisma (Intimidation) or DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion) check is needed to cause cultists to reveal that they are members of the Cult of the Dragon and that they are collecting loot "for the great hoard that will usher in the reign of the Queen of Dragons." They know that the cult has a clutch of dragon eggs under heavy guard in a cave at the camp.

Rewards

If characters capture a prisoner, award each of them 25 XP. To collect that award, the prisoner must be brought to the governor. Interrogating the prisoner independently and bringing the information to the governor doesn't count. The characters also receive standard XP for any monsters they defeat along the way.

Save the Mill

From the parapet of the keep, someone spots a group of raiders trying to set fire to the town mill (area 4). Governor Nighthill quickly approaches the adventurers.

> "The guards have spotted a new threat. Raiders are trying to set fire to the town's mill. If it burns, we'll lose our stockpile of flour and we won't be able to grind more for months. I'm trying to assemble enough defenders from here in the keep to defend it through the rest of the night, but that will take time. You'd do us a great service if you could get to the mill quickly and drive away the raiders before they can set it aflame. You'll need to defend it until our force arrives to take over, but it shouldn't be more than fifteen minutes behind you."

The mill is about 500 feet from the keep. The distance is doubled if characters use the secret tunnel and follow the stream to stay hidden.

Roll a d6 on the Chapter 1 Encounters table to determine the strength of the raiders that are trying to set fire to the mill. Any kobolds in this force run away as soon as two or more raiders are killed. If characters observe the mill for a minute or more before attacking, allow them to attempt DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) or Charisma

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(Performance) checks. If successful, a character realizes that the raiders are making a demonstration of starting a fire, but it's for show. A few fires are burning around the building, but they could be extinguished easily.

This act of burning the mill is a ruse. Mondath has been informed that heroes are aiding the town, and she wants to lure them into an ambush. More raiders—one **cultist** and one **guard** per character—are hiding inside the mill, waiting for the characters to show up.

The mill is a simple rectangular barn, about 40 feet long and 20 feet wide, with an attached, exterior office. The long side of the building away from the stream has barn doors and a two-part door, and the two short walls have windows. All these openings are closed, but none are locked or barred. Inside, the main floor is dominated by a massive stone grinding wheel driven by a water wheel in the stream. The mill was operating late when the raid began and the millers fled without disengaging the wheel, so it still turns noisily. The upper half of the barn is a loft where milled flour is stored. The loft can be reached by wooden stairs along the east wall or by using the ropes and pulleys that hoist bags of flour up and down through large openings in the loft floor.

The ambushers are waiting in the loft for heroes to enter the mill. When the heroes are inside, the guards launch a volley of spears from above, then leap down to fight hand-to-hand. The ambushers have a good chance to gain a surprise round for their spear volley; a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check is needed to notice them before the attack. Characters who scan the loft for hidden enemies upon entering the mill have advantage on the check.

Ten minutes after the second fight ends, a dozen bloody but basically healthy defenders arrive from the keep with orders to relieve the characters and defend the mill. They tell the characters to go back to the keep quietly while they remain behind at the mill.

Rewards

Award standard XP for defeated foes. If characters realized they were walking into a trap, give each a 50 XP bonus. If they didn't deduce that it was a trap but spotted the ambushers in time to prevent a surprise round, give each character a 25 XP bonus.

Sanctuary

Dozens of townsfolk have barricaded themselves inside the temple to Chauntea (area 3), which is surrounded by raiders. The attackers tried setting fire to the stout structure but had little success. Now they've deployed an improvised battering ram. It's only a matter of time, possibly minutes, before the temple's main doors crumple under the assault, leaving the people inside helpless.

The temple is a large building, made of fieldstone with a peaked slate roof, and square in shape. It is taller than most other buildings in town. Inside, the altar occupies the middle of the temple, with other worship areas arranged around it.

Foes

The force outside the temple is split into three groups. One (A) is battering at the front doors, another (B) is circling the temple in a screeching mob, and the third (C) is heaping burning straw against a rear door. All these groups together would overwhelm 1st-level characters, but characters can devise a plan that gets them inside the temple by dealing with one group.

Group A consists of one **dragonclaw** (see appendix D), two **cultists**, and six **kobolds**. The cultists are handling the ram while the kobolds stand guard in case the town militia mounts a counterattack. The dragonclaw is in charge. The kobold guards are alert, but they are distracted when Group B passes in front of the temple.

Group B consists of three **cultists**, ten **kobolds**, and two **ambush drakes** (see appendix D) strung out in a mob that stretches 50 feet. This procession with leaping and whirling kobolds completes one circuit around the temple approximately every eight minutes (two minutes per side).

Group C consists of four **cultists** and four **kobolds** clustered tightly around the temple's back door. Their meager fire produces little flame, instead creating prodigious clouds of thick smoke that engulf the back of the temple and blanket the surrounding 30 feet of ground. Everything in the smoke is lightly obscured, and objects or creatures that are seen through more than 15 feet of smoke are heavily obscured. Characters can sneak up on these raiders and gain a surprise round against them, as long as they avoid Group B in the process.

Arranging a Rescue

The heroes' best shot at rescuing the townsfolk is to overpower Group C and take control of the back door. In the temple, they can arrange a distraction to keep Groups A and B occupied at the front while the citizens of Greenest slip out the back and race for the keep or for the old tunnel—if characters have opened it already. That's only one possibility; clever players can come up with different solutions.

The townsfolk in the temple are near panic, however, and they won't take orders from strangers unless someone makes a successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check. Otherwise, characters need to locate the priest of Chauntea, Eadyan Falconmoon, a level-headed half-elf. He's easy to spot, being the only calm person they can find in the temple, and he is elated to see them. He looks to the characters for a plan.

Time is pressing. While characters are inside the temple, remind them of the booming blows of the battering ram against the front doors and the frightened townsfolk. How much time you allow before the doors burst open depends on your group. What's important is that players feel pressed.

To create a sense of pressure, give the front doors 30 hit points and let each thud of the battering ram deal 1d6 bludgeoning damage. When the doors reach 20 hit points, they have cracks large enough to see through. At 10 hit points, the doors sag in their hinges. At 5, they could collapse at the next impact. How frequently you roll the die is up to you! One roll every 15–20 seconds is a good target for an average group. Be flexible, judge the players' level of tension, and don't let anyone relax.

If the doors burst open before the temple is evacuated, this scene turns into an ugly melee against Group A. The kobolds in that group prefer to attack unarmed villagers instead of lethal adventurers. Each kobold

automatically kills one villager each round unless characters attack the kobolds, cut them off from their victims, or interfere some other way. If townsfolk have already evacuated the temple through the back door, or that process is well along before the front doors split apart under the ram, then characters can conduct a fighting withdrawal through the temple. After everyone gets into the smoke outside, they can close and brace the back door, then sprint for the keep or the tunnel in the stream bank with enough of a head start to get away safely.

Rewards

Rescuing people from the temple earns each character 100 XP in addition to the points for killing monsters. If more than ten villagers died during the rescue, reduce that award to 50 XP.

Half-Dragon Champion

Before all the raiders depart, their champion challenges the town's best warrior.

> From the darkness, a creature strides into the dim light of the dying fires around the keep. Although it is shaped roughly like a human, it is at least seven feet tall, its skin is covered in blue scales, its fingers bear wicked claws, and its face has the muzzle and reptilian eyes of a dragon. The creature stops about eighty yards from the main gate of the keep and scans the walls. A line of kobolds fans out behind it. With their spears, they prod four human prisoners into the dim light. You can make out a woman, a teenage boy in a blood-soaked tunic, and two children. Then the half-dragon creature hails the keep.
>
> "Defenders of Greenest! This has been a successful night, and I am feeling generous. Do you see these four pitiful, useless prisoners? We have no need for them, so I will trade them back to you. Send out your best warrior to fight me, and you can have these four in exchange."

The speaker is **Langdedrosa Cyanwrath** (see appendix D for statistics), a half-blue dragon who serves the Cult of the Dragon. Cyanwrath has a personal troop of sixteen **kobolds**. A character who makes a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) or Intelligence (Nature) check recognizes the creature as a half-dragon.

One of the defenders in the keep, Sergeant Markguth, recognizes the prisoners as his sister and her children, and he is ready to rush out into battle with the half-dragon. Escobert the Red and a few other defenders restrain him while Nighthill approaches the characters.

> "My friends, you've demonstrated your prowess all through this frightful night. I realize this is an awful burden to ask you to bear, but any of you has a better chance to defeat that horror than my militia have."

If no one steps forward, Nighthill is disappointed but says he understands, and their refusal in no way diminishes what they've done so far. In that case, the woman's brother goes out to face the half-dragon. He is a human **guard**. Select one of the players to control Sergeant Markguth for this fight or just narrate its result.

Cyanwrath is pleased to see a champion step forward. He agrees to these terms for the combat: The three children will be set loose immediately, but his kobolds will continue to stand guard over the woman, and they will kill her if anyone interferes in the fight—for example, if archers in the keep let fly at him. Regardless of who wins, the woman will be released when the fight is over; and the victor will be the last one standing.

Governor Nighthill holds his troops in the keep during the combat. Adventurers can go out if they want, but the half-dragon insists that they keep their distance and stay between him and the fortress. If characters try to surround him or to edge into position for an ambush, he warns them that his kobolds won't hesitate to kill the hostages if they see signs of treachery. The half-dragon is evil, but he has a deep sense of honor about one-on-one combat. He doesn't intend any shenanigans, and he won't allow any from his kobolds.

Cyanwrath is the likely winner of this match, whether he's fighting Sergeant Markguth or a character. When his foe drops, he strikes one more time; the last blow kills Markguth or inflicts one death roll failure on a character. If Cyanwrath loses the fight, the kobolds immediately jump in to protect his body and carry it away. (Cyanwrath will recover from his wounds and be encountered again later.) If by some mischance Cyanwrath is killed or captured, his place in the dragon hatchery (chapter 3) is taken by another half-dragon.

With the fight over, the last of the raiders retreat en masse from the town into the darkness, marching away toward the southeast.

Rewards

If a character steps up to the challenge and fights Cyanwrath, each party member earns 50 XP. If not, characters receive nothing for this encounter. A team of healers with healer's kits and +4 bonuses to Wisdom (Medicine) checks attend to the wounded or dying character, and Governor Nighthill gratefully offers two *potions of healing* to the wounded character. If characters do something that costs the life of a hostage, Governor Nighthill is furious with them and offers no more help.

Developments

It's assumed that when characters first see the fighting in Greenest, they will rush to its defense. If they don't, and they're traveling with others, then the NPCs they're traveling with suggest that an immediate attack might turn the tide or at least save many lives. If characters still sit out this fight, they see about half of the attackers leave around midnight, with the rest retiring in small groups over the next few hours. When the sun comes up, even a quick inspection shows that over half of the buildings are heavily damaged and much of the town's wealth was carried away. Hundreds of injured people are crowded into the keep or are found hiding in cellars, but most of them will survive.



Chapter 2: Raiders' Camp

In the warm light of day, Governor Nighthill and other leaders want to know who was behind the attack on Greenest, and why the town was a target. The raiders retreated toward the southeast, and their trail is easy to spot. A small, stealthy group could follow the trail to the raiders' camp and gather information.

Governor Nighthill approaches the characters with a proposal: If they locate the raiders' camp and find out certain information, he offers to pay them 250 gp apiece. He wants to know where the camp is sited, how many raiders are there, who their leaders are, what's motivating these attacks, and where they plan to strike next. If characters recover valuables that were stolen from the town, he would like them returned, but he does his best to arrange a reward from what's left of the town treasury. Recovering treasure, however, is a lesser goal when compared to the other objectives he brings up.

Any gear or supplies the characters need for the trip are furnished by the town. As characters prepare to set off on this mission (or to leave town if they turn down the mission), though, an injured monk approaches.

> A young man walks up to you, limping heavily on his bandaged left leg. "I hear that you intend to follow the raiders and see where they've gone. I'd like nothing better than to come with you, but in this condition, I'd slow you down. In the midst of all this tragedy, there's no reason you would have heard about the fate of my master, Leosin Erlanthar, but it's important you know. He is a monk from Berdusk. He disappeared last night, after we fought a particularly savage battle against raiders. A few others and I fought our way to the keep, barely. Leosin didn't make it at all. We went back this morning to look for him, but all we found was his broken staff and this choker, which he always wore."

The monk's name is Nesim Waladra. After introductions are made, he continues:

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"Leosin has been investigating these raiders for months. I fear that he might have tried to infiltrate their group when they retreated, or worse, was captured and carried away as a prisoner. No one understands these bandits better than he does, and his knowledge will be invaluable against them. When you find their camp, please look for any sign that Leosin is there. One of my brothers has already departed for Berdusk to bring back help, but it will be many days before help arrives. Anything you can do before then would be a godsend."

Nesim answers the characters' questions to the best of his ability, but he also urges them to move quickly. The monks were returning to Berdusk from the great library at Candlekeep, where Leosin was consulting the librarians and researching ancient writings on dragon folklore. Dragon cults are his special interest.

The broken staff is nothing special. The choker is a braided leather neckband with a silver dragon design chased into the leather. The ends are ragged, as if it was roughly torn off.

Tracking the Raiders

The raiders' path is easy to follow across the rolling grassland of the Greenfields. A wide swath of grass is trampled down, but it's impossible to determine the raiders' numbers precisely. The path only confirms what characters already know: there were a lot of them, and they were a mix of humans, kobolds, and trained reptiles. One bit of information can be gleaned with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check: many of the beasts' footprints are deeper on the retreat than they were on the approach march. They were weighed down with loot on the homeward-bound trip, but let players reach that conclusion on their own. It's not possible to tell from the confusing jumble of prints whether any specific footprints are those of prisoners.

Cult of the Dragon Ranks

The Cult of the Dragon has an active recruiting process, accepting initiates from a young age. An initiate (use the **cultist** stat block) trains for months or years before gaining any rank within the organization, and many trainees don't survive the tests. An initiate who passes the tests must choose an affinity to a particular color of dragon: black, blue, green, red, or white. He or she is then welcomed into the ranks as a dragonclaw.

The higher ranks of the cult, in ascending order, are dragonclaw, dragonwing, dragonfang, dragonsoul, and wyrmspeaker. There are only five wyrmspeakers, one per color of chromatic dragon. The current wyrmspeakers are Severin (red), Galvan (blue), Neronvain (green), Rezmir (black), and Varram (white).

Most of the cult's operations are overseen by local leaders called Wearers of Purple for the ceremonial robes that they wear. All of the wyrmspeakers are Wearers of Purple, as are lower-ranking cultists appointed by the wyrmspeakers to preside over cult enclaves.

The trail leads south about twelve miles, to a more rugged region where steep-sided, rocky plateaus replace the gently rolling hills. The land between the plateaus is largely flat, broken only by outcroppings and wandering streams in steep-sided gullies. The plateaus jut fifty to one hundred feet above their surroundings and are difficult to climb except where rock falls and subsidence created natural ramps. The crumbling sides of the plateaus are dotted with caves and tumbled boulder fields.

Characters can have two encounters during this trip. The first is with a group of raiders who have straggled behind the main body. They are disorganized and quarrelsome, and they should be easy prey for alert adventurers. The second group is an organized rearguard watching specifically for pursuers from the town. They present a much graver threat.

Stragglers

Characters spot this group's cooking fire smoke from several miles away, because the stragglers stopped to roast a few prairie hens for a meal. They sought shelter in a low spot between surrounding hills, where tall boulders have rolled into a loose jumble. In fact, the surroundings offer no protection while making it easier for enemies to sneak up on the site.

By observing for a few minutes, characters can discern that there are four **human cultists** and eight **kobolds** in the group. The kobolds and humans distrust each other, and although the cultists act as if they're the bosses, their leadership amounts to nothing more than ineffectual bullying. The humans' weapons are stacked against a rock, out of easy reach. The kobolds have their weapons on their belts.

If the group is left alone, the kobolds grab their share of the half-cooked lunch and move about fifty yards away to eat, while the humans continue squabbling over how to cook a hen and the uselessness of kobolds as allies.

If characters choose to bypass this group, a detour can get them around it with no difficulty. They could run into these stragglers again on their way back to Greenest.

If characters attack, then unless they give away their presence on purpose (by hailing the camp, for example), they gain a surprise round. The humans spend their first turns retrieving their weapons and shields. The kobolds drop their food and scatter, then regroup and counterattack on round four, using their slings as much as possible. They stick around and fight only as long as any of their human allies are still fighting. As soon as the humans are all defeated, the remaining kobolds slink away into the hills and aren't seen again.

Rewards

Award standard XP for defeated foes, including kobolds that ran away. If any cultists are questioned, they refuse to talk unless someone succeeds at a DC 15 Charisma (Intimidation) check. They know it's standard practice for a raiding party to leave behind a rearguard. They don't know how strong the rearguard will be, but they expect it is sited about a mile ahead where the path passes between rocky bluffs. They also can describe the raiders' camp and its location, plus they know some prisoners were taken from the town but not how many or whether they include a half-elf monk. They know the

raid was for loot, because they were told to look specifically for gold, gems, and other valuables and were forbidden to do any looting for themselves. Cultists know they are preparing "the great hoard to honor the Dragon Queen."

Captured kobolds talk freely, but most of what they say is lies. That's not because they try to mislead enemies, but because they will say anything, no matter how outlandish, if it might gain them their freedom.

The cultists have 28 sp among them, besides their cheap weapons. The kobolds, who looted despite their orders, have a sack containing pewter candlesticks, some silver serving dishes, and a few religious carvings of Chauntea taken from a home shrine.

Rearguard

If the characters learn of the camp location and probable site of the rearguard from the stragglers, they can use that information to bypass this encounter entirely. In fact, that would be the smart thing to do, both because it negates a damaging fight and because if the rearguard is wiped out, leaders in the cult will wonder why it never reported back. The best result for the characters is if the outpost checks in at the correct time with an "all clear."

The rearguard consists of one **veteran**, six **cultists**, and two **acolytes**. The guard and cultists have spears for both ranged and melee combat. They are positioned in an area where the trail winds through a gap between two outcrops. The ambushers are hidden in the rocks, 12 to 15 feet above ground level. Characters might detect the ambush, with the odds depending on what they know and how they approach the area.

- If stragglers described the likely ambush spot to characters, it can be recognized from 200 yards away with a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check.
- If stragglers mentioned the rearguard but didn't describe the spot, it is recognized as a good spot for an ambush from 100 yards away with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check.
- If characters haven't been warned about the rearguard, someone spots a face peering down from above with a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check, but not until the characters are within 20 yards.
- If players state that they're watching for potential ambush spots, give them advantage when making these checks.

The rearguard has a twofold mission. It must stop any small party of intruders coming up the trail, or harass and delay a larger group while sending word to the camp that trouble approaches. The veteran decides that he has enough of an advantage against a party of five or six adventurers to deal with the problem on the spot, provided he doesn't weaken his force by sending a runner to Frulam Mondath. If the adventuring group contains seven or more characters, you can either have the veteran harass the enemy and dispatch a runner to the camp, or you can add cultists until they outnumber the characters by two or three, then let the cultists make a stand.

If characters walk into the trap, the cultists tumble boulders onto them. Each character must succeed on a DC 11 Dexterity saving throw or take 2d12 bludgeoning damage from falling rocks (half as much damage on a successful save). The boulder attack constitutes the cultists' surprise round. After that, they use ranged attacks until they are out of ammunition or the heroes force them into melee. Because they are positioned in the rocks above the characters, the cultists have three-quarters cover against attacks from below. To reach the foes, characters must scramble up the rocks. The distance is only 10 to 15 feet and no ability check is required, but the rocks are difficult terrain.



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Developments

These raiders are distinctly different from the earlier stragglers. All are dressed in similar (but not identical) black leather tunics with flared, black mantles. These are dedicated cultists. If captured, nothing less than a successful DC 20 Charisma (Intimidation) check can pry any information from them. Even with that, all they reveal is that they are initiates in the Cult of the Dragon, the names of their leaders (Rezmir, Frulam Mondath, and Langdedrosa Cyanwrath), and that the raid on Greenest was to collect treasure for dragons. Rezmir outranks the other leaders.



Rewards

Award standard XP for defeated foes. The cultists have no treasure, but their Cult of the Dragon outfits and weapons could be invaluable when characters try to get into the raiders' camp.

The Camp

The cultists have set up their camp in the hollow of a rocky plateau that's shaped roughly like a horseshoe. The lower portion of the plateau rises gently from the surrounding land, but it quickly steepens and ascends to a height of 150 feet above the landscape. Boulders form jumbled heaps at the bases of the cliffs. The level shelves and top of the plateau are covered in long grass, and brush and scrubby trees grow in patches.

General Features

Boulders. The boulders are difficult terrain and provide three-quarters cover.

Brush. The brush around the site grows to a height of 4 to 6 feet. It is tough and dense, making it difficult terrain and providing three-quarters cover to targets sheltering among it.

Caves. The steep sides of the plateau are dotted with shallow caves. Boulders or brush conveniently conceals many of the cave mouths. Characters who need to take a long rest can easily find a secure cave in which to hide.

Guard Towers. The cultists have built two guard towers at the camp, one at the entrance to the hollow and one atop the plateau. These towers are 20 feet high and made from rough timbers lashed together with rope. They are large enough for a few lookouts. The tower at the mouth of the hollow is manned by kobolds, while warriors man the one above. The guards have horns to blow when they must sound an alarm.

Prisoners. The cultists' prisoners are kept at area 1. Currently, only eight prisoners are in the camp, not counting Leosin. During the day, they are put to work under guard by four **dragonclaws** (see appendix D). At night, they are shackled to a post in their hut to prevent escape. The shackles are secured by a single chain and lock that can be opened with a key carried by one of the guards or with thieves' tools and a successful DC 10 Dexterity check. The chain can be broken with a successful DC 20 Strength check. Five of the prisoners are from Greenest, and the other three are from earlier raids against hamlets and small farming villages to the south and east. There were more prisoners at one time, but many have died from overwork and mistreatment. If a situation develops where released prisoners must fight, use **commoner** stats for them.

Slopes. The sides of the plateau rise sharply, while the floor of the hollow slopes up gradually toward the east. A long ladder is lashed to the cliff so guards can reach the upper guard tower.

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The cliffs have handholds and footholds for climbing, so no die roll is needed under normal circumstances. If characters are in a hurry, a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check is needed to make the climb without falling. If characters are concerned about keeping quiet, then a successful DC 10 Dexterity (Stealth) check ensures that no rocks break loose and rattle down.

Tents. The raiders live in circular huts made from closely spaced wooden or bone poles covered in hide, mud, and sod. Huts vary in diameter from 10 feet to 25 feet, and in height from 5 feet to 10 feet. (Symbols on the map represent clusters of tents.) Those in the mouth of the hollow (level 1 on the map) are crudely built and decorated with animal skulls. These are occupied by kobolds. Cultists occupy the huts on level 2, which are sturdier, cleaner, and decorated with painted designs representing dragons. A few tents on level 2 are set aside for prisoners.

The large tent at area 2 is set apart from the others by an open space. It is reserved for Rezmir, Frulam Mondath, Langdedrosa Cyanwrath, and Azbara Jos. An honor guard of four **veterans** and four **guard drakes** (appendix D) keeps watch around this tent day and night. They don't sleep at their posts, they don't fall for tricks, and they don't listen to stories or pleas. Their job is to keep everyone away from the tent, and they are fanatical about it. Only acolytes and adepts the veterans know by sight and by voice are allowed to approach.

Camp Alertness

For the first day following the raid, the cultists are both elated with the outcome and exhausted. Rezmir doesn't expect a serious challenge from the town, and slower members of the raiding party and walking wounded straggle into camp all through the day after the raid. The situation at the camp is confused, and security is lax. Most of these raiders are mercenaries and bandits, and not even the dedicated cultists wear recognizable uniforms on raids. No one challenges latecomers for passwords or security signals. Put simply, the raiders are confident that no enemies followed them this far. Characters can walk straight into the camp without having their identities seriously challenged. In fact, the bolder they are, the more likely they are to blend right in.

Players may be tempted to have characters seek cover and observe during the day and not attempt to enter the camp until nightfall. This can work, too, but sneaking around in the dark is more likely to attract suspicion than simply walking in as if they belong in the camp.

The chief risk is that someone might recognize the characters from the fighting at Greenest. Have each character make a DC 5 Charisma check. Success means no one remembers the character's face, but failure means that at some time (not necessarily immediately, but when recognition would be the most dramatic), someone in the camp recognizes the character. If characters are wearing Cult of the Dragon regalia taken from the rearguard, the characters have disadvantage on this roll because no one returning to camp at this time should be in uniform. The character who faced



Langdedrosa Cyanwrath

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Cyanwrath one-on-one, however, has a -4 penalty to the roll. If that character ever comes face-to-face with the half-dragon, recognition is automatic.

As the day wears on and the commotion winds down, the camp becomes calmer and better organized. Guards resume their normal routines. If characters haven't entered the camp before sundown of the first day, they find it more difficult, since there's very little traffic in and out of the camp on a normal day. They'll need a good story and a successful DC 10 Charisma (Deception) check to walk past a guard station of five **guards**. This check can be made only once for the group; they can't talk their way out of a failure. After the initial opportunity to enter the camp has passed, characters need to resort to stealth or subterfuge to get in. For example, characters scaling the plateau from the east could use brush for cover right up to where the cliff overlooks the camp. From there, they could observe or climb down the rocks under cover of darkness.

The camp goes on alert if the bodies of murdered sentries or cultists are discovered. One dead kobold won't cause much alarm, but many dead kobolds will. If the camp goes on alert, every character must make a DC 15 Charisma check. A failure means the character has been spotted as a stranger and an infiltrator. Someone raises

the hue and cry, which quickly draws a crowd. A roll of 10 or lower means someone has recognized the character from the fight in Greenest. The characters have a chance to get away if they immediately go on the attack and begin cutting their way out of camp, but if they delay or spin tales, a crowd of **cultists** that outnumbers them five to one surrounds them.

If characters try to estimate numbers in the camp, they count roughly one hundred kobolds and a mix of bandits, guards, and cultists totaling about eighty—effectively an unlimited supply if characters get the idea of fighting them all.

Captured!

If caught, characters are disarmed, their hands are tied, and they are brought before Frulam Mondath for judgment. One by one, she asks them who they are, where they came from, and what they're doing in her camp.

- If anyone was recognized from the fighting in Greenest, it doesn't matter what the characters say. Mondath sentences all of them to be executed on the morrow, after spending the night tied to posts alongside the monk Leosin. Characters have one night to escape this fate. They might wriggle out of their bonds, bribe or charm a cultist to set them free, or come up with a clever use for a cantrip. If all else fails, Leosin reveals that he has a hidden knife with which they can cut themselves free.
- If characters admit they came from Greenest and are enemies of the cult, the effect is the same as if they'd been recognized.
- If characters lie to Mondath—claiming they are new recruits and this is all a mistake, for example, or that they are studying the cult before deciding whether to join—then compare their Charisma (Deception) checks to Mondath's Wisdom check to determine whether she believes them. You can allow advantage or disadvantage on the roll when someone's lies are especially plausible or implausible. Match die rolls individually for every character. Those who Mondath believes are set free, but watched and stopped if they try to leave the camp. Those who Mondath does not believe are sentenced to die as above.

Exploring the Camp

Characters can learn much from poking around in the camp. If the characters pose as cult members, they can speak to other cultists and question them (carefully) about the cult's plans and long-term goals. Most cultists should be treated as indifferent when determining reactions or trying to gain a favor. Kobolds are less helpful and should be considered hostile when characters make Charisma checks to gauge their reaction.

Characters can learn the following information through observation and questioning. They need to be careful, however, not to attract attention for asking too many questions or poking their noses into things that are none of their business. Any time they come off as "too nosy," feel free to call for another Charisma check to see whether someone recognizes them from Greenest.

- This is a camp of the Cult of the Dragon—praise Tiamat's glory!
- Not everyone here is a full-fledged member of the cult. Many are new initiates working toward full acceptance, and many others are simple mercenaries, hired to flesh out the camp's strength during raids or if it should come under attack.
- The kobolds are here because their worshipful attitude toward dragons makes them easy for Rezmir and other high-ranking cultists to manipulate, but they are not well liked or trusted by the other races.
- Hunters who bring in antelope and other large game from the grasslands feed the camp. The cultists and their allies eat most of it, but some is stored in the cave to feed the hatchlings.
- The cult has been ranging far and wide on small raids to collect treasure. Greenest was the closest target to the camp, the biggest of all the towns they've attacked, and the most profitable—praise Tiamat's glory!
- Prisoners are used for manual labor. In the past, a few have "converted" and become loyal members of the cult, but most die eventually of overwork and undernourishment. Then they are fed to the drakes or taken into the cave to feed the hatchlings.
- The cave at the back of the camp (area 4) is off-limits to all but those who've been cleared by Mondath and Rezmir, which includes a handful of guards and kobolds. It's known around camp as "the nursery," and it's an open secret that Rezmir plans to hatch a clutch of dragon eggs there.
- The half-black dragon Rezmir came to the area a few months ago, and she set up the camp. Mondath handles everyday operations.
- The half-blue dragon Cyanwrath is Mondath's right hand and is seldom far from her side. He has a rigid sense of honor, but you don't want to make him angry.
- The mother of dragons—praise Tiamat's glory—shall return, and when that day comes, all the nations of the world shall tremble before her majesty!
- The monk is of special interest to Rezmir. Why else would she keep the creature alive that way? What Rezmir hopes to learn from him is anyone's guess, but you wouldn't want to be in that half-elf's skin—or what's left of it—when the questioning gets serious.
- The plunder from nearby settlements is stored in the cave. No one but Rezmir knows how much is there altogether, but it must be a big pile by now.

Aside from being recognized, the chief risk of spending time in the cultist camp is getting roped into a work detail. Characters might be selected by an officer to spend a few hours helping with food preparation, standing guard in a tower, practicing weapon drill, or even cleaning up after animals (a job usually reserved for prisoners, but currently the number of prisoners in the camp is low).

Leosin Erlanthar

The monk is tied to a stake at the back of the camp (area 3). He has been severely beaten, and he has been denied food and water in an effort to break his spirit. Rezmir knows from informants across the Sword Coast that Leosin has been researching the cult's history and

recent activity. The wyrmspeaker wants to know how much Leosin has learned and with whom he shared his information. Rezmir considered it an amazing stroke of luck that Leosin was captured during the raid.

In fact, it wasn't luck at all, at least not for Rezmir. Leosin had studied their previous attacks and concluded that the time was right for the cult to strike a bigger target, and he knew that Greenest was prosperous yet poorly defended, making it the most likely next target. So, when he deemed the time was just about right, he visited the town with the intent of staying until something happened. His observations paid off, and Leosin separated from his people during the night and fell in with the raiders when they retreated, hoping to learn more about the cult's plans and the location of their camp. Rezmir spotted him after the sun came up, and the monk was quickly overpowered and captured.

That portion of Leosin's scheme has worked reasonably well. He now knows most of the information listed above under "Exploring the Camp." Unfortunately for him, captivity has been more brutal than he expected, and although his mind and will are still strong, he's in a very poor physical state.

Despite the danger, Leosin isn't entirely happy about being rescued if characters come to set him free. He believes he can learn more, and he's willing to take the risk. He's too weak to resist, however, so characters can easily take him away against his will if that's what they want to do. He can move without aid at a speed of 20 feet and fights as a **commoner** with disadvantage on attack rolls. If characters don't bring him out of the camp, Leosin breaks away on his own. He refuses to talk about it later.

If characters are captured and imprisoned alongside Leosin and their attempts to escape fall through, he reveals that he has a small knife hidden in his boot. They can use it to cut their bonds. Leosin's absence is noticed within five minutes if he is taken away, and an alarm goes up throughout the camp. Rigging up a dummy in his place delays the discovery by twenty minutes. Tying up a dead or unconscious cultist (preferably a half-elf) in his place assures the intruders a two-hour head start before the escape is noticed.



LEOSIN ERLANTHAR

BRYAN SYME

Rewards

Award standard XP for defeated foes. This chapter does not involve many fights, but it does present many challenges, and characters should be rewarded for overcoming them. The awards listed below are just recommendations; adjust them and add to them as you see fit. Characters can reach 3rd level if they act prudently and capitalize on all the opportunities the camp offers, but it's not essential that they do.

- If you are using the milestone experience rule, the characters reach 3rd level when they complete this chapter.
- For getting into and out of the cultists' camp without causing an alarm or being caught: 100 XP per character.
- For getting into and out of the cultists' camp without stirring any suspicion: an additional 100 XP per character.
- For rescuing Leosin: 250 XP per character.
- For leaving a dummy or decoy in Leosin's place: an additional 50 XP per character.
- For rescuing other prisoners: 25 XP for each prisoner brought out of the camp alive.
- For each piece of information listed under "Exploring the Camp" that characters learn on their own (not from Leosin): 25 XP per character.

When the characters arrive safely back at Greenest—presumably with Leosin in tow—he can fill them in on any details they missed during their investigation of the cult's camp. The monks who accompanied him are delighted to see him alive, and the families of any other released prisoners are equally grateful for the return of their loved ones. Governor Nighthill pays the characters their promised 250 gp each and publicly praises their courage and daring.



Chapter 3: Dragon Hatchery

After his experience in captivity, Leosin needs several days to recover. When he's healthy again, he intends to travel north to Elturel to convey what he's learned to Ontharr Frume, a paladin of Torm who shares his concern over the Cult of the Dragon's recent surge in activity. He has a favor to ask of the characters.

"After all you've done already for me personally and for the people of Greenest, I hate to ask anything more from you. But the need is great, and I dare to hope that you can aid me one time more. I need you to return to the cultists' camp. You know your way around it now. If the cultists are preparing to conduct another raid, or a large body of them marches away, or if anything substantial is carried into or out of that cave, I need to know. If you have a chance to get into the camp and look around again, that would be the ideal way to spot anything that's changed.

"I don't recommend letting yourselves get captured," he adds with a wry smile.

If the characters were working as caravan guards, Leosin offers to match whatever their previous employer was paying them plus 20 percent. If they are currently unemployed, he offers them 150 gp apiece. He's willing to haggle; this mission is important, and no one else is capable of handling it. If the characters accept, Leosin tells them to find him at the city of Elturel afterward, both to report and to collect their pay. If he has moved on before they reach the city, they can speak to the paladin Ontharr Frume instead.

The monk doesn't believe it's essential that the characters head back to the camp immediately. He doesn't expect the cultists to make any sudden changes in their plans or mode of operation. Leosin is wrong about this, because he doesn't realize how much his presence in Greenest alarmed the wyrmspeaker. Rezmir knows that Leosin is investigating the Cult of the Dragon, but she doesn't know whether the monk's appearance in Greenest was a coincidence, a good guess, or a sign that the cult's whole plan has been compromised. She isn't willing to take chances: she's heading north with the accumulated treasure immediately.

Abandoned Camp

When characters return to the camp area, they find it mostly abandoned. (If they stayed, they witnessed the

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rapid packing up and abandonment of the camp.) The stinking huts of the kobolds (those on level 1) have been burned, but the level 2 huts and both guard towers remain. Anyone can determine from tracks that the cultists trekked away in small groups in all directions. A successful DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals that most of the camp's wagons and pack animals moved in a train toward the west.

Still left in the camp are some hunters, the kobolds who tend the dragon nursery in the caves, Frulam Mondath, her guards, and Langdedrosa Cyanwrath. Only the hunters still use the huts. All others live in the hatchery cave. The activity and guards around the cave mouth should be the top draw on the characters' attention.

On most mornings, hunters fan out onto the grassland to hunt for antelope and other large game. They travel on horseback and bring along an extra horse to pack the field-dressed game back to the camp. Hunters don't necessarily return to the camp every evening. They stay out until they have a load of meat to bring back. Hunting on the Greenfields is good, so they seldom need to spend more than a night or two away. Four **scouts** act as hunters; roll a d4 to determine how many are in the camp when characters arrive. They are not dedicated cultists, so they won't challenge characters who enter the camp, attack them, or even alert the cultists. They consider standing guard to be beneath them.

They are a taciturn bunch, so they won't be much help to inquisitive characters. They converse more freely with rangers, but to most strangers they merely nod, point, shake their heads, scowl, and utter one- or two-word answers. If characters converse with them, these hunters can relate how the camp dissolved within hours after the discovery of the captured half-elf's escape. Crates carried from the cave were loaded onto wagons or animals and hauled to the west. A few raiders remain in the cave: the Wearer of Purple (Mondath), the "dragon-man" (Cyanwrath), the better warriors, and the "dragon-dogs" (kobolds). As long as the cultists pay well for fresh meat, the trackers continue hunting for them. Whatever else the cave holds is none of their concern.

A thorough search of the camp takes about ten man-hours. Allow characters to make a Wisdom (Perception) check after the first hour. A successful roll means the character realizes that while quite a bit of material has been left behind, it's all trash: cracked pottery, rusty knives, soiled clothing and bedding, cheap cookware, and wine that's gone to vinegar. Some of it might be of use to the people of Greenest who lost everything in fires, but it has no value as treasure.

Dragon Hatchery

The only thing of interest remaining in the camp is the cave itself (area 4 on the map of the camp). There, characters find the cultists who stayed behind, a clutch of dragon eggs, the special cadre of kobolds who tend the eggs—and the many traps the kobolds set to defend their home. These eggs are important to the cult, but they were deemed too near to hatching to be moved safely. Rezmir left them with what he believed was an adequate guard force under Frulam Mondath and Langdedrosa Cyanwrath.

General Features

Ceilings. Cavern ceilings are 15 feet high. Ceilings in the humans' chambers (areas 11, 12, and 13) are 10 feet high.

Light. During daytime, areas 1 and 2 are brightly lit, and areas 3 and 4 are dimly lit by outside light. All other areas are in darkness unless the area notes otherwise.

Sound. The caverns are filled with faint sounds: dripping water, scratching rodents, scrabbling lizards, wind moaning across the entrance. These normal underground sounds camouflage the clanks, thuds, coughs, and speech of the kobolds and cultists. Sound echoes well along the main chamber (areas 1–5), so a fight in any of these can be heard in the others. Elsewhere, normal sounds echo confusingly and are lost in the background noise. The sound of a scream carries a long distance, however, and the sound of a fight travels through 30 feet of tunnel and attracts attention if the fight lasts more than 3 rounds.

Wandering Monsters

Kobolds move freely through the caverns, going about their business. Characters have a chance to randomly encounter these wandering kobolds. Roll a d6 every time characters enter or re-enter areas 3 to 10. On a roll of 1, monsters are present. Roll on the Chapter 3 Encounters table to determine what they meet. These randomly encountered monsters are added to any creatures mentioned in the area description. Be sure to make this roll before characters enter the area, because both groups have a chance to gain surprise.

Chapter 3 Encounters

d6	Encounter
1	4 **kobolds**
2	6 **kobolds** and 2 **winged kobolds**
3	3 **winged kobolds**
4	5 **winged kobolds**
5	2 **winged kobolds** and 1 **guard drake** (appendix D)
6	2 **ambush drakes** (appendix D)

1. Cave Entrance

The entrance to the cave is broad and tall, but the ceiling quickly lowers to a height of 15 feet. Standing guard inside the entrance are two **dragonclaws** (see appendix D). They position themselves about 30 feet inside the cave and stay near the walls and the column, so that while they aren't hidden, they aren't conspicuous, either. Characters who observe the cave from a distance—from the area of the plateau where the steps ascend from level 1 to level 2, for example—spot one of the dragonclaws.

If characters approach openly through the camp, the dragonclaws spot them automatically and retreat toward area 2 in the cave, to set up an ambush. If characters approach the cave quietly from the sides, they won't be spotted. They then have a chance to surprise the dragonclaws.

2. Concealed Passage

If the guards at the entrance spotted the characters' approach, they wait here until the characters come into view, then try to spring an ambush. Determine surprise normally.

The passage at the end of this alcove is deeply shadowed and hidden by a cleverly cut fold in the rock. It's obvious to anyone who walks to the end of the alcove, but from elsewhere in the cavern, it can be spotted only with a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check.

The stairs down to area 3 are trapped. See that area's description for details.

3. Fungus Garden

The kobolds cultivate fungus in this cavern to supplement the meat brought in by the hunters. Mixed in among the mundane fungi are violet fungi. The drop-off from area 2 is 10 feet high. The stairs are trapped; see below.

> The entrance to the cave ends here at a 10-foot drop-off. To your right, broad steps are roughly hewn into a natural stone ramp. The cavern below is carpeted with a profusion of fungi ranging from a few inches high to nearly as tall as a human adult. Two paths lead through the fungi: one on the right and one on the left.

Nothing distinguishes the paths to casual inspection. The path on the right is flanked by four **violet fungi**, while the path on the left is free of these dangerous growths. The violet fungi can be spotted among all the other mushrooms with a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) check, but only from the base of the steps, not from atop the ledge. Likewise, a careful inspection of the path reveals that only the left trail sees heavy use.

Trapped Stairs

The stairs are constructed so that the lowest steps collapse into a ramp that dumps a character right at the base of the violet fungi. Roll any die as each character descends the steps; on an odd roll, the character triggers the trap. A character who is actively looking for a trap on the stairs can find the trapped step with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check. The kobolds and guards know where to avoid stepping, of course.

4. Stirge Lair

Some fungus from area 3 dots this area, but chiefly it is the lair of a colony of bats. Hidden among the bats are ten **stirges**. The bats are present only from sunrise to sundown, but the stirges are always here. Normally the stirges prey on the plentiful bats and leave the cave's other residents alone, but not always.

Characters notice dead bats on the floor (victims of the stirges). If that causes someone to look up, describe how the ceiling is covered with bats with a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check. To avoid startling the bats, characters must proceed very quietly. This requires a successful DC 10 group Dexterity (Stealth) check. If more characters fail the check than succeed, the bats are alarmed by the noise, drop from the ceiling, and fly through the cavern in a blinding cloud of flapping and squeaking rodents. The bats present no danger, but their racket drowns out other noise and makes it impossible to see more than 5 feet. It also alerts the stirges, and the opportunistic bloodsuckers attack in the confusion. The stirges gain a +2 bonus to AC in the bat storm.

The bats calm down and return to their roosts on the ceiling after five minutes of quiet in area 4.

A spear with a pitted blade lies on the floor near the top of the steps leading to area 6. Kobolds use this to bypass the trap at the bottom of the steps (see area 6).

5. Troglodyte Incursion

The floor drops down 10 feet at each ledge.

Kobolds use this portion of the cave as a trash dump. Along with normal sorts of refuse, such as broken pottery, rotted baskets, and mouse-chewed rope, they've also thrown out items that appear useful from a distance: discarded clothes, worn boots, tattered books, cracked lamps, and so forth. Some of these items came from prisoners who died, and others were taken in treasure raids and later deemed to be unworthy of Tiamat. Characters viewing this area from the ledge see tantalizing glints of metal (belt buckles without belts) and parchment (books rendered illegible by water damage).

A strong, foul smell hangs in the air. Troglodytes that live deeper beneath the ground have made incursions into the cave through narrow crevices (not displayed on the map). If characters give this area a cursory look and then leave, nothing happens here. If they spend time searching, then four **troglodytes** attack. The crevices are a potential area for characters to explore if you'd like to expand this dungeon for further adventures. If not, then declare that they're too tight for characters to squeeze through, or eliminate them and the troglodytes entirely.

Treasure

A thorough search of the trash heap, taking 10 minutes, does find one worthwhile item: an overlooked pouch of six ornamental gems worth 10 gp each and eight semi-precious gems worth 50 gp each. The troglodytes have nothing that anyone would want near them.

6. Meat Locker

The curtain across the entrance to this cavern is trapped. See "Trapped Curtain" below for details.

> At the base of these steeply descending steps, a curtain hangs across the passage. It is made from hundreds of heavy leather strips, each about the width of a human hand. The strips are fixed to the ceiling and are long enough to drag on the floor. The curtain extends from wall to wall. The leather comes from a variety of local animals and is badly cured. The curtain is several layers thick with no gaps, so you can't see through it at all.

This cavern is naturally cold. It hovers a few degrees above freezing year round, regardless of the season. Much of the meat brought in by the hunters feeds the cultists and the kobolds, but the extra is stored here for eventual use when the dragon eggs hatch and the ravenous hatchlings emerge. The carcasses range from very fresh to several months old. The meat is only cold, not frozen, so the older items are slowly going bad.

> The smell of old blood assaults your nose. The floor is covered with dried puddles of it. Four floor-to-ceiling columns are spaced across the chamber, and chains have been strung between them like clothesline. Animal carcasses hang on hooks from the chains. You see gutted and skinned antelope, deer, goats, what might be big cats, and even a few small bears. Some of this meat has been here for a while if the smell is a reliable indicator.

This cave contains nothing of value.

Trapped Curtain

Hidden amid the leather strips of the curtain are hundreds of metal barbs coated with poison. Anyone who brushes through the curtain must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw or take 5 (1d10) poison damage, and the target's hit point maximum is reduced by 5. This reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest.

A careful inspection of the leather strips coupled with a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check finds barbs; they can't be noticed otherwise. When kobolds use this stairway, they bring the ruined spear that's kept in area 4. With it, they sweep the leather strips to the left side of the corridor and wedge the end of the spear shaft into an angled socket in the floor just inside area 6. This holds the leather strips safely out of the way while they move in and out of the chamber.

7. Drake Nursery

The short, wide passage between areas 4 and 7 is trapped. See "Spike Trap" below for details. Simple oil lamps provide dim, flickering light. This chamber contains four **kobolds** and one **winged kobold**. These creatures are in the upper part of the chamber.

The lower area is where cultists conducted the rituals to create their guard drakes and then housed the creatures. The ledge is a sharp 10-foot drop-off. Wooden stairs descend at the right end of the ledge. A stout cage made of iron bars surrounds these steps to a height of 10 feet to prevent untrained drakes from escaping up the steps. A key hangs on a peg at the top of the steps; it opens the locked gate at the bottom.

A rack along the southwest wall holds implements used in training the drakes: long poles with lassos at the end, used for snaring and controlling young drakes; leashes and collars; sharp prods; mock weapons made of wood; human-sized dummies stitched out of sailcloth



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and stuffed with straw, with ridiculous expressions painted on their faces.

The lower area is heavily shadowed. Currently it holds three **guard drakes** (see appendix D) that are near the end of their training. Being not quite fully developed, they have only 33 hit points each. Spotting these drakes from the ledge requires a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check; sweeping the pit with a bullseye lantern grants advantage on this check. If characters bring some raw meat to the ledge, the drakes think they're about to be fed and advance into the light. If characters enter the pit, either by descending the steps or climbing down the ledge, the drakes attack.

If the drakes are spotted and attacked by characters on the ledge, they set up a howl that draws six **kobolds** and three **winged kobolds** from area 8. At least one of these try to get past the characters and unlock the gate at the bottom of the steps, letting the guard drakes join the battle as they've been trained to do.

Spike Trap

A portion of the floor between areas 4 and 7 has been replaced with a sheet of parchment cleverly painted to resemble the surrounding stone. It can be spotted with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check, or automatically by someone who is systematically tapping the floor ahead with a pole or other tool. Beneath the parchment sheet is a shallow pit (about 2 feet deep) lined with poisoned spikes. Each time a character moves between areas 4 and 7, roll a d10. On a roll of 1 or 2, that character's foot has gone through the trap. The character takes 1d4 piercing damage from the spikes and must make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw against poison. On a failed save, the character is affected as by a *confusion* spell for one minute (10 rounds). On a successful save, the character is affected as by a *confusion* spell for 1 round. The effect is not magical.

8. Kobold Barracks

The steps down from area 7 are trapped; see "Collapsing Trap" below for details. Area 8 is the kobolds' living quarters. It was a natural cavern, but it has been enlarged and smoothed in a crude manner. Unless they already responded to noise in area 7, this area contains six **kobolds** and six **winged kobolds**. They are off duty, so they aren't being especially alert. Use their passive Wisdom (Perception) scores to determine whether they react to noises. Flickering oil lamps provide dim illumination.

> Thin mattresses of straw covered with badly cured furs form small beds that are haphazardly positioned around the chamber. Rats and small lizards scurry through the food scraps, and moldy wine skins littering the floor.

Collapsing Trap

The top step is rigged to drop a portion of the ceiling in area 7. As each character enters the staircase, roll any die. On an odd roll, the character steps in the wrong spot and triggers the trap. The ceiling collapses above the next character in line (the one behind the character who triggered the trap). That character takes 4d4 bludgeoning damage from falling rocks; the damage is halved if the character makes a successful DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. Every other character within 5 feet takes 2d4 bludgeoning damage, or half as much damage with a successful saving throw.

A character who is actively looking for a trap on the stairs can find the trapped step with a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check. The collapsible ceiling is spotted incidentally with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check.

The kobolds in areas 8 and 9 hear the commotion if the trap is set off.

Treasure

A search of the room takes 10 minutes and turns up 38 gp, 152 sp, and 704 cp sorted into eighty-eight stacks of exactly eight copper coins each. Dozens of dragon-themed talismans and amulets are carved from bone, soapstone, wood, and ivory. The workmanship on most of them is terrible, but four have a unique, if savage, artistic flair. These are worth 50, 60, 70, and 100 gp respectively if sold to a collector of artistic oddities. To any other merchant, they are worth 10 gp each.

9. Dragon Shrine

This cave is a shrine to Tiamat, but with an emphasis on her black dragon head and on black dragons in general. It also contains many Cult of the Dragon icons and a devious trap for the unwary; see "Acid Trap" below. Flickering oil lamps provide dim light.

Langdedrosa Cyanwrath (see appendix D) occupies the shrine, and he is joined by two human **berserkers**. (If the adventuring party contains more than four characters, add one more **berserker** for each additional character. If Langdedrosa was killed, then replace him with another half-dragon with the same statistics.) If Cyanwrath fought any of the characters one-on-one in Greenest, he immediately singles out that person to address as follows.

> "You survived! I don't know whether to be disappointed or pleased. It's a mix of both, I think."

If the character beat the odds in Greenest and won the fight, you can paraphrase to reflect that. As soon as he finishes speaking, he attacks. As long as none of the characters intervene, Cyanwrath's group knows better than to interfere in his one-on-one matches. If the characters gang up on Cyanwrath or one of his guards, or try to leave the chamber, the guards attack.

If none of the characters fought Cyanwrath during the raid but spent time in the cultists' camp, read this.

> "You look familiar ... I've seen you around the camp. If you came looking for trouble, I am the trouble you seek."

Then he attacks, and his guards join in immediately.

The creatures in area 10 are not drawn to this fight. They hide and wait to see who wins. When the fight is over, characters have time to investigate the room.

> This chamber has been enlarged and reshaped from its original form. The floor and three of the walls are smooth, and stalactites and stalagmites have been polished into gleaming columns. Every surface glistens with moisture, and the air is warm and humid. The flat walls of the chamber are decorated with shallow abstract carvings of dragons. Dragons' tails coil into intricate patterns and knots that flow across the walls. The creature portrayed in the northwest corner stands out: a five-headed dragon, rising from an erupting volcano. Other dragons, which seem dwarfed by the five-headed monstrosity, flock to its side. A small, wooden chest with silver and mother-of-pearl inlays sits on the floor in the corner, in front of the monstrous dragon carving.

The five-headed dragon is Tiamat, and the volcano is the Well of Dragons, where the Cult of the Dragon intends to bring Tiamat into the world. The Well of Dragons is located at the northern extreme of the Sunset Mountains. Most characters should recognize Tiamat from folktales and know she was banished to the Nine Hells long ago and remains imprisoned there. There is no way to tell from the carvings where the volcano is located, or to know if it's meant to be a prediction of events to come or just a birth metaphor for the queen of evil dragons.

The chest is locked and trapped; see "Acid Trap" below for details. Characters can open it with the key from area 11, or the lock can be picked with thieves' tools and a successful DC 10 Dexterity check. Unless the Dexterity roll is 15 or higher, however, it sets off the trap when the chest opens.

If characters spend 10 minutes or more studying the carvings, they can learn two things. First, black dragons are overrepresented. Almost half the dragons shown appear to be black dragons. Wyrmspeaker Rezmir favors them over all other types. Second, a detailed search coupled with a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check spots that many of the black dragon carvings have holes in their mouths.

A passage in the southwest corner of the shrine chamber leads to a chute that rises 30 feet up to area 11. A rope ladder is fixed at the top; a rug covers the opening.

Acid Trap

The holes in the dragons' mouths are nozzles for a trap that sprays acidic mist. The trap has two triggers. The first is under the chest in the northwest corner. If the chest is moved, the trap goes off. The second is in the chest. If it is forced open, or if the lock is inexpertly picked (a Dexterity result of 14 or less), the trap goes off.

> You hear a snap from beneath the chest, followed by a hissing sound like dozens of angry snakes—or like liquid moving through open tubes. A moment later, liquid sprays out from dozens of tiny holes in the walls and ceiling. Wherever it splashes onto the floor, the moisture on the stone bubbles and smokes. Within moments, the chamber is filled with acidic mist.

Everyone in the chamber must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw or take 2d6 acid damage from the acid sprayed onto them (half as much damage on a successful saving throw). The real danger from the acid is not to the characters' skin, however, but to their lungs. Everyone must also succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or take an extra 2d8 acid damage. Players who declare immediately that their characters are covering their faces and getting out of the chamber as quickly as possible, and are trying to not inhale the vapor, have advantage on their Constitution saving throws.

Treasure

The chest contains a few of the choicest items seized during the cult's recent treasure raids. Mondath persuaded Rezmir to let her keep them, and she promised to bring them with her when she travels north for the ceremony at the Well of Dragons. In truth, she wanted something to fall back on if everything went sour (she never mentioned that last part to Rezmir). Inside are a string of pearls (300 gp), a gold-and-sapphire ring (900 gp), and a pouch containing a half-dozen masterfully cut and polished precious stones (100 gp each). The ring and the pearls were taken from Greenest and would be recognized by anyone from there, but the stones came from elsewhere and would be difficult to identify. If the items from Greenest are returned, their owners will pay a reward worth 25 percent of their value (300 gp).

10. Dragon Hatchery

This chamber holds three eggs that Rezmir hoped to hatch into a new brood of dragons. They have not hatched yet but they will very soon, which is why Rezmir was unwilling to move them when the camp packed up and left. Instead, she left them under the care of Mondath and the kobolds. The chamber is dark; the kobolds extinguished their lights when they heard fighting in area 9.

> The chamber that opens at the bottom of the stairs is immense. A wide ledge runs along the left wall and drops away to a pit on the right. Many stalactites descend from the ceiling, and the sound of dripping water echoes continuously.

The lower portion of the room (10A) is 15 feet below the ledge. Wooden steps have been built down to the lower floor. As in room 7, the steps are enclosed in a stout iron cage with a gate at the bottom. The key to the gate hangs

on a wall peg opposite the top of the stairs. As soon as characters advance into the room as far as the top of the stairs, they come under attack from the kobolds hiding in 10B. See that description for details.

From the ledge, characters can just make out the shapes of large eggs (each egg is nearly three feet tall) in the darkness below. The cavern extends into darkness beyond the range of their light. They need to go down the stairs and explore the area directly to discover its full extent. Characters standing along the ledge can discern many large, dark stains on the rough floor at the base of the ledge, but what caused them is not apparent.

10A. Black Dragon Eggs

This area is warm and humid. After characters look closely at the floor, they can determine that the stains are blood, and some of them are fresh. They come from the meat the kobolds toss down here.

Huddled in the shadows at the far edges of the room or behind the natural columns are two **guard drakes** (see appendix D) trained to protect the dragon eggs. They don't attack as soon as characters come through the gate but wait until the characters have moved into the chamber. The drakes' first priority is to protect the eggs. Their second priority is to get between the intruders and the steps to prevent them from escaping. Unless characters climb down into 10A without using the stairs, they trigger the kobolds' attack before exploring this area.

Mixed in among the stalactites near the southeast corner of the room is an unusual **roper** that can speak Common. It doesn't attack the kobolds or guard drakes because the kobolds feed it spoiled meat that the guard drakes won't eat. If attacked, it fights back (and it's very dangerous to 3rd-level characters!). It can reach anywhere in area 10 with its tentacles, and it can also move at speed 10. It is currently full and curious about strangers, however, so it's not averse to talking. Its only real concern is food. If told about the supply of meat in area 6 and brought some as proof, it leaves the characters alone while it creeps away to investigate the larder.

A total of three dragon eggs are spread throughout the area. Each is about three feet tall and weighs 150 pounds. Two of them are easy to spot just by walking through the room with a light source. The third is tucked into a pile of similar-colored stones behind one of the columns, making it easy to miss. When characters search the room, have everyone make a Wisdom (Perception) check. Only a character who gets a 15 or higher notices the egg in its camouflaged nest. Looking at a dragon egg, a character can determine the color of dragon with a successful DC 10 Intelligence (Nature) check.

If the eggs are left here, they hatch in less than a week. If they are taken away, whether they hatch depends on how they are stored and treated. Away from a warm, humid environment such as this chamber, their progress halts until they are again in a suitable incubator. The dragons can be killed easily if the eggs are smashed, crushed, or stabbed. If an egg is simply cracked open, the infant dragon struggles for breath, cries and squirms like a human baby for a few minutes, and then dies.

10B. Kobolds in Hiding

The floor of this area is about 10 feet below the ledge. The four **kobolds** who tend the eggs hid in this depression when they heard the fight break out in area 9. When characters approach within 25 feet of the ledge overlooking 10B (when they come in line with the top of the stairs to 10A), two kobolds toss glue bombs and the other two toss fire bombs. They do the same thing on the next round. Then they wait a round or two, if possible, while the roper in area 10A drags characters into its tentacles, bites them, or drops them 20 feet to the guard drakes. If all else fails, the kobolds scramble up their makeshift ladder and attack with their shortswords.

Glue Bomb. Each creature within 10 feet of the bomb's target point must succeed on a DC 11 Dexterity saving throw or be restrained. The target or another creature within reach of it can use an action to make a DC 11 Strength check; if the check succeeds, the effect on the target ends.

Fire Bomb. Each creature within 10 feet of the bomb's target point must succeed on a DC 11 Dexterity saving throw or take 4 (1d8) fire damage (half as much damage on a successful saving throw).



Guard Drake

CONCEPTOPOLIS

11. Frulam Mondath's Chamber

Frulam Mondath (see appendix D) moved into this comfortable chamber when the camp was abandoned. If no fight has occurred with the guards in area 12 and characters enter this chamber from area 9, then Mondath is here when they arrive. Guards in area 12 hear whatever happens in this chamber and respond dutifully.

The chamber contains a writing desk and stool, several tables with books and papers, and a mirror on a floor stand. Light comes from two oil lamps. Thick rugs completely cover the floor, including an open chute that drops down to area 9. A rope ladder is fixed in the chute for climbing up and down, but nothing marks the position of the open, 3-foot-wide hole when it is covered by rugs. The slight depression it causes in the rug can be noticed with a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check. If someone steps on the chute without knowing it's there, the character must make a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw. Success means the character hops off the rug before it collapses through the hole, or grabs the top of ladder as he or she falls; failure means the character plunges 30 feet down the chute into area 9, taking 3d6 bludgeoning damage from the fall.

> Spread open on one of the tables is a simple map of the Greenfields area showing the villages the cult attacked and looted. An arrow is sketched in from the Greenfields toward the west and the town of Beregost on the Trade Way, where the arrow turns north. A separate sheet of paper that is covered with numerals in columns contains the note, "Everything must be freighted north to Naerytar. Rezmir allowed us to keep some pearls, a ring, and a handful of small stones." Other papers are of less interest; most of them have bad poetry about dragons.

The smaller chamber off the main one contains a bed, a trunk containing Mondath's clothes, and a second trunk containing Mondath's Cult of the Dragon regalia and a key to the chest in area 9. With this regalia, one person can be outfitted as a Wearer of Purple. It's worth noting that each Wearer of Purple's regalia is similar but unique, so high-ranking cult members are likely to recognize this regalia as Mondath's. When they see that the person wearing it is not Mondath, or if they know she is dead, alarm bells are guaranteed to go off.

Developments

If a fight breaks out in area 12 and four of the guards from that chamber retreat here to defend Mondath, her response is up to you. If the fight in the barracks takes a heavy toll on the characters, she might decide to confront them here. If the attackers plow through her forward guards, Mondath might retreat down the chute to area 9 and join forces with Cyanwrath or even flee from the cave. She has dedicated her life to the Cult of the Dragon, but she isn't eager to die for the cult. Mondath knows that the cult is amassing treasure in the north and that Rezmir spoke often of Tiamat, but that is the extent of her knowledge of the larger plan.

12. Guard Barracks

The guards who remained behind with Mondath use this chamber as their barracks. They maintain a two-person watch at the entrance (area 1); two dragonclaws are currently on duty in that area, and the others—three **guards** and eight **cultists**—are here, asleep or relaxing. If fighting against the dragonclaws from area 1 pushes near the passage to area 12, roll a d20; the guards here investigate the sound on a roll of 12 or higher. Otherwise they stay here, mostly oblivious to what's going on elsewhere.

If characters enter this chamber from area 2, the guards react quickly. Two of the guards and five of the cultists fight the characters here while one guard and three of the cultists retreat to area 11 to protect Frulam Mondath.

Treasure

The guards' scabbards are decorated with dragon motifs. They are worth about 5 gp each. They are not part of a Cult of the Dragon "uniform," but wearing one of these scabbards could buy a character credibility when trying to pose as a cultist. For example, you might grant a +1 bonus to Charisma checks made to fool or influence cultists. Aside from their gear, the guards have coins and small gems worth a total of 120 gp.

13. Treasure Storage

This chamber is now mostly empty, except for a few overturned boxes, broken items, scattered coins, small gems that were dropped during the hasty evacuation, and one **cultist** who is sleeping soundly on the floor after consuming several bottles of wine. He won't wake up from anything less than vigorous shaking, and it will be several hours before he is coherent. All the dropped items left in this room have a total value of only 16 gp.

Rewards

Award standard XP for defeated foes. This chapter includes many challenges other than fights, and characters should be rewarded for overcoming them. The awards listed below are just recommendations; adjust them as you see fit. Characters might reach 4th level by the end of this chapter, but it's not essential that they do.

- If you are using the milestone experience rule, the characters reach 4th level.
- For locating and disarming traps: 100 XP per trap.
- For offering the roper meat instead of fighting it to the death: 1,800 XP (the roper's standard XP value).
- For each dragon egg destroyed or taken: 250 XP.

With the dragon hatchery destroyed and the cultists all gone, characters should head for Elturel and their rendezvous with Leosin Erlanthar and Ontharr Frume. They might choose to follow the wagon tracks instead. The wagons followed the course roughly laid out on the map in Mondath's chamber: west to Beregost, then north along the Trade Way. They have at least a full day's head start on the characters, and possibly more, depending on how much time characters spent in Greenest before returning to the plateau.



Chapter 4: On the Road

Treasure looted from the Greenfields is headed north on the Trade Way, hidden in unmarked freight wagons that are part of the regular merchant traffic of that well-traveled road. The heroes must find out where all that loot is going, which means taking a long, danger-filled trip northward.

The characters should travel from the abandoned cult camp southeast of Greenest to the city of Elturel on the River Chionthar. Their route takes them back through Greenest, where they can return any stolen goods that they recovered from the cult and recuperate from their wounds. Nighthill greets the characters with delight and respect. He tells them that before Leosin Erlanthar left town, he bought horses and riding gear for the characters to speed their journey to Elturel. The horses are being kept at the dealer's stables until the characters are ready to leave for Elturel; all their costs are paid for.

On horseback, characters can travel the 200 miles from Greenest to Elturel in about six days. They make the journey without incident, unless you throw an encounter or two at them to spice up the trip or to increase their XP totals. Encounters with bandits, humanoid clans, and roving monsters are appropriate in the untamed expanses of the Greenfields.

Elturel

Elturel, a large, orderly city overlooking the River Chionthar, is filled with merchants, river traders, and farmers' markets. Its most distinguishing feature is a brilliant magical light that hovers above it, illuminating it day and night. This light is painful to undead and is visible from almost every corner of Elturgard (of which Elturel is the capital), appearing from afar as a star or distant sun.

When the characters meet Ontharr Frume, they find him to be a good-natured paladin of Torm, the god of heroics and bravery. He is a man of action who loves jokes and pranks, a stiff drink, and a friendly scuffle.

If characters ask for Leosin Erlanthar when they arrive in Elturel, none of the locals know him. If they ask for Ontharr Frume, anyone can direct them to the "headquarters" of Frume's faction, the Order of the Gauntlet, at a tavern called A Pair of Black Antlers. If the characters arrive within a tenday of Erlanthar's departure from Greenest, then the monk is still there with his handful of disciples, too.

You can spend as much or as little time on interactions in Elturel as you and your players want. Characters are guaranteed to have a good time in Frume's company, provided they consider continual drinking, arm-wrestling, horseback riding contests, sparring, and weapon training to be a good time. If the players don't

MARCEL MERCADO

realize it, Erlanthar finds a quiet moment to be sure the characters understand that impressing Frume with their prowess, their honesty, and their drive is in their long-term interest. The characters can make a positive impression on Frume by winning a few contests (resolved quickly with opposed skill or ability checks) or sparring matches against his troopers or by telling entertaining tales of their exploits during the Greenest raid, in the raiders' camp, and in the dragon caves.

The Order of the Gauntlet

Late in the evening, after a day when Frume has been suitably impressed by the characters, he sends one of his squires to summon them to a private room in the tavern.

> Frume's squire shows you to a private space off the tavern's common room and closes the door when he leaves. Waiting for you in the room are the broad-shouldered human paladin, the monk Leosin, and many pitchers of dark red wine. The paladin's face wears a serious expression, unlike its usual open countenance.
>
> "My friends, we have important business to discuss. At this point, you know almost as much about it as we do, and thanks to you, we know twice as much today as we did a tenday ago. Something rotten is afoot. We have no formal organization to oppose these rascals—not yet anyway. We're working on that. And we need people like you, who know how and when to fight, and how and when to keep their heads down and observe. We can't promise you anything except long days filled with danger and stress—but what could be better than that, eh?"

Ontharr Frume and Leosin Erlanthar, along with a handful of other concerned leaders and scholars along the Sword Coast, are in the early stages of organizing against the Cult of the Dragon.

Erlanthar's organization is the Harpers. Characters might have heard of the older Harpers, but they're unlikely to know much about the secretive group beyond what is generally rumored: that the Harpers are dedicated to furthering equality and justice and to keeping power out of the hands of those who don't deserve it. Erlanthar explains that the Harpers are loosely organized; agents are allowed wide freedom of action.

Ontharr Frume represents the Order of the Gauntlet. His order shares many of the Harpers' principles, but the two organizations are very different. The Order of the Gauntlet emphasizes faith, vigilance, and constant struggle against threats of evil. Many of its members are clerics and paladins, but the order welcomes anyone who shares its ideals. Discipline is key, and the order is distinctly more structured and hierarchical than the Harpers.

The top concern of both groups is the Cult of the Dragon. In the past, the cult was more active to the east and it was focused on creating dracoliches. Its shift to the Sword Coast and new emphasis on living dragons and on Tiamat are cause for concern. The cult is on the move and it's up to something big; the Order of the Gauntlet, the Harpers, and a third allied group known as the Emerald Enclave want to thwart the cult's plans.

In this meeting, Frume and Erlanthar are offering the characters the chance to join their factions. At this early stage, there is no pay for members and there are no ranks. What they can offer is help and support from other members and allies, who are spread from Nashkel and Candlekeep in the south to Neverwinter and Mirabar in the north. The horses that Erlanthar arranged for the characters are just one small example of the aid the Harpers and the Order of the Gauntlet can provide.

Harpers can be recognized by the group's symbol: a silver harp nestled between the horns of a crescent moon. Some people wear the symbol openly, and others keep it concealed. Erlanthar wears his as a medallion around his neck when he is certain that he's not heading into a potential captive situation—sometimes openly and sometimes tucked away. Members of the Order of the Gauntlet wear their holy symbols openly. (Frume's is the right-handed gauntlet of Torm.) The order's universal symbol is a gauntlet grasping a sword by the blade. Frume wears such a symbol on a pendant around his neck, hidden below his flowing beard.

Characters don't need to join either faction, but there are advantages to doing so and no real drawbacks. Even if characters don't agree to join, Frume and Erlanthar try to enlist their aid in tracking the cult's shipments.

Ontharr Frume

BRYAN SYME

The Mission

Thanks to the characters, the Harpers now know that the cult is amassing treasure and shipping it north. Where exactly this treasure is going and what the cult plans to do with it are the next two questions that need answering. Frume and Erlanthar would like the characters to join the cult's caravan and accompany it on the journey. They could get themselves hired as guards—if not by the cult's wagon masters, then by other merchants who are traveling in the same direction at the same time. Merchants from different companies commonly join together to form larger trains for protection. Frume has contacts among the many merchants of the region and is certain he can arrange a job.

Timing is an issue. The tracks leaving the cultists' camp and the map from Mondath's chamber both indicate that the wagons were heading west to pick up the Coast Way road, where they would turn north to Beregost and Baldur's Gate, a journey of about 550 miles. The wagons would take twenty-five to thirty days for that trip, depending on conditions. The wagons pulled out at least a day ahead of the characters' return to the camp, and the characters probably spent a day exploring the abandoned camp and clearing out the dragon hatchery. Returning to Greenest, resting, and traveling to Elturel account for eight to ten more days. Unless the characters walked to Elturel or lounged for days in Greenest before coming north, they should have at least ten to fifteen days before the cult's wagons reach Baldur's Gate.

The River Chionthar flows directly from Elturel to Baldur's Gate. A sailing vessel can make that trip downstream in about three days if it ties up overnight for safety, or two if it risks pushing on through the night by lamplight. Frume has already arranged for such a boat to leave at dawn the next morning. They are also provided with 50 gp each to cover expenses on the trip.

If the characters turn down this mission, Frume makes some remarks about how they aren't the people he thought they were, and he leaves the meeting more than a little bit angry. Erlanthar stays and makes one more appeal to their sense of honor and duty. If the characters still turn him down, he reaches into his tunic and pulls out a soft leather pouch, which he hands to one of the characters. Inside is a magnificent ruby worth 1,200 gp. He explains that if they take the mission, this ruby will be waiting for them in the hands of a Harper agent in Waterdeep.

That night, Frume sees that the characters are all equipped with new clothing and gear, and even new weapons if they want. He suggests that they change their appearance as much as they can in simple ways, to reduce the odds of anyone they might have met at the cult camp recognizing them.

The trip downriver to Baldur's Gate is uneventful, regardless of whether it takes three days or two. The characters can bring their horses along on the boat if they wish. The horses won't like it, but they'll manage.

Baldur's Gate

Baldur's Gate is a bustling center of trade, with goods coming from north and south by wagon along the Trade Way and by ship on the Sea of Swords, and from the east along the River Chionthar and from Cormyr and Sembia. Baldur's Gate is situated on a prominent bluff next to the river, overlooking an excellent natural harbor. It is divided into three distinct segments: the Upper City where the richest and most influential citizens live and where the city's marketplace (the Wide) is located; the Lower City, which surrounds the harbor and where most of the city's merchants live and conduct their business; and the Outer City, which lies outside the walls and where most of the city's laborers reside in conditions that vary from crowded but clean to squalid.

Depending on timing, characters might have just a few days to wait in Baldur's Gate, or up to a tenday. Most of that time should be spent contacting a merchant recommended by Frume and arranging affairs so they can spot the cult wagons when they arrive.

Frume's contact is a human trader named Ackyn Selebon. He operates an equipage business in the Outer City north of the city wall, in a district called Blackgate. There he sells all the material needed for long-distance freight hauling: wagons, rope, netting, grease, chains, wheels, and so on. His shop also repairs wagons. He is not directly involved in the hiring of guards for caravans, but he knows people who are. With him to vouch for the characters, they should have no trouble getting hired on as guards for a northbound caravan, but he can't give them work with a specific merchant.

Hiring Out

Baldur's Gate doesn't allow wagons, pack animals, horses, or even dogs into the city. The streets are so narrow, steep, and slick from frequent rain that heavy wagons would be a menace. This is actually one of the reasons why Baldur's Gate is such a bustling commercial hub: for goods to pass through the city from south to north, for example, they must be unloaded in the Outer City east of the wall, carried through the city by porters on foot, and reloaded onto different wagons north of the city for the rest of their journey. No road conveniently bypasses the city—a situation that the gate's profiteering intermediaries work hard to maintain. Most merchants find it easier to sell their loads to those intermediaries and consignment dealers when they reach Baldur's Gate, buy a new load of exotic goods from somewhere far away, and turn around and head back home, where they can again sell the new goods at a profit.

Along with wagons, guards seldom make a continuous journey through Baldur's Gate. Guards for northbound caravans are typically hired in Blackgate where northbound wagons begin their journey. Selebon tells the characters that if they hang around any of the taverns or tent saloons near his shop, they are sure to see all the northbound traffic. They shouldn't hesitate to use him as a reference if a potential employer asks for one.

The northbound journey from Baldur's Gate is arduous, so merchants travel together for safety. Each merchant hires guards independently, but the common

belief is that if everyone hires two or three and enough wagons travel together, the caravan is well protected.

Within a few days (the wait is up to you and the timing you've worked out for the cargo's arrival from the camp), characters spot people they recognize from the cult's camp on the plateau. Rezmir, being a half-dragon, can't travel openly in Baldur's Gate; she'd be attacked by a mob. The city's wealthy elite, however, often travel the streets in screened or curtained palanquins for both comfort and privacy. Rezmir does the same. When characters spot familiar faces from the cult camp, the cultists are carrying or accompanying a palanquin where Rezmir rides. They might catch a glimpse of her through a briefly parted curtain if they're observant.

Rezmir and her bodyguards come to Selebon's yard to purchase five wagons and supplies (having sold the other wagons south of the city). Once they are equipped, local porters pack merchandise and supplies onto the wagons, cover them in canvas, and lash them down.

After the characters have identified the cultists' wagons and seen their arrangements, they should have an easy time getting hired as guards. They can apply to the cultists if they feel like being reckless, but other merchants are making the same preparations to leave on the morrow. Select anyone from the list of merchants and travelers to be a potential employer. Each character makes a Charisma (Persuasion) or Strength (Athletics) check, whichever they prefer. Check the results below.

Hiring Out

Check Result	Role in the Caravan
0–5	No one is interested in hiring the character, but he or she can tag along as a traveler. Guards sometimes quit or die on the road, and a replacement has a chance to find employment.
6–10	Hired as a basic guard for 5 gp per tenday, plus food and living expenses on the road.
11–15	Hired as a sergeant for 8 gp per tenday, plus food and living expenses on the road.
16+	Hired as a bodyguard for the merchant at 10 gp per tenday, plus food and living expenses on the road.

All hires are for the journey to Waterdeep. Sergeants are expected to manage two to five other guards. Bodyguards are expected to stick close to their employer and protect him or her against harm.

Fellow Travelers

During the course of this journey, the characters have opportunities to meet a range of people from across Faerûn. Merchants, mercenaries, pilgrims, scholars, thieves, and explorers all mingle on the great Trade Way.

Key Nonplayer Characters

Two NPCs who join the caravan partway through the trip are especially important: Azbara Jos and Jamna Gleamsilver. Both join the caravan at Daggerford, about 120 miles south of Waterdeep and the last place where the caravan takes a day-long rest. They are not traveling together; being in Daggerford at the same time is coincidental.

Azbara Jos (see appendix D for statistics) is a male human and a Red Wizard of Thay. Red Wizards are widely disliked and mistrusted, so he takes some pains to disguise his membership in that group by always wearing a wool cap with ear and neck flaps to cover his shaved, tattooed head. It's not an especially effective disguise; characters who make a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check notice the edges of the tattoos peeking out from under the cap. Many Thayans have shaved, tattooed heads, however, but only a few are Red Wizards. Countless Thayans fled their country when the lich Szass Tam seized control, so they are not entirely strange on the Sword Coast. If questioned, Jos claims to be just another Thayan expatriate trying to find refuge while his country is controlled by undead monsters. In fact, other than the denial that he's a Red Wizard, this is all true.

Jos buys space aboard one of the cult wagons, although they turned away everyone else who sought passage earlier in the journey. He does not mingle with the other travelers and seldom speaks to anyone except the man who seems to be the leader of the cultists.

Jamna Gleamsilver (see appendix D for statistics) is a female gnome and a member of a secretive organization called the Black Network, also known as the Zhentarim. Outwardly, the Black Network provides mercenaries and other forms of muscle for hire. Informally, it is known as a criminal society akin to a widespread thieves guild. Secretly, its leaders seek to extend their shadowy fingers into every throne room and ruling council chamber in Faerûn. Like the Harpers, the Zhentarim too are aware that the Cult of the Dragon is on the move, and they need to know the cult's plans so they can prevent them from interfering with the Zhentarim's own plans, plus perhaps take advantage of the plunder possibilities.

That's why Gleamsilver joins the caravan. The Black Network's spies learned that the cult is moving freight northward, and, like the characters, she was tasked with finding out what they're hauling and where it's headed. Those above her seriously considered wiping out the caravan with mercenaries disguised as bandits, ransacking the wagons, and torturing cult members for the desired information. Fortunately for the characters, Gleamsilver persuaded her superiors to give her a shot at uncovering the truth in a less bloody fashion. If she hasn't come up with something useful by the time the caravan reaches Waterdeep, she will put plan B—the one involving mass murder—into action.

Despite the vast gulf between their outlooks, the Black Network and the Harpers have a common enemy, and that is pushing them into an unlikely alliance. Gleamsilver is the antithesis of a hero—she is self-serving, a skilled thief and liar, and willing to murder anyone who stands between her and her goal.

Other Nonplayer Characters

This list of twenty NPCs is provided for when you need one quickly. You can, of course, change any details about

them that you wish. Use them to flesh out the caravan, to spice up the journey, to help bring the trip to life, and to give characters people to like and protect, or dislike and quarrel with, along the way.

Achreny Ulyeltin (Male Human Merchant). Ulyeltin is an independent wagon master with two wagons in this caravan. Both are hauling cured furs and uncured hides. He is a boorish man without a trace of civilization about him. He's not unfriendly—just smelly, vulgar, and utterly without manners. His second wagon driver and two laborers, on the other hand, are perfectly pleasant.

Aldor Urnpoleshurst (Male Human Lawyer). A lawyer by training but a skunk by inclination, Urnpoleshurst is relocating from Baldur's Gate to anywhere that isn't Baldur's Gate. Gossip around the caravan is that he was driven out by a scandal, and that's hard not to believe. He is suspicious of everyone and makes outrageous accusations at the drop of a hat.

Beyd Sechepol (Male Half-Elf Merchant). Ale and beer are so common that not much money can be made hauling them long distances. But that's what fills Sechepol's wagon. He will make his money on the road, selling his stock to his fellow travelers in the caravan. He is diplomatic and has a gift for defusing arguments to everyone's satisfaction before they escalate to violence, but he is careless about gear and horses—a fault that can cause friction with those who hate to see a horse mistreated through thoughtlessness.

Edhelri Lewel (Female Moon Elf Merchant). Lewel's wagon is loaded with exotic wood from the Jungle of Chult for the master carpenters and cabinetmakers of Waterdeep to turn into exquisite furniture. She is the exact opposite of Beyd Sechepol in temperament: impatient with people but exacting about her wagon and doting on her animals.

Eldkin Agetul (Female Shield Dwarf Guard). Agetul has made this trip several times before and never hesitates to wave that experience in others' faces. She is a perfectionist, and she wants others to know it.

Enom Tobun (Male Lightfoot Halfling Teamster). Tobun has driven freight wagons across Faerûn for the past forty years, from Waterdeep to Calimport and from Baldur's Gate to Hillsfar. He is a font of stories and legends, but it's impossible to tell the truth from fiction in his tales. If anyone challenges him on the truth of a story, he grows argumentative, then sullen and vengeful. As long as a traveler stays on his good side, Tobun is a wonderful traveling companion.

Green Imsa (Female Human Traveler). The reason behind Imsa's name is obvious: she is green from head to foot. Her skin, hair, eyes, nails, teeth—everything about her is green. She readily admits that she is traveling to Waterdeep in search of a remedy for her condition. The coloration doesn't seem to bother her, but she becomes flustered if anyone asks how she came to be this way. She is friendly, if somewhat quiet, as long as the conversation stays away from her past.

Lai Angesstun (Male Gold Dwarf Merchant). This ambitious merchant is hauling scented cooking oil and perfumes from Amn, hoping to make a huge profit from the aristocrats and dandies of Waterdeep. He talks about money constantly: how much he intends to make, how he will spend it, and how others will envy him for it. He will not spend a single copper buying anyone else a drink or a roasted turnip during the entire trip.

Lasfelro the Silent (Male Human Merchant). From time to time, Lasfelro inexplicably breaks into merry songs and short stretches of joke-telling. His voice is a fine tenor and his jokes are hilarious. But these gregarious moods are always short. The rest of the time, he is silent as the grave, staring sullenly at the road ahead, barely moving on the seat of his wagon, seeming hardly to breathe. No one knows what he transports in his wagon, but it is guarded by a brooding gargoyle that is tethered to the wagon by a slim, silver chain.

Leda Widris (Female Human Guard). Widris is as honest and courageous as mercenaries come. She has spent many years in the south and now wants to see the snows and frozen seas of the far north and experience what a truly cold wind feels like.

Losvius Longnose (Male Lightfoot Halfling Teamster). Although Losvius's nose is respectably large, even for a halfling, the appellation Longnose was hung on him for a different reason: he is curious about everything, including other people's business, and especially other people's embarrassing secrets. Losvius doesn't poke his nose where it's not wanted in a search for blackmail material. He is just overpoweringly curious about what other people don't talk about. If he is along, there's a good chance one or more of the characters



AZBARA JOS

BRYAN SYME

will find him nosing through their belongings when he thought their backs were turned.

Noohar Serelim (Male Moon Elf Merchant). Noohar and his mute brother, Selvek, are hauling exquisite wooden carvings made by the elves of Cormyr. Where his brother communicates only through sign language, Noohar may be the most articulate person the characters have ever met. Speech springs from him like music from the harp of Milil. The fact that he seldom has anything to say never seems to stop him from talking or others from listening.

Nyerhite Verther (Male Human Merchant). A load of Calishite silk will make Nyerhite Verther a rich man in Waterdeep, or so he believes. Sadly, he did not inspect his silk carefully when he bought it, and it's infested with worms. If anyone spots them and points them out to Verther during the trip, he becomes unhinged in his anger and grief.

Orvustia Esseren (Female Human Guard). Esseren grew up in the farmland outside Baldur's Gate, and this is her first trip more than two miles away from home. She is smart, tough, and talented with both spear and bow, but she knows nothing of the world beyond her aunt's farm or of people who deal dishonestly. Her aunt, a wise woman, believes this trip will be good for her.

Oyn Evenmor (Male Human Merchant). Evenmor is an independent wagon master hauling exotic birds to the lucrative markets in Waterdeep. He is a stubborn, argumentative man with strong opinions about almost everything, but he is generous when it comes to pouring drinks for those who will sit and argue with him endlessly.

Radecere Perethun (Male Rock Gnome Traveler). No one knows where Perethun is ultimately headed or why. He eats alone, seldom speaks, and always rides in the back of the wagon, staring wistfully at the road gone by. The only thing that brings him out of this shell is a game of chance. He gambles boisterously and well.

Samardag the Hoper (Male Human Merchant). Perhaps someone who hauls crates of expensive, fragile porcelain in a bouncing, jarring wagon along the Trade Way must be a born optimist. In Samardag's world, the sky is always blue, the weather is always fine, and the outlook for tomorrow is always bright. Odds are he would be a wealthy man if he hung onto his money, but he is a soft touch for every urchin and hard-luck story that crosses his path.

Sulesdeg the Pole (Male Human Guard). Among his tribe in his homeland of the Shaar, Sulesdeg's name means "tall as a lodge pole." On the Sword Coast, he is just known as "the Pole." At 7 feet 5 inches in height, he probably is the tallest human the characters or anyone else in the caravan has ever seen. He doesn't talk much, but when he does, people generally listen.

Tyjit Skesh (Female Shield Dwarf Guard). It won't take long before everyone in the caravan knows to steer clear of Tyjit Skesh. She is quick to anger and quicker to resort to her blades when something sets her off. She is honest to a fault and never fails to let people know why she was angry, so they can correct their behavior in the future. She will not tolerate bullying.

Werond Torohar (Female Human Teamster). Quiet, unassuming Werond Torohar can handle a team of horses or mules better than anyone on the Trade Way. She has an uncanny knack for making animals understand what she wants from them with only a twitch on the reins, a whistle, and a snap of her whip. Mud, stones, and ice seem to not be obstacles at all when Torohar is handling the team. She is a starry-eyed romantic at heart, and she can bring strong men to tears with her tales of long-ago lost loves and thwarted passion.

Life on the Road

The stretch of road from Baldur's Gate to Waterdeep is a journey of 750 miles. Horse-drawn or mule-drawn freight wagons cover 15 miles per day, depending on conditions. The animals need one day off after every six days of hauling to recover from their work. All things considered, the trip is expected to take two months.

The caravan leaving Baldur's Gate contains the three wagons of the Cult of the Dragon plus 2d4 more. Not all travelers are merchants. A wagon might carry a family relocating to the north or a diplomat on a mission to Waterdeep. People and wagons join the caravan along the way, and others leave according to the dictates of business and fortune. Some travelers ride horses, some walk beside the wagons, and some pay the merchants to ride aboard their wagons. On several occasions, characters notice the cult teamsters turning away passengers even though they have spare room on their wagons.

Nothing identifies the cult's wagons as anything but typical merchants hauling northbound freight. They don't bunch up during the day or camp together at night. As far as anyone else knows, their only connection is that they're part of this caravan.

Rezmir and eight of her guards leave Baldur's Gate secretly ahead of the caravan and ride north at a fast clip. They are headed for Castle Naerytar in the Mere of Dead Men and won't be seen again until chapter 6. She leaves twelve **guards** behind. One travels with each wagon, acting as a guard and assistant to the teamster. The other nine are cloaked as private travelers in two distinct groups, seeking company and protection in the caravan for their journey.

The wagons travel for about eight hours per day, with a few stops to feed and water the horses and mules. Many nights are spent camping along the road. Most small towns have roadside inns if travelers want more comfort, and walled hostelries catering to wagon caravans are spread a few days apart. Animals and travelers can rest comfortably at these walled compounds while wagons are safely locked inside. The map for chapter 5 shows a structure that once served that purpose. It can be used as the model for a typical hostelry if needed.

The most difficult part of the journey is near the beginning. A few days' travel north of Baldur's Gate brings the caravan into a countryside known as the Fields of the Dead. The road twists and wanders through hills dotted with ancient battlefields, dolmens, and barrow mounds. Common wisdom holds that it's a very bad idea to light a fire on a hilltop at night in the Fields of the Dead, because the light attracts monsters from miles around. Crossing this territory takes several days, during which everyone will be edgy and on watch.

Random Road Events

The journey north lasts about forty days, and most travelers hope these days are monotonous and uneventful. This being Faerûn, that's never the case.

Many days pass with no excitement, but others see monster attacks, strange incidents, excitement at roadside stops, meetings with NPCs, and the ever-present question of where the cult's wagons are headed. You can pace these events however you like. Use a few, use them all, or make up more of your own.

On a trip of this length, checking for random events every hour is excessive. The Trade Way sees a lot of travelers and it is relatively (if not entirely) safe. Check for a random event each day by rolling a d20. On a roll of 16 or higher, one or more events occur as indicated below:

- 16 means an event occurs in the morning
- 17 means an event occurs during the first rest stop
- 18 means an event occurs in the afternoon
- 19 means an event occurs in the evening or night
- 20 means one event occurs in the morning and another during afternoon or night

When an event occurs, select one that seems appropriate to the location, the timing, and the backstory that the characters have thus far, or you can roll a d12 to select one randomly. You can substitute a random bandit (daytime) or monster (nighttime) attack for any other event if a dose of instant action is needed.

Experience point awards for these events are up to you. We recommend 300 XP per character for each situation the heroes resolve successfully. Ideally, the characters have the chance to complete eight or nine of these events. If you use the milestone experience rule, the characters reach 5th level at the end of this journey.

Trade Way Events

d12	Event
1	Adventuring Life
2	Animal Abuse
3	Bane of the Mountains
4	Contraband
5	Everything Has a Price
6	Fungus Humongous
7	The Golden Stag
8	Payback
9	No Room at the Inn
10	Roadside Hospitality
11	Spider Woods
12	Stranded

Adventuring Life

Another group of adventurers joins the caravan or is staying at the same roadside inn. Judging by their boasting, they have bested some of the most ferocious monsters and foes Faerûn has to offer. They look prosperous, they're filled with exciting tales, and they strike up a bond with a merchant who employs one or more of the characters. The next morning, that merchant informs the characters that their services are no longer needed because he has hired more experienced guards.

The newcomers are a troop of actors trying to pay their way to the next town. They are gambling that no danger will arise that needs them to step up and fight. When it does (as it surely will), it becomes painfully obvious that not one warrior or wizard is among them; they are five human **commoners** with charisma to burn and shiny stage props for weapons and armor. After they've been rescued from danger, the characters' former employer, now suitably chastened, is willing to hire the characters back at slightly increased wages.

Animal Abuse

One of the travelers—a **noble**—is regularly seen mistreating his horses. He allows their collars and girths to chafe sores in their hide, skimps on their feed, and whips them when the aching, hungry animals don't pull hard enough or fast enough to suit him. If the characters still have their horses, he admires them and offers to buy one or more to replace the "useless nags" he is stuck with. Eventually, one of his horses will collapse in its harness, and he will either beat it to death in the road or cut it loose and leave it to die, unless one or more characters intervenes. He has a **knight** and a **mage** traveling with him as bodyguards.

Bane of the Mountains

High above, two **perytons** are watching the road for fresh hearts they can consume before laying their eggs. They circle at an altitude where they are easily mistaken for eagles. Each character can make a DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) check upon seeing the creatures. Success means they recognize the perytons for what they are before the first dive attack. Failure means the character is surprised.

Contraband

One of the cult wagons overturns on a difficult corner or when a wheel breaks on a rock. Of the crates that tumble free, one smashes open, revealing dozens of beautiful items of jewelry wrapped in wool for protection. This is an excellent opportunity for the characters to see some of the contraband and even to get friendly with the cultists by helping them repair their wagon.

The cult members are angry that people saw the contents of their spilled cargo. Their instructions, direct from Wyrmspeaker Rezmir, were to keep the material secure and secret. Witnesses who show much interest in the jewelry or who ask questions might need to be silenced. NPC witnesses could disappear overnight or die unexpectedly from sudden illness (which a successful DC 10 Wisdom [Medicine] check reveals to be poison). The same attacks can be directed against characters who show too much curiosity.

Everything Has a Price

Someone in the caravan develops a fancy for a treasured possession that belongs to one of the characters. The NPC tries to buy it, but the offered price is low. The NPC persists through the day, becoming more obnoxious without getting any more generous. Unless the character takes special precautions, the object disappears

overnight. If the character accuses the NPC publicly the following morning, they make an enduring enemy; that NPC doesn't have the item and is incensed at the accusation. Someone else who witnessed the conversations the day before decided the other NPC provided perfect cover for a little nighttime thievery and took the missing item. To find the item, characters need to surreptitiously search people's bags and wagons, since few people will agree to have their belongings rifled through as if they were common thieves—especially not a common thief.

Fungus Humongous

After two days and nights of rain, lightning, and strange whistling sounds on the wind, characters awaken to see that the surrounding countryside is blanketed with fungus. It grows everywhere, including on the road. When anyone steps on a mushroom (it's nearly impossible not to), it emits a puff of black spores and a moan of pain. These tiny shriekers sprout from an immense mycelium that has spread beneath the area from shallow caves. They can be identified with a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) check, but if the roll is 10–14, the character misidentifies them and believes they are deadly poisonous (they aren't).

The merchants are terrified of the things and refuse to drive through them, fearing that they may be poisonous or worse. Besides that, the sounds spook the animals and make them impossible to control.

The mushrooms are growing so fast on the rain-soaked ground that a person can almost see them getting bigger. They were the size of champagne corks when first noticed; within an hour, they grow six inches tall, and a foot tall an hour later. Their growth slows down after that, but by then, most people in the caravan are certain that all is doomed.

Anyone can literally sweep a path through the mushrooms with a heavy broom, a scythe, or a tree branch. The noise is distressing. Everyone involved in this process must make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw. Failure means the character is overcome with feelings of grief and remorse, seemingly triggered by hearing thousands of tiny cries of pain and death groans but which is in fact the result of inhaling mildly toxic spores released by the immature fungi. Affected characters break down after 1d20 minutes and simply can't face those sounds anymore. They have nightmares for days to come, until the toxin is completely out of their system. You can impose even more lingering results if you like, such as a lifelong aversion to eating mushrooms of any kind.

People can clear a path through the mushrooms with six man-hours of work (six people could do it in one hour, or three people could do it in two hours).

The Golden Stag

On a beautiful, sunny afternoon, a herd of **deer** is spotted grazing on a nearby hill. The travelers take such opportunities to hunt fresh meat for the larder. This herd, however, includes a magnificent stag (use **elk** statistics) that shimmers in the light as if its coat is spun from gold and its antlers plated with platinum. Nearly everyone in the caravan who can handle a bow wants to bring down that beast. Its pelt would be worth a fortune, even if it's not real gold. A few of the more cautious types warn that the creature is clearly a blessed being and that killing it would bring bad luck on the caravan, but no more than two or three people are persuaded. In minutes, the hunt is on, and the deer herd scatters into the nearby forest and through farmers' fields.

The characters can join the chase, try to talk people down, protect the stag, or ignore the situation, as they see fit. It can be tracked through the forest with a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) check. A new check must be made every 500 yards.

The stag leads hunters on a 1,500-yard chase to a moss-grown, ivy-draped ruin in the forest. There, one of three things can happen. Choose the one that best suits your game.

- The stag can be cornered, fought, and killed. It is a normal stag but with a breathtakingly beautiful coat of golden fur. If the local farmers learn that it's been killed, they grab their pitchforks and longbows and threaten to overrun the caravan unless they are paid 500 gp for their loss; the stag brought them luck.
- The stag greets the characters in Sylvan. If none of the characters speak that language, it switches to Elvish, and if no one responds again, it tries heavily accented, pidgin Common. It assures them that they are on the right track, and they must continue following the river of gold until they reach the castle in the sky. Sadly, their path will be filled with hardship and blood. To aid them, it offers the character a *+1 longbow*. The bow appears on the ground before them, and then the stag fades from view saying, "Not all will survive ..."
- When the characters search the tumbled ruins, they find no sign of the stag but see a thin person who resembles a wood elf with bright golden skin. The young male is naked and either is wearing an antlered headpiece or has delicate antlers growing from his head. He drops to his knees and beseeches the characters in a dialect of Elvish that is archaic but understandable. He is an elf prince, and the stones around them were once the beautiful castle where he ruled. But he was cursed by the father of the woman he loved to transform into a golden stag whenever he steps outside these walls. He has lived with the curse for so long that his kingdom is forgotten, his castle is fallen to ruin, and he no longer remembers his own name. He believes that a wizard somewhere can release him from the curse, but wherever he goes, people try to kill him for his golden coat. If the characters allow him to accompany them and protect him, he will do his best to reward them at the end of the journey. The story is true; several wizards in Waterdeep could remove the curse. The elf cannot pay a reward at the end, but the characters earn 500 XP apiece for believing him and protecting him. That job won't be easy, because people in the caravan find their story ridiculous and look for opportunities to kill the stag.

Payback

As the caravan rounds a bend in the road, a human head can be seen sitting in the middle of the road a hundred yards ahead. From a distance, characters with a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 15 or higher recognize

that the head is actually a person buried up to the neck, and he is unconscious but still alive. That fact is obvious to anyone who approaches within 10 yards, as is the word "Oathbreaker" painted on his forehead.

The buried human is in bad shape from exposure and dehydration. Any healing magic or some water and a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Medicine) check revives him.

Many of the merchants in the caravan are of the opinion that whoever this is, if someone or something went to the trouble of marking him as a traitor and burying him up to the neck in the Trade Way, he probably deserves it and should be left there. If characters are working as guards for NPC merchants, at least one of their employers is among this group. It's obvious from wheel tracks on the turned-over earth that other wagons have indeed passed him by during the last few days.

Digging the man out of the ground takes two diggers at least two hours, and refilling the hole takes another hour (you can't just leave a hole in the road).

The buried man is Carlon Amoffel. He is a human **spy** and a member of the Harpers; characters discover a Harper tattoo on his arm if they dig him up. He has nothing but the loincloth he was buried in.

Publicly, Amoffel's story is that the oath he broke was a promise to marry a woman. He broke the engagement because he discovered that her father and brothers were all bandits and that he was expected to join them.

If any of the characters are Harpers and they reveal their association to Amoffel, he tells them the real story. He was on exactly the same mission they are: tracking a shipment of stolen loot north. But the smugglers—he's sure they're members of the Cult of the Dragon—became suspicious of him. Amoffel passed information to another Harper at a roadside inn, and members of the caravan witnessed the meeting. The cultists manufactured a story that he was passing information to bandits. The merchants were unwilling to kill him outright, but they were willing to leave him buried in the road and "let providence decide the man's fate."

Amoffel has Harper contacts in Waterdeep and knows his way around the city. He can be a useful ally when this caravan reaches its destination.

No Room at the Inn

After a miserably wet, cold day that promises to become an even wetter, freezing night, the caravan arrives at a large inn. Upon entering the warm, comfortable common room to make arrangements for the night, the embarrassed innkeeper tells the characters that the entire inn is sold out; all the private rooms are taken and the common room is reserved for a private party. The caravan will need to spend the night outside. Looking around the room, the characters see just one group: an aristocratic judge and his entourage of three human dilettantes. They smirk at the characters while making comments such as "sleep tight" and "have a pleasant evening" followed by insults muttered under their breath about the characters' mud-spattered clothing and low breeding. If characters ask about sleeping in the stable, one of the nobles speaks up, saying, "Our horses are rather picky about who they share space with. We had to reserve all of it, too, for their sake. You understand, I'm sure." His snooty friends have a good chuckle over that.

Spending this night in the wagons will be hard on the characters but will be misery for the unprotected horses and mules, and the only reason for it is the cruelty and arrogance of these snickering twits in the inn.

The NPCs in the inn won't be influenced by any sort of reason or debate or by offers of money. They find the situation enormously amusing and seem pleased by the prospect of the merchants and their animals suffering in the freezing rain all night. They needle and goad the characters and their fellow travelers at every opportunity, including from the doorway and windows of the inn when no one else is inside. If the characters don't start a fight, someone else from the caravan might.

In fact, these NPCs are four disguised **veterans** traveling to Baldur's Gate in search of employment and out to have a good laugh over someone's misfortune. They drop all pretense after violence breaks out.

Roadside Hospitality

When the caravan reaches its stopping point for the night, two buxom twin sisters are there ahead of them, setting up camp and tending to their horses. Arietta and Zelina Innevar take a liking to some of the travelers—possibly, but not necessarily, a few of the characters—and spend the evening asking about their past, where they're headed, whether they have family, and so on. The sisters are actually two **doppelgangers**. They can either attack someone that night or join the caravan for a few days while they study the travelers and choose their victims. When the time comes to strike, they wait until after dark, then try to lure their target away from other people by calling for assistance in a familiar voice. Fortunately for the characters and their fellow travelers, if one is defeated, the other one flees in a flurry of curses and vengeful threats.

Spider Woods

The Trade Way skirts around and between the huge Trollbark and Misty Forests, but it passes through many other, smaller forests that don't appear on maps. When the caravan is passing through one such wooded region, three **ettercaps** and two **giant spiders** attack it. They are chiefly interested in taking horses, not merchandise, but they won't balk at taking people if they can't get horses. Two ettercaps go after horses while the third ettercap and the giant spiders keep the caravan guards busy. An ettercap can cut a horse free from its harness in 3 rounds. After that, they retreat into the trees, leading the horse away with reins of webbing. Without horses, the wagons are stranded. The characters' employer insists they go after the ettercaps and retrieve the stolen horses.

If the characters move quickly, they have a good chance to retrieve the horses alive. The animals leave a trail through the underbrush that's easy to follow; a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) check is sufficient to keep on it. The horses are led away about half a mile to the ettercaps' lair. If characters charge straight in, they are attacked by three **ettercaps** and two **giant spiders**. If they pause to observe for a few minutes, they

see the ettercaps shoo the giant spiders away while they prepare for their feast of horse meat. The characters can then fight just the ettercaps for 6 rounds, before the spiders return to the sound of battle. The characters can't delay for long, however, because the ettercaps won't waste much time before killing and tucking into the horses.

Stranded

This is an ideal event for the Fields of the Dead region, if one occurs there, but it can be used anywhere.

The caravan sees a fight happening ahead. A freight wagon is stranded on the road, its draft animals dead. A merchant (**noble**) and three **guards** are sheltered under the wagon, with crates dragged between the wheels for cover. They are plentifully supplied with crossbows and bolts, but the six **hobgoblins** and one **hobgoblin captain** assailing them seem content to keep them under siege until sundown, when they plan to rush the wagon with darkness as cover. These are Urshani hobgoblins, recognizable by their unusually savage appearance (even for hobgoblins). Urshani hobgoblins adorn themselves with wolf furs, paint worg heads onto their shields, and incorporate other wolf parts and icons in their armor and clothing.

First the hobgoblins must be driven off, then the injured attended to, and then something must be done about the stranded wagon. The trader has money to buy more horses if anyone is willing to sell. Otherwise, he'll take a lift to the next hostelry, where he can buy animals, while his three guards stay behind.

Planned Road Events

After Jamna Gleamsilver and Azbara Jos join the caravan, three planned events must take place. Their timing is up to you.

Recognized!

If the characters spent much time wandering through the raiders' camp on the Greenfields and talking to cultists, they might have struck up a conversation there with a cultist who is now one of the wagon drivers. Have each character make a Charisma check on the first day of the journey, but don't tell players what it's for. At some point during the journey, the character who scored the lowest result on the Charisma check is recognized by a cultist. The cultists assume that, at best, the character must be a deserter from the cult. At worst, he or she is a spy and a saboteur. At a dramatic point on the journey, when the caravan is away from Baldur's Gate, this means trouble.

Optionally, you can dispense with this die roll and have someone recognize one of the characters automatically, for the sake of using this event.

If a character is recognized, allow that character to make a DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check. Success means the character catches a cultist watching him or her suspiciously, noting who the character talks to, when the character eats, and where the character sleeps. Over the course of a few days, it should become obvious that this cultist has recognized the character. If characters delay taking action, the cultists strike first by trying to assassinate the characters in their bedrolls or perhaps by arranging an accident—a loose wheel, broken axle, or spooked lead horse might be an effective way to solve a problem. The only permanent solution to this problem for the characters is murder; the cultist with suspicions must be eliminated before he or she shares those suspicions with the others. Good characters may be reluctant to take this step; that's roleplaying. If they can find another way, that's excellent, but once the opposition recognizes someone, the situation is likely to end in death.



Jamna Gleamsilver

BRYAN SYME

Unwanted Attention

The day after the caravan leaves Daggerford, have each character make a Wisdom (Insight) check. (Alternatively, you can allow a Charisma [Deception] check here, permitting characters to use their knowledge of deception to recognize when someone else is putting the same talent to use. Only characters with training in Deception can choose this option.) Interpret the results as follows.

- 9 or less: The character notices nothing.
- 10–12: The character notices that the gnome who recently joined the caravan shows an interest in the human who joined at the same time and who was welcomed aboard one of the cult wagons as a passenger. They aren't together, but during stops, the gnome often sidles up near enough to overhear anything the human might say, and she has also been spotted hovering near the cult wagons when the cultists are busy with tasks other than guarding the wagons closely.
- 13–15: The character notices that the gnome shows an interest in the characters. She has spoken to

several of them, asking innocuous questions and commenting on the weather. She leaves the impression of being someone who flawlessly takes in every detail about people and her surroundings.
- 16+: The character notices both and has the impression that Gleamsilver is aware of the characters watching her, too.

If someone reveals a Harper badge to Gleamsilver, she responds with a curt "put that away, fool," and leaves.

Who's Your Friend?

On the morning of the day when the caravan is four days' travel from Waterdeep (two days after "Unwanted Attention"), Gleamsilver approaches the characters just as they are sitting down to the morning meal. After glancing around to make sure none of the cultists are watching, she puts her fingers to her lips, then takes the bowl of oatmeal that one of them is about to eat.

> After poking through your oatmeal with the blade of her dagger, the gnome lifts it out and shows you an oatmeal-smeared object resembling a tiny bead. She glances over her shoulder toward where cultists sit at their breakfast. "It's a sliver of bone," she whispers, "curled into a circle so you can swallow it in a mouthful of gruel without noticing. Once eaten, it slowly uncurls inside you, exposing needle points that pierce your guts and kill you slowly. I suspect they're in all your breakfasts." As she gets up and walks away, she adds, "Let's talk this evening."

No more bone slivers are in the characters' gruel. The one Gleamsilver showed them was already stuck to the underside of her dagger before she poked it into the bowl. If characters dig through their oatmeal looking for slivers, let them make DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) checks. If a check succeeds, tell them they find several small lumps that might be bone slivers, but they might just as easily be oat husks, sawdust, or insect eggs. Also tell them that two of the cultists keep looking in their direction but appear to be trying to hide their interest.

That evening, after most of the travelers have bedded down, Gleamsilver comes to the characters. She begins by introducing herself if that hasn't happened previously. Otherwise, she gets right to the point.

> "We don't work for the same people, but we're all on the same side—we share a belief that the Cult of the Dragon must be stopped. I need to know what they're carrying in those wagons and where they're taking it. Will you help me find out? We can do it tonight."

If the characters tell Gleamsilver what they know about the cult's cargo, she expresses gratitude and relief that she doesn't need to risk breaking into their wagons. In fact, she already knows, but she needed to find out what the characters know. She pumps them for every bit of information they're willing to share while offering little in return except confirmation of what they already know. If the characters haven't figured out that Azbara Jos is a Red Wizard of Thay, she points that out and raises the question of why a Red Wizard is chumming it up with Cult of the Dragon members.

Gleamsilver is especially cagey about why she's interested in all this. The gnome never mentions the Zhentarim or the Black Network. She never comes out and says she works for the Harpers, either. Gleamsilver is an expert at picking up on the subtlest clues and using them to seem to know things she doesn't actually know and to say what people want or expect to hear. She uses that talent to great advantage against the characters in all their dealings. If players ask to use Wisdom (Insight) to detect whether the gnome is telling the truth, let them make the check. On a roll of 15 or higher, the character suspects Gleamsilver isn't telling them everything but doesn't discern an actual lie. On any other result, the characters detect no dishonesty.

Murder Most Foul

Two days after "Who's Your Friend?" happens, the camp awakens to a killing. One of the cultists acting as a wagon guard was murdered overnight. He was stabbed in the back with a sword (the wound is too big to be from a dagger) and left where he fell beneath a cult wagon.

The dead man's companions immediately accuse one of the characters and demand to inspect the characters' weapons. If the character carries a shortsword, it will be a match, although that proves nothing. Any sword that size would be close enough. Many footprints are around the wagon, but a successful DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check determines that they are all from people crowding around the body in the morning. The ground was swept during the night to remove prints.

By this point in the journey, the characters should be popular with the other travelers; they probably have saved numerous lives and the entire caravan more than once. The cultists, on the other hand, are not so popular. They are standoffish and even a bit odd. This works in the accused character's favor, because many people will speak up in his or her defense.

If a character suggests that the wagon's owners should open their crates to see if anything is missing, the accusations die away. (If a character doesn't suggest this, an onlooker in the crowd does.) Uncharacteristically, Azbara Jos comes forward and tries to calm the situation, in the process saying more than anyone has so far heard him say at one time.

In the end, the caravan's most prominent merchants agree that without witnesses, nothing can be done. The gods will punish the guilty party and life will go on.

Most of the cultists never again look at the accused character with anything but undisguised hatred. This animosity becomes important later on in chapter 5.

The murderer was, of course, Jamna Gleamsilver. Knowing what was in the cargo, she couldn't resist helping herself to some. The theft itself is undetectable, because she left no signs, and the cult isn't carrying a manifest of its looted treasure. The guard interrupted her in the act and had to die; it was just that simple.



Chapter 5: Construction Ahead

The freight travels as far north as possible, following the Trade Way past Waterdeep to where the great road was swallowed up by the ever-expanding Mere of Dead Men. A fortified roadhouse that once served merchants and teamsters now feeds laborers and safeguards road-building supplies, and it also aids the Cult of the Dragon in smuggling its treasure.

Waterdeep

When the caravan rolls into Waterdeep after two months on the road, most of the merchants disperse to the city's markets, warehouses, and stables. They've reached their destination and the characters are paid off in silver and thanked for their service. If they performed well, they're told they can find work with these shippers any time in the future. Characters can't waste much time closing accounts with their own employers or sightseeing in Waterdeep, however, or they lose the treasure wagons in the crowded metropolis.

The cult wagons don't follow the same pattern as the others from the caravan. Instead, they head for the north side of the city before looking for a place to spend the night. Everyone who the characters know to be associated with the cult gathers at the same spot by nightfall. Azbara Jos remains with the cultists during this time, and Jamna expresses her desire to stick with the characters until they uncover the treasure's destination.

The cultists spend a day resting their horses at a stable on the north side of Waterdeep. Other wagons are already there, covertly carrying treasure from all over the Sword Coast to the collection point. During the day, some of the cultists visit a large warehouse just inside the northern city gate, where construction supplies are stockpiled for shipment north and where wagons are gathered and loaded for the trip.

If characters ask around Waterdeep's northern gate about anyone matching Rezmir's description, they hear rumors of a half-dragon being sighted in the area at least a tenday ago. Everyone remembers the incident; chromatic half-dragons are almost never seen, and they tend to cause alarm when they are. If the rumor is true, then the half-dragon was traveling with a strong escort of mounted guards, headed north. The rumor is true, of course, but it can't be confirmed 100 percent.

By asking around, characters learn that the road to the north, called the High Road, used to connect Waterdeep to the city of Neverwinter. A cold, coastal marsh called the Mere of Dead Men lay between the road and the coast. Over the years, the mere continually expanded. Each time it grew, it flooded the road, which had to be relocated farther inland. That was the situation until a century ago, when Neverwinter was nearly

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destroyed by the eruption of Mount Hotenow. With the city in ruins, efforts to keep the road open simply stopped. It no longer served a purpose.

But now, Lord Neverember is rebuilding Neverwinter and the road is needed again. The warehouse visited by the cultists is where shipments of supplies to the road-building camps are coordinated. If freight haulers went there, it must have been to see if they could haul supplies to the road-head for pay. Are they hiring guards for supply caravans? Sure, you bet they are. The Mere of Dead Men is wild and dangerous. Lord Neverember's agents in this endeavor are perpetually looking for laborers to build the road and fighters to protect the laborers. Turnover in those jobs is pretty high.

Northbound, Again

The characters have no trouble getting hired a s wagon escorts at the supply warehouse. Unlike in the caravan, guards are not hired by individual wagon masters but by the High Road Charter Company, a consortium of guilds and noble houses partnered with Lord Neverember. A human **veteran** named Ardred Briferhew commands the entire convoy. It consists of six supply wagons, twelve escorts (including the characters and Jamna), and two dozen laborers marching out to relieve a group that is coming back to Waterdeep for some time off. Those cultists who weren't hired as teamsters for their three wagons are coming along as laborers.

The cultists are not happy to see the characters again, so the characters are the target of dirty looks.

The work camp the convoy is headed toward lies 200 miles up the coast. For most of that distance, the road winds through rough coastal hills nestled between the Sword Mountains and the sea. On the seventh night, the convoy camps on a hilltop from which characters have their first sight of the Mere of Dead Men. It is a chill tangle of trees, brush, boggy ground, standing water, reeds, and cat-tails stretching farther than the eye can see. The rest of the trip is within sight of the mere. The destination is reached sometime on the tenth day.

Encounters North of Waterdeep

Nothing much needs to happen on the trip north of Waterdeep. You can narrate through it quickly. At your option, use the random encounters below to spice up the journey. Roll a d20 each day and use the indicated encounter. Add 2 to the roll on days 8, 9, and 10.

Remember that the characters are just part of the convoy escort. The monsters listed on the Encounters North of Waterdeep table are those the characters must fight. At the same time, NPC members of the escort are dealing with additional monsters not listed here. Assume that monsters and the travelers are being alert before these encounters. After each encounter, roll 1d4 – 2. The result is the number of NPC escorts killed elsewhere in the battle.

Encounters North of Waterdeep

d20	Encounter
1–14	No encounter
15	12 human **bandits**
16	1 **troll**
17	4 **orcs** and 1 **ogre**
18	2 **ogres**
19	3 **lizardfolk** and 3 **giant lizards**
20	6 **lizardfolk**
21	8 **giant frogs**
22	12 **bullywugs**

Carnath Roadhouse

The convoy's destination is the Carnath Roadhouse, a compound that served as a hostelry on the trade road between Waterdeep and Neverwinter in the days when trade flourished. It fell into disuse when trade stopped, but now that the road is being rebuilt, the roadhouse has been repaired and put to use as a supply depot and wagon park. This part of the adventure plays like a spy story. Stealthy characters should find plenty to do here.

Essential Ingredients

The work camp is exactly what it appears to be: a supply depot for the road builders. It is also something more, however: a transit point for the cult's contraband coming up from the south.

When wagons arrive from the south, they are brought into the compound one or two at a time for unloading, then moved back outside for parking. The compound is crowded with food, lumber, and myriad other supplies in crates and barrels. Material that can't be left exposed to the cold, wet weather or is especially valuable is stored in the warehouse (area 3), and anything valuable is kept in the locked strong room attached to the warehouse (area 4). Only the camp superintendent, a burly half-orc known only as Bog Luck (use **veteran** statistics), has a key to that inner room.

Bog Luck was recruited to the Cult of the Dragon years ago. The only outward sign of this is the scabbard of his ever-present shortsword, which is decorated with a dragon resembling the designs on the scabbards characters saw in the dragon hatchery (and possibly have with them still; see area 12 in that section). When cult wagons arrive, their road-building cargo is unloaded into the compound normally, but Bog Luck ensures that the contraband is stored in the strong room. Afterward, he goes into the strong room alone and paints a symbol onto each carton belonging to the cult.

In the floor of the strong room is a camouflaged trapdoor. It can be found with a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check. The trapdoor connects to a dripping, slimy tunnel that runs 500 yards into a dense stand of trees and brush at the edge of the Mere of Dead Men. At night, when everyone in the compound is asleep except for a few rooftop guards, lizardfolk creep through the tunnel and take the marked crates to a location in the mere (the subject of chapter 6). They seldom perform this task over a single night unless the shipment is very small. Typically they take one night per wagon.

1. Courtyard

Most of the time, this open courtyard is crowded with crates, barrels, and stacks of supplies. The damp climate means that the ground is muddy, except when the temperature is below freezing. Then the mud hardens into uneven, frost-covered ruts. A path is kept clear from the gate to the stables so animals can be moved, but during busy times, that path often runs under the balcony in front of the doors to the rooms.

2. Stables

In some ways, the stables are the most comfortable area of the compound. When the stables are crowded, the horses' and mules' body heat keeps the building warm. Four stable boys take care of the animals and sleep here. Only the youngest, a quick-witted boy called Wump, has any suspicion that something mysterious is going on. He knows nothing about the Cult of the Dragon, but he's sharp enough to wonder why anything used by the road builders needs to be locked up.

3. Warehouse

The warehouse door is latched but unlocked. Supplies that shouldn't be left exposed to the weather are stored here: food for the people and fodder for animals.

4. Strong Room

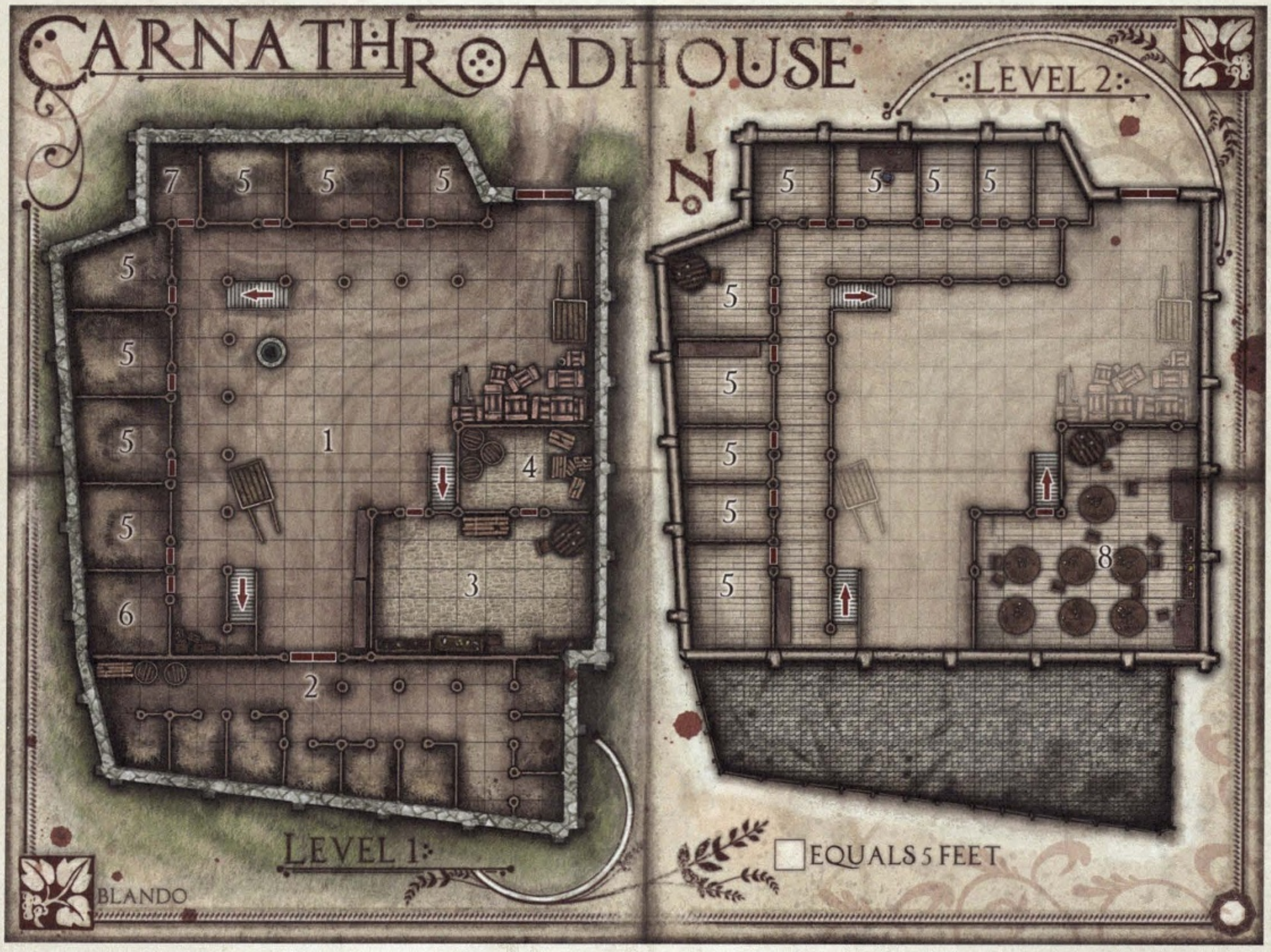
Unusually valuable cargoes and personal items are kept in the strong room under lock and key. None of the workers know or care what sorts of road-building supplies are considered so valuable they must be locked up for protection. They just follow Bog Luck's instructions and stack things where they're told to stack them.

Since the sleeping rooms can't be locked, workers and teamsters often have Bog Luck lock their cash and other valuables into the strong room for safekeeping. He keeps a record in a ledger book of all the personal items stored there and has a reputation for being meticulous about making sure everyone gets their belongings back—all of their belongings and o*nly* their belongings.

The key for this room is always on Bog Luck's belt, but the lock can be opened with a successful DC 10 Dexterity check and a set of thieves' tools.

The trapdoor is located in the southeast corner of the room. An empty crate nailed onto the door covers it; when the door is opened, the whole crate tips toward the north. Being nailed to the floor, the crate feels solid and full to a casual bump or shove. Only when it's tipped does the trick become obvious. It can be discovered with a thorough 20-minute search of the room or with a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check.

If characters search the strong room during the night, lizardfolk show up to cart away contraband. There are three **lizardfolk** for every two characters.



JARED BLANDO

5. Rooms

The wagon drivers, escorts, and laborers who stay at the compound share the rooms. None are private rooms; all have bunks for at least four people, and the larger rooms sleep six. They contain bunks, trunks for belongings, and wooden floors covered with rushes.

None of the rooms have locks on their doors except Bog Luck's. If asked about locks, Bog Luck explains that they kept freezing in cold weather so people couldn't get into or out of their rooms. This excuse is credible; the upper room doors, in particular, often are coated with ice in the morning. In fact, Bog Luck removed the locks to strengthen his excuse for locking the strong room.

6. Bog Luck's Room

Bog Luck has this room to himself, so it's more spacious and comfortable than the others. He's seldom here except when sleeping, and he keeps the door locked. A successful DC 10 Dexterity check with thieves' tools can open it. Despite his crude manner, Bog Luck is a somewhat educated man, as evidenced by the books of philosophy and natural history on his reading shelf.

7. Ardred Briferhew's Room

The commander of the hired guards has this small room to himself. There is nothing remarkable about it.

8. Kitchen

This upper room is used for preparing food on a large stove. In the evenings, this doubles as a common room where people gather to smoke, drink, swap stories, and keep warm. Eventually the cook, a grumpy human called Gristle Pete, kicks everyone out so he can unroll his mattress and blankets and get some sleep.

If characters listen carefully to Gristle Pete's mutterings as he works around his kitchen, they'll hear him talking in circles to himself about how he "... don't get no sleep from all the critters in the floors banging and knocking and hissing and whispering at all hours" and so on. The noises he hears and mistakes for rats are the lizardfolk retrieving contraband from the strong room below. If questioned, he hears the noises every now and then, not every night. If pressed, he realizes that the sounds happen a few nights after a new load gets dropped off. Now ain't that some oddball rat behavior?

Tracking the Load

Characters have a few ways to collect clues about what's happening at the work camp. Jamna can help out with these tasks if none of the characters are up to it.

- If they watch the wagons being unloaded, they'll notice Bog Luck directing laborers to carry the crates brought from the Greenfields into the warehouse. If they have a chance to see what's going on in the warehouse, they see that all the crates go into the strong room. If they don't look inside the warehouse while the wagons are unloaded but inspect the warehouse later, they won't find any of the crates; the only other place they could have gone is into the strong room.
- Gristle Pete, who sleeps above the strong room, hears strange noises on certain nights. He mistakes those noises for rats, but they come from lizardfolk carrying contraband into the tunnel beneath the strong room.
- They can take the direct approach and inspect the strong room surreptitiously. This leads to a fight with lizardfolk if characters search the room in the dead of night. Getting in by picking the lock is the safest approach. Trying to lift the key from Bog Luck's belt can work, but it's risky. If he catches someone in the attempt, a beating is the best they can hope for. A smart character submits to this humiliation, because fighting back means that Bog Luck calls everyone else to help him punish the thief, and all the characters are ostracized from then on. Taking the beating means Bog Luck keeps the incident between the two of them.
- Characters can arrange to have a room next to the Cult of the Dragon teamsters and listen through the walls to the cultists' conversation. They can't make out entire conversations, but they do pick out the words "strong room," "tunnel," "lizardfolk," and "Bog Luck."
- Talking to other escorts and wagon drivers yields some interesting observations but no concrete leads. Most of the others who came along on the haul north of Waterdeep agree that there's something standoffish about the cultists (they don't use that word).
- Searching the cultists' two rooms turns up something a personal bag containing six polished gems and small, easily concealed items of jewelry, all together worth about 1,400 gp. The cultists have a thief among them: a half-elf named Larion Keenblade. If he can be identified and accosted away from the others, he might agree to help the characters in exchange for their help getting away.

Grudge Match

A friend of the cultist murdered by Jamna has nurtured a grudge against a character since that incident. Now that their load is safely delivered and the mission is complete, this cultist can seek vengeance for her slain friend.

At an opportune time, the cultist tries to goad the character into a fight. She'll use any incident she can from their time together, including the murder, to question the character's courage and fighting ability in front of everyone. If the character refuses to bite, the cultist doesn't back down. The NPC wants blood and won't settle for anything less. She draws her sword and attacks. The cultist uses the stats of a **veteran**.

As far as the other cultists, teamsters, and hired guards are concerned, this is a personal issue between these two. If the character backs down, everyone assumes the character is a coward and treats this character with disrespect for the rest of his or her time at the camp. If other characters jump into the fight at their companion's side, more cultists do the same (treat them as twelve **guards**). Bog Luck and Ardred Briferhew prevent anyone else from joining in, but they don't mind watching some limited bloodshed to break the boredom.

The cultist means to kill the character, and she will if she wins the duel (continuing to stab the body after the character is at 0 hit points) and no one stops her.



Chapter 6: Castle Naerytar

The tunnel from the roadhouse emerges in a spot nearby that's screened by trees and brush from the camp. As characters approach through the tunnel, any of them with a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 10 or higher hears bestial voices ahead, growling and murmuring indistinctly in Draconic. From there, a trail leads into the Mere of Dead Men, where a mix of swamp denizens and cultists of the dragon vie for power at the ruins of Castle Naerytar.

This stout, stone castle was the home of a half-elf wizard, but he abandoned it long ago when the swamp claimed the area. For a time, a group of astrologers called the Academy of Stargazers took over the structure, but they vanished mysteriously after a few years. No one knows what became of them. Before the group's destruction, the members modified the castle by building an observatory into the top floor of the keep. Some of their magical viewing equipment is still there.

Now the Cult of the Dragon has moved people into Castle Naerytar and formed shaky alliances with nearby swamp dwellers, but the surrounding swampland is far from under anyone's control. The cult brought lizardfolk, bullywugs, and a pair of black dragons together in an unstable alliance, but the factions are riven by deep distrust that outsiders can exploit.

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Traveling to the Castle

Castle Naerytar sits fifteen miles from the work camp—fifteen cold, muddy, difficult miles. It takes the characters two days to cover that ground at a moderate pace. Fortunately, the trail is marked by the lizardfolk who transport contraband through the mere to Castle Naerytar for the cult. Without the trail, finding the castle in this snarled, confusing maze would depend more on luck than skill. This trail doesn't make travel easy; the lizardfolk's trail is still treated as difficult terrain. It only shows the direction to go.

Day 1

The first day's travel is by foot through tangled marsh. The ground is what passes for dry in the mere: even "solid ground" is soggy, with water very near the surface. Lizardfolk porters carry the cult's contraband on their backs along this portion of the trail, and their tracks can be plainly seen where the path crosses wet ground. Much of the path is through mucky, cold, knee-deep water. On those stretches, blaze marks are cut into trees to keep porters on the right course. No skill checks are needed to avoid getting lost as long as characters stick to the trail. If characters leave the trail, then a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check is needed to find it again. Each check equates to an hour of searching, which calls for a random encounters check.

Evening 1

After seven miles of progress, characters reach a campsite at the approximate halfway point on the trip between the work camp and Castle Naerytar.

> It isn't much of a camp—just a clearing that's slightly drier than the muck you've been wading through—but four wicker lean-tos and a stone platform (for lighting a fire above the soggy ground) command attention in this wilderness. Three dugout canoes are drawn up near one of the lean-tos.
>
> A few dozen yards beyond the campsite in the direction you've been traveling, dry land ends. Other than moss-covered trees, fallen logs, and thick clumps of reeds, nothing rises above the still, black water.

Each canoe has three paddles and is large enough to hold five humans without much gear, or two or three with packs and other gear. Inside the lean-tos are a few baskets containing smoked fish (edible) along with some lizards and birds that have been smashed flat and dried in the sun (very unappetizing to humans but edible).

If characters arrive before dusk, the camp is empty and they can explore it safely. No random encounters bother characters while they're in the campsite. As the sun begins to set, nine **lizardfolk** paddle up in three canoes. They are traveling from Castle Naerytar to the roadhouse to pick up a load of contraband. The lizardfolk expect no trouble near their camp, so if characters posted a watch, then those characters who are actively on watch notice the approaching lizardfolk automatically and the lizardfolk are surprised. If characters lit a fire, however, then the lizardfolk smell the smoke from quite a distance away and know someone is in the camp. They assume it's more of their own kind returning from the work camp with treasure bound for Castle Naerytar, but the mere is filled with potential enemies and one never knows for sure, so their approach is more cautious if they smell smoke. In that case, characters with passive Wisdom (Perception) scores of 10 or higher notice the approaching lizardfolk canoes before the lizardfolk spot the strangers in their camp.

These lizardfolk won't negotiate or converse with characters. They've been told by the elf who commands operations at Castle Naerytar that strangers in the mere are to be killed or captured but never engaged in conversation. If they are captured and tied up, a successful DC 10 Charisma (Intimidation) or DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check loosens their tongues. If the lizardfolk aren't tied up, characters have disadvantage on these rolls because the lizardfolk think them soft-hearted.

Lizardfolk know that they're transporting treasure to the castle. The "dragon kneelers" take it into the castle, and the lizardfolk never see it again. They are paid in steel blades (they have no ability to manufacture with metal) and magic talismans. All the lizardfolk wear necklaces and bracelets made of bone, teeth, feathers, carved soft stone, and leather. On close inspection, characters see mixed in among these things traces of civilization: glass beads, coins, costume jewelry, tiny mirrors, and stamped copper and tin amulets of the sort that can be bought for a few pennies at any trinket shop or souvenir stand. None of it is magical.

During the questioning, have every character make a Charisma check. Whichever character scores highest makes a strong impression on a lizardfolk captive. This lizardfolk, whose name is Snapjaw, is unhappy about the situation in the mere, and he develops the notion that these strangers could be the key to driving out the cultists and to slaughtering their cruel bullywug allies. Snapjaw tries to communicate with the chosen character, but he doesn't want any of his comrades to know. He speaks enough pidgin Common to converse in simple terms, in case no one in the party speaks Draconic.

How Snapjaw goes about opening a dialog depends on the situation. If he's the only surviving lizardfolk or he's questioned out of earshot from the others, he can speak openly. If several lizardfolk are tied up and they're being questioned together, he could sprinkle words of Common into his Draconic replies, such as "want to help" and "talk alone." If several lizardfolk are tied up and left alone for a few minutes, he could scratch a similar message into the ground. He might try provoking a character into a wrestling match or a duel, and then whisper his message into the character's ear.

If characters don't mistreat Snapjaw and don't kill any more lizardfolk than they need to, he becomes a reliable ally for as long as they work against the cult and the bullywugs. Roll a die for each of the other lizardfolk captives. On an even roll, Snapjaw persuades that lizardfolk to join his little revolt. On an odd roll, that NPC refuses to cooperate under any circumstance.

Day 2

From the campsite on, the trip to Castle Naerytar must be made by canoe. Snapjaw can guide the characters. A guide isn't really necessary, because the course is marked with symbols scratched into tree trunks and totems hung from branches.

Mere of Dead Men Random Encounters

The Mere of Dead Men is a place filled with dangerous creatures. Roll a d20 per hour of travel; an encounter occurs on a roll of 18–20. Determine the encounter by rolling on the table below, or choose an encounter.

Mere of Dead Men Encounters

d12	Encounter
1–2	**Bullywugs** (2 or 3 per character)
3	**Crocodiles** (2 per character)
4	**Giant frogs** (2 per character)
5	**Giant lizards** (2 per character)
6	**Giant spiders** (1 per character)
7–8	**Lizardfolk** (3 per 2 characters)
9	Quicksand
10	**Shambling mound**
11	**Will-o'-wisps** (3)
12	Yuan-ti hunting party (see below)

Bullywugs. Bullywugs patrol the mere haphazardly. Before characters reach the midway campsite, this encounter is with two bullywugs per character. After characters reach the midway campsite, this encounter is with three bullywugs per character. Not all bullywugs in the mere work for the cult, but any the characters run into do.

Crocodiles. An encounter with crocodiles always occurs in water at least 2 feet deep. The first time characters run into crocodiles in the mere, the creatures have advantage on their Stealth check.

Giant Frogs. Giant frogs use their sticky tongue attacks whenever they can, and they prefer halflings, gnomes, and other small targets over creatures they can't swallow.

Giant Lizards. Giant lizards of the Mere of Dead Men have the Hold Breath trait. There is a 30 percent chance that these are trained lizards moving ahead of a lizardfolk encounter group. If so, those lizardfolk (see below) appear on the scene at the start of the sixth round of combat.

Giant Spiders. The spiders' web is nearly invisible in an area of heavy fog. Spiders of the Mere of Dead Men have the Hold Breath trait.

Lizardfolk. The lizardfolk of the mere are reluctant allies of the cult, mostly because Dralmorrer Borngray allows the more numerous bullywugs to push them around. The odds are 50 percent whether a group of lizardfolk works for the cult or is independent. An independent group helps the characters if Snapjaw is present to persuade them. They won't tackle the cult or a large group of bullywugs head-on, but they can help by scouting and creating diversions. Lizardfolk that do work for the cult attack immediately if they see Snapjaw tied like a prisoner. If Snapjaw is loose and characters don't seem hostile toward him, the lizardfolk hesitate, wondering whether the characters are cultists themselves.

Quicksand. A creature that steps into the quicksand must succeed on a DC 11 Dexterity saving throw or sink into the quicksand and be restrained. On its turn, as part of its movement, the trapped creature can escape by making a DC 15 Strength check. Another creature can attempt to pull the restrained creature out of the quicksand as an action but must succeed on a DC 15 Strength check to do so. As in a movie, the trapped creature is always more than 5 feet from the edge of the quicksand, so rescuers can't just grab the character; they must find a vine, a rope, or a pole and toss it to where the trapped character can reach it.

Shambling Mound. All the lizardfolk, Snapjaw included, are terrified of "the weed that walks." If it appears while Snapjaw is with the characters, he spends 1 round urging the characters to flee, then does so himself. Unless someone follows him immediately, it will take an hour to find him again.

Will-o'-Wisps. If this encounter occurs before characters reach the midway camp, the wisps don't show themselves immediately but instead follow the characters invisibly until nightfall. Then they try to lure just one or two characters into following them, by appearing as indistinct, flickering lanterns passing nearby. Anyone who follows the lights even a short distance is lured into a patch of quicksand. If the encounter occurs after characters leave the midway camp, then the will-o'-wisps use the same trick but in heavy morning fog, and instead of luring characters into quicksand, they lure them to the lair of Voaraghamanthar, the black dragon.

Yuan-ti Hunting Party. All residents of the mere, including the lizardfolk, the cultists, and especially the bullywugs, fear and despise the yuan-ti. For their part, the yuan-ti despise everyone right back, but they have no fear. This group of two **yuan-ti malisons** (type 1) and three **yuan-ti purebloods** is hunting for any intelligent creatures that would be suitable sacrifices to their long-slumbering god Merrshaulk. Yuan-ti won't ally with anyone or against anyone.

Castle Naerytar

Over a century ago, a half-elf wizard built a castle at the edge of the Mere of Dead Men. He lived there a relatively short time before the growing swamp flowed past the castle on all sides and made the location too remote for even his taste. After the structure sat abandoned for years, a group of astrologers called the Academy of Stargazers claimed it. They built an observatory into the top level of the keep, where they installed a piece of magic equipment called the *farseer of Illusk*. But the astrologers vanished mysteriously after a few years.

After the disappearance of the astrologers, the castle again fell into disuse. It was built to withstand its cold, watery environment, so the encroaching water hasn't undermined the walls or flooded the dungeon. Over decades of abandonment, however, it filled with debris and attracted many unpleasant dwellers. Then Rezmir happened upon the castle on one of her trips into the mere to study and negotiate with the black dragon Voaraghamanthar. Rezmir suspected the castle could become a useful stronghold for her, being located so conveniently close to the lair of a black dragon. She explored the structure, cleared the giant spiders out of the tower, and forged an alliance with the nearby tribe of bullywugs.

During that time, the half-dragon was still thinking of the castle simply as a fortified hideout. When she discovered the portal in the dungeon and learned that it connected to an abandoned lodge in the Graypeak Mountains, a new thought took shape. Lugging large amounts of treasure fifteen miles through the mere would not be easy, but if it cut 700 miles of wagon transport out of the picture, it would be worth the difficulty—especially if bullywugs and lizardfolk did all the hard work. Rezmir laid claim to both structures, turned the Graypeak Mountain hunting lodge over to a trusted Cult of the Dragon associate (a half-elf named Talis who now despises Rezmir—see chapter 7), and set about making Castle Naerytar an essential hub in the cult's treasure-amassing activity in the North.

Through diplomacy and intimidation, and by leveraging the influence of Voaraghamanthar with the monstrous creatures of the mere, Rezmir created an uneasy alliance in the Mere of Dead Men and brought her vision into reality.

Factions

Three power groups operate around Castle Naerytar: the Cult of the Dragon, a band of bullywugs, and a lizardfolk tribe. The black dragon Voaraghamanthar, along with its kobold and lizardfolk minions, could constitute a fourth group if it took an active hand in events, but for now it is biding its time to see how events develop.

Rezmir's three-way alliance is unstable. The cultists despise living in the swamp and have little respect for the bullywugs or lizardfolk; the leader of the bullywugs would like to seize Castle Naerytar for his own purposes; the bullywugs in general take every opportunity to push around the lizardfolk; and the lizardfolk chafe under the abuse of the bullywugs and wonder why Voaraghamanthar doesn't step in to protect them.

Cult of the Dragon

Although Rezmir is responsible for resurrecting Castle Naerytar and claiming it for the Cult of the Dragon (in name only; she considers it her personal property), an elf Wearer of Purple named **Dralmorrer Borngray** (see appendix D for statistics) commands the castle for Rezmir. The half-dragon needs to show up occasionally to remind the bullywugs and lizardfolk that the Cult of the Dragon is really in charge, but Borngray runs the operation.

Dralmorrer Borngray is a member of the Eldreth Valuuthra, a group of elf supremacists dedicated to removing humanity from Faerûn. He longs for the age of great empires before humans claimed the continent. Being from Evermeet, he believes that his island home will be safely sheltered from the dragons' reign. Elves on the mainland will suffer, but that will be a small price to pay for the terror that will fall on humanity.

The elf idolizes Rezmir in all ways but one: he rues her decision to elevate the bullywugs in their alliance. In Borngray's opinion, the lizardfolk would be more useful, more reliable, and more appropriate allies than the repulsive bullywugs are. He cannot alter the arrangement without countering Rezmir's orders, but Borngray has taken small steps to restore the lizardfolk's tribal pride, such as by trying to teach them metallurgy. His effort has met with little success.

Borngray is loyal to the cult and yearns for Tiamat's return. He genuinely looks forward to the whole world lying helpless under the claws of dragons, both because that's where the world belongs, and because it will mean that his job at Castle Naerytar is finished. The second-best day of his life will be the day when Borngray can scrape the mud and stink of the Mere of Dead Men off his boots and return to someplace civilized. He has never mentioned his desire to leave to the bullywugs, whom he considers revolting necessities.

Only a handful of true Cult of the Dragon initiates and officers resides at the castle. All of them are noted in the castle description. They act as overseers and aides to Borngray and Rezmir.

Bullywugs

The band of bullywugs serving the Cult of the Dragon follows the dictates of **Pharblex Spattergoo** (see appendix D for statistics), a rare bullywug who has mastered shamanistic magic. His "religion" is a mishmash of confused tradition, borrowed mysticism, hallucinogenic intoxicants, and manufactured lore that serves more as a road to personal power for Pharblex than as a spiritual system for the bullywugs. Pharblex's spellcasting holds his followers together, and that makes him useful to Rezmir.

Pharblex hopes that when Tiamat returns, Rezmir will hand Castle Naerytar over to him, and he will rule the entire Mere of Dead Men from the castle. The only obstacle he sees between himself and his goal is the castle's current master, Dralmorrer Borngray; the notion that someone might want to not live in a swamp has never entered Pharblex's narrow mind, and the bullywug seems deaf to Borngray's ironic and sarcastic jabs at the mere. When the time is right, Pharblex plans to remove the elf from the picture by any means necessary. It is unlikely that he would choose the middle of a battle against the characters, when he and Borngray are fighting side by side, to betray the elf—but it's not impossible. If it looks like the cult's operation at the castle is doomed, Pharblex is the sort of creature who will switch sides to save his slimy skin. The timing must be perfect, because he fears Rezmir more than he fears the characters. If, however, the characters have won the lizardfolk over to their side, slaughtered or driven off most of the bullywugs, overrun the castle, and are poised to kill Borngray and Pharblex in battle—Pharblex judges that



Pharblex Spattergoo

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the ideal time to forsake old allies and court new ones has arrived. He offers just about anything in exchange for the characters leaving him alive and in possession of Castle Naerytar (with or without the *farseer of Illusk* in operating condition).

The number of bullywugs around the castle fluctuates. They come and go as they please. On any given day, forty to fifty are camped outside the castle. Thirty-four more plus Pharblex live in the castle barracks (areas 1G and 2G). Another thirty to seventy are in the immediate area, close enough to respond within fifteen minutes to the beating of the drum in the barbican.

The bullywugs already believe themselves to be lords of the mere, and they act like it. They are easily confused, however. Under normal circumstances, they attack adventurers on sight, provided the bullywugs had superior numbers. They have grown accustomed to seeing cultists of many races coming and going around the castle, so when they see strangers, their first assumption is that the newcomers are more cultists. This assumption is reinforced if Snapjaw or other lizardfolk accompany the strangers or if the characters have any overtly cultish gear or clothing.

This doesn't mean characters can wander at will through the camp and the castle. Bullywug guards still challenge them to ask who they are and where they're going (in fractured pidgin Common if none of the characters speak Bullywug). They just don't assume that every stranger is an enemy and attack on sight.

Lizardfolk

The Scaly Death lizardfolk tribe has no leader. Pharblex killed its shaman, Suncaller, and the death left the tribe with an inferiority complex that was ripe for exploitation. When Rezmir promised that Voaraghamanthar would reward the tribe's labors for the cult, the lizardfolk were ready to listen.

Where the bullywugs fill the role of a static defense force, the lizardfolk perform five functions. First, they are the cult's laborers and porters. Lizardfolk did most of the heavy work while clearing debris from the castle, and they carry most of the treasure from the work camp to the castle on their backs and in their canoes. Second, they tend the giant lizards that are used to drag or carry especially heavy loads through the mere. Third, they do most of the hunting, fishing, and gathering to feed everyone at the castle. Fourth, they act as the castle's far-ranging scouts and outlying guards, since they are far superior to any bullywug at actively patrolling, ambushing, and laying traps. Fifth, a cadre of lizardfolk has been enlisted as elite guards for the castle itself. Borngray doesn't expect that any force would ever mount a real attack against the castle; it's too inaccessible, lying deep in the swamp. But if that unlikely event ever happened, he knows that the swaggering bullywugs would desert rather than fight an organized enemy. The lizardfolk, on the other hand, can be courageous and disciplined when they have a leader worth following. Borngray hopes to be that leader, at least to the small contingent of lizardfolk warriors he houses in the castle and rewards with special treatment. In exchange for their work, Borngray pays the tribe in metal weapons that are brought to the castle along with the loot.

Meanwhile, the bullywugs boss and bully the lizardfolk, emboldened by their superior numbers, the lizardfolk's instinctive awe of Pharblex's magic, and the absence of any restraining sign from Borngray or from the lair of the black dragon. Voaraghamanthar's silence, more than anything else, makes the lizardfolk wonder whether fate is punishing them for some unknown transgression. They grumble, and occasionally a few desert, but most of them bear up with reptilian stoicism.

Snapjaw is one of the few who has suggested rebelling against the hated bullywugs and the cultists. He hasn't done so openly, because that would invite retribution from the bullywugs, but he has spoken to a few fellow tribesfolk he trusts. Their response was interested but noncommittal; they intend to take revenge on the bullywugs, but not until the omens are right. Meanwhile, they endure—and stockpile weapons. Borngray has only a rough idea of how many lizardfolk are in the tribe all together, and he hasn't kept close count over how many swords, spears, daggers, shields, and metal-tipped arrows have been turned over to them. The lizardfolk are much better armed at this point than they let on to either the bullywugs or the cultists. When the time comes to move against the bullywugs, the lizardfolk intend for every bullywug throat and belly to be slit open with a new, razor-sharp steel blade.

Like the bullywugs, the lizardfolk's first assumption on seeing strangers is that they are cultists, or allies of the cultists, come to work or parley at the castle. They don't share the bullywugs' arrogance, however, so unless they are attacked, they don't really care who wanders through the camp. Lizardfolk on patrol or standing guard are an exception. They are alert, and they assume everyone is a potential enemy. They won't attack until they know for sure, lest they incur the wrath of Rezmir or Borngray for killing an ally. As outlying guards, their instructions are to alert the camp when strangers approach, keep the strangers under observation, and await further instructions.

The Scaly Death tribe comprises eighty lizardfolk warriors, both male and female. About half of them are in the vicinity of the castle at any given time; twenty-six live in the castle and the rest in reed huts (area 3). The others are away hunting, fishing, patrolling, hauling contraband from the work camp, or visiting their families in the tribal village (a few hours away to the southwest).

Red Wizards

Only one Red Wizard is present at Castle Naerytar: Azbara Jos, who was also in the cult camp on the Greenfields and traveled north with Rezmir. He has no interest in the Mere of Dead Men, bullywugs, or lizardfolk, and just slightly more interest in black dragons. He is here only as Rath Modar's liaison to Rezmir. The portal beneath the castle piques Jos's interest, however; portals are always of concern to the Red Wizards.

Adventurers appearing at this remote, secret site also interest him. If Azbara Jos sees the characters or learns of their presence, he arranges a private meeting—one that Rezmir and Borngray don't even know about, let alone attend. He wants to learn how much the characters know of the cult's plans, where and how they

uncovered the information, who else knows about it, and what they think of the plan's chance to succeed. If the characters are captured and locked up in the castle, Jos finds an opportunity to ask all the same questions, again privately, but he is in a better position to force answers out of the characters.

This assumes the characters are at Castle Naerytar posing as cultists or hiding among the lizardfolk. If they're rampaging through the castle, killing everyone they meet, then Azbara Jos has only one concern: escaping through the portal before someone or something kills him.

Voaraghamanthar

Voaraghamanthar is an adult black dragon who claims the Mere of Dead Men as his territory. Although many creatures live in the mere and dominate it to one extent or another, none challenge Voaraghamanthar's supremacy. The bullywugs consider him a constant threat and tremble whenever his shadow passes near. The yuan-ti grant him grudging respect and covet his immense wealth. The lizardfolk honor him and wonder why he allows the cultists to abuse them. The cultists venerate him and divert some of the arriving contraband to his lair as tribute.

Voaraghamanthar has a secret that is known to only two other creatures in Faerûn. One of them is Rezmir. The other creature *is* the secret: Waervaerendor, the twin brother of Voaraghamanthar. For centuries, these twins have misled the world into believing that only one dragon dwells in the Mere of Dead Men—one dragon that must travel at immense speed, since it has been spotted at widely separated locales in rapid succession. The siblings seldom leave their lairs, but when they do, they coordinate so they are never seen together or seen in two distant places at precisely the same time.

Rezmir persuaded the twins to pledge their aid to the cult, but so far, the pledge hasn't carried much weight. Neither dragon leaves its lair frequently enough to provide much help. Like all black dragons, these two are paranoid about all other dragons. Tiamat's potential return and the establishment of a vast dragon empire seem like remote possibilities compared to the real danger of tangling with another dragon, any of whom would gladly murder Voaraghamanthar and Waervaerendor for their hoards. That's the twins' outlook, anyway. While their concern over the murderous nature of other dragons is justified, the fact that they are two means they have little to fear from most solitary dragons. Rezmir is working hard to persuade them that they could gain great power by revealing their secret at the strategically correct moment. Until Tiamat's return looks more certain, however, Voaraghamanthar and Waervaerendor intend to keep playing it safe, stick close to home, and guard their secret.

Voaraghamanthar and Waervaerendor are not a true faction in the mere because they are not advancing any agenda of their own, but their presence affects the balance of power. Without Voaraghamanthar, the cult wouldn't be here at all. Without Voaraghamanthar, the lizardfolk probably could not have been maneuvered into making common cause with the bullywugs.

Characters should not encounter either of these dragons face to face in this adventure (they are likely to meet in *The Rise of Tiamat*). If characters stray from the lizardfolk's path between the work camp and Castle Naerytar, intentionally or unintentionally—if, for example, they follow will-o'-wisps into the mere—they could enter the blighted territory around one of the lairs. Many clues can inform characters that they're in dragon territory. First, they pass markers consisting of the acid-eaten skulls of humans, humanoids, yuan-ti, crocodiles, and just about every other creature that lives in the mere. The skulls hang from withered trees and from spikes driven into the ground.

Both dragons' lairs are heavily guarded by lizardfolk. The dragons' guards are selected from the Scaly Death lizardfolk that work for the cult. Kobolds infest the actual lairs, but they seldom come out into the mere.

Squaring Off Against the Cult of the Dragon

Characters have several options at Castle Naerytar, and events there can go in many directions. Here are the key points to keep in mind when running this chapter.

- Rezmir and Azbara Jos do almost anything to avoid a battle with interfering adventurers. They have bigger concerns than the safety of Castle Naerytar and its occupants. If a battle develops, both of these characters head directly for the gate beneath the castle and teleport to Talis the White's hunting lodge (see chapter 7). For purposes of this adventure, do everything you can to ensure that Rezmir and Jos survive this chapter. It's not a catastrophe if they don't, but it's much better if they do.
- Dralmorrer Borngray and Pharblex Spattergoo have everything to lose if enemies of the cult overrun Castle Naerytar; a defeat would cost Borngray his hard-earned rank in the cult, and Spattergoo would lose the base from which he hopes to rule the mere after the cult is finished with the castle. They fight to the death to protect the castle (simultaneously buying time for Rezmir and Jos to escape). Despite their loathing for one another, they understand that they are much stronger together than apart. As soon as fighting breaks out, they join forces and cooperate.
- The best place for Borngray and Pharblex to make their stand depends on how the attack develops; you'll need to play that part by ear. Their best ploy against a determined assault may be a fighting retreat through the castle and down into the caverns, where the narrow passages and giant frogs work in their favor.
- The bullywugs are numerous but cowardly. They fight to protect Pharblex, but if he isn't immediately in sight—if Pharblex has retreated into the caverns while other bullywugs are fighting in the inner ward, for example—bullywugs who feel as if he has abandoned them are likely to leap away into the mere and never come back. If Pharblex is killed, most bullywugs desert immediately.
- The lizardfolk are brave, but they despise the bullywugs. If characters haven't recruited the lizardfolk

to their side, then the lizardfolk fight well whenever they're alone. If bullywugs are nearby, lizardfolk pull back and let the bullywugs bear the brunt of combat and casualties. If the lizardfolk have been won over to fighting alongside the characters, then they hunt bullywugs through the castle and grounds and murder them mercilessly. If bullywugs flee into the swamp, lizardfolk chase them. They are half-hearted when facing cultists—not because they fear the cultists but because they don't hate them, and they have a harder time mentally turning against that alliance.

- The cultists are dedicated but not fanatics, and they are laborers, not soldiers. They fight bravely with Dralmorrer Borngray leading them. Without him, the cultists' attacks are uncoordinated and hesitant. Their situation becomes even worse if they are fighting against rebellious lizardfolk. In that case, without Borngray to egg them on, they are most likely to barricade themselves in the upper levels of the southwest tower or the library and try to ride out the slaughter.

Approaching Castle Naerytar

How characters approach Naerytar can set the tone for everything that happens at the castle.

Snapjaw knows where the lizardfolk pickets are posted about half a mile out from the castle. If he is with the characters, he can prevent them from blundering into a trap or an ambush. He talks to the six **lizardfolk** guards if characters let him. What he tells them depends on the opinion he's formed about the characters.

- If Snapjaw isn't yet sure whether the characters are the saviors he hopes they are, he tells the guards that these are cultists coming to join those already in the castle. The guards accept that story without question and let everyone pass.
- If the heroes have established strong trust between themselves and Snapjaw, he tells the guards that the characters are great warriors come to destroy the Cult of the Dragon, and that now is the time to make their move against the bullywugs. You can either decide for yourself how the guards react to that, or make a DC 10 Charisma check for Snapjaw. If the check succeeds, the guards are persuaded. If the check fails, the characters don't impress them. They won't take action against the bullywugs now, but they won't interfere with the characters, either. If the result is 5 or lower, these guards decide Snapjaw's talk of an uprising is dangerously rash, and they attack him.
- If the characters have done nothing to win Snapjaw's trust or they've treated him no better than bullywugs would have, then he tells the guards that the characters are nothing but trouble, and the lizardfolk attack.

If Snapjaw is not with the characters, they still have a chance to detect the guard outpost on their own. Characters with passive Wisdom (Perception) scores of 15 or higher catch whiffs of wood smoke. Also make a single Dexterity (Stealth) check for the lizardfolk guards, with advantage (they've had plenty of time to conceal themselves). Compare their result to the characters' passive Wisdom (Perception) scores to see whether any of the characters notice the lizardfolk in hiding.

If the lizardfolk go undetected, they send two fast swimmers ahead by a secondary route to alert bullywugs at the castle. Two more scouts follow the characters while the last two remain at their post and continue keeping watch.

Outside Castle Naerytar

Castle Naerytar was built on dry land, then a deep, dry moat was dug around it. When the mere expanded and surrounded the castle site, the moat flooded and overflowed. Now the whole site is swampy, and large pools of standing water dot the clearing. The castle was built on exposed bedrock, so its foundation is sound and mostly dry even a century after the flooding. Tangled brush and trees grow to within twenty feet of the walls on three sides of the castle. Only the front (southern) face is clear.

Bullywugs live in crowded, hastily made reed huts. The lizardfolk have sturdier, roomier reed longhouses.

1. Landing

A half-dozen dugout canoes are pulled up onto land here. Three to five paddles lie in the bottom of each. Five of them are in good condition; the sixth has a rotten bottom, and the lizardfolk never use it. If characters grab canoes in a hurry, there is a 1-in-6 chance they get the rotten one. It starts leaking as soon as it's put in water, and it sinks after fifteen minutes.

2. Animal Stockade

The lizardfolk keep their giant lizards penned here. The five-foot-high wall of the stockade is made from sturdy logs driven into the earth, spaced about six inches apart, and bound together with twisted fiber. The lizards can carry or drag loads that are too massive for the lizardfolk, such as large timbers or impressive crocodiles. They are also used to raise stone onto the castle battlements through ropes and pulleys—technology that never ceases to amaze the lizardfolk. There are 2d4 **giant lizards** in the pen at any given time. They are ill-tempered and attack anyone who comes within reach if their handlers aren't present to keep them under control. If set loose, they most likely romp away into the swamp. If the goal is to have the lizards rampage through the camp, someone needs to rile them up first. Poking them through the stockade wall with spears will do the trick.

3. Longhouses

The lizardfolk warriors live in these longhouses.

> The longhouses are made from reeds bound into long, thick bundles and bent into upside-down, U-shaped ribs. The spaces between the ribs are latticed and thatched with more reeds. Each longhouse has a single, woven door in the center of one end wall. The construction technique used in the longhouses is ingenious.

The lizardfolk may be technologically backward, but they are masters of their environment. They show the same building talent in their traps and snares.

Inside, longhouses are roomy and well ventilated. The ground is covered with reed mats, and the interior is dry and airy. Gear hangs from pegs on the walls to keep it off the ground. Lizardfolk are especially careful with their new, steel weapons, which rust quickly when exposed to dampness. They fill small stone ovens with coals for heat. There are no open fireplaces; the danger from sparks is too great.

Each of these longhouses could house twenty-five lizardfolk comfortably, and more with some crowding. When Rezmir first negotiated with the lizardfolk, they intended to move the entire village here, and built accordingly. As more bullywugs also flocked to the castle and the real situation became apparent, the warriors instructed their families to stay behind. Thus, they have far more longhouse space at the castle than they need. Characters observing the area from hiding and judging solely from the longhouses would estimate conservatively that over a hundred lizardfolk live at the castle. They won't count anywhere near that many lizardfolk in the clearing. Snapjaw can explain the discrepancy, if he's around.

4. Huts

The bullywugs live in huts, which are crudely built.

> A dozen or more huts are placed haphazardly on the boggy ground. Each is shaped like a slightly flattened dome. The doorways are open, but a low, short tunnel forces a creature to crawl into the hut. They are made of reeds woven through a lattice, with a generous layer of mud, grass, and dung smeared over the whole thing. Mud, swamp water, and muck slops between the huts and even flows in and out of the low, open doorways.

The interiors of the bullywugs' huts are the complete opposite of the lizardfolk's longhouses: wet, filthy, sloppily made, and reeking. The floors aren't just damp; they're churned into mud pits up to 2 feet deep, so the bullywugs can rest froglike in mud up to their eyeballs. They have no sense of privacy or personal space. At night, they crowd in atop one another until everyone is squeezed. Bullywugs aren't assigned to any particular huts. They sleep in whichever is most convenient when they grow tired, so it's common for some huts to be packed at night while others sit completely empty.

Eight **giant frogs** hop randomly among the huts or sit silently in the pools of standing water. These creatures were raised from tadpoles by the bullywugs and don't bother them, but they attack anyone else who carelessly wanders within reach of their 15-foot-long tongues.

5. Moat

The muddy water lapping against the castle walls is indistinguishable at a glance from the puddles and hip-deep water standing throughout the area, but it hides a moat. Portions of the moat around the southwest tower have filled in to ground level, but elsewhere it is 30 to 40 feet wide and up to 15 feet deep. The causeway (1B) arches over the moat, providing a visual clue that the water may be deeper than it appears. Anyone splashing around in the moat attracts the attention of six **crocodiles**.

6. Main Gate

This is the only entrance into the castle that's used. When the castle was built, a pair of stout wooden gates and an iron portcullis closed off this 12-foot-wide, 10-foot-high gateway. The gates are never closed; they now sag on their hinges so badly that it's not worth the effort of levering them into place for any reason short of an imminent attack. The portcullis is rigged so it can be dropped with a hard yank on a lever (located on the upper level, area 2A), but since it was last tested, the mechanism has rusted to the point where the gate will drop only 3 feet, then jam in place.

Inside Castle Naerytar

The castle's exterior walls average 10 feet thick. Interior walls are also stone but only about 1 or 2 feet thick.

Most of the structures inside the castle are more than one story tall. In the descriptions, areas are identified by floor, then letter, so area 1L is on the ground floor, 2L the second floor, and so on. If an area doesn't have an entry for a floor, then it doesn't exist on that floor.

Ground Floor

1A. Barbican

The barbican is the primary defensive position for the castle. It is guarded round-the-clock by ten **bullywugs** and 1d6 **giant frogs**. Unless a fight or other disturbance has happened somewhere, these guards are at low alertness.

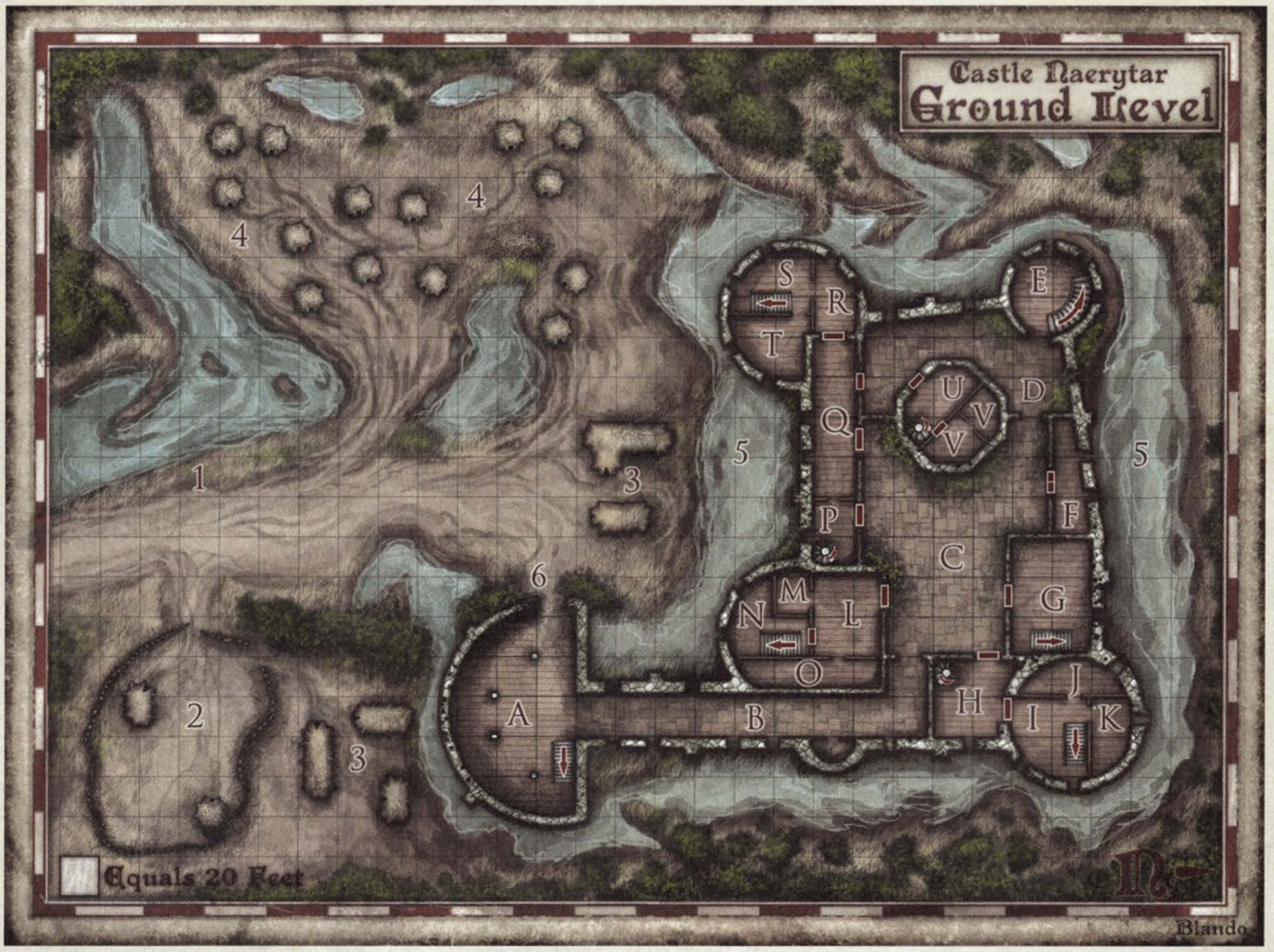
Sloppy mud covers the stone floor of this large chamber. Planks have been laid from the gateway to the causeway entrance to create a 10-foot-wide raised boardwalk for the cultists, who don't enjoy walking through mud the way bullywugs do. The slippery mud makes everywhere off the planks difficult terrain for characters. A few tables have been thrown together from planks laid across barrels, with crudely made benches for seats. The tables and benches are nearly as muddy as the floor.

The barbican has no windows or arrow slits at ground level. During daytime, bright light is within 20 feet of the open gateway and the open doorway to the causeway. Everywhere else, oil lamps cast only dim light (because the bullywugs never clean them).

Stairs lead up to area 2A.

1B. Causeway

This 180-foot causeway crosses the moat and leads to the castle's outer ward. It has no roof so defenders on the upper floor of the barbican (area 2A) can launch arrows into attackers crowded onto the causeway. A small



defensive bulge along the east wall of the causeway is never manned.

1C. Outer Ward

The ground here was once hard-packed earth, but the area in front of the barracks (area 1G) has been churned into mud by flapping bullywug feet. At any particular time, there are 1d6 – 1 **bullywugs** and 1d6 – 1 **lizardfolk** present in the outer ward. Lizardfolk are likely to be working (training their giant lizards), while bullywugs might be loafing or giving orders to the lizardfolk.

1D. Inner Ward

Originally, the passage between the outer and inner wards could be closed off with heavy wooden gates, but they have long since fallen apart and haven't been replaced. The inner ward is patrolled by three **guard drakes** (see appendix D for statistics) at all hours of the day. They attack anyone they don't recognize or who isn't accompanied by someone they recognize.

1E. Northwest Tower

The door to this tower has been torn off its hinges and lies on the ground. Originally, a wooden floor was at ground level with a pit beneath it for confining prisoners. The wooden floor is completely rotted away, and the pit has been filled nearly to ground level with garbage and mud.

> There must have been a wooden floor in this tower when it was built, to cover the dungeon pit beneath it. Now the floor is gone and the dungeon has been turned into a garbage pit and latrine filled with foul-smelling waste and swamp water to just a few feet below the level of the doorway. The floor above is badly rotted and large portions have collapsed. Through the gaping holes in the second floor, you can see that the third floor is still in good condition. But to reach the stone stairs that circle upward around the outer wall, you must cross 10 feet of indescribable muck.

The pit is home to an **otyugh** that consumes much of the castle's garbage. When characters arrive, it is sitting quietly submerged in the muck, making it undetectable unless characters stir the foul-smelling stuff with poles. If someone steps into the muck or leaps to the steps, the otyugh lashes out with its tentacles. A grappled character is dragged into the pit where, along with all the hazards of being savaged by an otyugh, there is the added danger of drowning. It's safe to assume that characters entering this tower will take a big gulp of clean air first, but the otyugh's attack might knock the wind out of them. Allow the attacked character to make a Constitution saving throw with a DC equal to 5 plus the damage caused by the otyugh's tentacle attack. A

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successful saving throw means the character has a lungful of air when dragged into the muck and can hold his or her breath for a number of minutes equal to 1 + his or her Constitution modifier, with a minimum of 30 seconds (5 rounds). Failure means the character's lungs are empty, and the character falls unconscious at the end of his or her turn after a number of rounds equal to the character's Constitution modifier unless the character breaks free from the otyugh's grasp before then. See the suffocation rules in the *Player's Handbook*.

1F. Stables

The fittest, most ferocious of the giant lizards are housed here instead of in the open stockade (area 2), to protect them against the biting and clawing that goes on in the common enclosure. These lizards are used as riding mounts by lizardfolk on long patrols. The stalls, originally built for horses, have been enlarged to accommodate the beasts (eight **giant lizards**). The normally lethargic creatures grow agitated when strangers enter the stables. If characters linger for more than a minute, two of the lizards start lashing the walls with their tails. The others pick up the ruckus in short order so that within two minutes, all are thrashing at the walls and bellowing. The commotion draws four **lizardfolk** who are the giant lizards' handlers. The lizardfolk have a calming influence on the giant lizards, but if they are interfered with, the disquieted lizards smash through their stalls and attack anything in the stables.

A ladder in the southeast corner of the stables grants access to a loft above the stables.

1G. Lower Barracks

This large structure was built to house the castle's garrison. Pharblex and his hand-picked circle of bullywug toughs has taken it over. Pharblex is seldom here, but during the day, twelve **bullywugs** lounge in the squalor. That number doubles at night.

If characters walk into the barracks during daytime, read the text below aloud. If they sneak in or enter in the middle of the night, adjust and paraphrase accordingly.

> Twelve bullywugs eye you suspiciously from a room that might have been a tidy barracks once. Now it is largely empty of furniture. Much of the floor is churned into mud, and the stink of bullywugs permeates everything.

If the bullywugs assume the characters are cultists, they tolerate their presence here on the lowest floor of the barracks. They won't allow anyone upstairs, and they won't take orders from someone they don't know and recognize. If a fight breaks out in this area, bullywugs from the upper level (area 2G) leap into the battle from the staircase on the third round.

Three mud-spattered chests are shoved into the sheltered space behind the staircase. These contain much of the bullywugs' accumulated pay. Dralmorrer Borngray pays them with articles of looted treasure that he deems too cheap or tacky to include in the hoard being accumulated for Tiamat. The chests contain hundreds of items made from copper and tin and that incorporate small or damaged semiprecious stones. The three chests combined contain 30,000 cp, 500 sp, and jewelry (copper and tin with ornamental or semiprecious stones) worth another 350 gp, for a total value of 700 gp. Their total weight is over 500 pounds: 305 pounds of coins plus another 200 pounds of jewelry.

Buried among all the copper and tin in one chest is a small mahogany box containing two *potions of healing* and one vial of *oil of etherealness*, overlooked by the cultists during sorting.

1H. Forge and Armory

Naerytar's builders set up this structure for the blacksmiths who would build and maintain the armor and weapons needed by the castle's defenders.

> A large forge dominates the center of this chamber, which is pleasantly warm thanks to a bed of coals glowing dully in the forge. Half a dozen lizardfolk are working around the forge, but they don't seem to be accomplishing much. Other accouterments of the blacksmith's trade are scattered through the room, and many very poorly made metal items are heaped in the northwest corner.

A few months ago, Dralmorrer Borngray decided to put the forge back into operation. He despises Pharblex and the bullywugs, and he would prefer to deal solely with the lizardfolk if they could overcome the gloom that has gripped the tribe since Pharblex murdered their shaman. Borngray thought mastering a craft as advanced as metalworking would instill the lizardfolk with a renewed sense of pride. He might be right, but so far, the lizardfolk have shown little aptitude for the craft. They do, however, enjoy basking in the warmth of the forge, and they have learned to take excellent care of their new weapons even if they can't manufacture more.

The six **lizardfolk** in the forge room won't attack unless they are antagonized first. They are trying to make an iron spear point from scraps of ruined armor, but their effort is producing something more like a shovel than a blade. They listen attentively if characters offer advice but show no sign of comprehending what they're told.

1I. Lizardfolk Ready Room

The twenty **lizardfolk** selected by Dralmorrer Borngray to serve as his backup guards use this northeast tower as their barracks. This chamber is their daytime ready room. When they are not drilling with their weapons, the lizardfolk spend their time in this chamber, gambling, exercising, and telling stories of happier times. Borngray maintains this force as insurance against treachery by Pharblex and the bullywugs.

Like guards elsewhere in the castle, those in this room assume that strangers are newly arrived cultists unless they have reason to think otherwise (seeing strangers with weapons dripping blood from recent

combat would be one such reason). They won't attack unless provoked, but they won't let anyone go upstairs or into areas 1J and 1K without an excellent reason, either.

1J. Lizardfolk Sleeping Room

The ten dominant lizardfolk guards rest in this chamber, because it gets more warmth from the forge (area 1H) than area 1K does. They sleep on reed pallets that are spread across the floor in no apparent pattern, and each keeps meager belongings beneath its "bed." Despite the lack of order, the room is clean and dry. It is empty during the day, but ten **lizardfolk** sleep here at night.

1K. Lizardfolk Sleeping Room

Ten lizardfolk guards sleep in this chamber. They are the less dominant half of Borngray's lizardfolk guards, consigned to this sleeping chamber because it gets less warmth from the forge (area 1H) than area 1J does. They sleep on reed pallets that are spread across the floor in no apparent pattern, and each keeps meager belongings beneath its "bed." Despite the lack of order, the room is clean and dry. It is empty during the day, but ten **lizardfolk** sleep here at night.

1L. Chapel

Over the years, this chapel has been consecrated to several different deities, depending on who ruled the castle. Now it is a shrine to Tiamat, adorned with a handsome wooden statue of the dragon queen crafted by lizardfolk. The workmanship is surprisingly good, though most of Tiamat's visages bear a stronger resemblance to lizardfolk than to dragons.

The cultists venerate Tiamat but do not worship her, so the chapel is seldom used for anything that could be considered a religious observance or mass. Instead, individual cultists or small groups sometimes retire here for quiet reflection on how the world will suffer when the Queen of Dragons rises.

Treasure

A hidden compartment beneath Tiamat's black dragon head contains a *dagger of venom*. It can be found with a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check. Only Rezmir and a few of the lizardfolk (including Snapjaw) who were involved in carving the statue know about the dagger.

1M. Storeroom

All the trash from the chapel—broken stools, rotted altar cloths, corroded icons—was dumped in this room when the cultists took over. There's nothing of value here.

1N. Rectory

This was originally the castle priest's living quarters, and it included many sturdy storage cabinets for vestments and religious paraphernalia. All the cabinets were hacked open and looted long ago. Four **dragonclaws** (see appendix D for statistics) moved into this chamber and turned it into their living quarters. They tend the library in area 2N.

1O. Chapel Gallery

This long hall has served as a modest gallery for religious artwork, a library, and a storage room depending on which deity the chapel served. Currently, the cultists don't use it for anything and it is empty.

1P. Kitchen

Meals for the cultists are prepared in this kitchen by a dwarf chef and his two human helpers (**commoners**). The chef is named Tharm Tharmzid. If given the chance, he complains bitterly about the lack of ingredients here for good meals. Everything he receives comes from the lizardfolk hunters and gatherers, whose notions about what is and isn't edible don't mesh well with Tharmzid's.

1Q. Great Hall

The cultists eat their meals and conduct most of their business in this high, wide hall. The eastern end of the hall is used for dining and socializing. The western half is where contraband hauled in from the Carnath Roadhouse is inspected, sorted, and repacked before being carried to the portal beneath the southwest tower. The tables in that half of the hall are covered with valuables.

Looting won't be possible, however, as long as any cultists are alive. During the day, there will always be twelve **cultists** (of initiate rank) working in the Great Hall and four **dragonclaws** (see appendix D for statistics) keeping an eye on them. Most of the cultists are human, but all the character races are represented. The precise mix doesn't matter.

If there is any disturbance in the Great Hall, everyone within hearing responds to the hue and cry. Cultists in the southwest tower and guard drakes from the inner ward show up at the start of the third round, and any bullywugs or lizardfolk in the outer ward respond at the beginning of the fourth round.

At night, two **guard drakes** (see appendix D for statistics) sleep in the Great Hall while a third **guard drake** patrols the hall and the inner ward. Even asleep, the guard drakes are at normal alertness.

Treasure

The southwest corner of the room is a makeshift carpentry shop, where cultists build new chests and boxes to hold the plunder. If characters have a chance to paw through the piles and keep what they find, they get 450 gp, 520 sp, 80 pp, 22 semiprecious stones (5 × 35 gp, 6 × 45 gp, 6 × 55 gp, 4 × 65 gp, 1 × 80 gp), and a *potion of greater healing*. Alternatively, you can create your own expert-level hoard.

1R. Southwest Tower Antechamber

Swamp water seeps into this chamber through a crack in the foundation to pool inches deep on the sagging stone floor and fill the air with a cloying, moldy stink. The cultists laid a walkway of planks across the floor so they can walk between the two doorways without soaking their feet. This chamber isn't used for anything other than a passage between areas 1Q and 1S.

1S. Subterranean Entrance

The puddles in area 1R don't extend into this chamber, but the smell does. Because of that, the cultists use this chamber only as an accessway to other areas.

The most important feature of this chamber is the staircase that leads down to the caverns beneath the castle. It sits directly below the stairs that lead up to level two of the tower. There is no doorway across either set of steps.

1T. Unused Chamber

This chamber is wet and moldy, though not flooded. The cultists don't use it because of the dampness, so giant centipedes have moved in and made a nest. Anyone who enters the chamber becomes the target of ten **giant centipedes**.

If the characters pose as reinforcements sent by the cult, they are assigned this chamber as their quarters. Their first task is clearing out the centipedes, chinking leaks, and generally making the room livable.

1U. Keep Entrance

The entrance to the main keep is raised three steps above the level of the inner ward. A stout wooden door in good repair bars it, but the door is never locked or barred under normal circumstances.

This front chamber is a small version of the Great Hall, with a few tables and benches that are seldom used. Spiral stairs lead up to the second floor.

1V. West Guest Rooms

Normally, these rooms aren't used, but Azbara Jos occupies them currently. They are reasonably warm and comfortable. Jos will be here when he isn't consulting with Rezmir in area 1U, 2N, or 3L. Jos keeps all of his real valuables with him. The only things he leaves in these chambers are his clothes and his traveling spellbook—which contains all the spells he has prepared (see appendix D). The spellbook is locked inside a box of silver-inlaid redwood. The lock can be opened with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check, but if the roll is less than 20, the tampering sets off a magical ward with the same effect as a *Melf's acid arrow* spell; the acid arrow launches at the character who opened the box and causes 4d6 acid damage immediately plus another 4d6 acid damage at the end of the character's next turn. The damage is halved if the character makes a successful DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. Opening the box with the key disarms the trap automatically; Jos carries the key on a string around his neck.

Second Floor

2A. Upper Barbican

Although it is much cleaner than the lower level, the upper level of the barbican is still a mess. Muddy, webbed footprints of bullywugs trail up and down the stairs and fan out across the floor. This area is staffed by nine **bullywugs** day and night, but at night, they tend to sleep on watch.

This level of the barbican has no roof. Hundreds of melon-sized stones are piled around the battlements for throwing down on the heads of attackers. Many of the piles have collapsed, and the bullywugs are too lazy to restack them.

The causeway is fully exposed to archers positioned at the rear of the barbican, but the bullywugs seldom watch that direction.

The main feature of this area is a signal drum carved from an enormous hollow log. This drum can be heard for miles when it is beaten vigorously. The bullywugs send many different signals with the drum: they can recall patrols and foragers to the castle, wake up the camp, indicate mealtimes, announce changes of the guard, and sound a general alarm if the castle ever comes under attack. The drum is heard about six times on a typical day, and everyone who lives at the castle knows the meanings of the different drumbeats. Characters won't know what they mean without asking someone.

2E. Rotted Floor

The second level of the northwest tower is in bad shape. There are large holes where the floorboards have completely rotted away or fallen into the muck below, and the floorboards that remain are unlikely to support a human's weight. The beams are still strong, but they are slick with fungus and mold. A successful DC 10 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check is needed to cross the level on a beam without slipping and falling into the awfulness of area 1E.

The stone steps that wind around the outer wall come to a small (approximately 3 feet by 3 feet) stone landing, then continue upward to the third level. Characters are safe from falling as long as they stay on the landing or the steps.

A trapdoor closes off the top of the stairs at the ceiling. The door is latched with a simple wooden turn-button. The door also bears a warning but, because the warning was drawn in chalk nearly a century ago, it is all but invisible now. It can be noticed with a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check. After the chalk mark is noticed, anyone who reads Dwarvish can correctly interpret it as a warning that powerful undead reside in the room beyond. Adventurers placed the rune here decades ago after running afoul of the specters in area 3E.

Treasure

Across the tower, up against the south wall, is a single, locked trunk. The lock can be opened with a set of thieves' tools and a successful DC 10 Dexterity check. The chest contains 1,825 cp, 54 sp, and a pair of garish gold earrings that would be worth another 10 gp if melted. The chest was left behind when the last tenants of the castle departed, being considered not worth the effort to lug down the stairs.

2F. Stables Loft

The loft above the stables is where the lizardfolk store bundles of cut reeds to use as bedding in the stalls of the giant lizards. Other than reeds and a few bats, nothing else is here.

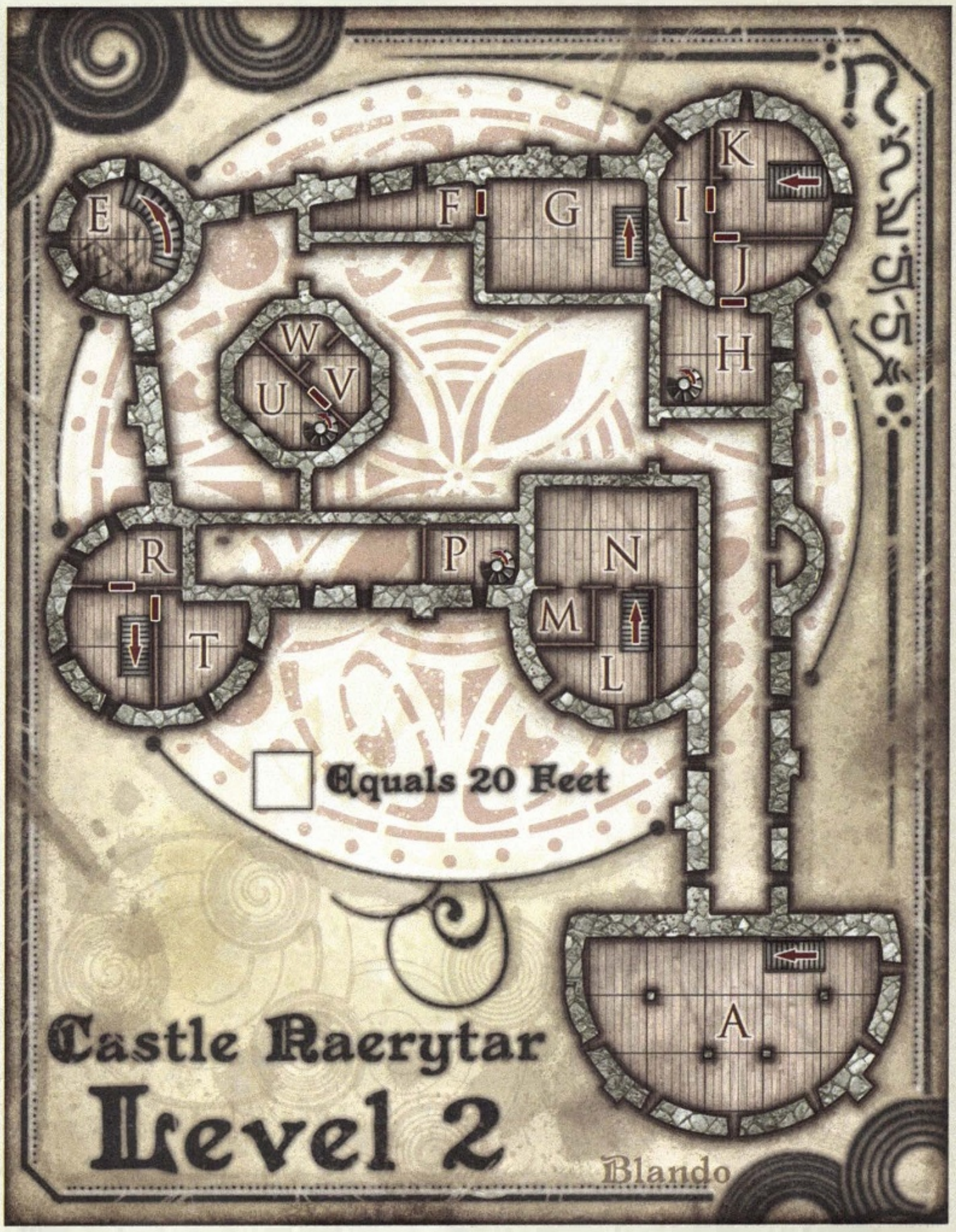
2G. Upper Barracks

Pharblex Spattergoo (see appendix D for statistics) and his personal retinue of ten **bullywugs** use this level of the barracks as their living quarters. No one else has any business being in this chamber, including cultists. Not even Borngray or Rezmir herself are welcome here. The bullywugs are always here at night but only two stand guard over the treasure chest during the day, when Pharblex spends most of his time in the giant frog hatchery beneath the castle. Those two guards trust no one, and one of them is equipped with a horn made of crocodile bone with which to sound the alarm if trouble develops.

Like all areas occupied by bullywugs, this chamber is a mess. Reed pallets, dirty baskets, and animal bones litter the floor.

Treasure

In the southeast corner of the room is a large, sturdy chest, wrapped in chains and padlocked. The lock can be picked with thieves' tools and a successful DC 12 Dexterity check. Inside is Pharblex's share of the bullywugs' pay: silver and electrum jewelry, hand mirrors, shell combs, hair pins and brooches with semiprecious stones, all with a total value of 1,376 gp. Most of the silver is black from tarnish. In a civilized land, every one of these items is something that would be found on a woman's dressing table or nightstand. This is a private joke that Dralmorrer Borngray finds quietly hilarious. It's all the same to Pharblex, since he knows nothing of civilization or the fashions of human noblewomen.



2H. Arsenal

This chamber was stocked with armor, weapons, and hundreds of arrows when the castle was abandoned. The metal rusted to dust, the arrows warped into uselessness, and the leather was chewed away by rats and other vermin. Now this chamber is the unofficial headquarters of the lizardfolk in the castle. Neither the bullywugs nor the cultists ever come up here.

The arsenal chamber is the warmest in the castle, thanks to heat rising from the forge (area 1H). The lizardfolk that live in the castle gather here—usually at night—to discuss their situation and what they should do. The debate is between accepting their fate as lowly servants of the Cult of the Dragon, attacking the bullywugs in a glorious yet suicidal assault, or biding their time until they can attack with a chance of winning.

The lizardfolk's stockpile of new weapons is hidden beneath stacks of rusted, rotten, century-old arms. Just a few minutes of searching through the junk can turn up one or two bundles of sharp, clean blades for shortswords, daggers, and spears, neatly wrapped in oilskin.

Unless the lizardfolk are meeting, this chamber usually is empty. The lizardfolk seldom come here when they could be observed gathering, to avoid attracting suspicion or making anyone curious about what's in the unused room above the forge.

2I, J, K. Vacant Rooms

Dralmorrer Borngray assigned the entire northeast tower to the lizardfolk for their use, but they sleep and live mainly on the ground floor. The second-floor rooms contain nothing of interest or value.

If characters poke around in this area, however, those with a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 15 or higher notice that the doors between areas 2H, 2I, and 2K open and close smoothly and soundlessly, unlike most other doors in the castle, which squeak and squeal loudly on corroded hinges. The lizardfolk keep these doors well-oiled so they can slip up to area 2H in the dead of night without awakening any bullywugs in the barracks (areas 1G and 2G).

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A trapdoor closes off the top of the stairs up to area 3H. The trapdoor isn't locked, but a pair of iron spikes has been hammered between the door and the frame. Opening the door requires either a DC 10 Strength check or ten minutes spent carefully prying out the spikes. If the door is forced and no one is standing by ready to catch the spikes, they clatter noisily down the steps.

2L. Outer Library

Dralmorrer Borngray has converted the second floor of the chapel into a library. This chamber at the top of the stairs contains a few crates and chests of books culled from the arriving treasure that haven't been sorted and cataloged yet.

2M. Reading Room

A small table and two chairs are the only furnishings in this chamber.

2N. Library

Books and manuscripts line wooden shelves constructed from salvaged lumber. One **dragonwing** (see appendix D for statistics) and **four cultists** (initiates) spend most of their time here, organizing the books.

Since treasure first started funneling through Naerytar, Dralmorrer Borngray has pulled out any books, parchments, tablets, and other written material that interested him. He knows better than to claim them as his own; he will forward these treasures to Tiamat's hoard when the work at Castle Naerytar draws to a close. Until then, he keeps the written material at the castle to study and to divert him from the miserable surroundings. Rezmir knows about the library and approves of using the books this way, as long as they are delivered to the Well of Dragons before Tiamat's arrival.

Borngray has assembled an impressive library. It contains over one hundred books, quartos, and manuscripts covering the history of the Sword Coast, natural philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, magic, and many theoretical works on alternate reality, time, and dimensional travel. This collection would be a priceless addition to any library or collector in Waterdeep if it could be removed from the castle before the cultists spirit it away or the bullywugs spoil it.

2P. Kitchen Storage

Items that are needed in the kitchen (area 1P) occasionally but not every day are stored here, along with nonperishable food such as cooking oil, grain, cheese, wine, and salted meat.

2R. Cultists' Sleeping Chamber

The lowest-ranking cultists sleep here. At night, five **cultists** are present. Otherwise, the chamber is empty of all but their reed mattresses and simple belongings in wooden trunks. A small stone hearth in area 2T provides meager warmth.

2T. Cultists' Sleeping Chamber

At night, seven **dragonwings** (see appendix D for statistics) sleep here. Otherwise, the chamber is empty of all but their reed mattresses and simple belongings in wooden trunks. A small stone hearth keeps the chamber warm.

2U. Dralmorrer Borngray's Common Room

This chamber is a combination sitting room and office, and a small hearth along the western wall provides heat. A writing desk, a large padded chair, and a bench are drawn up near the hearth.

2V, W. Borngray's Sleeping and Dressing Rooms

Area 2V is Borngray's sleeping chamber, furnished with a bed, a carpet-draped table with a wash basin and grooming supplies (comb, brush, soap, scented waters), and a stool. Rugs cover most of the floor. A **raven** in a large cage squawks loudly enough to be heard in the outer ward if a stranger enters the chamber, and the squawking awakens and draws the cultists and dragonwings from areas 2R and 2T to the tower.

Borngray is seldom here except when sleeping, immediately before retiring, and immediately after rising.

Treasure

In addition to the elf's clothing and personal effects, a small strongbox is hidden beneath a loose floorboard under a rug. The hiding place is spotted automatically if the rug is moved and missed automatically if the rug is left alone. The strongbox contains Borngray's emergency funds: 200 gp, 200 sp, and 10 precious stones worth 100 gp each. The locked box can be opened with a key from Borngray's belt or with a set of thieves' tools and a successful DC 15 Dexterity check.

Third Floor

Many of the topmost levels of the castle are unused by cultists. Some of them are still home to dangerous creatures that were sealed off instead of being cleared out.

3E. Specters' Sanctum

Several years after its builder and original owner abandoned Castle Naerytar, the castle was re-occupied by an all-female school of astrologers called the Academy of Stargazers. A few years after the astrologers moved in, they were wiped out by their own leader. Several of the castle's residents were murdered in this topmost room of the northwest tower in particularly hideous fashion. They are still here in the form of three **specters** haunting the chamber. They rest quietly, ignoring everything and everyone in the castle, until someone opens the trapdoor and enters.

The open chamber contains a large table and star charts in scroll racks around the walls. Three bodies are sprawled on the floor, reduced by time to powdery bones and dusty tatters of cloth. As soon as someone

enters the room, they rise as specters and attack. They pursue anywhere in the castle, but they won't leave the castle. They attack other living creatures if they can't get at those who disturbed their rest, but they prefer the intruders over anyone else.

Treasure

Most of the paper star charts crumble into dust when touched, but three are still sturdy enough to be carried away. One of these was drawn on parchment, one scribed on a clay disc, and one etched on thinly rolled copper. The surviving charts would fetch 700 gp each from an astrologer in Waterdeep or other major city.

3G. Unused Chamber

Originally, this level of the barracks was used for storage and for training during severe weather. Several fencing dummies and targets still stand around the room, but they fall apart if put to hard use.

3H, I, J. Spiders' Lair

The top level of the northeast tower is the lair of five **giant spiders**. They hunt in the swamp at night and return to the tower to rest during the days, entering through a hole in the roof. The spiders are wary, so they've never been seen coming and going. The lizardfolk know of them but haven't mentioned them to others.

The chamber is not hung with webs, but the cracked bones of many animals (including bullywugs) litter the floor. The spiders nestle among the deep shadows between ceiling beams, and they have advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks while hidden in their recesses.

A trapdoor is closed across the steps from area 2K and jammed shut with two iron spikes driven between the door and the frame. See the description of area 2K for notes about opening the door. The door is sufficient to keep the spiders out of the lower levels of the tower, since the spiders and the lizardfolk have an unspoken understanding to leave each other alone. That doesn't extend to strangers such as the characters.

3L. Rezmir's Office

The third floor of the old chapel is converted to living quarters for Wyrmspeaker Rezmir. No one else uses these chambers even when Rezmir is away from the castle for tendays or months at a stretch.

The furnishings in all four chambers are lavish—surprisingly so, compared to everything else at the castle. All other furnishings were built on site, but Rezmir's come from the workshops of the finest carpenters and upholsterers in Faerûn. They were brought to the castle through the portal from Talis the White's lodge.

This front chamber serves Rezmir as an office. It contains a writing desk, several smaller tables stacked with inventories and reports, and four beautiful but uncomfortable wooden chairs.

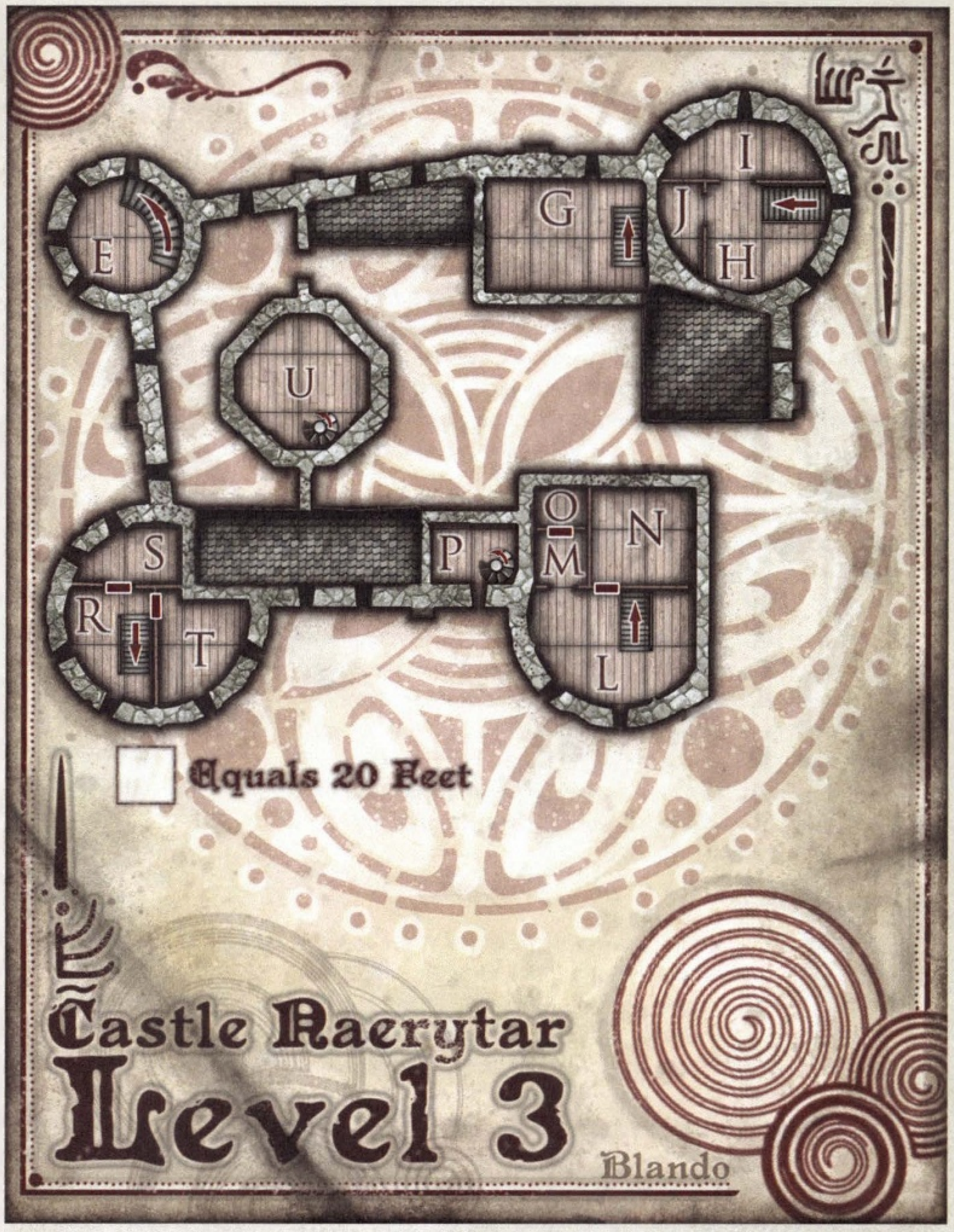
Among the papers on the desk are Rezmir's notes describing the portal beneath the castle and how to operate it, including its command word ("Draezir").

Treasure

Two matched onyx carvings of black dragons flank the top of the staircase. A serious collector would pay up to 3,000 gp for the pair. They are three feet tall and weigh 400 pounds apiece.

3M. Rezmir's Sitting Room

This chamber is a sitting room, comfortably furnished with upholstered chairs, padded benches, and two small carpet-draped tables. Rezmir does not entertain guests, so the chamber is never used by anyone but her.



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3N. Rezmir's Sleeping Chamber

A large bed, two wardrobes, a standing mirror, and an armor stand with a spare suit of scale mail armor dominate the room. One of the wardrobes is filled with clothing. The other, whose doors are painted with a depiction of a five-headed dragon, contains Rezmir's Cult of the Dragon regalia—purple robes, cloaks, mantles, and many items of rank, but not the *Black Dragon Mask*. Because Rezmir is a half-dragon, it's unlikely that her clothing or armor will fit anyone else.

The wardrobe containing the cult regalia is trapped. The trap can be detected with a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check. Once spotted, the trap can be disarmed automatically by using Rezmir's *insignia of claws* or with a set of thieves' tools and a successful DC 20 Dexterity check. If the wardrobe is opened without disarming the trap or if the Dexterity check fails, the trap goes off, causing vials of acid to explode. All creatures in the room must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 24 (7d6) acid damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one; the character who set off the trap has disadvantage on this saving throw. All Cult of the Dragon items in the wardrobe are ruined by acid, as are most of the furnishings and other objects in the room, including the dragon statuette described below.

Treasure

One of the few easily portable items of value in the room is a 2-foot-tall statuette of a black dragon, made from actual black dragon scales and claws, with ruby eyes and diamond teeth. It is perched atop a heap of treasure consisting of actual gold and gems. Its value to a collector is 4,800 gp, and it weighs only 20 pounds. Rough handling will damage it, however, and reduce its value to just 1,200 gp.

3O. Rezmir's Sanctuary

This chamber is where Rezmir retires to venerate Tiamat privately. The room is bare. Its only decoration is a stylized depiction of a five-headed dragon rising from a volcano, painted on the back of the door (where it won't be seen unless someone closes the door while they're in this room). The artist had only a few colors to work with and was not especially talented, but the five heads are recognizable as the five chromatic dragons.

3P. Kitchen Storage

This room contains more kitchen storage, similar to area 2P. Only dry goods are kept here—flour, sugar, dried fruits and vegetables—to avoid the hassles of hauling tubs or barrels of liquid up the stairs.

3R. Cultists' Sleeping Chamber

Middle-ranking cultists have the entire top floor of the tower for their use. At night, six **dragonwings** (see appendix D for statistics) are present. Otherwise, the chamber is empty of all but their reed mattresses and belongings in wooden trunks. A small stone hearth provides meager warmth. The door to area 3S is always kept closed but not locked.

3S. Unused Room

A portion of the roof and northwest wall has collapsed in this chamber, so it isn't used for anything. The door to area 3R is always kept closed but not locked.

3T. Cultists' Study

The six **cultists** who share area 3R use this chamber for studying their spellbooks and for practicing their magical craft. The chamber contains three stools, three writing desks, and a basin of water.

3U. Observatory

The Stargazers converted the top level of the keep into an astrological observatory. The most interesting device they installed was a *farseer of Illusk*—a telescope-like contraption that is useful for observing and studying heavenly bodies but which can also be used in a manner similar to an *arcane eye* spell. In that mode, the *farseer* can view a location within fifty miles of it. Tuning and focusing the device this way calls for a considerable amount of skill and practice, and the device's dilapidated condition makes the process more difficult.

Both Rezmir and Borngray visit this area frequently to study the *farseer*. The elf has had limited success with it, but Rezmir has mastered its use. Over the past year, she used the *farseer* to study Voaraghamanthar in the dragon's lair. During those spying sessions, Rezmir discovered the dragon's secret twin.

To protect this area, Rezmir enlisted the service of four **gargoyles**. They perch day and night on the four corners of the keep's roof, where they can be seen from the ground and where they can see through windows into the observatory. Only Rezmir and Borngray know the gargoyles are alive. If anyone enters the observatory without being accompanied by one of the two cult officers, the gargoyles tear open the observatory's four ceiling hatches and attack. This is the only intrusion they respond to. The gargoyles don't interfere elsewhere without direct orders from Rezmir, and she won't give such an order unless it is the direst of emergencies.

A character who inspects the contents of the observatory recognizes the *farseer of Illusk* with a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check. After its true nature is ascertained, using it to view a distant location requires a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check and a successful DC 15 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check. If the Intelligence check fails, the desired location can't be found. If the Dexterity check fails, the image is too distorted to convey any information. If the Dexterity check result is 5 or less, a key part of the *farseer* breaks off, rendering the item inoperable.

When characters find it, the *farseer* is focused on Waervaerendor's lair. This is a golden opportunity for characters to learn Voaraghamanthar's secret.

Characters might try to take this item when they leave. The *farseer* is bulky (approximately 40 pounds) and fragile. Worst of all, it has suffered almost two centuries of neglect. The least amount of rough handling will shatter it. A team of brass-smiths and sages, working patiently, might be able to remove the device from Castle Naerytar intact, but adventurers working in haste have no chance.

Beneath the Castle

The caverns beneath Castle Naerytar are accessible through area 1S. At the top, the steps are smooth and well made. As they descend, they are rougher, make several turns, and descend about 20 feet to area 1 of the dungeon map. This subterranean area is largely the realm of the bullywugs, who breed giant frogs in the cold lake. Pharblex spends most of his time down here, as do his bodyguards and many workers.

General Features of the Cave

Everywhere the walls drip water and the floor is slick with moisture. The temperature is a steady 50 degrees. There are no doors in the caverns.

Ceilings. Cavern ceilings are 10 feet high except where noted otherwise.

Light. Area 1 is brightly lit by lanterns. All other areas have no light.

Sound. The caverns are filled with the faint sounds of dripping water, scratching rodents, and scrabbling lizards. Sound does not carry well; the sound of a fight travels into neighboring chambers and attracts attention if the fight lasts more than three rounds.

1. Entry Cavern

The steps down from the southwest tower of Castle Naerytar spill out into this chamber. The chamber is brightly lit by one lantern hanging next to the entrance steps and another hanging near the northwest opening to area 9. The chamber is empty. Only the sound of dripping water comes from the direction of areas 3 and 9.

Steps to the northwest descend 5 feet to area 9. Steps to the southeast ascend 5 feet to a passage that descends again 5 feet to area 3. A search for muddy footprints accompanied by a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals that only bullywugs use the southeastern passage, never cultists or lizardfolk.

The water flooding the center of the chamber is little more than a puddle; it reaches a depth of 1 foot near the center. The water is slightly acidic, but not enough to cause damage. The gap in the wall connecting to area 2 is only about 3 feet high above the water, so most characters must crouch to get through.

2. Gray Ooze Lair

This chamber is the lair of a **gray ooze**, though none of the bullywugs or cultists are aware of it. Occasionally it slithers out of its chamber and eats a giant frog; the rest of the time, it stays out of sight. The ooze matches the surrounding stone perfectly and has nothing but time in which to camouflage itself. Compare the ooze's Dexterity (Stealth) check to the characters' passive Wisdom (Perception) scores to determine whether one or more of them spots it.

Treasure

Searching characters do see the glint of gems beneath the water at the east end of the chamber. Fishing through that area turns up a handful of fancy and semi-precious stones worth 1,800 gp (2 × 50 gp, 5 × 100 gp, 200 gp, 400 gp, 600 gp). The gems came from a less-than-devoted cultist who throws a fistful of coins and other treasure items into area 2 every time he gets the chance. His plan is to come back to the castle after the cult leaves and collect his "retirement fund." Unknown to him, the ooze living in area 2 scoops up the items when it passes through its lair. All the items except the gems dissolve in the ooze's body. The stones fascinate the creature's tiny brain, so it "spits out" the gems in the corner and collects them. The ooze won't bother those who enter, look around, and leave. It fights back if attacked, and it attacks (probably with surprise) anyone who takes gems.

3. Mud Room

The floor of this room is flooded a foot deep with sticky, reeking mud, making the whole chamber difficult terrain. Bullywugs roll in this mud, both because they enjoy it and for obscure ceremonial purposes mandated by Pharblex. Two **bullywugs** maintain the mud at just the consistency and depth the bullywugs prefer. They don't leap to the attack when characters enter, but they are hostile and quick to anger.

The steps to the west descend steeply 10 feet to area 4. A lip of stones across the top of the steps keeps most of the mud from spilling down the steps, but enough slops over to make the steps slippery. Every character who walks down these steps must make a successful DC 8 Dexterity saving throw to avoid tumbling into area 4. The fall causes 1d4 bludgeoning damage and makes a lot of noise.

4. Centipede Lair

This chamber is empty, but swarms of centipedes live in niches and alcoves lining the western wall. They are frightened away by torches, but lanterns, candles, and *light* spells don't bother them. They attack any group that isn't carrying at least one lit torch. There are two **swarms of centipedes** per party member.

5. Empty Chamber

The steps to the west descend 5 feet to area 6.

6. Frog Lake

Pharblex and the bullywugs raise giant frogs in this water-filled cavern. The ceiling arches 30 feet overhead. The floor of the pool drops off suddenly from the shore, with the water varying from 10 to 15 feet deep.

When characters enter, a **giant frog** sits still on the island and watches them. Most characters can't see that far from the entrance with torches or lanterns. If the characters stick to the shore between the east and north entrances, the frog doesn't react. If someone enters the water or walks out onto the promontory, the frog croaks loudly and splashes into the water. Characters hear more croaking and at least a dozen splashes from area 7. If they are still in area 6 or area 7 after 2 rounds, they are attacked by twelve **giant frogs**. The frogs focus their attacks on small characters they can swallow.

Frogs move into and out of this area by swimming through a passage that opens below the water level in the southeast corner of the pool. Characters can deduce



this fact if they watch the pool for 10 to 15 minutes and make a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Nature) check. The passage connects to water south of the bullywugs' huts outside the castle. Its total length is 300 feet. At 80 feet from the entrance in this pool, the tunnel branches; the left branch leads to the surface and the right branch extends 50 feet to a dead-end. In the pitch blackness, a swimmer has few cues about which tunnel to follow. A DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals which tunnel to follow.

Many bats also roost in this cavern. They can reach the outside through natural chimneys in the roof. The bats don't bother anyone normally, but if a fight breaks out, they become agitated and fill the air.

7. Frog Landing

When they aren't swimming in the underground lake, most of the giant frogs in the cavern sit on this rocky shelf, occasionally snatching bats out of the air with their long tongues. There can be as many as twelve **giant frogs** here at a particular time, plus up to five **bullywugs**. The bullywugs don't join the fight if the giant frogs attack characters as described in the area 6 description. Instead, they dive into the water and watch the fight from the edge of the characters' light. If the giant frogs look likely to win, the bullywugs join in. If the giant frogs lose, the bullywugs swim for the underwater exit in the southeast corner of the pool (see area 6).

Bones of larger animals brought here by the bullywugs and fed to the frogs also litter the ground. Most disturbing of all are three sets of iron shackles anchored to the stone, with human, elf, dwarf, and halfling bones.

8. Tadpole Hatchery

Giant frog tadpoles are raised in this small pool until they are large enough to avoid being eaten by the adult frogs in areas 6 and 7. The tadpoles currently in this area are harmless to characters.

The passage from area 6 is guarded by two **bullywugs** to keep adult frogs out. They hide from enemies in area 6 if they can. They'll fight if cornered or if a fight develops in area 6 and they see a chance for victory.

9. Crane

The ledge dividing area 9 from area 10 is a 15-foot drop. A wooden, crank-powered crane has been set up for lowering heavy crates of treasure down to area 10. The crane effectively triples a character's Strength score in terms of how much weight can be lifted. A wooden ladder is lashed to the ledge for climbing up and down.

10. Misty Room

Mist flowing out of area 2 and through area 9 accumulates here to a depth of 3 feet before spilling into area 6 and dissipating. Otherwise, the chamber is empty.

JARED BLANDO

11. Frog Shrine

Pharblex turned this area into a shrine to his distorted notions of religion. Niches in the walls are filled with carvings of frogs ranging from the size of a fist to the size of a pumpkin. Larger carvings sit on the floor. Crude renderings of frogs are scratched into the walls around the niches and colored with chalk.

Anyone with the Intelligence (Religion) skill recognizes elements in these designs taken from the worship of both Ghaunadaur (god of slimes) and Shar (goddess of shadows), but none of these elements are used in a canonical manner. Pharblex used pieces that he saw in religious icons that arrived in treasure shipments, but he has no understanding of their real meaning. With a successful DC 18 Intelligence (Religion) check, a character also sees indications that Ramenos is venerated here. Ramenos is an ancient entity now believed to be in a deep slumber. As far as the character is aware, Ramenos was a god of one of the ancient creator races—if it was ever anything more than a legend. Judging from this chamber, whoever created this place has only the shallowest knowledge about these entities.

Unless a disturbance develops elsewhere in the caverns, the most likely place to find Pharblex is here, followed by areas 12 and 7 (in that order). Wherever he goes, **Pharblex Spattergoo** (see appendix D for statistics) has ten **bullywugs** protecting him.

12. Pharblex's Sanctum

Pharblex comes to this chamber to contemplate the great mysteries of the universe—or so he tells his followers. This is the only place Pharblex goes alone. His bodyguards wait in area 10 or 11 while Pharblex "communes with the great powers." The chamber contains a mud-covered chair and reading table, a box of candles, and a wooden chest.

The chest is not locked, but it is trapped. If the chest is moved or if the hasp is not opened properly, six clay pots drop from concealed niches in the ceiling. Roll a d6 to determine how many pots shatter on the floor. The pots contain fine powder coated with hallucinogenic frog poison. Every creature in the chamber that is neither a frog nor a bullywug must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC equal to 11 + the number of pots that broke. A creature that succeeds on the save is unaffected. A creature that fails the saving throw succumbs to the hallucination that all other creatures in the chamber have been transformed into nightmarish, froglike monstrosities. While affected, the creature cannot take reactions and must roll a die at the start of each of its turns. If the die result is odd, the creature must use its action and all of its available movement to move to area 6, enter the pool, and remain underwater. If the die result is even, the hallucinating creature attacks the nearest creature to it, treating it as hostile. The effect lasts for 10 minutes.

The trap can be spotted by someone who inspects the chest or the ceiling and succeeds on a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check. Unbroken clay pots can be saved and used as poison grenades. A pot has a 50 percent chance to break open any time it's thrown. Bullywugs and frogs of all kinds are immune to the poison's effect.

Treasure

Pharblex retires to this chamber to study two spellbooks, which he stole from area 2N. Dralmorrer Borngray and Rezmir would be furious if they learned the books were missing. One belonged to a 7th-level wizard and contains spells up to level 4, and the other was written by a 9th-level wizard and contains spells up to level 5 (you pick the spells). Being wizard spells, the magic is beyond Pharblex's ability to learn or cast; his lust for power is great enough to keep him puzzling over the text and hoping for a breakthrough.

13. To the Graypeak Mountains

Mist from area 10 seeps into this room and keeps it filled to a depth of two to three feet. Aside from the mist, the chamber appears empty.

It is not empty, however. A permanent teleportation circle is carved into the floor, where it is obscured by the mist. Characters with a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 10 or higher spot the circle, while dispersing the mist (using a *gust of wind* spell, for example) reveals the circle to all.

To travel through the gate, a command word must be spoken aloud (a whisper will do). The command word ("Draezir") can be found on a paper on Rezmir's desk in area 3L or from Dralmorrer Borngray if he faces defeat with no escape. When the command word is spoken, everyone and everything inside the gate's circumference is teleported to the corresponding gate near the hunting lodge of Talis the White (see chapter 7). Castle Naerytar and the Graypeak Mountain lodge were constructed by the same reclusive wizard, and this was his means of transit between the two.

Rewards

Award standard XP for defeated foes. If you are using the milestone experience rule, the characters reach 6th level after activating the gate.





Chapter 7: Hunting Lodge

Characters who follow Wyrmspeaker Rezmir or Azbara Jos with the aid of the teleportation circle in Castle Naerytar's dungeon are deposited high in the Greypeak Mountains. The change in climate is very stark; the portal and a nearby lodge are buffeted by chill winds, and the surrounding countryside is heavily forested. The portal is one of several that predate the Cult of the Dragon, and it helps the cult leaders gather over large distances.

Next to the portal is a hunting lodge used by a succession of local lords over the years. The lodge is a useful and central meeting place for high-ranking cultists, among them a Wearer of Purple known as Talis the White.

Talis feels strongly that she belongs in Severin's "inner circle," but Severin doesn't trust her and recently appointed a dwarf named Varram as his wyrmspeaker in charge of recovering the *White Dragon Mask*. The adventurers meet Talis and her servants, and they could end up fighting Talis and her crew in the lodge. They might also bargain and make a deal with Talis, striking against those who oppose her ascension. If they do the latter, she helps the party reach the nearby village of Parnast and aboard Skyreach Castle (see chapter 8)—but negotiations are fairly hazardous and might easily result in combat rather than a deal.

If the players don't realize that the cult hopes to bring Tiamat to the Realms, this chapter is the best time for that information to be revealed or confirmed. Although Talis won't mention any details such as masks or summonings, the cultists share a general belief that the time is right for Tiamat's arrival. The characters can find several clues that encourage this belief.

General Features

The lodge is built in a comfortable but rustic style, and good tapestries and some hunting trophies festoon its rooms. The wooden floors are heavily scarred by claws. A successful DC 20 Intelligence (Nature) check reveals that these are not the marks of normal hunting hounds, but rather ambush drakes (see appendix D).

Ceilings. Most hunting lodge ceilings are 8 feet high.

Light. The lodge is not lit except by fireplaces and candles. The interior is dark when the shutters are closed.

GUIDO KUIP

Important Nonplayer Characters

The cultists who meet in the lodge come and go around planned gatherings. At the moment, things are in a lull.

Talis

Talis believes she is the rightful bearer of the *White Dragon Mask*, and that she was deeply wronged when custody of the mask went to her hated rival, the dwarf Varram, a foolish creature whom Talis considers insultingly incompetent and worthless. She's been watching the cult's hoard grow, and she hopes to still make her move to become a major figure within the cult hierarchy—certainly she has a lot of support among cultists.

Rezmir

Because they are enemies, Rezmir does not warn Talis that attackers might be coming through the portal on her heels, but instead slips off to Skyreach Castle (see chapter 8) with the intent of letting the adventurers destroy Talis. If the characters slew Rezmir, the lodge's relative lack of watchfulness is not surprising.

If Rezmir survived the earlier chapter, the half-dragon meets with Captain Othelstan in Parnast to receive a full report on the status of the cult raids and to inform the captain of the possible arrival of adventurers. Tracking her successfully requires a DC 23 Wisdom (Survival) check. If the adventurers ignore the lodge in favor of following Rezmir to Parnast, skip to chapter 8.

Trepsin the Troll

This four-armed troll is a demon-worshiper and a fanatical hunter of big game: nothing pleases him so much as bringing blood and bones back to feed his ambush drakes, or the delightful terror of his more intelligent victims. Trepsin cares mostly about combat and mayhem, but he has found that serving the cult makes combat and mayhem more likely. He's very devoted to Talis, and he serves the Cult of the Dragon enthusiastically. His four arms just make it easier to claw, rip, and shred anything too slow to escape his reach. He terrifies the kobolds and the human servants of the lodge.

Cult Signs and Signals

The Cult of the Dragon uses several signs and countersigns among its members, the most common being holding the hand out with all five fingers extended, which they call the "Tiamat salute." In addition, the phrases "All hail Tiamat!" and "They shall rise!" are frequently used pass phrases.

In addition to their signals, cultists often wear a five-colored band or even use red, blue, and green stripes as coded bits of clothing. A few banners showing cult insignia also exist, but most of those are being held in reserve for the days when the dragons rise to take over. Until then, pass phrases and the salute are the recognition signals most used among Cult of the Dragon members.

Through the Gate

The gate from Castle Naerytar closes as soon as the party steps through. The gate cannot be reopened without the proper password.

> Dark pine woods are all around on the slopes of a mountain valley; the air is cold and fresh. Two ancient stones stand to either side of you, and no more than a bowshot ahead along a path is a large house, with stone on the ground floor, timbers above. Within sight are more standing stones.
>
> Pine branches shift and sway in a gusting, fitful wind. A squirrel chitters and then falls silent.

The portal stands between stone markers (see area 1).

Outside the Lodge

> This ancient building has a wood and plaster upper floor over a fieldstone lower floor. Its shuttered windows are all closed. In places, the roof is overgrown with moss. A single door stands slightly open. Smoke pours from one of three large chimneys.

The lodge stands in a forest, among tall pines and in excellent hunting territory. The building can be accessed through the front door, kitchen door, the shuttered windows (DC 10 Dexterity check or a shutter bangs), or a hole in the moss-covered roof (above area 17) that's visible from the kennel and stables. Climbing up to the hole requires a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check.

The drake kennel (area 2) and wyvern stables (area 3) are stone outbuildings located behind the lodge, near a well and a woodpile. Investigating the kennel rouses the loud hissing and peculiar deep growl of drakes, and is one sure way to get the entire lodge's attention.

There's also the peryton nest on the roof (see area 22), directly above area 18.

Outdoor Patrol

If the party lingers outside the lodge or explores the woods nearby, it finds company. Those with a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 12 or higher are not surprised by the rush of a group of two **trolls** and three **ambush drakes** (see appendix D for statistics) that has been wandering the area. The combat alerts Talis that she has company. The trolls serve as the lodge's bouncers, and anyone who is not expected is eaten.

Troll Pursuit

If the party is forced to retreat from the lodge, the four-armed troll Trepsin (see area 2 and the "Four-Armed Troll sidebar) pursues them and tries to bring at least one of them back to the lodge for questioning.

1. Portal Stones

This location is not shown on the map.

> The mossy stones are old and weathered; lichen covers most of their surfaces, but traces of white paint remain in a few of the grooves.

The magical gate to Castle Naerytar sits between a pair of moss-covered standing stones visible from all the front rooms of the lodge. Three other portals near the lodge stand between similar stones, and the cultists have re-tuned their destinations to suit their own ends. One of them connects to the distant north (where Talis visits white dragon allies), one leads to a heavily guarded chamber in Thay, and one leads to the desert of Mulhorand, near a blue dragon's lair.

These additional portals should not be a major part of the adventure, but they can introduce cultist nonplayer characters coming to "do business at the lodge" if the characters decide to dawdle at the lodge for many days. Activating any of these portal stones is unlikely without the lore available in distant libraries or in Rath Modar's chambers in Skyreach Castle (see chapter 8).



Trepsin

The grooves are Draconic letters that spell out words in Loross, the language of Netheril. They mention the "snowy lands," an "unquiet swamp of mournful croaking," and the lands of the "red sun," but provide no place names. Over time, the stones have been used to reach many sites within the Realms.

2. Hunting Kennel

> The stone outbuilding has a mossy roof and no windows. The solid oak doors at either end are 9 feet tall; the whole thing resembles a small barn.

Opening the door requires a *knock* spell or a successful DC 20 Strength check; hammering on it brings the occupants over to open it, but they might be a surprise. When the door opens, read:

> The door opens and the smell of rotting flesh wafts out. The creature just inside the door is a four-armed troll in a muddy cloak, holding the leash of a small dragon. "What you want?" it asks. "Show the sign."

The four-armed troll, Trepsin (see the "Four-Armed Troll" sidebar), is asking for the cult's recognition signal. If the characters don't know it or just don't provide it, the troll attacks.

The kennel contains six **ambush drakes** (see appendix D for statistics), which the cultists use to track and kill game and intruders. The drakes obey Trepsin as the leader of their pack.

Trepsin wears a mossy and filthy cape that he soaks in water from the well; this provides both good camouflage and partial protection against fire. The muddy cape allows him to ignore the first 10 points of fire damage from any attack or source.

If the characters investigate the interior of the kennels, they find a disturbing altar.

> At the back of the kennels, three boar spears have been lashed together in a rough and strong tripod. An animal carcass hangs from the tripod by a rope: probably a young boar, though the flies make it hard to tell. Beneath it is a bowl circled by runes written in blood.

The runes are written in Giant. Trepsin is a follower of the demon lord Baphomet, lord of hunters and slayers. The strange and rusted spear-altar has rotted meat on it as a sacrifice to the demon lord.

Treasure

Trepsin keeps some items for himself. These include six ermine pelts (100 gp each), three fox pelts (25 gp each), and the prize of his collection: a full winter wolf cloak (250 gp) with a mithral clasp in the shape of a paw used to secure the cloak (750 gp).

MARCEL MERCADO

Four-Armed Troll

Sometimes when a troll loses a limb, it regenerates two limbs to replace the one it lost. This can result in trolls with multiple arms. A four-armed troll uses the **troll** stat block, except that it is a challenge rating 6 monster (2,300 XP) and has the following action instead of the troll's normal Multiattack action:

Multiattack. The troll attacks five times, once with its bite and four times with its claws. If two or more claws hit the same target, the troll rends the target, dealing an extra 2d6 slashing damage.

3. Stables and Well

The stables sometimes hold a wyvern or three, but they are empty at the moment. The well has a hoist, a bucket, and cold water, and it seems to have been carved magically through stone. It is otherwise unremarkable.

Lodge Ground Floor

The lower floor has heavy, mud-stained carpets and dark wooden walls. These are the common spaces for visitors and for servants. Characters can enter the lodge through the front door, the kitchen door, or a shuttered window. Opening a shutter without alerting the lodge's occupants requires a successful DC 12 Dexterity (Stealth) check.

The lodge is currently empty of most senior cultists other than Talis, who is on the upper floor (see area 16). She expects only fellow cultists as visitors. Most servants will expect that friendly visitors are here to see her.

4. Cloak Room and Guard Post

Just inside the front door is a chamber with pegs and benches for cloaks and boots. A set of rusty spears rests in one corner, held in the claw of a small drake statue.

The guard post to the right of this entryway is unoccupied except when large groups of rival cultists gather. Two small arrow slits make it easy to fire into the entry hall with three-quarters cover.

5. Small Hall

This central hallway has stairs, large wooden doors, and a set of fine plate armor. Flanking the main entrance are two freestanding suits of elven plate armor, both coated in chipped green paint. Man-sized demonic statues stand near the base of the stairs.

The heavy carpet near the entryway is stained with the muddy boots of returning hunters. The two demonic statues are **gargoyles**, and they attack creatures that enter the hall with weapons drawn.

Treasure

The freestanding suits of elven armor are warded with freezing runes that can be detected with a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check. Any creature that touches one of the suits or passes between them must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. On a failed saving throw, the creature takes 1d12 cold damage and is restrained (frozen in place) for 1 minute. The creature may use an action on its turn to make a DC 15 Strength check, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Each suit of plate armor is mounted on a crude wooden stand vaguely shaped like a headless elf. A freezing rune can be remove with *dispel magic* (DC 15), whereupon the armor becomes nonmagical.

6. Three Hounds Parlor

The stout beams overhead are stained black with smoke. A comfortable table and chairs, a small wardrobe, and suit of dull black armor stand in the room. A large tapestry shows three hounds dragging down a white boar, and it shimmers with strange light.

The armor is a **helmed horror** disguised by an illusion to appear as ordinary armor. It detects as magical and attacks if disturbed or if commanded to do so by Talis or someone else wearing purple Cult of the Dragon robes. The helmed horror has an *Evard's black tentacles* spell stored in it. It is programmed to cast this spell when confronted by three or more adversaries, and can do so only once. (See the helmed horror's stat block for details on its Spell Storing trait.)

Treasure

The tapestry is magical and transports those who step through it into the surrounding forest, about five miles from the lodge. It often places the travelers near a deer, mountain goat, or other wild game. The tapestry weighs about 50 pounds and works only when it is hanging on a wall, teleporting creatures to a random location out to a range of five miles; it does not work if placed on the floor like a carpet and loses its magical property if damaged in any way. It is worth 2,500 gp, or 400 gp if it loses its teleportation property.

7. Kitchen

There is a door out to the drake kennels (area 2) and stables (area 3) here.

This spacious kitchen is a hive of activity. A large stove against one wall contains a roaring fire with a bubbling stew pot and shanks of venison suspended above it. Strings of onions and herbs crisscross the ceiling like webs above cluttered tables. Preparing meals are four humans: two men and two women. All are within arm's reach of boiling water, cleavers, and knives, and their stares make it quite clear they don't like company.



These four **cultists** are Talis's servants. They know how to cook, and they can put up a fight. If attacked, one cultist runs to the drake kennels (area 2) to fetch Trepsin and his drakes. Those reinforcements arrive 3 rounds later.

8. Pantry

This pantry is well-stocked with beans, butter, smoked hams, hard biscuits, fresh apples, eggs, sacks of flour, and barrels of ale. There's enough food here to last a long winter.

A successful DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals a hollow space under the floorboards that contains a strongbox, inside which is stored the lodge's fine dining silver: 24 place settings of butter knife, soup spoon, fork, and dessert spoon—but no knives.

Treasure

The silver is worth 300 gp all told, and it weighs 50 pounds.

9. Basement

The cellar is damp and smells like apples and vinegar. Bags of apples and sacks of potatoes line one wall. Three prisoners are chained along another wall: a dwarf with a chopped and singed beard, and two humans—a man and a woman. The woman is wounded. Their chains are secured to iron rings, keeping them just out of reach of the food.

They are all shackled with iron chains and malnourished, and two of the captives are clearly whipped and beaten. The cultists captured them and brought them to the lodge for interrogation.

Craggnor the Dwarf

Craggnor is a member of the cult and a friend of the dwarf Varram the White, the cultist whom Talis hates above all others. She captured Craggnor hoping to learn a weakness she can exploit, but so far he has resisted various bribes, enchantments, and physical torments. She intends to try a more powerful form of mind-reading after she can pull together materials.

JARED BLANDO

Miresella

This young woman from Baldur's Gate came to Parnast with a caravan, stumbled upon the cult's doings here, and was captured. She is terrified of Talis, who comes down to beat her and Craggnor from time to time. She has bruises and cuts along her neck and shoulder. Treat her as a human **scout** with just 1 hit point to start. She's grateful to escape but not eager to tangle with the cult unless healed and equipped.

Brother Caemon

This human **priest** of Amaunator has not been abused, which makes him nervous. He says he arrived here from Hillsfar to the east, as part of a pilgrimage to a shrine on the coast, and this is why Talis singled him out for good treatment—he's unlikely to know anything useful.

Brother Caemon suspects that Talis is trying to win him over to the cult, but he also fears that Talis plans to sacrifice him as part of a summoning ritual and is trying the "catch more flies with honey" approach to win his freedom. Talis's kindness is entirely false, but it might confuse the characters as a red herring. Caemon doesn't know much, and he is a bit of a kind-hearted fool.

10. Guest Chamber

This room is dark and cold. Furnishings include a bed covered with blankets and furs, a small desk with an unlit oil lamp atop it, a washstand, a chamberpot, and a brazier of coals. The window is shuttered.

This room is ready for guests, but unoccupied. There is nothing of value here.

11. White Stag Parlor

This room is warm and comfortable, with a large fireplace, stuffed leather chairs, and a table set with smoked sausages and candles. A tapestry displays a magnificent white stag above a valley, with a pair of green dragons soaring overhead and deer, boars, and hedgehogs hiding among the leaves and trees below.

The walls each have a trophy or two, including two fine mountain goat heads, an elk's head with a 10-point rack, a giant eagle's head and talons, a metallic bull's head, a griffon's head and foreclaws, and the head of a white-furred boar with tusks as long as daggers. The room seems otherwise deserted.

The metallic bull's head is a gorgon, and the trophies are all real, though not valuable except as curiosities.

Treasure

The tapestry here is worth about 400 gp, but weighs 40 pounds. Additionally, the griffon's head does contain something unusual: a stash of two *potions of healing*.

12. Kobold Servants

A foul odor permeates this unfurnished room, which is filled with more than twenty kobolds, half sleeping and half awake.

The twenty-four **kobolds** are the lodge's maids, grooms, and cooks. They work primarily at night. The kobold servants avoid combat, but they spy on every visitor and report back to Talis if they see anything suspicious.

13. Human Servants

This room contains three beds and a simple writing desk. The room smells clean, and the floorboards are swept spotless.

Three human servants (**commoners**) sleep here when they are not working as the lodge's waiters and greeters. They were hired by the lodge's prior owner, one Lord Marsten, a noble slain by the cult. They are confined to this chamber when not serving Talis. These resentful servants are the chief butler Gastyn, head maid Arlaenga, and former chief hunter and now chief groom Angrath Woodwise. They resent the cultists, especially Trepsin the troll.

The human servants avoid combat, but they spy on every visitor. Arlaenga is trying to ingratiate herself, and she reports back to Talis if she sees anything suspicious.

The servants are willing to tell the adventurers about the troll in the kennels (area 2) and the room where the whole cult comes to plot (area 20). They also know that the perytons can be placated with food (area 22), and that the cult keeps a valuable banner in the linens (area 15). Most of all, though, they say they've seen "a castle in the sky near Parnast."

14. Bath

This small chamber has a large bathtub in it. The lower bath doubles as a laundry for the servants to wash linens, bedding, and so forth.

15. Linens

This room is stacked with blankets, sheets, various animal furs, tablecloths, flags, banners, and rolled-up rugs.

There's nothing of exceptional value here, but one of the banners has five stripes colored black, blue, green, red, and white, respectively. The banner is meant to be flown on a lance or spear as a signal when approaching Skyreach Castle, to show that the bearer is friendly. Any captured cultist can explain the banner's purpose.

Lodge Upper Floor

The second floor includes sleeping quarters for guests, the armory, a feast hall used for cult gatherings, and Talis's private room.

16. Talis's Hall

What looks to be a well-appointed chamber is filled with furniture and can serve as a place to eat food or discuss important matters. Three men in the room wear scale mail and carry swords; a woman wears robes over white scale mail, and she holds a wand set with a blue gemstone. "Welcome. I consider you to be my guests. Perhaps we can do business."

This encounter is the classic scene where the villain explains herself if the players are willing to pause. In combat, **Talis the White** (see appendix D for statistics) stands behind her bodyguards and uses a *wand of winter* (see appendix C). Talis's bodyguards include two human **veterans** named Maelgot and Sorvic, and a **dragonclaw** (see appendix D) named Kusphia. If Talis is slain, the veterans surrender, but Kusphia fights to the death to avenge her slain mistress.

Talis expects to meet some co-conspirators at the lodge to discuss various matters of her own ascendancy in the ranks. If the characters can be turned to her advantage, she would much rather send them against her rival than fight them. At the same time, she knows she cannot be seen as disloyal to the cult's interests.

Negotiating with Talis. Talis is wary of the characters but offers them hospitality to see whether they might be useful tools. An observer will note that she is polite but not warm. She is clearly looking for something.

What Talis Wants. Talis wants to move up in the ranks by causing her rivals to fail spectacularly.

What Talis Offers. She urges the characters to thwart the transport of a large treasure hoard. Cultists under Rezmir's command are using a cloud giant's flying castle to expedite the delivery. Talis offers to help the characters get aboard Skyreach Castle before it departs (see chapter 8) and provides them with a banner (see area 15) and a useful pass-phrase ("Tiamat, our Mother and Strength") that will allow them to reach the castle unharmed.

Accepting the Deal. If the party accepts the deal, Talis prefers to remain behind so that she can use her magic to check on them from time to time. If the characters insist that she join them, she acquiesces but might turn against them depending on how events play out in Skyreach Castle.

Rejecting the Deal. Refusing Talis's generous offer triggers a fight. Talis shouts for reinforcements, which brings the gargoyles from area 5, the helmed horror from area 6, and the kobolds from area 12 running, and even yells out the window for Trepsin the troll. Pull out all the stops—and if things go badly, Talis climbs out a window and flees into the woods or through a portal (see area 1).

Talis Surrenders

Talis is not a to-the-death sort of villain; she is a survivor and willing to surrender and ask for mercy. Indeed, she uses her rivalry and her recent setbacks within the cult hierarchy to paint herself as a "disgruntled cultist" who is perhaps not eager but willing to provide information.

If the characters accept her surrender, she shares the following information as long as the character questioning her continues to make a sequence of successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) rolls. Once a roll is failed, she clams up—at least until she is bribed, threatened, or offered other information in exchange.

- Talis identifies the five leaders of the cult as "wyrmspeakers," each of whom has an affinity for a particular kind of chromatic dragon. The leaders' names are Severin the Red, Galvan the Blue, Neronvain the Green, Rezmir the Black, and Varram the White.
- She explains the significance of the banner in area 15 and reveals the various cult signs and signals (see the sidebar at the start of the chapter).
- If that is not sufficient, she tells them that the cult has an enormous hoard of valuables in a flying castle hidden nearby—but not for long. If pressed for details, Talis reveals that castle belongs to a cloud giant allied with the cult. The castle, she says, is hidden near the village of Parnast, which is under the cult's control.
- If all that is not enough, she tells the party, in glowing and worshipful tones, that a great white dragon inhabits the castle. She refers to the dragon as "snow-white Glazhael, the Cloudchaser, a handsome dragon of the pure northern breed." She sounds like a fanatic when discussing dragonkind.
- She doesn't know much about the Red Wizards but reveals that a Red Wizard liaison has been sent to help arrange the hoard's transport to the cult's headquarters.
- She might be willing to tell the party the cult and its allies are building an army in the Sunset Mountains far to the south, in anticipation of Tiamat's arrival.

17. Armory

A gaping hole in the roof exposes this armory to the elements. Few weapons are stored here at present. Shelves to the north lie mostly bare, and a poorly maintained weapon rack standing against the south wall holds three rusty spears and a frayed net. Nearby is a closed cabinet.

A search of the shelves and weapon rack yields a longsword, a box of 20 crossbow bolts, a box of 10 arrows, three spears, and a net. The cabinet is unlocked and contains two heavy crossbows and two longbows.

Treasure

One of the rusty spears is decorated with inlaid mithral (50 gp), and another, named *Dragongleam*, is enchanted with 10 charges of a *daylight* spell for use in twilight or dark forest underbrush. The command phrase is "Tiamat's eyes shine," written in Draconic runes on the spear's crossguard.

18. Talis's Bedchamber

An enormous bed is covered in a soft burgundy bedspread, and a fire crackles in the fireplace, lending the room warmth and an atmosphere of comfort.

Treasure

Talis keeps a locked chest in this room and she carries the only key. It can also be opened by a character using thieves' tools with a successful DC 21 Dexterity check. When opened, light spills out from the *+1 chain mail* within it. The armor's light also shines on the chest's 4,000 gp and a *spell scroll* of *scorching ray*.

The two veterans carry 20 gp each, and Kusphia carries a symbol of the cult worked in silver worth 40 gp.

19. Bodyguards' Chamber

The shutters are open, allowing light to shine in. Four unmade beds line the south wall, and other furnishings include a table with four chairs and a wine rack containing a multitude of bottles, most of them uncorked and empty.

The veterans who serve Talis have taken these well-furnished quarters for their own: they are Maelgot, Sorvic, and Wessic the Wizened. Wessic, a human **veteran** of sixty years, is resting here the first time the characters show up; the others are in area 16. Wessic sleeps in his armor and keeps his weapon stowed under his bed, within easy reach. If awakened, he fights fiercely and shouts loudly for help; this usually brings Talis and the other guards, but not the Trepsin the troll or the lodge's human and kobold servants. If reduced to half his hit points, he attempts to surrender.

Treasure

Most of the wine bottles are empty, but the twelve full ones that remain are worth 15 gp each. In addition, one of the empty bottles contains a stolen gold necklace worth 250 gp.

20. Queen of Dragons Chamber

A roaring fireplace churns out heat and light at one end of this spacious, 30-foot-high chamber, the ceiling of which is buttressed by ten wooden pillars carved as dragons. Five large tapestries hang along the walls—two on the west wall flanking a door, two on the east wall hanging side by side, and a particularly grand one dominating the south wall next to the fireplace.

Once a feast hall, this room is now set aside for cult gatherings and is currently unoccupied. A set of double doors in the north wall pulls open to reveal a stone balcony overlooking the stables, kennel, and well (see areas 2 and 3 for details).

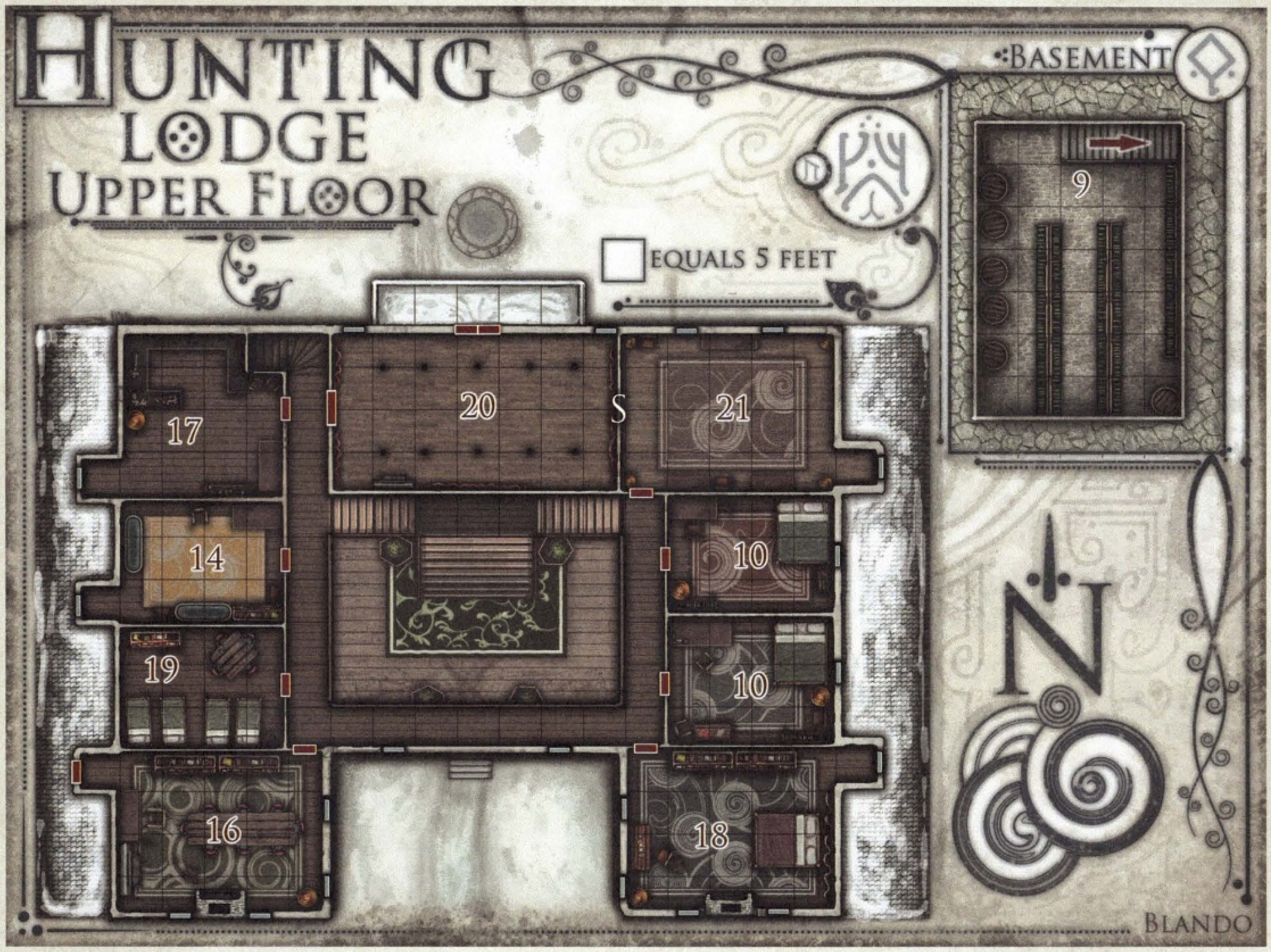
Tapestries

Four of the five tapestries each show dragons hunting, killing, and feasting on lesser creatures, with blue dragons attacking a desert caravan, elves succumbing to a green dragon's gaseous breath weapon, a red dragon burning down what might be the Castle Ward of Waterdeep, and a black and white dragon circling over a cold



Talis the White

BRYAN SYME



swamp dotted with ruins. Each is worth at least 500 gp to the right buyer, but each also weighs about 75 pounds and is extremely cumbersome.

The fifth tapestry shows Tiamat, the queen of evil dragons, in all her glory, crowned in gold and silver, and worked with gemstones and gold and silver thread. Fully 35 feet wide and 20 feet tall, it shows Tiamat crushing cities and surrounded by adoring followers. The tapestry weighs about 200 pounds and is worth 2,500 gp. Simply removing the semiprecious stones provides garnets, agates, moonstones, and others worth about 800 gp.

Close examination of the tapestries and a successful DC 20 Intelligence (History) check reveals their locations in the Sword Coast region. The blue dragons are attacking a caravan crossing the desert of Anauroch, the white and black dragons are circling above the Mere of Dead Men, the red dragon is near Waterdeep, and the green dragon is clearly rampaging among the High Forest elves, based on the mountains in the background. Tiamat herself is shown with what are clearly Waterdeep, Neverwinter, and Baldur's Gate in her claws.

Secret Door

The outline of a hidden door can be found with a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check. The door opens into the trophy room (area 21).

21. Trophy Room

Three open windows let in light and air; the room's walls are adorned with stuffed animal heads, including a large 14-point stag, a mountain goat, a bear, two winter wolves, and what can only be an ankheg's head. Two tattered banners hang from the ceiling, and two leather chairs and a handful of braziers complete the comfortable parlor.

This is very much a hunter's bragging room.

Secret Door

A secret door can be discovered between the eastern tapestries with a DC 20 Intelligence (Investigate) check. The door is cunningly hidden among the room's wooden panels, and pulls open to reveal area 20. It can also be discovered by pulling on the edge of the wood panel between the tapestries.

JARED BLANDO

22. Peryton Roost

This location is not shown on the map.

> This large nest on the roof is made of woven sticks, leaves, and feathers intermingled with the sun-bleached bones of sizable animals: deer, bear, or mountain goat, perhaps.

The nest abuts a chimney that leads down to Talis's bedchamber (area 18) and belongs to a mated pair of **perytons**. Several times during the day, the perytons leave their nest to hunt for food. There's a 50 percent chance that the nest is empty during the day; at night, both perytons are roosting here.

The perytons are allies of the cult and have a clear view of the portals in front of the lodge (area 1). They cannot see the stables or kennels (areas 2 and 3) from the nest.

Combat on the Rooftop

The nest provides reasonable traction and a good perch for the perytons, but the sloped roof is tricky to stand on. At the start of its turn or whenever it takes damage, a creature standing on the roof must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed saving throw, the creature falls prone on the roof; if the saving throw fails by 5 or more, the creature slips and falls off the roof, taking 2d6 bludgeoning damage and landing prone on the ground.

Treasure

The nest contains bones, old bits of armor, a punctured helmet, and other detritus. Digging around for 1 minute or more also reveals two treasures: an ancient *arrow-catching shield* and a bag of tarnished silverware worth 100 gp.

Traveling to Parnast

If you are using the milestone experience rule, the characters reach 7th level after clearing out the hunting lodge and either defeating Talis or forging a tenuous alliance with her.

Walking to Parnast

The village of Parnast and the castle is a five-mile hike from the lodge, on the far side of the mountain, through forested hills, over logs and rushing creeks, and along muddy trails. It's at least a half day's walk.

Missing the Castle

If the characters kill Talis and all her servants and guardians, there's no one to tell the characters about Skyreach Castle, and the party may well delay too long healing up or investigating the lodge. Consider leaving a paper trail in Talis's personal effects, or have a villager (most villagers are cultists) show up at the lodge with a delivery of food and supplies.



Dragonclaw

Tyler Jacobson



Chapter 8: Castle in the Clouds

The cult has acquired a friendly roost in Skyreach Castle, a flying fortress built by cloud giants. This castle is docked near the village of Parnast and guarded by mists, magic, and monsters. The fortress contains much of the treasure and valuables that the cult has looted from the surrounding region—treasure that will be added to an even more monstrous hoard at the Well of Dragons, where the cult plans to summon forth Tiamat.

By the time the characters arrive in the village, Rezmir has already announced that the fortress must be made ready for departure. Characters should have time to deal with Talis and possibly other cultists before it takes to the sky.

The characters must be smart in how they tackle storming the castle—it's clearly a well-fortified place. They also can't wait too long. If the characters tarry, Skyreach Castle leaves to pick up more treasure from another lair of the cult. The exact moment when it takes flight is up to you as DM.

If Talis is with the party, she can use her rank and influence to get the characters safely to Skyreach Castle, but once inside, she cannot guarantee their safety and, in fact, turns against them at the earliest opportunity. Characters should be at or near 8th level by the end of this chapter.

1. Village of Parnast

This small village is secretly under the control of the Cult of the Dragon. The cultists load and unload goods here, and some of those goods are sent to Talis's hunting lodge (see chapter 7).

> The village has a few dozen houses and a small square, with buildings that include a tavern, a stable, and a shrine. In contrast to this rustic burg stands a mighty ice castle half hidden in a fog-shrouded ravine: walls stand forty feet high, huge narrow towers loom upward—one of blue ice, one crumbling—and all of it is built to a scale for giants. Wisps of fog hide much of the castle's detail, but you see two statues standing just before the enormous gate.

Cultists posing as villagers are unfriendly toward visitors, while villagers under the cult's sway remain silent and withdraw from visitors for fear of incurring the cult's wrath.

If the characters demand to speak with someone in charge, they are directed to **Captain Othelstan** (see appendix D for statistics) but are also warned that he has no time or patience for dealing with outlaws.

GUIDO KUIP

The Helpful Wheelwright

While the village is full of cultists and those who cooperate with them, not everyone is willing to tolerate the cult's presence. One man, Gundalin the Wheelwright, a human male who makes wheels and fixes axles for the merchants, woodsfolk, and others, wants the cult gone. If the characters look around for someone who is not a member of the cult, they might find him at the Golden Tankard (where he says nothing) or at his small shop on the square. He often tries to catch their eye, but he is terrified of the cult and speaks only in a safe haven where he can't be seen. He knows all of the information in the "Rumors and Information" section.

Rumors and Information

Laborers, porters, craftsfolk, and cultists live and work in the village, and although they are reluctant to talk, they can be bribed, charmed, or talked around with a successful DC 18 Charisma (Persuasion) check. The following bits of information are available, one for each success, and should be doled out in the order presented below.

- The highest-ranking member of the cult to frequent Parnast is the half-dragon, Wyrmspeaker Rezmir. (If she is still alive and free, Rezmir has gone into hiding. No one in the village knows where she is, although they claim that Skyreach Castle is the most likely place to find her.)
- Rezmir's deputy is a cult veteran and dragonsoul name Captain Othelstan. He commands the cult forces in Parnast, and he monitors all visitors and merchandise passing through the village.
- The cult has controlled Parnast for more than a year, and it basically brought in a company of thugs to take over.
- Some villagers were already cult infiltrators, and others signed up when it became clear that the cultists are rich and have a private army.
- The cultists keep trained wyverns in the village stables. The cultists use them to reach the castle while it is airborne. (No one in the village, including Captain Othelstan, knows where the castle goes after it leaves Parnast.)
- Characters can also learn one of two pass-phrases for safely entering for the castle from Gundalin or anyone who becomes a friendly helper to them: "Tiamat, Our Mother and Strength" or "Hail Blagothkus."

2. The Golden Tankard

A yellow tankard hangs over the door of this rustic tavern. Inside, though, the place is short on cheer. All conversation stops and all eyes turn in your direction. A tall, heavyset man with enormous muttonchop sideburns steps forward and asks, "What can I get you travelers?"

A visitor can buy a mug of beer for 3 cp or a mug of strong mead for 1 sp. There's sausage on the menu as well as stewed cabbage and heavy black bread (4 cp for a plate full), but no one visits for the fine dining. It's just enough to keep a visitor going another day, and no more than that.

If the characters sit and order ale, well and good.



JARED BLANDO



Captain Othelstan

> "I will send the pot boy out to you in a moment with the finest available in my humble tavern." He goes toward the kitchen, bellowing for a cask.

The owner is Raggnar Redtooth, who seems friendly enough but secretly takes bribes from the Cult of the Dragon. Strangers are never really welcome in his tavern, but they get service while he informs Captain Othelstan by sending a messenger. Raggnar has a violent past and is treated as an unarmored **veteran** (AC 10). He keeps his weapons behind the bar.

Prying information from Raggnar and his clientele is difficult. The villagers want to keep the characters occupied, and they ask for them to tell tales of their journey, they inquire about the characters' families and where they are from, and they query how the party got here.

If asked about a place to sleep, Raggnar makes it clear that he isn't an innkeeper: there are no beds or rooms, and even the stable is full. If anyone asks why, he gives his usual excuse: "Lord Marsten and his entourage are coming to hunt. All the servants are making things ready for their arrival." (This is pure nonsense, of course—he has no rooms other than his own.) If the characters just wait a moment, Raggnar says he will offer them his own chambers, for a steep fee of 10 gp. "I'll clear out a few things and it is all yours." This is also a stalling tactic, though he'll certainly take the money.

Because the cultists are about to ship a castle full of treasure from the village, they desperately don't want the characters to find anything suspicious, such as wagons loaded with chests (there's no room to hide a caravan in a village this small) or their wyvern mounts in the stables (see area 3). If Raggnar can keep the characters eating and drinking and gossiping, then Skyreach Castle can slip away into the sky.

Treasure

The Golden Tankard takes its name from a common magic item that Raggnar found years ago: a golden stein decorated with dancing dwarves and grain patterns. This is a *tankard of plenty*. Speaking the command word ("Illefarn") while grasping the handle fills the tankard with three pints of rich dwarven ale. This power can be used up to three times per day.

3. The Stable

> The two big doors leading into the stable are sealed, and the place looks shuttered.

If the characters ask around, the villagers claim that the stable was put out of business some time ago. Anyone listening carefully hears a bellowing noise, though (no check required). The cult keeps two **wyverns** in the stable; sometimes, they unleash a wyvern-sized roar.

Cracked sheep bones and a few ox skulls cover the stable floor. Other than riding harnesses for the wyverns, there is no treasure here.

Wyvern Riding and Castle Catching

The wyverns in the stable (area 3) are trained to carry up to two Medium or six Small riders at a time. The difficult part is getting their harnesses attached so that riders don't fall off, and giving the proper commands once airborne.

Any character can put the harness on a wyvern with a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check. If the check fails by 5 or more, the wyvern strenuously objects and attacks the character once with its tail stinger as a reaction. The wyverns aren't choosy about who rides them, but convincing a wyvern to fly or move in a specific direction requires an action to make a DC 15 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check; if the check fails, the wyvern ignores the rider's commands until the rider's next turn. After a rider succeeds on two such checks, the wyvern goes where the rider wants for the next hour, or until it takes damage or the rider dismounts.

The castle is easily spotted, day or night, out to a range of five miles. The wyverns are faster than the castle in flight, and they can catch up to it.

BRYAN SYME

Timing the Departure

How long can the characters dawdle? The question of timing is tricky, since the party might head straight to the castle and miss a lot of possible information and roleplaying in Parnast. So, Skyreach Castle should leave whenever it seems most dramatic to you as DM, but here are some tips to help you choose the best moment.

Storming the Castle Immediately. Aggressive players can assail the castle while it's on the ground. In addition to dealing with the castle's defenses, they must also contend with reinforcements from Parnast. Such reinforcements include **Captain Othelstan** (see appendix D for statistics), one **veteran**, six **guards**, and three **dragonclaws** (see appendix D for statistics). In addition, Othelstan and the veteran (his lieutenant) ride a pair of **wyverns** (see area 3).

Dawdling and Resting. Any party that spends an hour or more in the village asking questions, getting a meal or rest, or otherwise not getting aboard the castle might miss the boat. The castle leaves one hour after the cultists realize the village has been infiltrated. After the castle is gone, the villagers drop all pretense of friendliness and send **Captain Othelstan**, one **veteran**, and six **guards** to attempt to capture the intruders and either kill them as sacrifices or drive them out of the village. Othelstan can also call for reinforcements in the form of three **dragonclaws**, one of whom takes the time to release the two **wyverns** in the stables (see area 3).

Last Recourse. If the castle flies away without the characters, Gundalin or another villager predisposed to help the party might provide assistance before Captain Othelstan and his retinue arrive, suggesting that the characters rush to the stables, mount the wyverns, and take flight at once. The characters have a few rounds to reach the stables before Othelstan has the building surrounded and demands their surrender.

Developments

The characters can try to equip the wyverns with harnesses and ride them as aerial mounts; see the "Wyvern Riding and Castle Catching" sidebar for details. If they steal one or both wyverns from under the Cult of the Dragon's nose, divide 4,000 XP evenly among the characters—more than what they would receive for slaying the wyverns.

4. Shrine of Axes

This wooden building is a shrine for woodcutters, and it combines several gods under one roof.

A statue of Angharradh, an obscure elven deity representing spring, stands among statues of gods representing the other seasons, namely Auril (winter), Chauntea (summer), and Mielikki (autumn). Angharradh's statue has been defaced by having her face and hands chopped away. A dead squirrel has been left at Auril's feet.

The statue of Mielikki is not only freshly painted but also has a set of small cups, bits of bread, and other small sacrifices at its feet.

5. Village Well and Square

A well stands at the center of the village square. Four buildings surround it: an empty shrine, a wheelwright's shop, a tavern, and a stable.

Timber merchants, woodsfolk, and others haggle over the finer lumber here, and wagons carry supplies. See areas 2, 3, and 4 for more information about the tavern, the stable, and the shrine.

The well is 40 feet deep, cold, and pure. Five human **guards** loyal to the Cult of the Dragon keep an eye out here at all times, making sure that villagers do as they are told. If the guards are confronted, one runs to fetch Captain Othelstan as the villagers flee. Only the wheelwright Gundalin sticks around to watch, and even he does so from behind a heavy wooden oxcart.

Skyreach Castle

Eons ago, cloud giants built this flying fortress to take their ancient battle against dragonkind into the skies. The spirit of a giant enables it to fly—this ancient bond dates back to the days when giants and dragons fought great wars. The binding kept dragons from taking these castles for their own, and the bond still holds centuries later.

The cult has struck a bargain with the castle's owner, a cloud giant named Blagothkus who harbors no particular hatred of dragonkind (or anything else, for that matter). The spirit of his deceased wife, Esclarotta, controls the castle's propulsion and buoyancy. The cult cannot afford to alienate Blagothkus, because the castle's spirit will not obey them.

Skyreach Castle is carved from ice so thick as to be opaque. The ice is as strong and impenetrable as granite, thanks to ancient cloud giant wizardry. Towers and walls surround an iceberg core that's been hollowed out to serve as the lair of a powerful white dragon allied with the cult. The whole thing can be hidden under a veil of fog and cloud, or set to move slowly with the wind. See area 19 for details.

General Features

The castle is carved from opaque ice magically reinforced to be as hard as stone. While on the ground, the castle rests in a wide ravine on the outskirts of Parnast. Everything in the ravine is heavily obscured by fog, so the characters can approach the castle without being seen by its inhabitants. Until the castle takes flight, cultists and guards from the village deliver wagons laden with supplies and treasure to the castle's main gate (see area 6 for details).

Ceilings. All castle ceilings are 30 feet tall to accommodate the cloud giants who built it.

Doors. All doors in the castle are made of 1-foot-thick ice as hard and tough as stone, but only half the weight. They are fitted with iron hinges and handles, and sized for giants. A normal door is 20 feet tall, 8 feet wide, and has its handles situated 10 feet above floor level.



JARED BLANDO

Important Nonplayer Characters

Skyreach Castle is home to the cloud giant Blagothkus, a pair of stone giants named Wigluf and Hulde (allies of the cloud giant), Wyrmspeaker Rezmir of the Cult of the Dragon, two Red Wizards of Thay (Rath Modar and Azbara Jos), a vampire named Sandesyl Morgia, and an adult white dragon named Glazhael the Cloudchaser.

These adversaries do not entirely trust one another and are unlikely to present a unified front against the characters. Instead, the giants fight to defend their home, and the cultists and dragon fight to defend their treasure. If the characters play their hand wisely, this lack of trust will be the villains' undoing. The NPCs have dozens of servants, cultists, and guards at their disposal. If more than one or two of these turn up dead, the cultists search the castle for the killers.

Negotiating with the Cloud Giant

Blagothkus the cloud giant is not a particularly enthusiastic supporter of the Cult of the Dragon, but he sees it as a way to stir his fellow giants out of their complacency and into action.

Blagothkus thinks giants have grown soft, and thrashing some dragons would be good for giantkind. So, he plays along with the cult, but on the side he is gathering support among giants, urging them to assume their rightful place as lords of the world. He believes that the rise of Tiamat and the threat of a dragon empire will spur the giants to unite.

Blagothkus has no conflict with "small folk." He'll happily let the party know that yes, his castle is transporting a vast amount of treasure to the Well of Dragons, where the cult is gathering its forces and amassing a hoard in anticipation of the Tiamat's arrival (from where he doesn't know). If the characters want to help him fight cultists, he'll happily take them somewhere more interesting up north, where he's massing his own small army to fight the dragons after they have been lured out into the open. This army is further detailed in *The Rise of Tiamat*.

6. Main Gate

A lowered drawbridge spans a foggy moat. Beyond the drawbridge is an open portcullis, and beyond the portcullis is a covered gateway leading to an open courtyard. Large figures loom in the gateway, but you can't quite make them out.

Prior to the castle taking flight and leaving Parnast, the cult moves a few wagons laden with treasure chests and supplies into the lower courtyard and unloads them every hour or two during daylight. Adventurers within earshot of the gate who listen closely can also hear the password spoken as each cart passes by.

The supply carts provide a way for the party to enter the castle undetected. Cultists haul the supplies to the kitchen (area 15) and carry the treasure chests down to the dragon's main hoard chamber (area 25).

Walls and Aerial Defenses

The castle walls are carved from solid ice and possess the resiliency and texture of stone. The walls provide a great defense against attacks from the ground. While the castle is airborne, the walls also keep those within from falling to their deaths, and they block the wind.

By Day. Three ogres stand guard atop each gate tower (see area 6B). They can shout for reinforcements, which come from areas 9, 10, and 15. Rezmir and her guard drakes (see area 11) arrive three rounds later. The lower courtyard is clear of fog during daylight hours.

At Night. In addition to the ogres standing watch (see above), the vampire Sandesyl Morgia patrols the lower courtyard, which is heavily obscured by thick fog at night, and the upper courtyard, which is lightly obscured at night. As long as the vampire is on patrol, cultists and kobolds steer clear of the courtyards.

6A. Gateway and Golems

A heavy oak-and-iron portcullis is drawn up just behind the drawbridge. Two life-sized statues of 18-foot-tall cloud giants—one male and one female—stand behind the portcullis, facing each other within the covered gateway.

The winches that raise and lower the drawbridge and portcullis are located in the nearby gate towers; see area 6B for details.

The two statues flanking the portcullis inside the gateway are Huge but otherwise have the statistics of **stone golems**. Anyone who passes through the gateway without speaking the correct pass-phrase ("Tiamat, Our Mother and Strength" or "Hail Blagothkus") activates one of the golems. If another creature attempts to pass through without speaking the pass-phrase, the second golem attacks. Only a cloud giant can command the golems to return to their posts once activated.

6B. Gate Towers

These two gate towers are not the same height. The one to the left of the drawbridge is 120 feet tall, while the one to the right of the drawbridge is 80 feet tall.

Three **ogres** stand atop each tower. Although the ogres are equipped with javelins, they can also fire their javelins from a large ballista on the roof each tower.

Tower Rooftops

It takes one action to load and fire a ballista, and a ballista can be fired only once in a given round. An ogre firing a javelin from a ballista makes the following attack instead of its regular javelin attack.

Javelin. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 120 ft./480 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (3d8) piercing damage.

Each ballista has AC 10, hp 50, and immunity to poison and psychic damage.

Tower Interiors

A large trapdoor in the roof of each tower can be pulled open to reveal a staircase of ice that hugs the tower interior and spirals all the way down to the tower's ground floor, where there's a single unlocked, giant-sized door leading to the lower courtyard (area 7) or the cultist barracks (area 9).

The winch that raises and lowers the drawbridge is located on the ground floor of the northern tower, while the winch for the portcullis is located in the ground floor of the other. Each winch is manned by one **ogre**, and each ogre has strict orders to guard its winch and not leave its tower even if the general alarm sounds. Turning the crank on a winch is an action and requires a successful DC 15 Strength check, and each action spent turning a crank either half-raises or half-lowers the drawbridge or portcullis. (Two actions are required to fully raise or lower either barrier.)

7. Lower Courtyard

The upper courtyard (area 16) partially overhangs the lower courtyard, held aloft by gigantic arches of ice. At night, the lower courtyard is heavily obscured by fog to a height of 40 feet—the same height as the walls that enclose it.

> Walls of solid ice enclose this courtyard. Another courtyard partially overhangs this one. It is held aloft by sweeping arches of ice that soar to a height of over 100 feet. Doors of sculpted ice fitted with iron hinges lead to various outbuildings and main keep on the far side of the courtyard from the gate towers.

Add the following if one or more characters succeed on a DC 22 Wisdom (Perception) check:

> Hidden in the shadows of the overhanging courtyard, across from the main gate, is an opening in one wall that leads to a spiral staircase made of sculpted ice.

Combat here alerts the ogres in area 6, the cultists in area 9, the stone giants in area 10, and the kobolds in area 15. One of the cultists runs to area 11 and alerts Rezmir, who arrives with her guard drakes three rounds later.

Spiral Staircase

A spiral staircase of sculpted ice connects the upper and lower courtyards, as well as the tunnels leading to the main vault where the dragon lairs (area 25). The staircase's spiraling steps are coated with crunchy frost and cannot be climbed quietly, nor are they slippery.

8. Stables

The double doors to the stables are 20 feet tall and wide, making it easy for the wyverns (see below) to get in and out.

> The place stinks of some kind of droppings and rotted flesh. Cracked bones cover the floor. Two wyverns stride into view with their fangs bared and tails lashing.

This outbuilding currently holds two **wyverns** trained as aerial mounts. However, they are hungry and attack anyone they don't recognize.

Treasure

Four fine wyvern bridles are kept here, embellished with jade and with mithral bits (worth 500 gp each).

9. Cultist Barracks

The barracks smell of unwashed bedclothes, and the chamber contains fourteen fur-covered beds, as well as several chests of clothing, a table and chairs, and other simple furnishings.

At any given time, ten **dragonwings** (see appendix D for statistics) are resting here. Half of them are sound asleep, while the other half are awake but doing nothing overly strenuous. They do not roam the castle unless an alarm has sounded, they hear combat in the courtyard, or the ogres at the gate yell for reinforcements.

10. Stone Giants' Chamber

Two 20-foot-tall, 8-foot-wide archways connect this chamber to the lower courtyard. Any loud disturbance in the courtyard alerts the stone giants that dwell here.

> In the middle of this frost-glazed room stands a nine-foot-tall table of carved stone surrounded by three giant-sized chairs, also carved from stone. A fat iron cauldron etched with runes rests upon the table. On the floor in the far corner sits a large iron chest.

If an alarm has not been raised and the stone giants are present, add:

> A male stone giant gazes into the cauldron while a female stone giant sits nearby.

If the castle alarms have not sounded, the characters gain a surprise round.

The two **stone giants**, Wiglof and Hulda, are guests of the cloud giant. They are worried that Blagothkus's attempts to incite the giants into action against the dragons could lead to devastating consequences, but they are supportive nonetheless. They have agreed to help Blagothkus repair damage to the castle and gladly aid in its defense.

Presently, Wiglof is using a magic cauldron (see "Treasure" below) to perform an *augury* ritual and hopes to ascertain the most likely outcome of Blagothkus's alliance with the Cult of the Dragon, to either confirm or assuage the cloud giant's fears that the cult is planning to betray him. Any attack launched against Wiglof disrupts his ritual and angers him greatly. Hulda is Wiglof's companion and bodyguard, and any hostility directed at her or Wiglof is met with brutal force.

The stone giants know that the flying castle is controlled from a steering tower (area 19) accessible from the upper courtyard, and that only giants can gain entry to the tower.

Treasure

The stone giants collect small-but-perfect gemstones, primarily amethysts but also diamonds, opals, rubies, and topaz. Their collection is secured by a magical globe of force inside an iron chest, which is six feet long, four feet tall and wide, and weighs 500 pounds. Lifting the heavy iron lid requires an action and a DC 12 Strength check, and destroying the globe of force requires an *antimagic shell* or a successful casting of *dispel magic* (DC 16). The 32 gems are worth 500 gp each, or a total of 16,000 gp. The iron chest also contains the stone giants' masonry tools, but they are neither valuable nor usable by smaller creatures.

The iron cauldron weighs 50 pounds. When filled with water or some other liquid, the cauldron substitutes for the normal material components needed to cast the *augury* spell. The cauldron is worth 25 gp.

Developments

The stone giants are reluctant to share any information, but if defeated and either threatened or bribed, they might cooperate.

11. Rezmir's Chamber

The door is always locked and Rezmir holds the key. A *knock* spell is the easiest way to get in, but a character can also unlock the door with a DC 25 Dexterity check made using thieves' tools. Alternatively, knocking and spinning a good yarn might work; cultists and servants come and go at all hours.

> A large rug covers the icy floor just inside the door of this 10-foot-high room, which is lit by a brazier of hot coals. A large bed rests in one corner, a desk in another. Resting atop the desk is a handsome, iron-banded chest secured with a sturdy padlock.

Unless she is lured elsewhere by a general alarm, **Rezmir** is here along with two loyal **guard drakes**. Statistics for these monsters appear in appendix D.

The large rug inside of the door is actually a **rug of smothering**. The rug patiently waits for a creature to walk onto it before attacking. If they are present, Rezmir and her drakes wait for the rug to attack an enemy coming through the door before springing into action.

If Rezmir is killed, the contents of the iron chest on her desk teleport away, leaving the chest empty.

Treasure

Rezmir carries keys to this room, the lock on the chest, and to the storeroom (area 13). In addition, the chest here is locked and magically attuned to Rezmir so that if she dies, its contents are teleported to the Well of Dragons and out of her slayers' hands.

The chest's padlock can be picked using thieves' tools with a successful DC 20 Dexterity check. However, the lock is rigged with a poison needle trap that triggers if the check fails by 5 or more. The needle can be found with a successful DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check and can be disarmed with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check. A creature triggering the needle trap or failing the Dexterity check by 5 or more is injected with wyvern poison and must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw, taking 24 (7d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.



Rezmir

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The chest contains the *black dragon mask* (see appendix C) as well as Rezmir's private collection of gems, jewelry, and coins. The gems and jewelry includes a set of matched peridot stones on a gold chain (400 gp), a silver torc with dragon's heads (200 gp), six moonstones of 50 gp each, and a set of 20 loose pearls, worth a total of 3,000 gp. There's also 600 sp, 200 gp, and 50 pp.

Developments

If the characters capture Rezmir, she refuses to cooperate in any way. She prefers death over surrender, particularly if her death might keep the *black dragon mask* out of her enemies' clutches (see above). Rezmir is a true believer, and the best that the characters can hope for is that their prisoner eventually stops berating and insulting them. "Your cause is hopeless. My friends will devour you, and your pitiful little attempts to deny the majesty of Tiamat will amount to nothing."

12. Red Wizards' Room

The door to this chamber is unlocked.

> Hundreds of horse skulls are nailed to the ceiling and cover it entirely. Thick carpets cover the icy floor, and desks, chairs, and lecterns are everywhere, some covered with books and scrolls, others with potion vials, bits of meat and fur, and other things. Four hulking gargoyles stand frozen in the room.

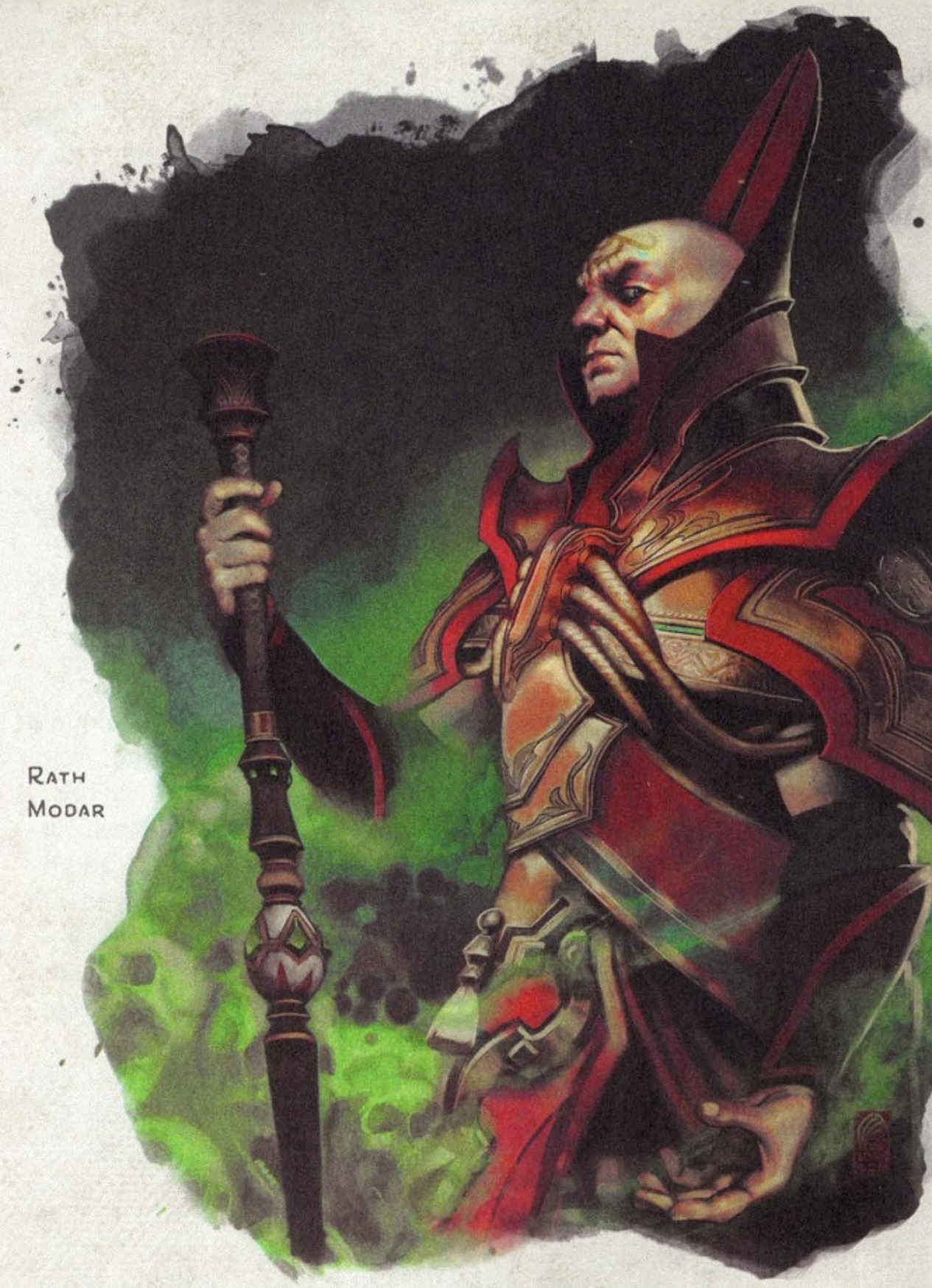
Rath Modar (see appendix D for statistics), a Red Wizard of Thay allied with the Cult of the Dragon, resides here. Unless he was killed or captured previously, **Azbara Jos** (see appendix D) is also present. If both Red Wizards are present, they are in the midst of a scholarly argument when the characters arrive, but they clam up as soon as others appear. If Rath Modar is alone, he is standing at a lectern, reading a book (see "Treasure").

If Azbara is absent, Rath Modar might mistake the characters for cultists. If the characters play along and attempt to gather information from the Red Wizard, roleplay it out. Rath is no fool, and he is an expert at seeing through illusions and deceptions. He also has a healthy suspicion of strangers, especially if the characters are wounded or inappropriately equipped.

Rath Modar is here to help watch over the vast treasure being transported to the Well of Dragons and also to plan for the summoning of Tiamat; the necessary incantations are complex and require hundreds of skilled spellcasters. He knows that the cult's ultimate goal is to free Tiamat and raise her temple from the Nine Hells, and Rath's ultimate goal is to use Tiamat and her dragons to overthrow Szass Tam.

The horse skulls on the ceiling are ghastly ornaments and nothing more.

Three of the gargoyles are statues; the fourth is a living **gargoyle** that serves Rath Modar.



Rath Modar

Vanishing Wall of Ice

Between two windows is a 35-foot-long, 20-foot-high section of icy wall that vanishes for 1 minute when touched. Beyond the wall is an outdoor landing platform.

If he is outmatched, Rath Modar turns invisible, casts *fly* on himself, touches the disappearing wall, and leaps off the landing platform, leaving Azbara Jos to fend for himself. If the gargoyle is still alive, it tries to cover Rath's escape. His *fly* spell and disappearing trick mean that an escape is very likely.

Developments

Characters who speak to Rath Modar or Azbara Jos find that the Red Wizard reputation for arrogance is true: the pair are haughty and proud of their skill, and they have little patience for "ruffians, thugs, and mercenaries seeking to stop the inevitable." Rath Modar and his associate figure prominently in *The Rise of Tiamat*. Defeating or killing them is a serious blow to the cult's ability to summon Tiamat.

Treasure

Rath Modar has three *spell scrolls* (*dimension door*, *feather fall*, and *fireball*), and he carries a *staff of fire*.

A thorough search of the room yields several letters to Rath Modar from Severin, the supreme leader of the Cult of the Dragon. Severin's letters reveal the depths of the connections between the Red Wizards (at least

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those friendly to Rath Modar) and the cult. The characters also find other letters from Thay revealing that clearly some Red Wizards are not nearly as keen on the cult's plans. If the characters deliver these letters to Leosin Erlanthar, Ontharr Frume, or one of their other contacts in organizations opposed to the Red Wizards and the Cult of the Dragon, award the party 1,000 XP.

Resting on a lectern is a book titled *Beyond the Iron Gates*. Written entirely in Infernal, it describes various forms of devil summoning, but the final chapter describes the use of massive summonings and the sacrifice of hundreds of souls to bring Tiamat bodily out of the Nine Hells and into the world. The details of the ritual make it clear that this is something that requires enormous preparation and expense—but the actual magical formulae and chants are not given in this volume. Neither the book nor the other papers here, however, provide a timetable for when the cult or the Red Wizards plan to attempt the summoning, nor do they mention the significance of the treasure that the cult has amassed. (Rath Modar and Azbara Jos can both attest that the treasure is to appease Tiamat upon her arrival.)

13. Storeroom

The door is secured and locked. Any character with thieves' tools can attempt a DC 17 Dexterity check to unlock it. Rezmir and Blagothkus carry keys.

> Huge sides of beef, entire ham hocks, and enormous barrels fill this room, as do hundreds of crates. The place smells of burlap, wood, and salt.

This storeroom contains a huge amount of food, though all of it is of average quality. Other than its natural refrigeration, this room is not remarkable.

14. Guest Chamber

This room is comfortably furnished for inhabitants of human size.

A large section of the icy wall opposite the door vanishes for 1 minute when touched, exposing this room to the elements. Beyond the wall is an outdoor landing platform.

15. Kitchen

> The scene is pure chaos: dozens of kobolds chopping, mixing, carrying sacks of ingredients, and stirring great cauldrons. It could be an alchemical lab or a kitchen—with kobolds cooking, it's a little hard to be sure.

Twenty **kobolds** are here, preparing food for the castle's other inhabitants. The kitchen is filled with huge sides of beef, entire sheep, chests full of dried fish and vast amounts of bacon, onions, beans, and so forth.

Roosting on a ledge above the fray is a **griffon**. The creature is Blagothkus's pet, and it makes sure the kobolds behave themselves. Whenever a fight breaks out, one shriek from above snaps the kobolds back in line. The griffon also protects the kobolds if they come under attack.

Treasure

A thorough search of the kitchen reveals small chests of black pepper, cinnamon, and nutmeg. Each of these weighs 2 pounds, but their contents are worth 130 gp total.

16. Upper Courtyard

> Tall, slender towers and walls of ice enclose a windswept courtyard.

The upper courtyard is the primary landing site for dragons, wyverns, and flying spellcasters when the castle is airborne. During the day, 2d6 **ogres** practice their javelin hurling here. At night, the courtyard is lightly obscured by fog (to a height of 30 feet) and patrolled by the **vampire**, Sandesyl Morgia (see area 18).

Characters landing here need to be prepared to either show a banner or token of the cult immediately; otherwise, the ogres or vampire on watch will sound the alarm and attack them. The ogres in area 20 investigate any loud disturbance in the courtyard.

Developments

If the characters arrive in disguise or fast-talk their way through the courtyard, they are taken to meet Blagothkus the cloud giant (if caught by the ogres) or Rezmir (if caught by the vampire).

17. High Blue Tower

> This tower of pale blue ice is the color of sky on a winter day. Its few windows shimmer like mirrored glass or crystal.

The door to this tower is fitted with an iron lock, and Blagothkus carries the only key. The lock can be picked with thieves' tools and a successful DC 15 Dexterity check. Two ogres armed with javelins, rocks, and a ballista stand watch atop this tower. They have long coils of rope they use to climb up and down the tower's exterior.

The tower interior is a hollow cylinder 90 feet high, without stairs or ladders to reach the top. Any creature inside the tower that speaks the command word "Esclarotta" is instantly teleported to area 21.

Developments

If the two ogres standing watch atop this tower begin firing the ballista or dropping some boulders, they get the attention of the ogre guards, cultists, and others in the main castle grounds and courtyard fairly quickly. The alarm is raised as soon as any ogre yells.

18. Crumbling Tower

This ancient tower seems to be crumbling. The windows have been sealed shut with ice, and cracks have formed in the walls and rooftop. A balcony of sculpted ice hugs one side of the tower, 75 feet above the tower base.

This tower is almost 100 feet high, but it is in shoddy repair. There are two entrances: a door at the base of the tower that cannot be opened (see below), and a working door connected to a crumbling ice balcony 75 feet above the tower's base.



Sandesyl Morgia

The tower is home to the **vampire** Sandesyl Morgia, a moon elf who joined the Cult of the Dragon long before she became undead. She is a member of the old guard and was around long before Severin took over. Given the chance, she talks about serving under Sammaster and killing dragons to raise them as dracoliches, which she still considers "the true path." She hates the new cult leadership, but she is forced by circumstance to work with them.

Sandesyl is active by night only and prowls both the upper and lower courtyards in the night hours, keeping a keen eye out for lone ogre guards or others who might provide a meal. When confronted by more enemies than she can handle, she summons two **vampire spawn** (moon elf consorts) as reinforcements. These vampire spawn lurk on the upper floor of the tower.

The tower is in dire need of repair. The cracked and crumbled ice provides abundant handholds, allowing the tower's walls to be climbed with a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check.

The tower once had four levels with 20-foot-high ceilings; however, all but the highest level have had their floors and ceilings shattered, and the staircase that once curled up the inside of the tower, connecting its various levels, has also been destroyed. The ground floor is now packed with icy debris to a depth of 20 feet, and this debris prevents the ground-floor door from being opened.

Balcony

The best way into the tower is via the balcony. However, it has been weakened and breaks away if more than 150 pounds of weight is placed on it. The door leading from the balcony is unlocked and opens into the upper level that serves as Sandesyl's crypt. There are no windows on this level.

Sandesyl's Crypt

Sandesyl's coffin rests in the middle of the tower's upper level, guarded day and night by her two consorts. The coffin contains grave dirt, but no treasure. A ice staircase hugs one wall, descending a few feet before ending suddenly, 50 feet above the icy detritus filling the lowest level of the tower.

19. Steering Tower

Blagothkus has secured the door to this tower with an *arcane lock*. It can be opened normally by a giant or by a *knock* spell. For everyone else, breaking it down is largely impossible, because a DC 70 Strength check is required.

Bryan Syme

A staircase of ice leads from the tower's ground floor to a higher chamber, the walls and ceiling of which gleam and glitter: Jewels are everywhere in the room. You see glowing moonstones, thumb-sized emeralds, shining silvery mithral wands, and strange spheres covered in turquoise and gold, as well as dozens of copper levers and golden spheres embedded in the walls. After a moment, the walls themselves seem to disappear, providing a perfect aerial view in all directions, as if there were no castle and no cloudstuff around. More than a dozen glowing white runes wink into existence, drifting about the room like snowflakes.

This is the castle's steering chamber. When no one is present, the castle is under the control of the spirit of Esclarotta, who is bound to the fortress by powerful magic that cannot be dispelled. Touching one of the glowing runes issues a specific command to Esclarotta's spirit. A character who understands Dwarvish or Giant can interpret the command runes.

Command Runes

There are eighteen command runes.

Alarm. A noise akin to a howling wind alerts all non-deafened creatures in the castle.

All-Clear. A noise akin to a loud whisper signals an end to danger.

Anchor. The castle holds position on the ground or in the air. The castle remains stationary despite winds, storms, and so on.

Calm. The thunderclouds around the castle abate over a period of 1 minute. During this time, the storm rune cannot be reactivated.

Cast Off. The castle is no longer anchored.

Drift. The castle drifts on the wind, effectively under no one's control.

Home. The castle returns to its place of origin, in the Spine of the World (a cold mountain range to the north).

North, South, East, and West. The castle moves in the specified cardinal direction. Touching two runes simultaneously can move the castle in other directions; for example, touching the north and east runes at the same time moves the castle northeast.

Rise. The castle ascends at a rate of 10 feet per round.

Sink. The castle descends at a rate of 10 feet per round. If it comes into contact with the ground, it lands.

Spin. The castle rotates gently clockwise, completing one full rotation in 1 minute.

Storm. The clouds around the castle darken and churn, becoming rumbling thunderclouds over a period of 1 minute. Until then, the calm rune cannot be activated. Once the thunderclouds have fully formed, the creature that activated the storm rune can use its action while standing in the steering chamber to target one creature or unattended object it can see with a lightning bolt. The bolt has a range of 1,000 feet. A creature targeted by the bolt must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or take 22 (4d10) lightning damage. An unattended object targeted by the bolt simply takes the damage (no saving throw).

Unveil. Foggy cloudstuff engulfing the castle dissipates. Lightly obscured areas become clear in 1 round, and heavily obscured areas become lightly obscured for 1 minute, then become clear.

Veil. Foggy cloudstuff materializes around the castle. After one minute, all creatures and objects in outdoor areas within 100 feet of the castle are heavily obscured, and all creatures and objects in indoor areas are lightly obscured.

Widdershins. The castle rotates gently counterclockwise, completing one full rotation in one minute.

Esclarotta

Although anyone can trigger command runes, the spirit of the cloud giant Esclarotta actually controls the castle and can "lock out" individuals who misuse the command runes, effectively rendering them unable to trigger the runes.

Any character succeeding on a DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check senses an intelligence at work, and one can attempt to communicate with Esclarotta's spirit simply by calling out to it while inside the tower. She is a kind soul, disturbed by the cultists, dragon, wyverns, and kobolds infesting her beautiful castle, and she longs for information about what her husband is up to. Requests made to her succeed with a DC 14 Charisma (Persuasion). The person has advantage on the check if he or she speaks Giant. If anyone tries to wreck the steering chamber, Esclarotta triggers the alarm rune. **Blagothkus** (see appendix D for statistics) arrives 3 rounds later with two **ogres** (his stewards) in tow.

If Blagothkus dies aboard the castle, his spirit replaces Esclarotta's, and he crashes the castle to keep it from falling into enemy hands (see "Developments").

Treasure

If the characters insist on tearing out the valuable control elements, they can pry loose fistfuls of emeralds, turquoise, moonstones, a huge chunk of jade, bits of amber, and large pieces of mithral, worth 10,000 gp total. This destroys the castle's ability to move under power, generate weather effects, and so on. The castle will drift on powerful winds that carry it northward, where it ultimately crashes on the Miklos Glacier in the Spine of the World Mountains. Repairing the control mechanism requires a long period of extremely difficult and expensive work, though a *wish* spell could accomplish it.

Developments

The castle might crash, depending on the actions of the characters and various NPCs.

Crashed by Blagothkus. If the cloud giant is slain, his wife's spirit in the steering chamber is replaced by his spirit. Enraged, he avenges his death by moving the castle northward and then commanding it to crash in the Spine of the World, near the Miklos Glacier. More details of this crash and its consequences are provided in *The Rise of Tiamat*.

If the dragon is slain and the cultists are routed, Rath Modar gathers any remaining forces allied with the cult

and slays Blagothkus, knowing full well that the cloud giant's death will cause the castle to crash (see above). Rath Modar then uses his *fly* spell to escape.

Characters Seize the Castle. If the adventurers befriend Blagothkus and drive off the cultists and the dragon, they may fly it anywhere, though they will certainly attract hostile attention from any dragon. If they are still aboard the castle, Rath Modar and the vampire do their utmost to thwart them.

If he remains in control of the castle, Blagothkus decides to visit the giants. He sends Skyreach Castle north to near the Spine of the World.

20. Ogre Barracks

Read the following text if the characters surprise this chamber's occupants:

> This unfurnished chamber contains a horde of ogres sleeping on piles of fur.

Unless they are drawn elsewhere by an alarm or some other disturbance, twelve **ogres** sleep on the furs heaped about this otherwise featureless structure.

Treasure

If the characters spend 30 minutes searching the barracks, they find 800 sp and 300 gp. If one member of the party succeeds at a DC 20 Intelligence (Investigate) check, he or she finds a single pale blue sapphire worth 500 gp wedged into a crevice.

Developments

If any ogres are taken prisoner, charmed, or fast-talked, the characters learn relatively little. They serve the cloud giant Blagothkus (whose wife was slain some years ago), they know that the cloud giant has several guests, including "duh wizard in red robes" (Rath Modar), "duh dragon lady" (Rezmir), and "a big white dragon dat lives in duh caves" (Glazhael). Getting more than the basic rundown takes a DC 19 Charisma (Persuasion) check for each of the following three additional items:

- A vampire watches the Skyreach Castle at night. It sometimes feeds on the ogres, to their chagrin.
- The cult uses the castle to visit important sites without roads or portals. The ogres don't really know where they are other than "the green forests" and "that stretch of the moors" and "the old mountains."
- The castle's mists and navigation are all controlled by the cloud giant's magic. Without him, the castle won't fly.

The last point is untrue, but it's what Blagothkus told his ogres, and they believe him.

21. Esclarotta's Tomb

This icy cyst has no obvious means of entry or egress. However, a creature can teleport to this buried chamber via area 17.

> You appear in an oval cave carved from solid glacial ice, with no passages leading out. The ceiling is 30 feet high and lined with icicles, and bits of broken ice surround a massive white marble sarcophagus situated in the middle of the floor. The lid of the sarcophagus is sculpted into the likeness of a female giant with long flowing hair.

The sarcophagus is 20 feet long, 10 feet wide, and 10 feet tall. Dwarvish runes carved into its base spell the name ESCLAROTTA. The lid of the sarcophagus requires a DC 30 Strength check to push aside, and the bones of Blagothkus's deceased cloud giant wife are contained within. There is no treasure buried with her.

A creature in this tomb that speaks the name "Blagothkus" is instantly teleported to the ground floor of area 17.

22. Cloud Giant Tower

This 70-foot-tall tower has a parapet rooftop, two unlocked doors at ground level, and no windows. The tower interior is split into two levels, each with a 30-foot-high ceiling. A staircase of chiseled ice hugs the interior wall. Unless the characters take strides to conceal their approach, the ogres on the roof spot them.

Tower Rooftop

Three **ogres** guard the tower rooftop, which is furnished with a ballista. See area 6B for details.

Ground Floor

A chime attached to the inside of each door rings when the door is opened, alerting the tower's inhabitants.

A staircase hugs the interior wall of this chamber, leading up to a landing with a door. The room itself contains sturdy wood-carved furnishings of giant proportions, including a table surrounded by four chairs. The walls are sculpted with ice murals depicting an army of hill, frost, fire, stone, and cloud giants.

Four **ogres** guard the lower level. They wear fancy plumed helmets to signify that they are members of Blagothkus's "honor guard." This simple reward keeps the ogres alert and loyal, for they know the giant could give their helms away to someone else at any time.

Upper Floor

If the ogres above or below him sound the alarm, Blagothkus cannot be surprised.

> The walls of this room are sculpted with icy murals depicting cloud giants riding giant birds. An enormous bed with a headboard of ice sculpted to resemble clouds dominates the room. Bear furs are heaped upon the bed, and two large wooden chests rest at the bed's foot.
>
> A blue-skinned giant sits on the floor with his legs crossed while two ogres comb his snowy white hair. The giant's hulking morningstar leans against the bed within arm's reach.

Blagothkus (see appendix D for statistics) and the two **ogres** (his stewards) aren't the only inhabitants of this room. As a bonus action on his turn, Blagothkus can summon an **air elemental** that's been magically bound to the room. The elemental follows the giant's commands but cannot leave the room. It remains until dismissed by its master.

The dim-witted ogre stewards are poor conversationalists, but Blagothkus uses them as sounding boards, expressing his concerns that the Cult of the Dragon might try to seize control of the castle. The ogres offer no advice. Clever characters can sow discord by preying on the giant's fears (see "Negotiating with the Cloud Giant" near the beginning of the chapter). An alarm or the characters' sudden appearance startles him, and he reaches for his weapon. If the characters are pretending to be cultists, Blagothkus is furious at their intrusion but does not attack unless they further provoke him. The ogres defend their master to the death.

Treasure

The chests are unlocked and loaded with silver and gold coins (12,000 gp total). One of the chests also contains a *bag of holding*, four bars of solid gold (worth 1,000 gp each), and forty bars of solid silver (worth 100 gp each). Each bar weighs approximately 5 pounds.

Developments

If the characters surrender to Blagothkus, he asks about their names, allegiances, and plans. If the characters represent themselves as enemies of the cult, the giant says, "I can take care of them. But just in case, you should know that they are entirely serious about making dragons a power along the coast again. Can you imagine? The nerve." If they sway the giant to their side, he locks himself in area 19 and guides the castle northward while the characters deal with the cultists and the white dragon. Blagothkus's ultimate destination is described in *The Rise of Tiamat*.

If anyone attempts to wrest the castle from him, Blagothkus goes to the steering tower and tries to crash the castle in the Spine of the World; see area 19 for details. If Blagothkus is killed, his spirit takes over the castle, with the same end result.

23. Giant Guest Chambers

These rooms are set aside for giant-sized guests and have furnishings of the appropriate size.

In each room, a large section of the outer wall vanishes for 1 minute when touched, revealing a icy landing platform. Long ago, giants would use these platforms to land their roc mounts.

24. Servant Barracks

Twenty **kobolds** are trying to sleep here on dozens of small piles of bedding, fur, and clothes. They are exhausted and ignore the characters unless they are in great danger. They have no treasure.

Characters questioning the kobold servants may make a DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion) check. If the characters are dressed as cultists and are fairly convincing, no check is required. Each success brings one of the following bits of information to light; the first failure by any character means that the kobolds unite in their terror of the cultists and go completely silent. If questioned further, they start screaming for help and babbling for mercy: completely useless.

- An elf vampire lives in the crumbling tower (area 18).
- Blagothkus still speaks to his dead wife, and her spirit is the castle's pilot and protector. If the giant dies, all the magic of the castle will be undone.
- The human dragon-cult people don't really understand dragons the way that kobolds do. Dragons are fine creatures, but grumpy. They say the treasure here is for the queen of all dragons, to keep her from being grumpy.
- A red-robed wizard is working with the cultists, and his room (area 12) is off limits to all kobolds.
- The white dragon Cloudchaser loves frozen meat. Toss it into the cavern (area 25) and run!



Blagothkus

BRYAN SYME

25. Main Vault

The icy "core" of the castle is hollowed out with tunnels that break the surface at multiple points. The white dragon, Glazhael the Cloudchaser, enters and leaves via a wide funnel-shaped passageway that narrows as it draws closer to the main vault, where the Cult of the Dragon stores its treasure.

If the characters explore the tunnels, read or paraphrase the following:

> The walls of blue ice are partly transparent, revealing various things embedded in the ice all around, including coins, helmets, livestock, a handful of kobolds, and an ogre or two. Frost coats the tunnel floors and crunches underfoot.

When the characters reach the main vault, read:

> All tunnels seem to lead to a central core—a glittering cavern of ice with jagged walls and icicles the size of stalactites. This grand vault is split into two levels: an egg-shaped upper level with a sheer ledge overlooking a sunken level 30 feet below, where a massive pile of treasure rests beneath an icy glaze. Clinging to the ceiling above the hoard, wings tucked in tight along its sides with claws gripping the ice, is a huge white dragon.

Glazhael is an **adult white dragon** that is doing his part to ensure the rise of Tiamat, hopeful that the queen of evil dragons will reward him with untold power. He is, however, a bit on the dim side, thinking of visitors as either servants (who bring him food) or as enemies (who do not bring him food). Mostly, Glazhael is proud to guard this treasure for Tiamat, his most glorious and perfect queen. He rarely talks to any cultists other than Talis and is suspicious of Rezmir and the others.

If the characters speak with Glazhael, he responds with a pompous speech about the superiority of dragons over humans, dwarves, and so forth.

If the characters flatter him to a ludicrous degree, he listens to anything that sounds like fawning, servile, helpful obedience but offers nothing in return. He will generously spare the lives of those who offer him tribute in the form of treasure or food. Those who challenge him become targets of his breath weapon.

When fighting, Glazhael clings to the ceiling whenever possible, using his breath weapon and Frightful Presence to start. If that doesn't scare the characters off, he makes melee attacks until his breath weapon recharges. If dropped to fewer than 40 hit points, he flees. He can navigate even the narrow tunnels by tucking in his wings. Once outside, he alerts the rest of the castle, shouting "They're after the treasure!" in Draconic.

Clever characters can lure the dragon into a narrow tunnel where it is unable to maneuver effectively. Under such circumstances, the dragon has disadvantage on its melee attacks.

Treasure

When the characters investigate the hoard, read:

> The floor of the cavern is carpeted in gold, silver, copper, and jewels, all sealed under a sheet of ice. Dozens of old human skulls and bones are also frozen in the ice.

The treasure hoard is frozen in ice, and it requires either several fire spells or a long wait with bonfires to melt the ice. The hoard includes 500,000 cp, 100,000 sp, and 5,000 gp, a frozen chest containing 800 pp and 21 small blue sapphires worth 300 gp each, a frozen *potion of gaseous form*, a *+1 longsword*, a *+1 longbow*, *+1 leather armor*, and *bracers of defense*.

Developments

If the dragon is slain, the cultists are enraged and seek immediate vengeance. The major cult players on Skyreach Castle will call out the ogres, wake the vampire, and ask the Red Wizards to find the intruders. If the characters are still around after the dragon is slain, the entire castle is on high alert until they are found and killed.

Concluding the Adventure

The crash or capture of Skyreach Castle marks the end of *Hoard of the Dragon Queen*. If you are using the milestone experience rule, the characters reach 8th level for completing the adventure. By uncovering the cult's plans and hijacking a huge hoard of treasure, the characters have slowed and damaged the cult's chances of success. They might also have slain or captured important leaders of the Cult of the Dragon. But there is much more to come. The cult moves forward with its plan to free their five-headed queen out of the Nine Hells, and the mere loss of wealth will not stop the true fanatics.

The Rise of Tiamat expands on the final drive to destroy the Cult of the Dragon, and it requires great new powers and new courage. Things grow much more dangerous for the adventurers as they seek help in strange places, from the Sea of Moving Ice to the depths of the Serpent Hills. They might find a great weapon among the giants or uncover an unexpected ally within the cult itself.

Unless the characters press on, the Queen of Dragons might yet establish her personal rule over the lands of lesser creatures. The stakes are high when the gates to the Nine Hells open, and scaly doom comes out of its lair, full of fire and fangs.

The conflict reaches its apex at the Well of Dragons, where the characters and their hard-won allies face Tiamat and her greatest minions in a fight to the death!

TYRANNY OF DRAGONS™

THE RISE OF TIAMAT™



BRYAN SYME

By Steve Winter and Alexander Winter



Chapter 9: Council of Waterdeep

The Rise of Tiamat begins immediately after the conclusion of *Hoard of the Dragon Queen*, and assumes that the characters have returned to Waterdeep in the aftermath of that adventure. While in the city, the adventurers are summoned to the first meeting of the Council of Waterdeep. While at that gathering, they hear the sounding of the ancient *Draakhorn* that heralds the next stage of the Cult of the Dragon's plots. (See chapter 17 for more information on the *Draakhorn*, but be sure to withhold that information until the characters have played through "Chapter 10: The Sea of Moving Ice.")

Starting the Adventure

The Rise of Tiamat begins in Waterdeep. If you played *Hoard of the Dragon Queen*, the characters might have already made their way back to the City of Splendors after Skyreach Castle crashed at the end of that first adventure. If you didn't play *Hoard of the Dragon Queen*, if Skyreach Castle wasn't crashed, or if the characters went somewhere other than Waterdeep afterward, you need to get the party back to Waterdeep for the start of this adventure.

It's easy enough to simply tell the players that their characters are back in Waterdeep. However, if you suspect that your group won't find that satisfying, you can avoid playing through a long overland journey by making use of the following scenario.

Wherever the characters are when this session begins, a raven flies up to them. The bird is part of an *animal messenger* relay dispatched by Leosin Erlanthar's allies in the Emerald Enclave.

> The raven lands a dozen paces from you, then boldly hops closer, a flat parcel wrapped in oilskin strapped to its belly. It eyes you enigmatically for a few moments, then speaks in a familiar voice. "Leosin Erlanthar sends his heartiest congratulations! Please use the gift this bird brings to meet me in Waterdeep as soon as possible."

The bird waits patiently while the leather parcel is removed from its harness. The parcel contains a carefully folded *spell scroll of teleport* and the sigil sequence of a permanent teleportation circle in Waterdeep. The circle can be in a temple, a government building, or any other site of your choice. If the party includes more than six characters, the parcel contains two scrolls. If none of the characters can use a *teleport* scroll, they'll need to seek out an NPC who can. Just don't make it too difficult.

GUIDO KUIP

Back in Waterdeep

The most powerful factions of the Sword Coast all recognize the significance of Tiamat's possible return, and they are willing to cooperate with each other to prevent it. Trust doesn't come easily for these disparate groups. But even for orders and organizations that have been in conflict in the past, the "enemy of my enemy" is easily understood.

To coordinate their efforts against the Cult of the Dragon, the factions have sent important delegates for secret meetings in Waterdeep. If the adventurers played through *Hoard of the Dragon Queen*, they now know as much as anyone about the cult's activities, and their heroics have been brought to the attention of powerful leaders and earned them a place at the council table. If you didn't play *Hoard of the Dragon Queen*, a separate group of heroes assaulted Skyreach Castle and bravely gave their lives to crash the fortress. The characters are then invited to the council simply because of their reputation as powerful adventurers, and because the council expects to need their services.

Four Councils

When the characters arrive in Waterdeep, they are met by the Harper agent Leosin Erlanthar. The monk explains the purpose of the council and tells the adventurers they are expected to attend the first gathering—both so the council can thank them for their great deeds and to advise the council about the Cult of the Dragon. Four meetings of the council occur at critical points throughout the crisis, right up to the final chapter of the adventure at the Well of Dragons.

During the **first session** of the council, all the Sword Coast becomes aware of how the Cult of the Dragon's plots are advancing when the *Draakhorn* sounds. In the aftermath, the characters are given leads to chapter 10 or to Varram in chapter 11 and 12.

A **second session** of the council is summoned to address increasingly aggressive dragon activity. The characters are asked to investigate a devastating series of raids in the Misty Forest, leading to Neronvain in "Chapters 11 and 12: Death to the Wyrmspeakers." The adventurers are also approached by a representative who wishes to bring the party to a secret meeting with the metallic dragons, leading to chapter 14.

A **third session** of the council is called to assess the gains made by the allied factions against the Cult of the Dragon. The party is called on to pursue two leads that might grant even more advantage over the cult—a renegade cultist offering to turn over one of the dragon masks, in chapter 15, and an attempt to undercut the power of the exile Red Wizards in chapter 16.

At the **fourth session** of the Council of Waterdeep, the adventurers learn that the plots of the Cult of the Dragon and the Red Wizards are nearing fruition. The forces of the various factions must gather in preparation for the assault on the Well of Dragons.

During each new council, the various factions measure the party's actions and achievements, comparing those actions to their own goals. Characters who further the goals of a faction will find that faction willing to pledge more resources to the fight against the cult. However, gaining the allegiance of one faction might lead to distrust from others. The adventurers must strike a careful balance in their appeal to—and appeasement of—the delegates to gather the strongest force possible to confront Tiamat.

Though it isn't ideal for all attendees, the Lords' Palace in Waterdeep is the designated location of the council meetings. The Lords' Alliance faction is sending the most delegates, and those delegates prefer a civilized gathering place.

Gathering Allies

Though every faction provides some troops and resources toward the final showdown with the forces of Tiamat, the extent of their support—and how much effect that support will have—is dependent on the respect the adventurers garner from each group for their actions. Before committing irrevocably to the fight, a faction must be convinced that the cult presents a danger surpassing all other concerns—and that the adventurers are the right heroes to lead this fight. Moreover, what is worthy of respect in one faction might lose respect from another.

As the adventurers complete chapters of the adventure, you track how they earn or lose respect from each faction on the council scorecard (see appendix B). See "Scoring the Sessions," below, for more information.

Leading Delegates

Most factions have sent a delegation to the Council of Waterdeep consisting of several important persons and their aides. In general, only the leaders of each delegation are present at the council meetings attended by the adventurers. However, no matter how individual delegates might react to the characters' deeds, they also heed the words of their fellow councilors not present at the council meetings. Brave and heroic feats that individual leaders might approve of could be frowned on by a faction as a whole if those deeds don't line up with the faction's agenda.

Sessions of the Council

The format of the four council meetings as described below follows the flow of the adventure as set out in the "Campaign Overview" section. If events unfold differently in your campaign, adjust the meetings and their events accordingly. For each council meeting, a brief justification for the different attitudes of the factions is provided. More information on the factions and their delegates is provided under "Allies" in the book's introduction.

Each session of the council discusses the setup for chapters meant to be played as a result of that session, and the follow-up for previous chapters whose outcome is resolved in that session. In all cases, see those specific chapters for full details.

Two preliminary events help to set up the first session of the council: news of the assassination of Arthagast Ulbrinter, one of the Masked Lords of Waterdeep, and the sounding of the *Draakhorn*.

Death of a Masked Lord

Though the leadership of the Cult of the Dragon could not have realized it, one of the key events in the fight to thwart Severin's plans was the cult's assassination of Arthagast Ulbrinter, a Masked Lord of Waterdeep and husband of Remi Haventree of the Harpers. News of Arthagast's recent murder has spread across the Sword Coast, and has galvanized opposition to the cult in Waterdeep.

In her grief, Remi Haventree has sworn to destroy the cult and the threat it presents to the Sword Coast. She has been instrumental in bringing the factions together for this Council of Waterdeep, setting up the potential for alliances that the adventurers must now complete.

The Draakhorn Sounds

Shortly after the crash or capture of Skyreach Castle, operatives of the Cult of the Dragon sounded the *Draakhorn* at the distant Well of Dragons. An ancient magic relic, the *Draakhorn* is being used by the cult to summon chromatic dragons to their dark cause.

As the characters are arriving in Waterdeep, read or paraphrase the following.

> A sudden shift in the wind brings with it a strange sense of unease. The feeling is akin to the drop in air pressure before the approach of a deadly storm, or faint tremors felt from a landslide or earthquake far away. You're not the only ones who have noticed. The city around you goes unnaturally quiet suddenly. No dogs bark, no birds squawk. Even the street vendors have gone silent.

The silence lasts only a moment before the normal sounds of Waterdeep return to mask the unexplained sensation. If the characters get to a quiet place, they notice the disturbance again, like a rumbling almost too faint to hear. As well, subtle changes in the behavior of animals can be noted. Dogs are nervous and on edge, horses are skittish, cats are more feral than usual, and rats gather in large, bold packs. Sensitive NPCs are also affected, becoming nervous, fearful, and impatient.

During the first session of the council (or earlier if the characters make efforts to investigate the strange phenomenon), the adventurers are approached by Dala Silmerhelve—a Waterdhavian noble. Read or paraphrase the following when the characters speak to Dala.

> "The disturbance that's been sensed across the Sword Coast is the *Draakhorn*—an ancient device whose sounding alerts dragons across Faerûn that great events are unfolding. It's impossible to say what the sounding means, but the dragons hear it clearly and will eventually answer its call."

Lady Silmerhelve learned this from her family's secret benefactor, an ancient bronze dragon named Nymmurh. She knows a little more about the *Draakhorn*, but she waits to reveal it until she attends the first council meeting. She flatly refuses to tell anyone the source of her knowledge if asked. This makes Ulder Ravengard, King Connerad, and Ontharr Frume suspicious, but others take the secrecy in stride. If Lady Silmerhelve is treated poorly, it might affect how Nymmurh interacts with the characters in chapter 14.

First Session

Having accepted the invitation to the council meeting, the adventurers are received at the Lords' Palace. Make the introduction to the City of Splendors and the Lords' Palace as detailed or as simple as fits your campaign style.

Once inside the Lords' Palace, the party is escorted to the secret council chambers by Leosin Erlanthar. The outer galleries are packed with nobles engaged in heated debate, and the guards are wearing livery from city-states across the North.

Although Erlanthar is not invited to the council discussions, Remallia Haventree has informed him of the agenda and the reason the party has been summoned. He advises the characters that though the factions are all nominally committed to stopping the Cult of the Dragon, none of the delegates have made substantive pledges yet.

Too much mistrust still burdens the factions, and not enough is known about the situation. Erlanthar thinks the leaders need someone to show them the right path—heroes who will lead the forces of the Sword Coast with certainty into the coming darkness. He believes that the adventurers have a chance to be those heroes. However, he explains that each faction will weigh every word the characters say and scrutinize every one of their decisions. What pleases one group might anger another, and it will be incredibly difficult to make all parties happy.

Follow-up: Hoard of the Dragon Queen

Once introductions are made, Dagult Neverember summarizes the situation if the adventurers did not play through *Hoard of the Dragon Queen*. This includes the plan to summon Tiamat, increased dragon raids led by the cult, the treasure collection system, the crash or capture of Skyreach Castle, and the importance of the wyrmspeakers and dragon masks to the cult.

If the party played through the previous adventure, Dagult explains that the council has heard reports from Ontharr, Leosin, and other witnesses, but that the delegates wish to hear from the heroes at the center of recent events. (At this point, use Neverember to also fill in any information the characters did not gather during *Hoard of the Dragon Queen* that you deem important.)

Most of the factions recognize that Skyreach Castle needed to be stopped, and they are happy if the castle crashed. However, some members of the Lords' Alliance think it unconscionable that such a resource would be destroyed, intentionally or otherwise. These dissidents believe it would have been better for the characters to have waited for reinforcements, then attacked to secure the castle (regardless of how unrealistic that plan might have been).

The fate of the dragon hatchery divides opinion as well. Most delegates respect a decision to destroy the hatchery, accepting that having fewer dragons to deal with later on is an advantage. However, the Harpers would have preferred the eggs to be kept for ransoming back to their parents, potentially keeping those dragons from cooperating with the cult. Dagult would have sold the valuable eggs to "responsible buyers," then used that gold to hire more mercenaries. The Emerald Enclave is firmly against any dragon eggs being destroyed, believing that the chromatic dragons are a part of the natural order and that killing their young upsets the balance of that order. Taern Hornblade and Lady Laeral Silverhand think there might have been a way to leverage the eggs as ransom, but both recognize that they would have been dangerous to hold onto—and even more dangerous to return.

When the discussion around the events from *Hoard of the Dragon Queen* is concluded, the council moves on to current matters. It's obvious to all that the adventurers have taken a firm hand in addressing this crisis, and that they have proven their worth. The council deputizes the characters with emergency investigative powers and a writ demonstrating such. This grants the characters access to resources and sites they deem necessary for their investigation, but carries with it the burden of oversight from the council. If the adventurers misbehave or abuse their powers, their actions will be reviewed and the writ will be revoked.

Once the characters have been vested with their powers, the first stages of the adventure await.

Setup: Varram the White

One of Remallia Haventree's first acts in her fight against the Cult of the Dragon was to encourage the Harpers to focus all their resources on the cult's activities and its most powerful members. Those efforts have been successful, and Leosin Erlanthar reports to the adventurers of the movements of Varram, the cult's White Wyrmspeaker. This leads to "Varram the White," part of "Chapters 11 and 12: Death to the Wyrmspeakers."

Setup: The Sea of Moving Ice

The sounding of the *Draakhorn* weighs heavily on all the leaders of the Sword Coast. Seeking more information on the horn and its whereabouts leads the party on an expedition to the frozen North, and chapter 10.

Second Session

At the Second Council of Waterdeep, the adventurers see two new faces. Lord Neverember has been replaced as Open Lord of Waterdeep by Lady Laeral Silverhand, who now sits at the head of the council table. Dagult sits to her right, alongside a human female introduced as Elia (see below).

The delegates discuss the raids in their various domains after receiving the characters' report, providing flavor for the ongoing activities of the cult and giving a clear impression that the situation is escalating.

Follow-up: Varram the White

In response to the fate of Wyrmspeaker Varram, the Harpers and Taern are upset if the dwarf was slain without being interrogated, and Connerad is upset that Varram was not captured and made an example of in a court of dwarven law. Though most are pleased with capturing Varram, the Emerald Enclave is nonplussed, believing that capturing him only complicates matters. Varram has already demonstrated a willingness to corrupt the natural order, making a trial excessive—and potentially opening the door to a rescue attempt.

Follow-up: The Sea of Moving Ice

The Arcane Brotherhood are powerful allies, and all are pleased if the party wins their allegiance—with the exception of the Order of the Gauntlet. Ontharr Frume knows that the Arcane Brotherhood does not police its members in what kinds of knowledge they pursue, and that they tolerate many evil wizards in their company. Bringing the Arcane Brotherhood into the alliance doesn't lose Frume's respect, but neither does it earn it.

Setup: Neronvain

Delaan Winterhound of the Emerald Enclave is involved with investigations into recent dragon attacks in the Misty Forest. King Melandrach waves away Delaan's concerns, saying that dragon attacks in the area have stopped since his elves increased their patrols and fortified their positions. Discovering the truth will lead the adventurers to "Neronvain," part of "Chapters 11 and 12: Death to the Wyrmspeakers.".

Setup: Metallic Dragons, Arise

During the council, the adventurers are introduced to the silver dragon Otaaryliakkarnos, in her human guise as Elia. She bears an invitation from the metallic dragons to a council of their own, and the council delegates ask the adventurers to attend. This leads into chapter 14.

Third Session

The third council features another new face—the tiefling Rian Nightshade, introduced as a special adviser to Lord Neverember. Characters who pay attention notice that some at the meeting—including Sir Isteval, Ontharr Frume, and Ambassador Brawnanvil—are doing their best to ignore the secret Zhentarim delegate, who makes no statements unless addressed by the party.

Follow-up: Neronvain

News that the dragon attacks in the elven forest have ended is gratefully received by all on the council. However, King Melandrach responds with cold fury to news of his son Neronvain's betrayal. He remains hesitant to put elves in the front lines of combat, but no longer acts as a roadblock to negotiations. His pragmatism means that he no longer has any qualms against the adventurers' securing the allegiance of Red Wizards, giants, or even devils in the fight against the Cult of the Dragon—as long as such allies are conveniently arrayed in front of his elves in battle.

Follow-up: Metallic Dragons, Arise

All the delegates are impressed if the party has gained the support of the metallic dragons, even if their own faction was asked to make concessions. The good dragons are wise and just creatures, and their acceptance of the party greatly boosts the adventurers' standing in everyone's eyes.

King Melandrach is furious if the characters agreed to an apology for the *Dracorage mythal*. He makes the apology because honor demands it, but he resents the party for forcing his hand. Connerad Brawnanvil is similarly unhappy if a concession was made in response to the ancient dragonmoots of the dwarves. The traditions of the dragonmoot saved many lives in their time, and the fact that one metallic dragon was injured indicates that it was probably misbehaving. Dwarves have no patience for tolerating misbehaving dragons, no matter what their color.

Bartering away portions of the hoard that the cult stole is the only way some factions can make concessions. For every concession that was made for a share, circle a negative (–) icon in the following order: Dagult Neverember, Connerad, Melandrach, Lady Laeral, Ulder Ravengard, Taern Hornblade, the Harpers, Sir Isteval, and the Order of the Gauntlet. The Emerald Enclave is not affected by such concessions, since the order has not been overly affected by the dragon raids.

As an effect of the way in which the adventurers have impressed the dragon council, it now falls to them to allocate the dragons that have pledged their service to the factions. Dragons allocated to a delegate of the Lords' Alliance are assigned to protect the capital city of the delegate's territory. A dragon assigned to the Harpers will be used for intelligence gathering. The Order of the Gauntlet sends any dragons to the city of Elturel, while the Emerald Enclave sends dragons to guard the ancient treant known as the Grandfather Tree. The party can also distribute dragons to specific regions. In such a scenario, a dragon protects a 100-mile-radius area around the point where it is assigned, stopping draconic raids in that area.

Setup: Xonthal's Tower

At the summit, information comes to the characters revealing that a senior member of the Cult of the Dragon seeks to defect from the group, and that the cultist is offering a dragon mask as part of his plea for aid. Though the offer could be a trap, the council delegates believe that the risk is worth it. The defector is holed up in a fortress known as Xonthal's Tower, recently taken over by the cult. Because a small team has a better chance to successfully infiltrate the tower than a larger force, the adventurers are asked to investigate. This leads to chapter 15.

Setup: Mission to Thay

The Red Wizards are integral to the cult's plans for summoning Tiamat, but the Red Wizards allied with the Cult of the Dragon are exiles with no connection to Thay. The Thayan Red Wizards approach the Council of Waterdeep asking for an envoy to be sent to Thay, where they must convince the most reviled wizards in Faerûn to join with the forces of the Sword Coast for the common good. This paves the way for chapter 16.

Fourth Session

The fourth council is the final meeting between the faction leaders and the adventurers. Hundreds of chromatic dragons have been sighted near the Well of Dragons, and the time has come to strike. At the end of this council, the delegates make their final decisions of support for the adventurers and their cause, if they haven't done so already.

Follow-up: Xonthal's Tower

At an appropriate point in the council meetings, Rian Nightshade approaches the characters and asks for a private audience. She explains her position as an emissary of the Zhentarim, and of the Zhentarim's interest in current affairs. She bemoans the dithering of the other factions, stating that the Black Network is willing to act immediately and unflinchingly—if the party can help arrange agreeable terms for the Zhentarim's support.

Rian points out that the Zhentarim have a keen interest in Xonthal's Tower. Ownership of the tower is under discussion by the council, but the tiefling wants to deal directly with the adventurers, who have claim to the tower by right of conquest. The Zhentarim are willing to purchase the adventurers' interest in the tower for 50,000 gp, and Rian can throw in a *potion of greater healing*, a *potion of frost giant strength*, and a *spell scroll* of *earthquake* to sweeten the deal. This price could go up considerably if the party negotiates agreeable terms from the other factions for the Zhentarim's support—up to an additional 25,000 gp, at your discretion.

Follow-up: Mission to Thay

Any alliance with the Red Wizards is a mixed blessing. More pragmatic factions and delegates—including the Harpers, King Melandrach, Dagult Neverember, and Taern Hornblade—are impressed by the diplomacy such an arrangement demonstrates, and know that regardless of the Red Wizards' character and previous plots against the Sword Coast, they are a significant asset. Sir Isteval, Ambassador Brawnanvil, and the Order of the Gauntlet object to the idea of even opening dialogue with the Red Wizards, and believe that the Thayans would agree to an alliance only if it furthered their own plots to rule the Sword Coast and all Faerûn. Lady Laeral and Ulder Ravengard both think the Red Wizards unpredictable but necessary, believing that the only important factor is how the Thayans influence the outcome of the final battle.

Follow-up: Metallic Dragons, Arise

The outcome of the support of the metallic dragons (as allocated in the third council) is accounted for in this fourth council. Factions that did not receive draconic aid suffer terribly in the cult's raids, and some delegates resent the adventurers for withholding the service of their dragon allies. Only Isteval, Connerad, and the Harpers maintain their respect for the adventurers regardless of how the dragons were assigned. Cormyr remains largely untouched by the cult, whose operations remain focused on the Sword Coast. The Harpers have no strongholds, and so suffer less than other factions. Ambassador Brawnanvil appreciates the value of dragon guards, but his strongholds are deep underground and hard for the cult to reach—and all dwarves know how even good dragons covet dwarven gems and gold.

Scoring the Sessions

Every faction will donate troops and resources to the struggle against the Cult of the Dragon. However, to win the battle requires the full, unconditional support of multiple factions. The outcome of the Council of Waterdeep is tracked on the council scorecard in appendix B, which determines what resources are available to oppose the Cult of the Dragon during the final confrontation at the Well of Dragons.

Which way a faction leans is determined by the adventurers' actions and accomplishments during the adventure. Successfully completing a chapter of the adventure will usually gain support from multiple factions. However, each faction has its own priorities, and sometimes a heroic deed that pleases one faction can anger or disappoint another. In some cases, a faction might even prefer that the characters engage in antiheroic acts—by executing certain enemies rather than taking prisoners, for example. The adventurers might also be seen to be favoring certain factions, if metallic dragon allies are sent to defend the interests and settlements of one faction over another.

Each faction has its own column on the scorecard. Important events that occur during *The Rise of Tiamat* are noted along the side of the scorecard, beginning with events that could have occurred in the previous adventure, *Hoard of the Dragon Queen*. If you didn't play *Hoard of the Dragon Queen*, assume that events marked with an asterisk (*) occurred and that other events did not.

A plus sign (+) for a particular faction and event indicates that the faction approves of the successful outcome of that event, and that the characters gain respect for that outcome. Each + counts as +1 in the final tally. A negative icon (–) indicates that a faction disapproves of an outcome and the characters lose respect for it. Each – counts as –1 in the final tally. A blank means that the faction either doesn't consider the event significant or that there's no consensus within the faction. Some events are especially important to certain factions, and are marked double plus (+/+) or double minus (–/–). They count as +2 or –2, respectively, in the tally.

Whenever an event occurs as noted in the list, circle or highlight the appropriate icons. You can usually mark all the icons in a row at once. Icons that are marked off are counted to determine each faction's attitude, while unmarked icons are ignored.

Three rows on the table have icons that can't be marked all at once. These are the decisions about which factions receive metallic dragon guardians, which factions had to make concessions to secure the metallic dragons' aid, and who takes possession of Xonthal's Tower. Only the factions that are affected have their icons marked. For example, if King Melandrach and Ulder Ravengard had to make concessions to win the support of the metallic dragons, only their entries on that line should be circled or highlighted.

Some attendees are easier to sway toward pledging their full support, including Dagult Neverember. Others are more difficult, such as Connerad Brawnanvil. Additionally, securing Sir Isteval or Laeral Silverhand's full support provides one additional respect for certain of the other factions, since both those senior delegates hold great influence on the council.

The scorecard covers the events and outcomes that are likely to occur over the course of the adventure. However, *The Rise of Tiamat* is an open-ended scenario, such that decisions by the players might trigger events that aren't noted on the scorecard. Excellent diplomacy, good roleplaying, and creative handling of events that have the potential to impress or anger certain delegates can be rewarded with additional respect, at your discretion. Likewise, if the characters tackle chapters in a different order from this list, just mark off icons for events as they happen, then keep track of the subtotals as you see fit.

At the end of each council, add up all the pluses and minuses from that stage of the adventure and write the subtotal in the provided space. At the end of the fourth council, add up the subtotals. You can use the subtotals as feedback to give the players an idea of how the factions are reacting to their exploits and whether the delegates treat them with respect, disdain, or something between.

The scorecard is meant to be used only by the DM, but there's nothing wrong with sharing it with your players if that suits the style of your game. If you don't reveal the specifics of the scorecard, convey the players' and adventurers' goals through description and roleplaying, providing good indications of how effectively the adventurers are winning over the factions.

If a faction's final tally equals or exceeds the "Score Needed For Support," the characters have won that faction's full support in the final battle. If the tally is below the score required, that faction sends only minimal support that won't help in the final confrontation. The benefits of each faction's support are determined in chapter 17.



Chapter 10: The Sea of Moving Ice

Far to the north, beyond the Spine of the World and above even Icewind Dale, lies the Sea of Moving Ice. Gigantic icebergs wander listlessly through this glass-like sea, or are sent smashing and grinding against each other by bitterly cold winds, the sea spray transformed into fantastic frozen shapes around them. Only creatures adapted to severe cold can survive such frigid extremes, but many beasts—and even people—make their homes in the Sea of Moving Ice. One such creature is the white dragon Arauthator, known as "Old White Death" by those he stalks and terrorizes. In this section of the adventure, the heroes' battle against the cult leads them to one of Arauthator's iceberg lairs.

The Draakhorn's Call

Each time the *Draakhorn* sounds out, its unearthly call echoes across the Sword Coast. Dragons hear it plainly, even as other creatures hear it only as an indistinct moaning when their surroundings are quiet and the wind blows just right. Creatures that cannot hear the *Draakhorn* can still sense it, like a faint vibration felt subconsciously and interpreted as a sense of dread.

The adventurers were introduced to the *Draakhorn* by Dala Silmerhelve during the first session of the Council of Waterdeep. When they are ready to seek more information on the ancient relic, Dala provides it.

> "The Sea of Moving Ice was the last known location of the *Draakhorn*. No one can pinpoint its present location from the sound, or even verify with certainty that the relic is still in the northern sea, but the search must start there.
>
> "The one person who could tell us more is a tiefling sorcerer called Maccath the Crimson. No one alive knows more about the *Draakhorn* than her, but the Arcane Brotherhood, of which she is also a member, hasn't seen her for three years. She was investigating the Sea of Moving Ice when she disappeared."

"Old White Death"

The white dragon Arauthator haunts the Sea of Moving Ice like an avenging wind. Personifying the brutality and savagery of his kind, Arauthator is a solid ally of the Cult of the Dragon, and can be counted on to be present at the Well of Dragons when Tiamat makes her triumphant return from the Nine Hells.

NICOLE CARDIFF

Arauthator's chief lair is beneath a remote peak known as Lonefang Mountain, but he maintains a number of smaller lairs among the icebergs that drift with the seasonal tides in the Sea of Moving Ice. One of these is known as Oyaviggaton ("island of eternity") by the local tribes known as the Ice Hunters, because of the many enemies Arauthator has frozen into the icy walls of the berg's hollowed interior.

In addition to his size, cunning, and ferocity, Arauthator wields spellcasting power that makes him a particularly dangerous foe. More than a century ago, during one of the cyclical periods of draconic violence known as the Rage of Dragons, Arauthator joined with a dozen other dragons in attacking the Hosttower of the Arcane in Luskan. Their assault toppled the west arm of the tower, and Arauthator was seen scooping up numerous items of great magical importance and power, including at least three tomes of rare spells. The possibility of recovering those books is part of what drew Maccath the Crimson to the Sea of Moving Ice.

Arauthator's iceberg lair serves primarily as a meeting ground for him and his mate, the ancient white dragon Arveiaturace ("the White Wyrm"). She is aware of the cult's activity but has been reluctant to join forces with it, and Arauthator seeks a way to gain her commitment. At one time, Arveiaturace served a wizard named Meltharond, whose corpse remains strapped to a saddle on the dragon's back. She has never accepted his death, and still speaks to him as if he were alive. Arauthator hopes that if he provides Arveiaturace with a new wizard to serve, she will recover from her grief and join him in wholeheartedly supporting the Cult of the Dragon. When the proud, ambitious Maccath the Crimson arrived in Arauthator's lair, the dragon enticed her with the prospect of becoming Arveiaturace's master and rider.

Maccath the Crimson

The Arcane Brotherhood is a league of mages based in the city of Luskan at the fabled Hosttower of the Arcane. The Hosttower is an academy for the best and brightest mages of Faerûn. Only the most promising are accepted as members in the Arcane Brotherhood, and only members of the order can study at the Hosttower.

Maccath the Crimson was one of those best and brightest when she journeyed to the Hosttower seeking admission. Her knowledge of dragon lore and draconic relics was already vast, but she wanted to know more about the dragons' magic. Even though she gained access to the accumulated lore of the Arcane Brotherhood, Maccath concluded that some questions could be answered only by dragons—and that questions about the magic stolen from the Hosttower during the last Rage of Dragons could be answered only by Arauthator. Maccath set sail on an expedition to learn those answers three years ago and hasn't been heard from since.

Dala Silmerhelve provides the characters with all that is known of Maccath's fate.

"Maccath reported her progress to the Hosttower by way of *sending* spells. Her last report spoke of seeing Ice Hunters paddling their sealskin boats toward a huge iceberg, flattened like a plateau across its surface, but ringed by icy peaks. She had intended to follow the Ice Hunters and investigate the iceberg. After that, no more reports came.

"Attempts to find Maccath using scrying and other magical means located only her ship, adrift and heavily damaged. Some of the ship's crew were seen dead, but no sign of the tiefling sorcerer was ever found. However, the lair of a dragon as powerful as Arauthator is no doubt protected against scrying magic. If Maccath is alive, in addition to the lore she can share regarding the *Draakhorn*, the Arcane Brotherhood would be most grateful to get her back."

Setting Sail

In Waterdeep, the characters are outfitted with cold weather gear, including snowshoes suitable for traversing deep drifts, and have passage north arranged on a ship specially built for plying the waters of the Sea of Moving Ice. *Frostskimmr* is captained by a human male known as Lerustah Half-face. The right half of his face was left a scarred ruin from severe frostbite suffered years ago on the Sea of Moving Ice. He keeps a leather hood drawn across his face most of the time, both for warmth and so as not to frighten children. Lerustah is a brave explorer and a skilled sailor.

Frostskimmr is a light longship with a shallow draft, driven by a single sail or by oars when necessary. The combination of wind and oar power is needed for picking a course through close-packed ice. Despite the ship's length of nearly sixty feet, it is still light enough to be lifted by its forty crew members if it becomes hemmed in by ice. The ship is open to the air, but the crew rig sailcloth shelters across the deck to keep away the wind and sleet and hold in some warmth.

The Sea of Moving Ice

The journey up the Sword Coast isn't the focus of this chapter, so you don't need to dwell on it in detail. With favorable winds, *Frostskimmr* reaches the Sea of Moving Ice in a few days. From that point, the ship must slow down and proceed cautiously.

Captain Lerustah has no strong feelings one way or the other about whether the crew should pull *Frostskimmr* onto an ice floe at night or spend the night on the water. An ice floe is more comfortable and offers safety from certain aquatic creatures. On the open water, the ship is safer from creatures that hunt only on the ice, but sleeping on the deck is colder and less comfortable than in an easily built snow shelter. The decision of where to spend the night is up to the characters.

Ice Hunters

The Ice Hunters are nomads that have lived in the North far longer than any other humans. Short, dark-haired, broad-faced, and with light brown skin, they cling stolidly to their culture and their traditions of fishing and whaling on the Sea of Moving Ice, and of hunting for seal, walrus, and polar bears among the ice floes. They travel by dogsled on land and ice, and paddle seal-hide boats called khyeks or oumyeks across the frigid water. They worship totems of animals from the world around them, such as Clever Oomio the gray seal, Grandfather Walrus, Great White Bear, and Pindalpau-pau the Reindeer Mother.

The Ice Hunters came unaware to the dragon's iceberg generations ago. Desiring servants to guard his lair during his long absences, the dragon killed just enough of the tribesfolk to force the rest to obey him out of terror. Using their unsurpassed ability as scouts, they act now as Arauthator's eyes and ears on the Sea of Moving Ice. Living as thralls, they have no doubt that if they ever leave the iceberg, Arauthator will hunt them down and take horrific revenge.

Random Encounters

Searching the Sea of Moving Ice for the plateau-like iceberg described by Maccath is a time-consuming process. Roll a d6 each morning, afternoon, and night. On a roll of 1, an encounter occurs. Roll on the table to determine the specifics, adding +1 for each previous table roll made while the characters were searching from the ship on water by day. Searching by night or searching by day while *Frostskimmr* is on an ice floe doesn't improve the odds of finding Oyaviggaton.

Sea of Moving Ice Encounters

d6	Encounter
1	Giant octopi
2	Merrow
3	Polar bear
4	Scrags*
5	Ice Hunters
6	Ice Hunters in fishing boats
7+	Oyaviggaton sighted

If combat becomes necessary, Captain Lerustah fights as a **knight** and his crew fight as 40 **guards**. If fighting aboard *Frostskimmr*, the characters must be cautious while using area spells that deal fire or force damage. One such spell does minimal damage that can be fixed by the crew at sea after the fight ends. If two such spells are used, *Frostskimmr* must be hauled onto an ice floe for repairs that take half a day. Roll normally for events during that time, but reroll any total of 7 or higher.

Giant Octopi. This event can occur by day or night, but only on water. Two **giant octopi** attack simultaneously, trying to drag characters and crew off the ship into the freezing water. When one octopus is killed, the other withdraws underwater and escapes.

Merrow. This event can occur by day or night, on ice or water. Five **merrow** move as close as possible to *Frostskimmr* before attacking. If the characters are on the ship, the merrow try to swamp it by making a DC 25 Strength check, with a +2 bonus to the check for each additional merrow involved in the attempt. Success means that *Frostskimmr* lurches dangerously and each creature on board must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed saving throw, a creature is dumped overboard.

A creature that falls into the frigid water is swimming and must make a DC 12 Constitution saving throw at the start of each turn that it is in the water. On each failed saving throw, the creature suffers one level of exhaustion. Characters in the water are preferred targets for monsters in the water.

Polar Bear. This event can occur day or night, but only on the ice. A crew member aboard *Frostskimmr* spots a **polar bear** stalking a wounded Ice Hunter on an ice floe. If the characters intervene and save the hunter, he is grateful, and converses with them in his own tongue. (If the characters have no means to communicate with him, one of *Frostskimmr's* crew can translate.) Though he is not from the tribe that lives on Oyaviggaton, the hunter knows the iceberg. In response to any questions about Oyaviggaton, he advises the characters as to its distance and direction from their current position, but warns them to keep away from it. Armed with this information, the characters gain a +1 bonus to their next two daytime event rolls.

Scrags. This event occurs only at night, and only on the ice. While *Frostskimmr* sits on an ice floe to wait for morning, three aquatic **trolls**, known as scrags (swimming speed 30 ft., can breathe underwater), attack the ship. If the characters and crew don't intend to haul *Frostskimmr* onto an ice floe for the night, one of the scrags swims beneath the ship and wrenches a plank loose, causing a serious leak that requires the ship to be pulled onto the ice for repairs.

Ice Hunters. This event can occur only by day. A hunting party from Oyaviggaton (12 **tribal warriors**) is spotted pursuing seals on an ice floe, whether *Frostskimmr* is on the water or on an adjacent ice floe. The hunters are surly and uncommunicative if approached, knowing that they must return to the iceberg before nightfall or their kin will be punished. Captain Lerustah is puzzled by their behavior, knowing that the Ice Hunter people are shy but never hostile. The hunters quickly paddle their khyeks away to the northeast. If the characters follow the hunters or use that bearing for the next stage of their journey, they gain a +1 bonus to their next daytime event roll.

Ice Hunters in Fishing Boats. This event occurs only during the day. A group of fishers from Oyaviggaton (12 **tribal warriors**) are spotted in their characteristic boats, whether *Frostskimmr* is in the water or on a nearby ice floe. They are unfriendly and uncommunicative if approached, paddling away to the northeast as soon as they are able. If the characters follow the hunters or use that bearing for the next stage of their journey, they gain a +1 bonus to their next daytime event roll.

Oyaviggaton Sighted. This event can occur by day or night. There's no mistaking the silhouette of this massive iceberg as matching the description given by Maccath the Crimson. With a flattened expanse at one end rising to jagged peaks at the other, the characters' objective is at hand.

Oyaviggaton

Arauthator's iceberg lair rises from the sea to form a floating island. The portion of the berg above the water appears,roughly triangular, with rounded corners. The plateau portion of the iceberg rises more than a hundred feet above the water, and the jagged ice peaks add another two hundred feet above that.

The Ice Hunter village is a collection of snow shelters and tents sitting at the center of the island. The village can't be seen from the sea because of the berg's height, but a large shelf of ice where the Ice Hunters beach their boats is clearly visible from the water. Approximately 60 feet across, the shelf rises a few feet above sea level and is littered with enormous, cracked bones—including ribs that arch taller than a human.

A character proficient in Nature recognizes that the bones are mostly from whales and huge seals (or Captain Lerustah can supply that information). Any character who spends a few minutes examining the bones discovers tooth marks with a monstrous bite radius—evidence that a gigantic predator (Arauthator) ate at least some of these creatures. Examining the bones reveals smaller human bones in the pile as well, all of which show the same bite marks.

An ice chasm splits the cliff face above the ice shelf, rising to the top of the plateau. The chasm is 20 feet wide near the bottom but narrows to 5 feet wide at the top. Steps are cut into the ice, making for an easy climb to the top of the plateau.

Captain Lerustah would like to keep his crew members aboard *Frostskimmr* rather than marching them up to the plateau. He's not at all comfortable with the idea of leaving his ship without the strongest possible complement of guards. If the characters are unable to communicate with the Ice Hunters (who speak only their own language, Uluik), one of the crew members speaks enough Uluik to get by. The translator will accompany the characters onto the iceberg if he's paid a bonus of at least 50 gp, but he returns to the ship as soon as the characters descend into the ice caves.

The Village

The top of Oyaviggaton is a plateau, but it's not level. The ground is uneven, fractured by narrow ice chasms and divided by rills, snowdrifts, and ice ridges taller than a human, sculpted by sea spray and wind. The ridges block the view of the village until characters are 200 feet from the nearest shelter.

The first sight that greets the adventurers when they emerge onto the plateau is a row of ten corpses frozen into a wall of ice: three Luskar warriors, a dwarf, and six Ice Hunters. The bodies have been preserved in the ice, making it impossible to tell how long they've been here. The southerners and the dwarf were some of Maccath the Crimson's companions, killed by Arauthator. The Ice Hunters used the bodies to put up this grisly warning, in the hope that other intruders might fear the same fate and turn back. The dead Ice Hunters tried to flee from the iceberg but were hunted and killed by Arauthator, who forced their kin to add them to the horrid display.

Layout

The village sits in a sheltered spot near the center of the iceberg. When the wind blows—which is most of the time—snow whips off the surrounding drifts and surrounds the settlement in a swirling shroud of white.

Twenty structures make up the village, divided between snow-block shelters similar to igloos and double-walled yurts made from sealskin stretched over whalebone frames. Sixteen of these structures are small, one-room family dwellings. One ice-block shelter is a storeroom used for gear owned in common by the tribesfolk, including fishing nets and heavy ropes used for whaling. One yurt near the center of the village is slightly larger than the others, and is home to the Ice Hunter chieftain, Barking Seal. A yurt standing apart from the rest of the shelters is home to the shaman Bonecarver, as indicated by the many animal totems and whalebone carvings around the hut. The shaman's hut features a lesser-used entrance to the ice caves.

The largest structure in the village is the meeting hall, heavily decorated with whalebone and the skulls of fish and mammals. Consisting of one large room, the hall has a wooden floor made of planks salvaged from ships caught and crushed in the Sea of Moving Ice. Beneath the planks in a back corner is an entrance to the ice caves under the village, which lead to Arauthator's grotto. A long coil of rope hangs on the wall near that corner, and a large iron pulley has been left suspended from a beam above the hole.

No columns of smoke rise above the village to give away its location, since the Sea of Moving Ice features no wood or peat to burn. The only artificial heat comes from lamps and tiny stoves burning whale oil. The villagers live on fish, whale meat, and seal meat, eaten raw or dried on racks scattered around the village. With a successful DC 10 Intelligence (Survival) check, a character examining the racks realizes that the village must produce far more food than the number of villagers alone would require.

Villagers

If the characters approach by the obvious path up the chasm from the ice ledge, they are noticed by the village's 12 sled dogs (treat as **wolves**). As soon as the dogs begin barking and growling, the whole village turns out armed and alert—25 **tribal warriors** (males and females; including the chieftain, Barking Seal), 30 **commoners** (children), 1 **druid** (Bonecarver, tribal shaman, female), and 1 **gladiator** (Orcaheart, village champion, male).

The chieftain and shaman do all the talking for the villagers, who speak only their own language, Uluik. The chieftain also knows a little of a rough Illuskan dialect. The Ice Hunters have two main interests: finding out why strangers have come to Oyaviggaton, and getting



them to leave. They lie freely and well, telling tales of sea monsters and ravaging scrags in the area. If the characters ask about Arauthator or other dragons, the shaman claims a dragon known as Old White Death was killed a year ago by frost giants. She describes the heap of whale and seal bones on the waterside ice shelf as all that's left of the monster. Otherwise, the bones are described as evidence of monstrous predators in the area.

While Barking Seal and Bonecarver speak with the adventurers, the other members of the tribe circle around the party, frowning and muttering as the dogs growl. Eight warriors lope off with their weapons toward the icy staircase and the ice shelf below, where they keep a cautious eye on *Frostskimmr*. Wizards, sorcerers, and warlocks among the party attract scornful looks. Do your best to communicate an atmosphere of tense hostility to the players.

Any crew member accompanying the characters can point out that this behavior is highly unusual. Though the Ice Hunters avoid contact with outsiders, they are almost never hostile.

During this interaction, allow the characters to attempt DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) checks. A character who succeeds notices several villagers slipping away one by one and disappearing into the meeting hall. From the hall, the villagers descend into the ice caves to warn Arauthator's servants that strangers have come, then quickly slip back up to the surface.

Encounters in the ice caves assume that the presence of intruders on the iceberg is already known. If the party has maintained stealth since they arrived, they have a chance to surprise creatures in the ice caves.

An Honorable Duel

The Ice Hunters are determined not to allow the strangers inside the village hall, where they might discover the entrance to the ice caves. They know that letting powerful adventurers get past them into the dragon's lair means torture or death for every adult and child of the tribe.

As they stall for time, Barking Seal, Bonecarver, and Orcaheart are also sizing up the adventurers' strength. If the characters refuse to leave the iceberg, Barking Seal proposes a contest: the village's champion against any warrior among the strangers. If the champion wins, the characters must hand over some of their fine steel weapons and sail away immediately, never to return. If the adventurer wins, the strangers will have earned their place among the villagers. They can spend the night in the village, after which Bonecarver will answer their questions to the best of her ability.

If the characters agree to the duel, one of them must fight Orcaheart one-on-one. No magic is allowed, but if the character possesses a magic weapon or magic armor with no obvious effects, the villagers are unlikely to notice. The fight continues until one contestant is unconscious and dying. (Allow Orcaheart to make death saving throws if he drops to 0 hit points.) At that point, the match ends and each combatant's allies can step in to provide healing and assistance.

During the fight, a combatant forfeits if he or she gains assistance of any kind from allies. Despite this, however, Bonecarver aids Orcaheart during the fight if she can. She positions herself so that when he is struck, he can fall backward and land in front of her. When she helps him back onto his feet, she surreptitiously casts *cure wounds*. If a player states specifically that a character is watching the crowd for signs of interference, that character can attempt a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check. Success means that Bonecarver was spotted in the act, though she denies providing assistance if accused of cheating.

Ice Hunter Hospitality

If Orcaheart loses the match, the Ice Hunters go through the motions of honoring their pledge. They offer to let the characters sleep in the village storage hut, which barely qualifies as shelter. Bonecarver brings them a platter of slightly spoiled raw fish, explaining (truthfully) that her people prefer the tanginess of meat that's gone past its prime. The fish won't hurt characters who eat it—but the poison Bonecarver added to it will. The sharp tang of the fish covers the bitter poison so well that a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check or DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check is needed to detect it.

BRYAN SYME

Any character who eats the poisoned fish must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. Failure means the character takes 13 (3d8) poison damage and becomes unconscious for 8 hours. On a successful save, the character takes 9 (2d8) poison damage. If all the characters are rendered unconscious by the poison, they are tied up and carried down to area 1 in the ice caves, where they awaken to see 5 **ice toads** (see appendix D for statistics) examining their belongings.

Convincing the Shaman

Of all the Ice Hunters, Bonecarver is the only one whose favor the characters have any chance of winning. She does not initially trust the adventurers, and is as keen to see them depart Oyaviggaton as the rest of her people. However, she knows that the Ice Hunters will eventually perish under Arauthator's wrath, and she has long dreamed that the totem spirits will send heroes with the strength to best the dragon.

With effective roleplaying and a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check, Bonecarver will meet privately with the adventurers and speak the truth of her people's plight. A druid, ranger, or some other character who can truthfully express an understanding of the shaman's animal totem-based faith has advantage on this check. Bonecarver is not willing to risk the lives of her tribesfolk in a battle against the dragon. However, she shows the characters the entrance to the ice caves from her hut and explains what she knows about the caves. This includes their general layout, occupants, and the presence of the "horned lady" (Maccath the Crimson).

Ice Caves

Beneath the village lies a network of ice caves inhabited by Arauthator and his minions. Two entrances lead into the caves from the village: one hidden inside the meeting hall and the other inside the shaman's hut. The dragon enters the caves by way of underwater tunnels that connect to his lair chamber, but these are too deep and well hidden to be used by the adventurers.

General Features

With its caverns carved out of the glacial depths of the iceberg, every surface in Oyaviggaton is made of ice.

Ceilings and Walls. Most passages in the ice caves are at least 15 feet wide, and ceilings are 20 feet high unless noted otherwise. The walls are intricately carved with draconic imagery, pillars, cornices, filigrees, buttresses, leering dragon faces, and other decorative flourishes. This work has been done by kobolds in Arauthator's service, and its quality varies widely.

Floors. The floors inside the iceberg are worn glass-smooth from decades of traffic. Arauthator, the ice trolls, and the ice toads move across the slick ice with ease thanks to claws and bony spurs on their feet. The dragon's kobold servants wear crampons made of animal teeth strapped to their feet. Characters without crampons or the ability to walk on ice treat all areas of the ice caves as difficult terrain. A successful DC 10 Intelligence check allows a character to rig a set of crampons from items in a climbing kit, or to convert a pair of kobold-sized crampons to fit a Medium creature. Snowshoes are of no help inside the iceberg.

There are no stairs inside the iceberg; the floor slopes between areas of different elevation. Characters can slide down a one-level ramp with ease. Sliding down a two-level ramp (for example, from area 10 to area 9) is automatic if the character is sitting, but requires a DC 10 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check if the character tries to slide down while standing. Characters equipped with crampons cannot stand, but can treat ramps as difficult terrain. Moving along a two-level ramp with crampons also requires a successful DC 12 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. Characters without crampons can climb a one-level ramp with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check, or can climb a two-level ramp with a successful DC 20 Dexterity check. Acrobatics is of no use to these checks, but using a climber's kit grants advantage on the checks. Any failed Dexterity check to move on a ramp results in the character sliding to the bottom and falling prone.

Light. The interior of Oyaviggaton is filled with dim light by whale-oil lamps that are kept filled and lit by the kobolds. The light is for the benefit of the ice toads, who are the only residents of the caves who need light to see.

Temperature. The ice caverns are cold, with the temperature in most chambers hovering around 20 degrees Fahrenheit. The white dragons, the ice trolls, and the ice toads don't mind the cold. The kobolds and Maccath the Crimson bundle up in furs and warm their living quarters with small stoves that burn whale oil supplied by the villagers. As long as the characters wear proper cold weather gear, they are at no risk from the cold while in the ice caves.

Visibility. The ice caves are open to the sea, creating banks of vapor that roll constantly through Oyaviggaton's corridors and chambers. This fog is more common in the low points of the caverns. In areas noted as +10 feet on the map, visibility is unrestricted unless a patch of random fog is encountered. In areas noted as 0 feet, visibility is limited to 75 feet. In areas noted as –10 feet or –20 feet, visibility is limited to 45 feet.

Ice Toads

Arauthator has attracted a number of ice toads to Oyaviggaton, where they help to maintain the iceberg and the dragon's many treasures and trophies. The ice toads are good at this job, thanks to their exceptionally intelligent leader, Marfulb.

Feeding on seals, sea birds, and fish caught for them by the Ice Hunters, Oyaviggaton's ice toads are not automatically hostile to strangers. Once characters get inside Arauthator's lair, they might find that these creatures can be helpful to their quest. Ice toads normally speak only their own obscure language. Those in Oyaviggaton know a little Draconic and Uluik (the language of the Ice Hunters), but their accents are thick and their pronunciation atrocious. Marfulb is fluent in Draconic thanks to many hours spent conversing with Arauthator.

When the characters encounter ice toads, their intelligence won't be apparent until they act or attempt to speak. Even then, characters might not recognize the ice toads' croaking as language. Ice toads move on all fours, but their webbed front feet are surprisingly dexterous. Some carry tools and useful items in pouches slung around their necks.

Random Encounters

In addition to the inhabitants noted in specific areas, the adventurers might run into Arauthator's minions in any corridor or empty chamber. Whenever the characters move from a chamber into the circular corridor, or from the corridor into a chamber with no occupants, roll a d6. On a roll of 1, an encounter occurs. Then roll on the table to determine the specifics.

Ice Caves Encounters

d10	Encounter or Event
1–2	Fog
3–5	Kobolds (3d6)
6–8	Ice toads (1d6)
9	Maccath the Crimson
10	Ice trolls (1d2)

Fog. The air is suddenly filled with roiling vapor. Visibility is reduced to 5 feet for 2 minutes or until the characters move 90 feet away.

Kobolds. Arauthator brought a pack of unwitting kobolds to Oyaviggaton generations ago, and the creatures have been serving him in the frigid cold ever since. In the event of an encounter, a squad of 3d6 **kobolds** is working in or passing through the area. If the characters are dressed as Ice Hunter villagers or are wearing some other appropriate disguise, the kobolds eye them warily but don't immediately sound an alarm. Make a single Wisdom check for the kobolds with a DC equal to the lowest of the characters' checks to disguise themselves. The kobolds' Wisdom modifier is –2, but they have advantage on this check because of their numbers. If the check is successful (or if the characters aren't disguised), the kobolds launch a single volley of sling stones at the intruders, then flee in as many directions as possible to report the intrusion to the ice toads or ice trolls.

Ice Toads. A crew of 1d6 **ice toads** (see appendix D of statistics) is working in this area or passing along the corridor. Disguises are ineffective against the ice toads, which know what creatures live in Oyaviggaton at any given time. If they see anything unexpected—even Ice Hunter villagers entering the caves without permission—they stop what they're doing and observe the characters' actions, asking questions if they can. The ice toads flee to the ice trolls if threatened, fighting only if they must.

The ice toads speak their own language, plus enough Draconic and Uluik to communicate with Arauthator, the kobolds, and the Ice Hunters. They work for Arauthator but have no special devotion to the dragon. If a fight is coming, their loyalty goes to whomever they expect to win. That means the dragon, unless the characters somehow impress them.

Maccath the Crimson. Maccath often wanders the ice caves, deep in thought. On meeting strangers, her reaction is oddly subdued. See area 10 for more details on Maccath's situation.

Ice Trolls. Encountered singly or in small roving gangs, ice trolls are ordinary **trolls** with bluish skin and immunity to cold damage. Unless any ice toads are nearby to intervene, the ice trolls treats any creature not a kobold, an ice toad, Maccath, or an Ice Hunter as an intruder. For more information on the ice trolls working for Arauthator, see area 12.

1. Entrance from Hut

Inside the hut of the shaman Bonecarver, old furs heaped atop poles are laid across an opening leading down to the ice caves. Steps are cut into the wall of the chute, creating steep, icy stairs that drop down 100 feet in a tight spiral. Because this entrance is seldom used, the steps become increasingly obscured by frost as the characters descend. At the 40-foot mark, a character must attempt a DC 12 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to maintain a grip on the dangerously uneven footholds. Failure means the character loses his or her footing, sliding and tumbling 60 feet to the bottom and taking 21 (6d6) bludgeoning damage. Characters can mitigate this danger by roping themselves together or using a climber's kit. Past the 40-foot mark, the steps improve again so that no further checks are necessary.

The chute and its icy stairs end at the ceiling. A sturdy ladder then descends into the approximate center of a rectangular chamber. The exit to the corridor is an icy, 15-foot-wide passageway sloping downward.

The chamber is empty except for a dozen baskets woven from leather strips and walrus ribs, stacked in the north corner. These contain frozen fish and a few skin-wrapped bundles of rotting shark meat that the Ice Hunters consider a delicacy.

2. Entrance from the Village Hall

Hidden beneath the planks in the back corner of the village hall, this entrance to the ice caves consists of a chute carved with icy stairs descending 100 feet in a tight spiral. This route is used regularly to bring supplies to Arauthator's minions, so the steps are clear and easy to climb. Supplies are carried down strapped to villagers' backs, or lowered in baskets with the pulley and rope in the village hall.

This chamber is empty except for three bundles of rolled sealskins sitting where the ladder descends from the chute above to the approximate center of the room. Additionally, a bed of piled furs has been arranged in the southwest corner, from which the sound of loud coughing can be heard when the characters enter the chamber. Villagers who suffer disease or injury beyond Bonecarver's limited healing ability are quarantined here in the relative warmth of the caves. The coughing villager is named Mend-nets (**tribal warrior**).

Mend-nets is naturally suspicious of strangers, but if any character can use *lesser restoration* to cure his disease, he becomes a trustworthy ally. He won't do anything to hurt the village or the tribe, but he hates the kobolds who live in the caves. The ice toads likewise repulse him, though they also ignore him. The ice trolls



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terrify him, and he has awoken several times to find a troll hungrily peering at him from the tunnel leading to the trolls' lair (area 12). He tells the characters that the creatures of the caves have been warned of their presence, but the only chambers he knows anything about besides this one are areas 1, 3, and 7.

3. Larder

The supplies that the villagers provide for Arauthator and his minions are stored here—mostly dried and frozen fish, whale, seal, walrus, and giant squid, plus furs that the kobolds fashion into protective clothing. Fish organs, shells, bones, soft stone, and other sundries are stored in smaller quantities, and are used by the ice toads to make ink, brushes, parchment, and other items for their work. A few seemingly inexplicable items are stored away from the other supplies, including a single steel gauntlet, a silver brooch containing a cameo, the brass hilt of a dueling knife, and a decorative belt buckle—bits and pieces that the villagers have pulled from the stomachs of sharks or giant octopi that have fed on explorers lost to the Sea of Moving Ice.

Also stockpiled in this chamber are coils of rope, spikes, and a few pulleys. It's clear at a glance that this gear has come from the south and was not made by the Ice Hunters. The kobolds use this equipment when something—or someone—needs to be lowered down into Arauthator's lair through area 6. The pulley is attached to the iron hook in the ceiling of that chamber.

4. Kobolds' Den

Arauthator's kobold servants live in this chamber.

> A dozen kobolds occupy this disheveled and filthy chamber. Half-eaten fish heads and gnawed seal flippers are tossed into corners or carelessly strewn around matted heaps of furs, which would undoubtedly smell as bad as they look if not for the cold.

The chamber holds 12 **kobolds** when the characters enter. A few are sleeping but most are tossing knucklebones, sharpening blades, sewing clothing, carving whalebone, or picking on each other. See "Random Encounters" (earlier in the chapter) for guidelines on how the kobolds respond to intruders.

If the characters spend a few minutes searching the area, a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check suggests that approximately two dozen kobolds live in this chamber.

Treasure

Their only possessions of value are a number of walrus tusks carved with draconic imagery, six of which are of sufficient artistry to fetch 200 gp each from a suitable collector.

5. Junk Room

The kobolds throw their litter, food scraps, waste, worn-out boots, and other useless junk into this cavernous chamber. Its pit-like floor is filled to a depth of several feet, courtesy of minions that have been serving Arauthator in this iceberg for centuries. The trash floor of the chamber can be safely traversed, but there is nothing of value here.

6. The Chute

This narrow cavern is the access point to the lair of Arauthator below.

> This chamber feels far colder than any area of the ice caves you've explored so far. The cold issues from a yawning pit in the floor that twists down into darkness, and above which a heavy iron hook is anchored in the ice of the ceiling. A five-foot-wide walkway extends around both sides of the pit, connecting this entrance to an exit across the room. Carved into the ice of the walls are images of white dragons in flight.

A visual inspection from either doorway indicates that the walkway looks safe enough—aside from being icy, narrow, and adjacent to an apparently bottomless pit. The walkway that crosses the east and north sides of the chamber is, in fact, safe, and characters can walk along it without difficulty. The walkway that crosses the west and south walls is weakened and dangerous. When a character reaches the bend in the walkway, have the player roll any die. If an odd number is rolled, a portion of the wall crumbles, and any creature on the walkway must attempt a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, the creature is pushed off the walkway into the chute.

The chute drops 60 feet to the top of the ice platform in area 16 in Arauthator's lair. A creature tipped into the chute slides as much as falls, taking only 10 (3d6) bludgeoning damage when hitting bottom. The creature must then attempt a Dexterity saving throw or fall off the ice platform; see area 16 for more information. A creature that jumps into the chute on purpose takes half damage from the descent and has advantage on the saving throw to stay on the ice platform.

7. Hall of Giants

The bodies of some of the frost giants Arauthator has fought and killed over the centuries are on display in this chamber, frozen into crystal-clear ice walls. Visibility at this level is only 45 feet, so characters won't be able to see much from the doorway. As they move into the chamber, the shape of the first frost giant becomes dimly visible at a distance of 60 feet. At 45 feet, the figure is easily mistakable for a living frost giant standing perfectly still. At 30 feet, the characters recognize that the giant is dead and frozen, seeing its torn armor and the awful claw wounds in its pale blue flesh. The hall displays the bodies of eight frost giants, one fire giant, and one cloud giant.

When the characters arrive in this area, 8 **kobolds** are working in the chamber, polishing and maintaining the ice. If they recognize the characters as intruders, they

try to keep away from them in the fog, then slip out of the chamber when they can.

8. Trophy Hall

Trophies of Arauthator's many battles are displayed in this chamber. Visibility is 45 feet, so the characters won't be able to see much from the doorway. Among the creatures frozen here in death are two remorhazes, a trio of behirs, five abominable yetis, and a giant squid of jaw-dropping size. A complete longship with sail raised is also on display here. The ship clearly will not fit through any of the iceberg's entrances; it was painstakingly disassembled outside and reassembled here by the kobolds. Characters who know ships can see mistakes in the rigging and hull planking, but it's passably good work for a display.

Treasure

Of more immediate interest is the open chest of gold and jewels sitting on the ship's deck. The chest contains 375 gp, 1,480 ep, and 495 sp, plus jewelry and precious objects worth another 225 gp. A character examining the chest without disturbing it or the contents can estimate its value at between 1,000 and 1,500 gp with a successful DC 10 Intelligence check.

If the chest or any of the treasure it contains—even a single coin—is removed from the ship, Arauthator senses it immediately and dispatches 2 ice **trolls** (see area 12) to investigate.

9. Unused Chamber

This chamber is empty, awaiting the day when Arauthator's collection of trophies overflows areas 7 and 8.

10. Maccath the Crimson

If Maccath the Crimson hasn't been encountered elsewhere in Oyaviggaton, the characters meet her here.

At the top of the ramp from area 9, an ice **troll** (see area 12) stands guard over this cavern. It positions itself around the corner so it can't be seen until intruders reach the top of the ramp.

> The empty ice floor of this chamber holds a most unexpected sight. A large shelter is seemingly built of scraps, and in the style of the tents used by the desert nomads of Calimshan, some two thousand miles to the south.

Maccath's shelter is made from huge tapestries and carpets draped across a frame of whale ribs, and stands 8 feet tall, 20 feet wide, and 30 feet long. The bottoms of the walls drape down onto the ground, leaving no gaps underneath. The tent has no obvious entrance, but a character can slide between any two overlapping tapestries to emerge inside the shelter.

When the characters step inside, read or paraphrase the following.

> The interior of the shelter is surprisingly warm, thanks to a small stove and simple lamps burning aromatic whale oil. Carpets are heaped on the floor in thick layers, and tapestries from every culture in Faerûn hang suspended from a sturdy frame of whale ribs.
>
> Books and scrolls are stacked neatly on tables and reading stands made of hide and whalebone. The only furnishings in the shelter not made from these natural materials are the carpets and tapestries, and a portable writing desk that appears to have been taken from a sailing ship.

If this is the characters' first meeting with Maccath the Crimson, add:

> Seated at the writing desk is a female tiefling wearing a blazing crimson cloak over tailored furs. The cloak is fastened with a silver-and-ivory brooch bearing a design reminiscent of a stylized, branching tree—the symbol of the Arcane Brotherhood. Two kobold attendants stand nearby, glancing nervously between you and the tiefling. After a few moments, the tiefling looks up with an expression of pale disinterest and asks, "Have you come to save me or kill me? Not that there will be much difference between the two."

When Maccath arrived at Oyaviggaton three years ago, Arauthator would normally have killed her without a second thought. However, the brooch of the Arcane Brotherhood she wore suggested to Arauthator that the tiefling might present a solution to two problems. First, the dragon possessed numerous items stolen from the Arcane Brotherhood, some of which defied his understanding even after decades of study. Second, Arauthator had long sought to help his mate Arveiaturace overcome her grief over the death of the wizard she once served. Replacing that wizard with a member of the Arcane Brotherhood seemed a perfect solution.

Maccath was smart enough to convince the dragon that his offer had won her over, expecting that she would eventually be able to seek a means of escape from the iceberg. However, she has so far been thwarted by Arauthator's potent magic—including spells and rituals stolen from the Arcane Brotherhood—which have kept her sealed and helpless in Oyaviggaton, invisible to scrying and unable to use *sending* to call for help. Before he turns Maccath over to Arveiaturace, Arauthator has had the tiefling deciphering his stolen writings, though the work has gone slowly thanks to the inherent complexity and danger of the material. Maccath is studying one of the stolen scrolls when the characters walk in.

If the characters announced their presence by fighting the ice troll, the 2 **kobolds** will be visibly agitated, even though Maccath shows little concern. The kobolds have been directed to stay with the tiefling and follow her orders, which mostly means undertaking errands

to the scriptorium (area 11). She also relies on them for cooking, housekeeping, and other mundane chores. The moment the characters make it clear that they are here to rescue Maccath, the kobolds make a dash for area 12. They alert the ice trolls unless they are stopped.

Maccath's Bargain

Though she is a prisoner, Maccath has become obsessed with completing Arauthator's challenging magical translations. Like most members of the Arcane Brotherhood, she is dedicated to the point of arrogance, believing that even if she is fated to die as a dragon's plaything, she will have accomplished something magnificent first.

As such, the tiefling sets out terms for her rescue, saying that she won't leave Oyaviggaton without bringing along as much of the Arcane Brotherhood's stolen property as she can. If the characters agree, Maccath shares the following information:

- Arauthator is currently in area 20 of his lair, close to the entrance beneath the scriptorium (area 11).
- Most of the material stolen from the Hosttower is in the scriptorium, but a few items might be in Arauthator's lair (see "Arauthator's Treasure" at the end of this chapter.)
- Maccath knows the general layout of the dragon's cavern but not its specific dangers. Arauthator has never allowed her out of his sight in the lair. In particular, she knows nothing of the scrags in area 15 or the traps in area 18.
- Two entrances lead to Arauthator's lair—one in the adjoining scriptorium and the other in area 6.
- Arauthator moves in and out of the lair using underwater passages.
- The *Draakhorn* was here when Maccath came to Oyaviggaton, but a group of humans wearing distinctive robes came to the iceberg half a year ago. After negotiation with Arauthator, they took the device away. (The characters recognize Cult of the Dragon regalia in Maccath's description of the humans.) In addition to this, Maccath can tell the characters all the information about the *Draakhorn* as it's described in chapter 17.
- Trying to escape from the iceberg on a ship would be suicidal while Arauthator is able to attack from the air. The dragon is content to let his minions deal with intruders, but he will be alerted if the characters flee.
- Even if the adventurers have not alerted any of the dragon's servants, Maccath's absence would be reported within a day. When that happens, the dragon will come looking for her and whoever helped her escape.

Maccath knows that surprise is the characters' best weapon for challenging the dragon, and that he will not risk dying over this single lair. Though he hates the idea of abandoning a home with its treasure and trophies, if bested by the adventurers, Arauthator will flee to one of his other lairs.

Treasure

If the party seems intent on fighting Arauthator, Maccath offers them a *ring of resistance* (cold) and two *arrows of slaying* (dragons) that she has crafted during her captivity. Though these items and her draconic knowledge give the characters an edge, she warns the party that Arauthator has devoured almost every hero he has faced.

11. Scriptorium

Though this chamber is deeper than the adjacent caverns, no mist hangs in the air here.

> Three shelves stand in this otherwise empty cavern, cobbled together out of salvaged wood, whale bone, pieces of giants' armor, and even the frozen limbs of yetis. A number of scrolls, books, parchments, and folios are carefully arranged on the shelves, all bearing the markings of magical writing.

If Maccath is with the characters, she can direct them to the items stolen from the Hosttower of the Arcane. She cautions the characters not to read or even peruse the material for their own safety. The writings are laced with diabolical lore that is anathema to the mortal mind.

Characters unable to read magic can't make any headway in the books. A character who can read magic who examines the writings must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. Success indicates that the character recognizes the danger and stops reading. Failure indicates the character absorbs the power of the fiendish lore and suffers a psychic shock. While suffering this shock, the character has disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks, and must attempt a DC 10 Constitution check to cast a spell. On a failed check, the spell cannot be cast, though the spell slot is not expended. The character can make another saving throw to end the effect each time he or she finishes a long rest.

Treasure

Arcane spellcasters can find much of value in this scriptorium, along with much that's worthless. Arauthator has collected many spellbooks from slain wizards over the centuries. More importantly for the party's immediate benefit, he also collected dozens of scrolls. Though many of those here have deteriorated from dampness or age, characters who spend a few minutes searching can find ten *spell scrolls*: *gaseous form*, *haste*, *protection from energy*, *water breathing*, *Evard's black tentacles*, *fire shield*, *wall of fire*, *hold monster*, *chain lightning*, and *disintegrate*.

Access to Arauthator's Lair

Near the western end of the scriptorium, a 15-foot-wide chute leads down to area 19 of Arauthator's lair. The dragon can clamber up and down this passage without difficulty. Characters proficient in Athletics can climb down the chute using crampons or some other device to grip the wall. Other characters can climb down only with ropes, pitons, and other climbing gear. The chute descends 60 feet to the roof of area 19, after which characters must drop 15 feet to the ice platform.

Before the characters head down into the cavern, Maccath tells them they have no easy way back up to these chambers. Old White Death doesn't want anyone—intruders or guests—to be able to easily leave his lair.

12. Ice Trolls

The ice trolls that Arauthator has gathered to his service use this hall as their residence, and no other creatures are permitted here. An ice troll has bluish, translucent skin and immunity to cold damage; it otherwise has the statistics of an ordinary troll.

A minimum of 2 ice **trolls** are here when characters first enter, but 3 or more can be placed in this area at your discretion (and depending on whether the adventurers meet conditions that might lead to fighting; see below).

> This cavernous chamber is filled with drifting mist that shrouds a field of ice pillars rising from floor to ceiling. The muffled silence beyond is broken only by the sound of running water.

Ice pillars and pressure ridges form razor-sharp crags that loom out of the roiling fog. Streams of crackling water, magically flowing even at subzero temperatures, course thickly through the hollows beneath wind-driven, icy snow.

From the entrance, only swirling fog can be seen and only the wind can be heard. If Maccath or any ice toad is with the party, they advise the characters in the strongest possible terms to stay out of this chamber. Those who venture here are silently surrounded and ambushed by the ice trolls. The trolls hungrily pursue the adventurers if they flee, but they heed the ice toads and refrain from attacking if the toads command them to.

The trolls speak Giant and understand a little bit of the Draconic tongue. They are willing to trade or bargain with characters who prove too difficult to kill. Only the verifiable offer of food and treasure can convince the trolls to turn against Arauthator.

13. Ice Toad Workplace

Giant ice toads serve Arauthator as overseers at Oyaviggaton. They manage the labor of the kobolds, direct the Ice Hunter villagers to provide the lair with food and other supplies, and have the patience required to deal with the ornery ice trolls.

> A bizarre sight greets you in this rough-walled chamber. About a dozen giant toads with thick, mottled white hides are at work here, scribing strange writing into the ice of the walls, or onto weathered parchment and stone tablets. A few toads transfer parchments and tablets into and out of floor-to-ceiling cubbyholes cut into the ice along the entire southern wall.

A total of 11 **ice toads** (see appendix D for statistics) work in this chamber, scribing records and tallies into the ice using sharpened antlers or their own claws. They also maintain rough maps of the Sea of Moving Ice based on reports from the Ice Hunter villagers. At regular intervals, their temporary records are transferred to more permanent form.

See "Random Encounters" (earlier in this chapter) for guidelines on how the giant ice toads respond to intruders. The characters' best chance to avoid a fight in this area—and to keep the toads from alerting the ice trolls—is to win the ice toads to their cause by treating with their leader, Marfulb.

The average ice toad is smart, but their leader Marfulb is exceptional (Intelligence 13). Her knack for organization and governance had no outlet until her path crossed Arauthator's on the Sea of Moving Ice, and she has served as the seneschal of Oyaviggaton for the four decades since. Not even Arauthator understands the workings of Oyaviggaton as well as Marfulb, who knows the contents and value of every pack, chest, and heap of coins in the iceberg down to the last copper piece.

Marfulb's Lore

In addition to data about Arauthator—his treasures, mating habits, and epic battles with frost giants and other monsters—the information amassed by the ice toads includes exhaustive details on the ever-changing Sea of Moving Ice, the weather north of the Spine of the World, and the culture of the elusive Ice Hunters. Marfulb feels great satisfaction in her life's work, but she knows too little about society south of the Spine of the World to sense its full importance.

Characters equipped with a *bag of holding* could take all the parchments and stone slabs with them when they leave Oyaviggaton. The Arcane Brotherhood would regard the lore as one of the most amazing works of natural philosophy in existence (once it is painstakingly translated from the ice toads' unique language), and they would clamor to meet and praise Marfulb. Without a *bag of holding*, the collection is too large to move.

14. Ice Toad Lair

This freezing, miserable chamber makes a perfect home for the ice toads, but is presently empty. None of the toads' belongings here has value as loot, but they make a strange and curious collection. Such objects include walrus-tooth wart scrapers, spears fashioned from narwhal horn, oddly shaped furniture sculpted into the icy floor instead of rising above it, writing implements carved from baleen and shaped for a webbed hand, and art objects that combine carved whalebone, driftwood, and mundane items such as silverware and glass stoppers salvaged from shipwrecks.

Arauthator's Lair

The dragon's lair is a single, cavernous chamber with many nooks, crannies, and icy outcroppings.

General Features

Like the caverns above it, Arauthator's lair is composed entirely of ice.

Ceiling. The rough ceiling of the open cavern rises 40 feet above the varying height of the uneven floor.

Floors. The floor of the cavern is worn smooth and is highly slippery. Arauthator and the scrags move across the slick ice with ease thanks to their claws, but characters without crampons or the ability to walk on ice treat all areas of the lair cavern as difficult terrain. See the "General Features" of the ice caves for information on crampons. Snowshoes are of no help in the lair.

The terrain levels represented on the map of the cavern show increments of 8 feet. The elevation of the floor results from the ice splitting and splintering, so the ledges are abrupt and have a distinctly step-like appearance. Characters can drop down a level without difficulty. Scrambling up a level requires a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check; the climber has advantage on the check if equipped with crampons or climbing gear.

Light. The lair cavern is normally dark. All description assumes that the characters have a light source or darkvision.

Temperature. The lair cavern is colder than the tunnels and chambers above it. The cavern is a bone-chilling 0 degrees Fahrenheit. Area 20 is even colder.

Visibility. Banks of vapor roll through the cavern, limiting visibility to 60 feet for characters with light.

15. Scrags' Lair

This corner of the cavern is home to 2 scrags that Arauthator allows to live in his lair, provided they guard it in his absence. These aquatic **trolls** can breathe underwater and have a swimming speed of 30 feet.

If the characters approach, the scrags duck into hiding places, then attempt to attack from ambush and claim an unexpected meal.

16. Ice Pillars

Pillars of ice jut from the floor in this area. Climbing an ice pillar more than 8 feet tall requires a climber's kit and a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check.

A creature dropping down the chute from area 6 lands on the top level of the large ice platform in the southeast part of the cavern, 16 feet above the cavern floor. The creature must then succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw to stay on the platform. (A creature that intentionally jumps down the chute takes half damage from the descent and has advantage on this saving throw.) If the saving throw fails, the creature slides off the top level of the icy platform and hits the second level, taking 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage and falling prone.

Any creature falling to the cavern floor attracts the attention of the scrags in area 15.

17. The Icewolf's Spine

This jagged ridge of ice divides the cavern into sections. Climbing up to at least the 8-foot level and moving along the ridge is the only safe way to get from area 15 or 16 into area 19 or 20 without encountering the traps in areas 18a and 18b.

Unlike other ledges in the cavern, the horizontal surfaces of the Icewolf's Spine aren't level. The denizens of the lair can traverse the ledges without difficulty, but any other creature that moves more than 15 feet during a round must make a DC 12 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. Failure indicates that the creature loses its footing and falls to the next level below, taking 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage and landing prone. Wearing crampons grants advantage on this check.

18a. The Gullet

This narrow passage is rigged with a magic trap. When the first character passes through the narrowest point of the passage, the entire area of the passage fills with a *stinking cloud* for 1 minute.

Arauthator immediately becomes aware of intruders if the *stinking cloud* is triggered. The dragon does not set off the trap if it moves through the area.

18b. The Throat

This narrow passage is rigged with a magic trap. When the first character moves through the narrowest point of the passage, a *slow* spell is triggered, targeting every creature in the area. Creatures affected by the spell suffer its effects for 1 minute.

Arauthator immediately becomes aware of intruders if the *slow* spell is triggered. The dragon does not set off the trap if it moves through the area.

19. The Perch

Arauthator sometimes sleeps on this vast ice shelf, but more often he spends his time lounging in area 20. Much of the treasure the dragon keeps at Oyaviggaton is stashed here and on the ledges above. See "Arauthator's Treasure," below.

20. Arauthator's Abyss

The western end of the lair cavern is where Arauthator (an **adult white dragon**) spends most of his time. Gold, jewels, and other treasure lies scattered on the floor and frozen into the walls of this vast chamber.

It is noticeably colder here than anywhere else in the iceberg, reaching –10 degrees Fahrenheit. Any character in an area where the temperature is below 0 degrees Fahrenheit must make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw at the end of each hour. Characters without cold weather gear automatically fail this save. On a failed saving throw, a character suffers one level of exhaustion.

When the characters face off against Arauthator, the dragon roars so loudly that the whole iceberg reverberates with his rage. This calls the ice trolls from area 12, which arrive 5 rounds later.

Pools of slush spread across the floor of the cavern, prevented from freezing by the seawater's high salt content. One such pool, in the westernmost angle of the cavern, conceals a flooded passage connecting to the Sea of Moving Ice. This is Arauthator's customary entrance and exit. When the dragon is reduced to 100 hit points or fewer and facing three or more foes, he dives for this exit and escapes into the frozen sea. If the dragon flees, the ice trolls retreat as well.

Developments

If the characters defeat Arauthator, the reactions of Oyaviggaton's other inhabitants are dependent on whether the dragon is killed or driven off.

If Arauthator is killed, the ice toads grieve, but they won't take any action against the characters. In contrast, the kobolds are furious with grief, throwing themselves at the characters in frenzied, suicidal attacks. The ice trolls' reaction will likely be influenced by whatever interaction the characters had with them earlier. The trolls might flee without a word, or they might decide they like Oyaviggaton and make it their permanent home.

The Ice Hunters are elated over the dragon's death. When the characters emerge from the iceberg, the normally reserved villagers greet them with cheers and offers of the choicest fermented fish. The villagers then begin packing their few belongings into their hide boats and prepare to leave immediately.

If Arauthator is wounded and driven off, Maccath or Marfulb know enough of the dragon to predict that he will spend months recovering at one of his other lairs before returning to Oyaviggaton. The Ice Hunters believe that this gives them enough time to lose themselves in the vast expanse of the Sea of Moving Ice and find a new home where Arauthator can't track them. The dragon is vengeful, but with everything else going on, Maccath believes Arauthator won't put any real effort into seeking out his former thralls. The Ice Hunters have no contact with civilization, so they can't possibly spread word of his humiliating defeat.

With the dragon's disappearance, the kobolds hide if they can, while the ice toads demonstrate the same impassive stoicism they show if the dragon is killed. The ice trolls shy away from Arauthator's treasure as long as he is alive, knowing better than to come between a dragon and its hoard. They don't really care if someone else plunders items from the dragon's hoard, and they're too stupid to think they might be blamed for any such thefts.

Leaving Oyaviggaton

The characters have no chance to sail away from the iceberg aboard *Frostskimmr* while Arauthator is free to attack. The dragon can strike just as easily from the sky or from beneath the water, freezing or capsizing the ship, then picking off the crew at his leisure. If the adventurers try to sneak away with Maccath, the sorcerer's absence is noticed by the kobolds and ice toads within a day.

If Arauthator was beaten in combat and forced to retreat, he will not pursue *Frostskimmr* as the characters sail away. The adventurers and the crew might see the dragon shadowing them in the far distance, but Arauthator is too proud and fearful to face the party again.

Arauthator's Treasure

If Old White Death is killed or driven away, he leaves his iceberg lair's treasure hoard behind. (Because Oyaviggaton is just one of a number of minor lairs maintained by the dragon, the treasure here represents only the smallest part of his total wealth.)

Areas 19 and 20 contain a total of 700 gp, 1,000 sp, and 20 precious stones (five each worth 200 gp, 400 gp, 600 gp, and 800 gp). In addition, add potions, scrolls, and magic items at your discretion. Alternatively, use the treasure tables in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* to generate a hoard whose value is in line with your campaign.

To claim this treasure, it must be hacked out of the ice in the lair cavern. Doing so takes half a day (and is thus impossible if Arauthator is still in the lair).

Marfulb's four decades of data on Arauthator is priceless to the Arcane Brotherhood (a fact Maccath will recognize if the characters don't) or to other collectors of draconic lore. If the dragon is dead, Marfulb can be talked into letting this material be transported south, provided she gets to come along. If Arauthator still lives, the ice toad would prefer to stay and continue her work with her records intact.

Conclusion

Arauthator is a strong ally of the Cult of the Dragon, and the adventurers deal a solid blow to the cult by defeating him. Additionally, by returning Maccath and the stolen lore of the Hosttower, the characters can earn the allegiance of the Arcane Brotherhood in the fight against the cult's plans.

The characters gain a level at the end of this chapter.



Chapters 11 and 12: Death to the Wyrmspeakers

From their first discovery of the dragon masks, the characters likely recognized the importance of the masks to the Cult of the Dragon. Over the course of the adventure, the heroes have two chances to come face to face with the wyrmspeakers of Severin's inner circle, perhaps claiming their dragon masks and hindering Severin's plans.

This section comprises two distinct but interrelated chapters. In the first chapter, the characters track Varram, keeper of the *White Dragon Mask*, to an ancient crypt overrun by yuan-ti in the Serpent Hills. In the second chapter, the adventurers go up against Neronvain, the wyrmspeaker with the *Green Dragon Mask*, in a hidden stronghold and dragon lair in the Misty Forest. These chapters play out at different points during the first and second sessions of the Council of Waterdeep, but are presented together because they form two halves of a single mission—taking the fight to the wyrmspeakers as a means of thwarting Severin's plots.

Three of the five wyrmspeakers of the cult—Galvan the Blue, Rezmir the Black, and Severin himself, who wears the *Red Dragon Mask*—are already at the Well of Dragons and beyond the party's reach. However, the white wyrmspeaker Varram is forced to leave the security of his stronghold after losing possession of the *White Dragon Mask*, while the green wyrmspeaker Neronvain engages in raids against the elves of the Misty Forest with his draconic ally, Chuth. When word comes to the Council of Waterdeep that two of the five wyrmspeakers might be at large, the adventurers seize the opportunity to strike.

Varram the White

Varram the White is a close ally and confidant of Severin, but the Cult of the Dragon leader is unaware of how his old friend's actions have threatened the cult's plans. Varram's *White Dragon Mask* has gone missing, stolen by a thief allied with the Zhentarim and now hidden from normal scrying magic. Varram is desperate to retrieve the mask before Severin discovers it is missing, so he has created the pretense of taking a group of trusted followers to seek out a site of ancient magic in the Serpent Hills, which he claims will help the cult in its plans to summon Tiamat. In truth, Varram is seeking the Tomb of Diderius—site of an ancient divination pool that he hopes will show him the location of the lost mask.

GUIDO KUIP

Harper agents have heard rumors of the theft of the *White Dragon Mask*, and Leosin Erlanthar has recently learned that the dwarf Varram was seen in the trade settlement of Boareskyr Bridge, near the Serpent Hills. With the Harpers already spread far and wide on their intelligence-gathering missions, the adventurers are a perfect choice to pursue the wyrmspeaker.

Following the Trail

Leosin Erlanthar contacts the party during a council session in Waterdeep. After filling them in on the rumors that Varram has lost the *White Dragon Mask* and gone abroad in search of it, he sends the characters to Boareskyr Bridge, instructing them to seek information on Varram's recent movements and probable destination.

This chapter sees the characters journey from Boareskyr Bridge to a forgotten Anaurian ruin in the Serpent Hills. The divination pool that Varram seeks is there—but so too is a clan of yuan-ti that are a threat to the wyrmspeaker and the adventurers alike.

Boareskyr Bridge

Boareskyr Bridge bears the name of a now-vanished realm north and east of the Trade Way. The bridge spans the Winding Water and is a major landmark. Constructed of black granite, it bears sculpted images of the deities Cyric and Bhaal, commemorating the legendary battle they fought on the bridge during the Time of Troubles.

This way station settlement is little more than a collection of tents, wagons, and caravans providing food, fresh mounts, and other services to travelers. A contingent of paladins from the theocracy of Elturgard maintains watch over the bridge in a newly built keep.

Bolo's Tentside Inn

Bolo's Tentside Inn is a rough-and-tumble establishment set up in a large pavilion near the center of Boareskyr's tent city. When the characters make inquiries about Varram, they are directed to Bolo's and its female halfling proprietor.

> "A dwarf in purple robes? Oh, I saw him. He was asking about escorts into the hills, when this hooded fellow starts asking him his business. The dwarf looked him straight in the eye, then pulled out his dagger and stabbed the tall fellow dead! He was one of the scaled folk of the Serpent Hills, come down to spy on us! That dwarf's a hero, make no mistake. But he and his entourage took off straight away for the hills then, quick as cats!"

Varram's only goal in killing the yuan-ti spy was stopping word of his movements from reaching the Serpent Hills before he got there, but it has made him something of a local hero. Bolo is happy to share what she knows as long as the characters don't let on that they intend to harm the dwarf.

Varram traveled with more than a dozen other companions, including a handful of cloaked and hooded warriors. She assumed them to be barbarian mercenaries, but Varram is actually traveling under the protection of a force of bearded devils. The dwarf headed into the Serpent Hills after killing the yuan-ti.

The Serpent Hills

Good weather and the fact that Varram and his large party were moving with haste makes their trail into the hills easy to follow. From Boareskyr Bridge, the adventurers pursue the dwarf into the Serpent Hills—a swath of badlands, mesas, and rocky plateaus sprinkled with trees and tall grass. Varram's trail leads some sixty-five miles north-northeast.

Lizardfolk and nagas, trolls and giants, and the treacherous yuan-ti all lurk in the Serpent Hills, amid the tombs and ruined settlements of more than one fallen civilization. As the characters pursue Varram, roll a d20 every 6 hours of travel; an encounter occurs on a roll of 17–20. Determine the encounter by rolling on the table below.

Serpent Hills Encounters

d8	Encounter
1	Humanoids (1d6)
2	Herd mammals (5d6)
3	Hill giants (1d2)
4	Unmarked grave
5	Shrine
6	Vultures (3d6)
7	Ruined settlement
8	Lizardfolk (2d8)

Humanoids. Humanoids ranging into the Serpent Hills might be treasure hunters, escaped slaves from the monstrous land of Najara, or scouts from Elturgard keeping watch on yuan-ti activity.

Herd Mammals. Packs of goats, antelope, and other herd mammals range across the Serpent Hills. They avoid other creatures, but can become fierce if threatened or cornered.

Hill Giants. The party comes across one or two **hill giants** gorging on a fallen herd animal. When the giants notice the adventurers, they see the opportunity for another meal. A hill giant retreats when reduced to half its hit points or fewer, preferring prey that does not fight back.

Unmarked Grave. A low rise covered in hastily collected rocks marks the resting place of one of the many explorers to have fallen in the Serpent Hills. At your discretion, an unmarked grave at night could become an encounter with a ghost or other restless undead.

Shrine. An isolated shrine to one of the many lost gods of Netheril or Anauria rises up out of the desert. Many such sites show signs of having been used as campsites by travelers in the hills.

Vultures. Flocks of **vultures** might be seen circling at a distance, or could harass the characters if they mistake them for lost travelers on their last legs.

Ruined Settlement. Crumbling stones and dry wells are all that remain of the many lost settlements of the Serpent Hills.

Lizardfolk. **Lizardfolk** regularly hunt and gather food for their yuan-ti masters, grabbing humanoid settlers along the fringes of the hills when they can.

Tomb of Diderius

The Tomb of Diderius and its magic pool are hidden within a complex of chambers carved into a towering cliff. Originally part of the manse the wizard Diderius built around the mystical divination pool, the complex was converted to a crypt only after his death. The crypt looks down over the ruins of the town that grew up around the magic pool to cater to those who came seeking Diderius's wisdom.

The town once nestled into a canyon between two bluffs, but only a few ruined stone structures and the slab foundations of administrative and temple buildings now remain. Cave entrances dot the bluffs, marking former residences and simple tombs. None of the ruins hold anything of value or interest, but the caves offer safe places for the party to rest.

Knowledge of the settlement that once stood here has been lost to all except Ilda, a ghostly librarian in area 9 of the crypt, who has answers to many forgotten questions. As well, though few seek the pool these days, a small yuan-ti colony known as Ss'tck'al has arisen behind the crypt. The yuan-ti use humanoid sacrifices to power the divination pool's magic, learning dark secrets that fuel their insidious plots.

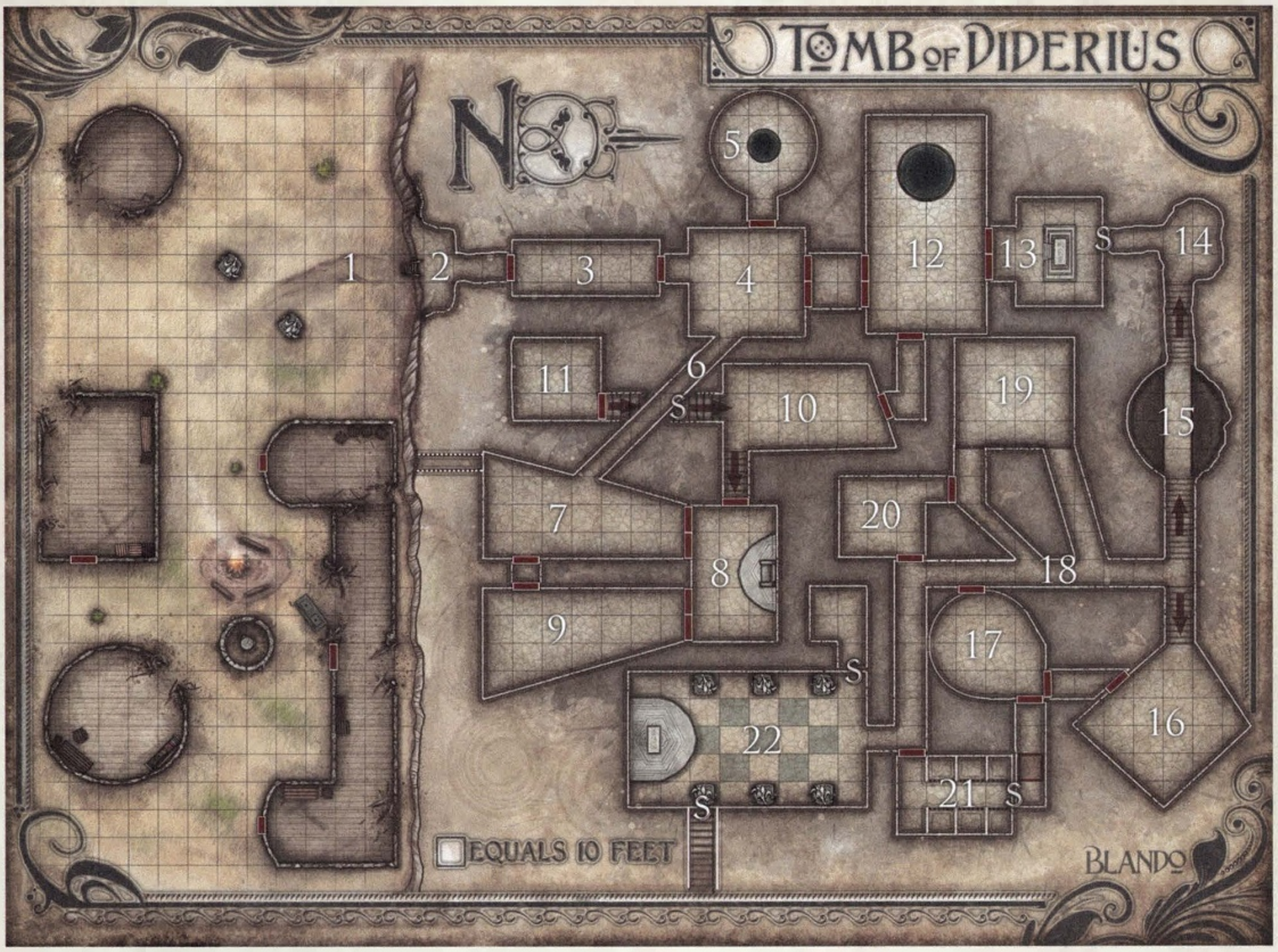
General Features

Unless otherwise specified, the floor and walls of the dungeon are sandstone blocks and flagstones. The walls are cool to the touch, and the air is cold.

Ceilings. The tomb's ceilings are 10 feet high unless otherwise noted.

Light. Unless specified otherwise, there is no light inside the tomb.

Regional Effects. When Diderius died, those who honored him in life transformed him into a special **mummy lord** whose magic pervades his tomb. Since Diderius is neutral rather than evil, the area lacks dark magic common to other mummy lord tombs. A few chambers of the tomb have the appearance of opulent and well-kept rooms suitable for a noble archmage. This effect is an illusion, however, failing to cover the rank scent of dust and decay.



JARED BLANDO

1. Entrance Plaza

The entrance to Diderius's tomb stands in what was once a large paved plaza. The remains of a fountain are now little more than a stone circle set around a crumbling hole in the ground leading to a well deep below. Two stone statues stand in the courtyard, rising twenty feet high. Behind them, a forty-foot high edifice is carved into the cliff side, dominated by relief columns carved with strange, otherworldly scenes.

The left-hand colossus is a bearded human male wearing exotic clothes, but its face is smashed beyond recognition. It holds a balance in its right hand and a cudgel at its side, its left hand raised as if in warning. The colossus to the right of the entrance is a young human male wearing similarly exotic clothing, the left half of its head cracked off and lying at its feet. The statue holds a shepherd's crook in its left hand, its right hand raised in warning as well.

The relief-carved scenes around the entrance depict things Diderius glimpsed in the divination pool, including other worlds and planes that never came to be. Use your imagination when describing these scenes. The entrance to the crypt is 30 feet up atop a stone stairwell that stops 10 feet short of a platform jutting out from the cliff face. Varram's cultists (see below) have left a ladder leaning against the edifice that allows characters to climb up to the entrance.

Approaching the Statues

When the party approaches the statues, read the following.

As you approach the statues, you hear the sudden sound of grinding stone. The colossal figures turn their massive heads, their shattered features staring down at you. Two voices issue forth in unison, booming out as though erupting from the deep earth.

"Halt. You come before Diderius, ether walker and conduit of clairvoyance. Behold ye now his wondrous triumphs. Diderius extends wisdom, and Diderius offers knowledge. Which do you seek?"

If a response of "We seek wisdom," or "We desire knowledge" is given, or the characters roleplay an obsequious or self-deprecating response that might please an egotistical wizard, the statues respond. They say, "Diderius shall grant you what you seek, but only if you heed him and continue to show proper respect!" They then revert to their original positions.

The adventurers' positive response earns them beneficial warnings, courtesy of the magic of Diderius. Warnings are detailed in the areas to which they apply.

Any response other than "knowledge" or "wisdom" that is not in some way flattering to Diderius—including questions for clarification—results in the statues reverting to their initial positions. The characters are free to continue on into the complex, but they receive no benefit from this interaction.

Cultist Campsite and Ruined Fountain

Varram's cultists have made camp in the plaza near the ruined fountain. A campfire is burning next to the fountain, and three bedrolls show where the rearguard cultists are camped. Seven shallow graves have been dug east of the campsite—casualties from the cultists' exploration.

The guards are dead, having been dragged off and eaten by trolls living in the tunnels beneath the well. Those sewers remain largely intact, and the 3 **trolls** that dwell there have discovered that using them to move between the crypt and the plaza makes for good foraging in the area. If the party rests here or in area 5, the trolls attack in the night. A troll fights until reduced to one-third or fewer of its hit points before retreating to the safety of the well.

The entrance to the tunnels is too narrow for even a Small character to squeeze through. The trolls dislocate their hips and shoulders to pass through, taking 10 bludgeoning damage that they quickly regenerate.

2. Antechamber

While an illusion still shows a tomb with gilded carvings and silver censers, these are mere shadows. Looters have defaced and ruined the relief-carved walls, and the censers are long gone. Set between the carvings are a dozen alcoves recognizable as funerary niches, though these contain only splinters of bone. At the far end of the chamber, a stone door hangs ajar. Marks on the door and frame indicate that it was recently forced.

3. Watchful Statues

Six statues stand here, all of cowled wizards leaning on staffs, their faces obscured by deep hoods. The hollows the hoods form are particulalry dark. Niches between the statues once held skeletal guardians that fought the cultists. The bones of more than a dozen humanoids now litter the ground.

Characters who chose well when speaking with the statues in area 1 are struck by a sudden thought when they enter this area: "Some secrets are not meant for mortal minds to know. Look away from the darkness in which such knowledge hides."

Statue Trap

When the first adventurer passes the halfway point of the room, the sound of grinding stone announces the statues turning their cowled heads to follow the characters' movements. The characters must not look into the darkness in the statues' hoods. Any character who does must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw against a *suggestion* spell. Success indicates that the character shrugs off the statue's magic, while failure indicates the character is held by the dark gaze within the stony cowl for 1 round. During this time, the statue whispers impossible secrets to the character, which carry both benefit and burden.

Customization: Animated Tile Creature

An animated tile creature acts like the creature it resembles, except it is a construct that doesn't breathe, drink, eat, or sleep. The creature also gains the following features.

Damage Resistances piercing
Damage Immunities poison, psychic
Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

A tile creature gains the following trait.

Rejuvenation. If destroyed, the tile creature regains all its hit points and becomes active again in 24 hours unless at least half its tiles are collected and kept separate from the rest of the creature's tiles.

A tile creature gains the following reaction.

Narrow Dodge. When targeted by a melee attack, the tile creature can take a reaction to turn its narrowest aspect toward the attacker. The attacker has disadvantage on the attack roll.

A character who failed the initial save must then make a DC 15 Intelligence saving throw. On a failed save, the character cannot grasp the secrets it was shown, and there is no effect. On a success, the character understands the world more accurately, gaining advantage on Intelligence checks for the next 24 hours. However, the character is also driven temporarily insane for 1 minute. An insane creature can't take actions or reactions, can't understand what other creatures say, can't read, and speaks only in gibberish. You control the creature's movement, which is erratic.

4. Mosaic Chamber

This chamber is a high vaulted dome with a deep inset ledge circling the room, 10 feet wide and 15 feet up. The floor here is set with a beautiful tile mosaic showing a knight in plate armor wielding a glowing sword against a chimera. The word "SAFE" is written in chalk on the door leading to area 5, marking that chamber as a resting place used by the cultists.

When the first character enters this room, the tile chimera begins to slowly shift. With a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check, a character notices this movement and is not surprised as the tiles shoot up and the chimera seemingly claws its way out of the mosaic.

The tile chimera acts as a normal **chimera** magically animated and customized per the sidebar. It makes a clacking noise as it moves, and when injured, it sprays tiles instead of bleeding. It is thin in one dimension and can use that fact to its advantage in combat. The creature flies up to the ledge to use its fire breath at range, flying down to attack in melee until it can breathe again.

Mosaic Sun

The sun is depicted in the mosaic near the hallway that is area 6—and is actually a sliding circular plate that reveals the bone boulder trap in that area. The plate is only apparent with a successful DC 24 Wisdom (Perception) check or a DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check.

Door Hazard

The double doors leading to area 12 are plated in corroded copper engraved to depict a group of wizards peering over a pool of water. The oversized figure of a male wizard at the top of the image raises his hands as if summoning a creature from the pool.

The doors bulge out noticeably from their frame, pushed out by the weight of stone where the ceiling of the corridor between area 4 and area 12 has collapsed. Pulling on either door unleashes enough force to break the hinges and send the doors and a wall of rubble crashing into the room. Any creature within 10 feet of the doors must make a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw to jump out of the way. On a failure, the creature takes 28 (8d6) bludgeoning damage, or half as much damage on a successful save. The fall of rubble leaves the hallway filled with stone and impassable.

5. Well Chamber

The divination pool used water to create a mirror-like surface for its powerful rituals, which was replenished from this well. The well holds water still, but the regional effects Diderius imposes on his lair causes it to evaporate within a few rounds of being hauled up into this area. A bronze bucket on a rope sits near the well, while an empty basin stands 8 feet up along the north wall, with stone steps leading up to it. A brass lever protrudes from the wall near the basin. When water is poured into the basin and the lever pulled, it feeds the sluice in area 12.

The sides of the well and the floor next to it are covered in bright red mushrooms. They are slick with a watery sheen that resembles blood, and have the taste and texture of raw liver if picked and eaten before the lair effects spoil them. They are safe to consume, however.

The cultists used this room as a forward campsite during their short expedition. Sleeping rolls and camping gear are scattered around. As with the door leading into this area, "SAFE" is scribed on the wall in chalk in case anyone became lost or disoriented.

Trolls

The well here connects to the reservoir that feeds the fountain in the plaza outside. The trolls in that area sometimes come here when their hunting goes poorly and feed on the liver mushrooms. Though the cultists did not encounter them before being taken by the yuan-ti, the trolls attack in the middle of the night if the party uses this area for resting. As on the plaza, the trolls flee down the well if badly injured.

6. Hallway

This hallway slants down sharply toward area 7, dropping 15 feet over its full length. Any character who takes a moment to poke around and succeeds on a DC 17 Intelligence (Investigation) check notices a secret panel halfway down the hallway, large enough for a Small creature to fit through, or a Medium creature that is squeezing. The panel reveals a narrow shaft that once housed a dumbwaiter, which drops down 30 feet to the stairwell leading to area 11. (The cultists discovered

this shaft and used it to enter areas 10 and 11, though no sign can be found of their passage.)

Bone Boulder Trap

At 15 feet beyond the shaft entrance, a mechanical plate installed in the floor triggers a rolling boulder trap. A successful DC 22 Wisdom (Perception) check by one of the characters in the first rank of the marching order is required to notice this trigger without activating the pressure plate.

If the plate is activated, the circular mosaic pattern that appears as the sun on the floor in area 4 slides back and a 7-foot-diameter sphere made of hundreds of skeletal bodies rises magically from the floor. This bone boulder tilts toward area 6 and rolls down the sloping hallway before crashing against the wall in area 7.

As it rolls through, the bone boulder crushes and slashes at any creature in area 6, dealing 18 (4d8) bludgeoning damage and 18 (4d8) slashing damage, or half as much damage with a successful DC 17 Dexterity saving throw. Any creature that fails this save is grabbed by skeletal hands and pulled into the sphere, which continues to roll over any other creatures in the hallway.

A creature trapped in the bone boulder can attempt a DC 17 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to break free before the boulder slams into the wall in area 7. Any creature that fails to escape is inside the boulder when it hits, and is caught in an explosion of bones and stone, taking 14 (4d6) bludgeoning damage and 14 (4d6) slashing damage.

7. Throne Room Antechamber

The smell of incense fills this room, and rich tapestries cover the walls. On the south wall, a chute large enough only for a Small character to squeeze through lets in light from outside.

If the characters spoke properly to the statues in area 1, an unfamiliar voice is heard to whisper as they enter this area: "Humility proffered in the manner of Mystril shelters those opening the way to seeking knowledge." A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Religion) check reminds a character of a holy gesture among adherents of the fallen goddess Mystril, involving turning the head downward and raising the hands as if holding a lamp. Characters who make this gesture while opening the double doors to the north can pass without difficulty.

Sarcophagi

Six sarcophagi are embedded in the walls behind the tapestries, holding the mummified remains of Diderius's household guards. A character who opens the north double doors without making the proper gesture, or who tampers with a sarcophagus, awakens the 6 **mummies**, which lurch forth and attack.

8. Throne Room

A throne on a massive dais resembles a floating cloud concealing a golden sun. Seated on the throne is a twelve-foot-tall, regal and well-muscled humanoid male with a flowing white beard and purple toga—in reality, a **clay golem** that Diderius used to receive favored guests in this area.

The golem has been imbued with castings of *magic mouth*. When any character first approaches it, the creature speaks in a soothing, magnificent voice, saying, "Ye who seek Diderius's insight must first furnish tribute, that Diderius might work his mighty magic. Lay such tribute at my feet or depart."

Diderius was not a greedy wizard, and he accepted even meek offerings from the poor in the town. As long as each party member places something more valuable than a clay cup in the treasure pile, the characters are allowed to pass. If the adventurers attempt to steal any of the treasure or to use the door to area 10 without leaving treasure, the golem attacks.

Treasure

At the foot of the throne is a pile of treasure containing 250 sp, six fine silver necklaces worth 50 gp each, and a *potion of fire breath*. Even with a quick glance, characters can see that the pile also contains hundreds of copper pieces and worthless bits of jewelry and pottery.

9. Study and Library

This room was Diderius's study and library, in which he would meet with sages and travelers. Its dusty shelves and tables are now empty, the scrolls and tomes once held here having been looted long ago. However, the area's unwitting guardian remains.

Ilda is a neutral good **ghost** who was once one of Diderius's apprentices. She worshiped her master, but was mistakenly banished as a thief when one of his prize tomes was misplaced. Ilda died not long after Diderius, and her spirit returned here to act as caretaker to his great stores of knowledge.

Ilda is not violent except to those who would steal from Diderius. She manifests when the characters enter this area, demanding to know why they have come and threatening them if they plan to loot the library. If the characters point out that there's nothing left in the library to steal, Ilda is overcome by a fit of misery as she agonizes over her failures. A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Religion) check reveals that Ilda can be released from her sojourn here if any volumes from the lost library are returned (see area 11).

Although Ilda is not evil, the confrontation with her should still be harrowing. This is a creature whose spirit is tied to the world out of anguish, and any interaction with Ilda should be a precarious process of talking to a character who might fly off the handle at any moment. She might vanish into thin air for no reason, then return in a fury if the characters try to call her back.

If the party manages to converse with Ilda, they might learn that yuan-ti dwell in the innermost parts of the complex. Ilda knows nothing about the cultists, who have not entered this area. If the characters gain her confidence, Ilda can also offer the following information:

- Diderius's passion was powerful divination magic, which is how he discovered the mysterious pool in this cavern complex. He excavated these chambers around the pool, and kings and wizards came bearing tribute. When he died after many centuries of life, this underground manse became his crypt.

- The divination pool allows those using it to peer past many magical protections that block lesser divination magic.
- The pool's revelations could drive a user insane unless the questions asked were specific and dealt only with the physical world, avoiding metaphysical concerns. Gazing into the pool without first offering a sacrifice was exceedingly dangerous.
- Using the divination pool required a personal sacrifice, but over time, the pool's demands grew steeper. If others have been using the pool since Diderius died, as Ilda suspects the yuan-ti do, its current price must be dark indeed.

10. Dining Hall

Two long tables of plain stone stand at the south end of this dining hall, while a long marble table stands to the north. The door up the stairs leading to area 8 has "? DANGER" written in chalk on it. The door down the southern stairs is spiked shut, and has "DANGER" scrawled on it in chalk.

Five **bearded devils** are seated at the marble table—the last survivors of Varram's expedition. When his cultist followers were routed investigating area 11, Varram left the devils here with instructions to guard against any creatures coming out of that area. The devils take their orders seriously, which means they all but ignore the adventurers unless the characters attack.

If the devils are questioned politely, they tell the characters only that they were ordered to remain here. They admit that their master is Varram, and speak of great treasure down the stairs to the south. The dwarf has been gone for some time, but they have no idea what happened to him.

If the devils are offered 100 gp or more in gems, they also tell the characters that they have fought and killed undead in the complex; that the dwarf lost something important to his cult and needs the divination pool to get it back; and that they are working for the cult on the orders of their lord Zariel, Archduchess of Avernus, who wants Tiamat out of the Nine Hells.

The characters are free to pass through this room, including entering area 11—but they will be attacked with glee by the devils when they leave that area.

11. Treasure Vault

While Diderius lived, this area was his bedchamber, and it still contains an elegant bed, sets of bookshelves, a large wooden chest, and a side table set with ewer and goblets. The cultists sealed this room after a disastrous run-in with its undead guardians.

On the Stairs

The dumbwaiter shaft from area 6 to the stairwell in front of the vault was once used to bypass the long walk from the bedchamber to the upper parts of the complex for Diderius's servants. The dumbwaiter's ropes and rotted wooden platform are strewn across the stairs.

This area is guarded by 3 **wraiths** and 3 **specters**. The wraiths are the spirits of warriors who pledged their souls to Diderius in exchange for the wizard's exotic knowledge. They can be defeated in combat, but their spirits are bound to the room by ancient magic, causing them to manifest again 24 hours after being destroyed. The undead are the reanimated souls of three cultists who died here and of three yuan-ti that died exploring the ruins. They do not manifest again if destroyed.

Treasure

The bookshelves contain magical treatises and notes on divination that have withstood the ravages of time. They detail the spellcasting practices of ancient Netheril, and will fetch 750 gp if sold. If the characters search the room, they find a crumbling book titled *Transubstantiality across Potentialities* stuck between the bed and the wall. If it is returned to the library (area 9), the ghost there is free to move on from this world.

The silver ewer and four goblets next to the bed are magical. If a character pours from the empty ewer into an empty goblet, a fuming gas flows between both vessels. A character who "drinks" from a gas-filled goblet receives advantage on saving throws against poison and resistance to poison damage for 3 hours. Each of the goblets can be used to produce this effect once per seven days.

The airtight chest holds seven silk robes kept free from rot, and worth 50 gp each if sold.

The chest also holds an amethyst-set *ring of resistance* (poison) and two *spell scrolls of protection from energy*.

12. Divination Pool

This long gallery holds the magic pool that was the source of Diderius's power. The double doors to the south have no markings on them, but they feature the same hazard as the doors in area 4.

Broken arrows, bloodstains, and a dead cultist are strewn across the floor of the chamber. A DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals that the arrows were shot from the north doorway leading into area 13. The arrows are carved of stone and their heads are in the shape of fangs, set with the symbol of a cobra with a crown above it. A DC 18 Intelligence (Religion) check recognizes the symbol of the yuan-ti god Merrshaulk.

If a character inspects the body, it is revealed that the cultist died not from arrows but from a dagger wound. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals that a *dragontooth dagger* (see appendix C) was the killing weapon. This was the unlucky cultist the duplicitous Varram sacrificed when he used the pool.

Pool

The pool is currently empty. Varram had only just completed the pool's divination ritual when the yuan-ti attacked and hauled him off. A stone sluice runs from the southern wall to empty into the pool. If the characters can fill the basin in area 5 and release the sluice quickly enough, the water pours into the pool before it has a chance to evaporate. Alternatively, the pool can be activated with a flask of holy water, which is not subject to the mummy lord's lair effects.

When any water hits the pool, it spreads out and flares with a black light. Any character who received Ilda's

warning (or who remembers the statues words in area 3) will hopefully declare that he or she looks away from the pool. Otherwise, a character must make a DC 20 Wisdom saving throw against a *suggestion* spell. On a failed save, the character is compelled to gaze into the divination pool unless another character immediately pulls the curious victim away from the pool (and avoids gazing into it as he or she does so). If not pulled away, a gazing character is driven temporarily insane for 1 minute (see area 3). A character pulled away from the pool does not suffer insanity but is stunned for 1 minute.

Using the Pool. The divination pool has always required that a user make a personal sacrifice to gain its secrets. However, the pool's magic has grown considerably hungrier over the long years of its isolation. In response to the cruelty of the yuan-ti, using the pool requires the sacrifice of a sentient creature.

13. Crypt of Diderius

Diderius's final resting place is a 20-foot-high chamber lit by braziers imbued with *continual flame*. A massive stone sarcophagus sits atop a stepped stone dais at center. The walls are decorated with life-sized frescoes showing the lost gods of Netheril and Anauria. If the party benefits from the boon granted in area 1, all the characters sense it would be disrespectful to disturb anything here—everything should remain as it is.

Frescoes

Characters who examine the frescoes can attempt a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check to discover thin plaster on four of them. If any such fresco is broken open, a **mummy** hidden behind it attacks. The other three hidden mummies, all once Diderius's advisers, smash free to attack thereafter.

Sarcophagus

Diderius, the **mummy lord**, rests within the sarcophagus. When the characters approach within a few paces of it, a deep, clear voice issues from the coffin, saying, "You approach Diderius in repose. I know what you seek."

If the adventurers spoke well to the statues in area 1, the voice says, "Yuan-ti have taken the one called Varram beyond their portal in the northern wall. Be prepared, for I shall open the way to peril." Unless the characters ask Diderius to wait, a moment later, with a chiming sound, the secret door opens to area 14. The party gains a surprise round to act against the guards there.

Those who didn't speak well in area 1 must ask Diderius about Varram to gain information about his whereabouts. Failure to do so respectfully causes Diderius to say, "Leave me to my rest or face your doom." Diderius opens the way only for those who are particularly decorous in this exchange.

If the adventurers try to open the sarcophagus, Diderius warns them. If they persist, he attacks. The mummies behind the frescoes also smash free and attack. None of the monsters pursue those who flee this room, which soon returns to its original state.

Diderius can use mummy lord legendary actions, but he is unusual because he casts wizard spells. He uses his 18 Intelligence as his spellcasting ability (his Wisdom remains 18) and, rather than those a mummy lord usually possesses, he has the following wizard spells:

Cantrips (at will): *minor illusion, ray of frost*
1st level (4 slots): *charm person, detect magic, shield, thunderwave*
2nd level (3 slots): *cloud of daggers, hold person, see invisibility*
3rd level (3 slots): *animate dead, dispel magic*
4th level (3 slots): *fire shield, greater invisibility*
5th level (2 slots): *cloudkill, wall of stone*

A canopic jar in the sarcophagus contains Diderius's withered heart.

Secret Door

In the northern wall is a secret door that requires a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check to find. Knocking on the stone wall reveals a hollow echo beyond, but the mechanism for opening the door is on the other side. A *knock* or *stone shape* spell can open it, or the door can be forced with a successful DC 20 Strength check.

Ss'tck'al

Long after Diderius's death, the yuan-ti discovered the crypt and claimed it as their own. A small group of yuan-ti now lives here, backed up by lizardfolk slaves.



Varram

BRYAN SYME

They are the caretakers of the divination pool, which high-ranking yuan-ti use to seek magical insight for their far-reaching plots. The yuan-ti have avoided moving into the original chambers of the complex, fearing the undead there. Instead, they have expanded the complex by excavating deeper into the cliff side.

The yuan-ti capture and sacrifice those who visit the tomb of Diderius. They are not above cutting a deal to save themselves, however.

General Features

It is noticeably warmer here than in the crypt, and the air is uncomfortably humid throughout.

Walls. The walls of the yuan-ti enclave are worked slabs of dark green stone, slick with slime and moisture.

Ceiling. The crypt's ceiling is 10 feet high unless otherwise noted.

Light. Unless otherwise specified, there is no light inside the crypt.

14. Entryway

This rough natural cavern holds the winch system for raising the stone slab secret door between area 13 and area 14. The doorway is guarded by 6 **lizardfolk**, which attack at the first sign of the door rising between this area and area 13. One lizardfolk runs to warn the yuan-ti while the others move near the door.

If it takes the characters more than 10 rounds to open the door, 4 more **lizardfolk** and 3 **yuan-ti malisons** (type 1) show up. The door is then opened from this area and the enemy forces attack. The malisons retreat if one of them is killed. The lizardfolk retreat when half of them are dead.

The eastern stairs descend 30 feet before coming to the bridge in area 15.

15. Bridge

The steep stairs from area 14 lead to a 40-foot-long stone bridge extending over a dark pit. The west end of the bridge is 10 feet higher than the eastern edge.

Moisture drips down from the high ceiling, covering the bridge in slick moss that hangs over the edge in green curtains. Any creature moving along of the bridge must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or fall. On a failed saving throw, a creature can attempt a DC 10 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to cling to the bridge rather than fall off into the darkness.

The pit over which the bridge extends is 60 feet deep at the top of the bridge (to the west) and 50 feet deep at the foot of the bridge (to the east). The area below the bridge is a feeding chamber for the snakelike yuan-ti young (see area 19), which crawl between the two areas through holes in the wall. Any characters or lizardfolk that fall off the bridge take appropriate falling damage, then are attacked by the yuan-ti young. Climbing back up to where the bridge meets either set of stairs requires three successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) checks.

Any lizardfolk that retreated from area 14 attempt to hold the party off here. In addition, 6 more **lizardfolk** crouch on the bridge to reinforce the area, hoping that characters trying to fight their way past fall off into the darkness below. They are supported by 2 **yuan-ti malisons** (type 1) armed with bows, which attack from the eastern stairs. The malisons also use *suggestion* spells to tell characters that a fellow party member has been replaced by a yuan-ti spy and should be attacked.

16. Meditation Chamber

In this large chamber, the yuan-ti meditate in the name of their dark gods and discuss their own plans and schemes. The northeast and southwest walls of this chamber feature statue shrines to the yuan-ti deities Merrshaulk and Sseth. The other two walls have statues of yuan-ti high priests carved into them, with suits of plate armor arranged as offerings at their feet.

When the characters arrive here, hundreds of snakes begin to slither out of holes in the statues and the corners of the room. Though they are not a threat by themselves, the snakes fill the suits of armor, which rise up to attack as 2 **helmed horrors** with poisoned longswords. The target of a snake horror's successful longsword attack must make a DC 12 Constitution saving throw, taking 9 (2d8) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. The horrors won't leave this room.

Treasure

Four rubies worth 1,000 gp each are set in the eyes of the statues and can be pried out.

17. Yuan-ti Quarters

A dozen cylindrical shafts 3 feet wide and 7 feet deep are cut into the stone floor here, and are used as sleeping holes by the lesser yuan-ti. Two stone totems stand here, both in the form of asps rising up with their mouths open. These totems radiate magic that negates some of the regional effects of a mummy lord's lair in this area, allowing the yuan-ti to store food and water here that does not evaporate or spoil.

This room is presently guarded by 3 **lizardfolk** and 1 **yuan-ti pureblood**, unless those creatures have already been encountered in area 18.

Dart Trap

The secret door in the hallway leading to area 21 is marked by an archway scribed into the wall. However, a pressure plate is set 10 feet before the archway, revealed by a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check. When any creature steps on the pressure plate, darts shoot out from the walls along the length of the hallway, targeting all creatures in the area: +8 to hit, 3 (1d6) piercing damage, and a creature hit by the trap must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or take 10 (3d6) poison damage and be paralyzed for 1 minute.

Treasure

Characters who search the sleeping holes can find 600 cp, 200 sp, and 150 gp, as well as a *potion of poison*.

18. Long Hallway

The walls of this long hallway seem to undulate, moving back and forth as though the corridor is slithering in the

manner of a giant snake. This effect is illusory, but it is unsettling all the same.

When the characters reach the turn in the hallway, 4 **lizardfolk** charge from the direction of area 22, followed by 2 **yuan-ti malisons** (type 1). If the characters moved past the door to area 17 without checking that room, the 3 **lizardfolk** and 1 **yuan-ti pureblood** in that area come charging out.

19. Hatchery

The floor of this room is 20 feet below the floor of the adjoining hallways, which are reached by tall ladders. The walls of this yuan-ti hatchery drip with slime, and the floor literally writhes with the room's occupants. Yuan-ti produce copious young, which are consumed by their siblings so that only the strongest survive. A swarm of these young (use the **swarm of poisonous snakes** statistics) crawl through piles of eggs and crushed egg shells littering the floor, and are watched over by 1 **yuan-ti abomination** and 3 **yuan-ti purebloods**.

At the first sign of the party, the yuan-ti use *suggestion* as they apologize for any previous strife, stating that their kin meant no harm to the characters. As a show of good faith, the abomination invites the characters to descend the ladders and join the yuan-ti for a feast.

If the characters are completely swayed, the yuan-ti wait until they descend, then they and the swarms attack. If the characters flee, the yuan-ti pursue. If they are attacked from above, the yuan-ti ascend the ladders to fight. The abomination flees any fight if reduced to half its hit points or fewer.

20. Lizardfolk Den

This foul-smelling chamber is piled high with trash and filth. The yuan-ti's lizardfolk slaves are kept here. The area is presently unoccupied, with all its residents accounted for in other areas.

Treasure

Hidden throughout the lizardfolk's filthy nests are 22 gp and 125 sp in loose coin.

21. Prison

The yuan-ti use humanoid sacrifice to power the magic of the divination pool. Their unfortunate victims are held here until needed, but the prison is presently empty.

22. Temple

The heart of the yuan-ti settlement, this huge chamber features giant stone statues of serpents along the east and west walls, their open mouths guttering green flames. The leaders of the yuan-ti are here—3 **yuan-ti purebloods**, 2 **yuan-ti malisons** (type 2), and 1 **yuan-ti abomination** priestess—along with any yuan-ti and lizardfolk that retreated from previous encounters.

The yuan-ti and lizardfolk stand in the shadows of the flickering green flames, ready to attack but understanding that the adventurers are a serious threat if they've made it this far. At the back of the room, near an altar carved with the form of a giant openmouthed cobra, the comatose Varram has been beaten and bound.

Dealing for the Dwarf

If the characters have made any mention of their search for Varram during their previous battles with the yuan-ti or lizardfolk, the yuan-ti abomination priestess holds Varram's *dragontooth dagger* to the dwarf's neck. The priestess has heard of the characters' mission, though she does not know or care why they seek the dwarf.

If the yuan-ti have no idea why the characters have attacked, the priestess knows only that Varram has been begging for his life by promising the yuan-ti great wealth if he is freed. The priestess plans to bargain with the characters by offering them the hypothetical wealth the dwarf has promised her.

Either way, if the characters want Varram alive, the priestess demands that the party leave the complex without killing any more yuan-ti. She is willing to turn over the dwarf, but explains that his soul has been temporarily drawn from his body by powerful yuan-ti magic. When the characters have left the enclave, it will be returned. (The priestess is lying—Varram is in his present semiconscious state because of the brutal treatment he's received at the hands of the yuan-ti.)

If the characters refuse her offer, the priestess attempts to use *suggestion* to sway whomever she perceives as the party's leader. If that fails and combat breaks out, she slays Varram (he has only 3 hit points remaining), then attacks with her followers.

Developments

A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals a secret space and a passage beneath one of the serpent statues in the temple. Within the space is the enclave's treasure hoard, comprising 800 gp, 100 pp, 2 cloudy emeralds worth 500 gp each, a necklace of 22 crysoprase beads worth 20 gp each, and 2 *spell scrolls*, one of *levitation* and the other of *call lightning*. The passage leads to the exit the yuan-ti use to leave the complex without passing through the crypt. The exit is carefully hidden behind a screen of rocks and scrub trees a hundred yards away from the plaza entrance to the ruins.

Conclusion

If the characters rescue him, Varram remains incoherent until he receives healing magic or finishes a long rest. Once his health is restored, the fallen wyrmspeaker is quick to accept his status as the party's prisoner—if only because he knows that Severin will kill him if he makes any attempt to return to the cult. Varram can offer detailed insight into the cult's hierarchy and plans, and can reveal secret sympathizers and traitors within the factions of the Council of Waterdeep, at your discretion. Taking the dwarf alive earns the party significant respect among the factions, though bringing back word of his death is nearly as impressive.

If he is asked about the *White Dragon Mask*, Varram grudgingly admits that he saw it in the pool—and that it has already been found and reclaimed by the cult, and is presently at the Well of Dragons.

The characters gain a level at the end of this chapter.

Neronvain

With the loss of Skyreach Castle at the end of *Hoard of the Dragon Queen*, the Cult of the Dragon's efforts to gather Tiamat's tribute were badly compromised. To compensate, the cultists launched several raids against the elves of the Misty Forest, led by Wyrmspeaker Neronvain and his companion, the green dragon Chuth.

Having fulfilled their quota for the cult, wyrmspeaker and dragon retreated deeper into the Misty Forest, leaving the elven enclaves ruined behind them. However, the survivors of those cult raids would have been astonished to learn that the green wyrmspeaker is Neronvain—King Melandrach's exiled son, believed to have died many years before.

On one of his raids, Neronvain won the fealty of an elf named Galin—a warden of the forest who pledged his service to the wyrmspeaker in exchange for ending the attack on his home village. Neronvain accepted, using Galin's knowledge of the Misty Forest to help plan raids against other settlements. Galin has so far kept secret his oath to Neronvain, though he feels tremendous guilt over his actions.

Under King Melandrach's command, the elves of the Misty Forest have stepped up their defenses, and the cult attacks have ceased. Melandrach believes the threat has ended, though his son Alagarthas disagrees. Prince Alagarthas used the Emerald Enclave to search for clues to the source of the raids, and they have learned that an elf seen with the green dragon appeared to command the beast. Both Prince Alagarthas and Delaan Winterhound of the Emerald Enclave believe that more attacks are imminent, and that the green dragon's master might be one of the cult's wyrmspeakers. But what neither realize is that the Green Wyrmspeaker is actually Alagarthas's own half-brother Neronvain—the disgraced second son of King Melandrach, exiled by his people and long thought dead. They now seek the adventurers' help to find this dragon master.

Call for Aid

Delaan Winterhound comes to the adventurers during the Council of Waterdeep or while they are returning to the city after completing another chapter. He speaks of the draconic incursions in the Misty Forest mentioned at the council, and says that the Emerald Enclave's agents have been working with the support of Prince Alagarthas to prevent a new round of attacks. With his agents already scattered throughout the Misty Forest, he wants the adventurers to travel to one of the few dragon-raided settlements left standing in the aftermath—a village called Altand. If Delaan's belief that the mysterious master of the green dragon was one of the cult's wyrmspeakers is true, the survivors of Altand might know something that will help find him.

The Misty Forest

This chapter takes place within the Misty Forest—a vast woodland concealed by thick mist and rain. Enormous spruce trees dominate the northern end of the forest where Altand is found—and where Neronvain and Chuth have established their stronghold.

The mist in the forest is omnipresent. Though it can be ignored inside buildings, all outdoor areas of the forest are lightly obscured.

Investigation at Altand

Altand is primarily a wood elf settlement, blending almost seamlessly into the forest around it. The village exists on two levels, with a few structures built on the ground around an ancient monument to an elven ranger. Residences and the village temple are built into the upper boughs of the forest. The elves string rope bridges between these sites and construct circular walkways around the trees.

Like many other settlements raided by the dragon, pulley-operated platforms connect the two levels of the village, and provide an excellent defense against the orcs that occasionally enter the forest as an alternative to raiding human settlements along the Trade Way. However, those defenses proved a deathtrap against the flying green dragon, leaving many elves unable to reach the ground quickly enough to escape.

Survivors' Tales

Of the three hundred residents of the village, more than half survived the raid—a different outcome than at other raided settlements, where the dragon hunted and killed the elves to the last adult and child. Many of the residents of Altand were on the ground when the attack came. Of the elves in the upper level of the village, many died of the dragon's poisonous breath while waiting to descend, or fell to their deaths as bridges and walkways collapsed under the weight of panic.

Most survivors fled and saw little of what ensued. However, by asking careful questions of a number of villagers, the characters can learn the following:

- The dragon swooped down and attacked on the ground first. Nearly half of the village's victims died during that first assault.
- Humans in the regalia of the Cult of the Dragon followed the dragon, killing all those they found. The village's priest stepped out to lead others in fighting the dragon, but the beast swallowed him whole.
- Some survivors claim to have seen a cultist riding atop the dragon. Most of those refer to the dragon rider as human, like the other cultists. However, a few people report that the figure moved with the grace of an elf.
- With the priest dead, the village's warden, Galin, has become the leader of Altand. Though he was in the thick of the fight, he survived unscathed, and has been a potent force for rallying the survivors.
- The attack lasted only a short while, then the dragon unexpectedly retreated. The cultists followed, but as they fled, they took nothing of value from the village. This is a stark contrast to the dragon's other raids, which were focused on capturing treasure.

The Warden's Story

Galin the warden is a nervous-looking elf with a dark secret. The folk of the village describe him as suffering from the weight of his new leadership role and the deaths of more than a hundred villagers—including his own wife.

In response to any question about Galin, the characters are directed to his residence in the upper boughs of the village.

> Stepping into a modest dwelling suspended among iron-strong boughs, you enter a cozy sitting room. A slim elf sits at a desk, standing to greet you with a forced smile as a raven perched in a nearby cage caws hideously.
>
> "Welcome to our village," the elf says. "How can I be of service?"

Galin answers any questions the characters put to him, but his responses echo only what the other survivors know. He claims to have not seen the dragon rider and disbelieves those who say they did, dismissing such reports as the result of fear and chaos during the raid. A successful DC 18 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals that the elf warden is withholding information. If he is pressed on this, he admits that he saw the dragon kill his wife and is wracked by guilt that he could not save her. A follow-up successful DC 16 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals that even this isn't the whole truth, but Galin takes umbrage if the character ply him with any more questions.

Silent Witnesses

Where the humanoid witnesses to the attack are limited in their knowledge, the characters have other potential resources to draw on. By using *speak with plants*, the characters can draw on the impressions and memories of the trees themselves. Though the spell allows only for impressions of the previous 24 hours to be recalled by its subjects, the trees of Altand can report that late the previous night, they witnessed Galin sneaking out of the village and disappearing into the woods, accompanied by his pet raven. Galin has been making this sojourn most nights since the attack, giving Neronvain information on other elven settlements, which the wyrmspeaker is using to plan his next round of assaults.

If the characters use *speak with animals* to question the raven, they learn that Galin walked a mile or more into the woods and came face to face with the green dragon Chuth and his rider the previous night. Remember that an animal intelligence is not as articulate as a humanoid, and it might take subtle coaxing to get the raven to describe a scene that likely frightened it.

The characters might also choose to watch and follow Galin on one of his late night excursions. Neronvain does not show up that night, but the warden's prearranged meeting place is a spot of flattened brush where a dragon has clearly landed more than once.

Confronting Galin

If confronted with evidence against him, Galin accuses the adventurers (publicly if necessary) of being in league with the cult and attempting to break the resolve of Altand's survivors. If the characters have access to *zone of truth* or similar magic, he flatly refuses to take part in any further questioning.

Galin will not respond to intimidation. However, effective roleplaying can be used to tap into his guilt. If he is offered commiseration for his wife's death—as opposed to accusations—the warden eventually breaks down. He confesses that after seeing his wife killed, he found himself face to face with Neronvain in the thick of battle and begged for his life, offering anything in return. Neronvain took the warden up on his offer, agreeing to spare Galin and leave Altand intact in exchange for information on other settlements that would become the targets of the cult's next round of raids.

Galin does not know the identity of the green wyrmspeaker, or the location of Neronvain and Chuth's lair. However, from the meeting place, he has watched the dragon flying off on a course due southeast and noticed that the wyrmspeaker's clothes are often wet.



Neronvain

BRYAN SYME

Into the Forest

Neronvain's stronghold lies thirty miles from Altand through dense, fog-filled forest. As they seek the wyrmspeaker and his dragon, the characters meet an old druid and must deal with spidery sentries.

A Timely Rescue

As the characters travel through the forest, they hear the crunch of a large tree breaking, followed by a female voice crying out. If they investigate, they see a venerable woman with her leg trapped under a heavy fallen tree. She calls out for help when she sees the party. This **druid** is the caretaker of this part of the forest.

Three **awakened trees** are hidden among the other trees nearby—one of which has harmlessly fallen across the druid, allowing her to feign injury and draw the characters to her. She guesses correctly that the group are seeking the dragon, and wishes to give them a boon to aid their fight against this scourge of her forest, but she wishes to test their strength of character first. She will not help those who do not help others.

If the characters help the druid without reservation, read the following.

> It takes all your effort to lift the tree, knowing that you put yourselves at risk if it shifts against you. But then even as you are close to freeing the woman, the tree begins to rise on its own. Two other trees standing nearby shift back along the ground as the elf stands and smiles, showing no sign of injury.
>
> "Heroes at last!" she says. "How many might fall back in fear at the sight of a stranger in the woods, or think first of their own safety before helping another? I grant you my blessing. May your hearts prove true where others fear to tread."
>
> The woman picks flowers from her hair that you swear were not there a moment ago, then twists her fingers to weave them into garlands as if by magic. She lays a garland around each of your necks, then suddenly transforms into an owl. Her awakened tree servants stomp after her into the forest.

As long as the characters wear these garlands, they are invisible to Chuth's animal spies (part of the magic imbued into the area around the dragon's lair) as they approach Neronvain's stronghold. In addition, the first time a character wearing a garland is confronted by Chuth, he or she feels a stirring warmth from the garland and automatically succeeds on the saving throw against the dragon's Frightful Presence.

If the characters ignore the druid, she calls out pitifully for help as they move away, offering a last lament against their cowardice as they disappear. If the adventurers attack the druid, the awakened trees attack. They fight to the death as the druid turns into an owl and flies away.

Spiders' Haunt

A quarter of a mile from Chuth's lair, thin strands of spiderweb begin to be seen, hanging nearly invisible in the misty air. The webs mark the overlap between the dragon's lair and the hunting grounds of a brood of spiders. The webbing combines with the dense mist of the forest to make the area around the lair heavily obscured and difficult terrain, up to when the party reaches the pool (area 1). Because the webs are moist, they do not burn away easily. The direct application of fire destroys webs, but fire doesn't spread among them. A character with a torch can use an action to clear the webs within reach.

As the characters advance, the webbing becomes thicker and shows birds and animals trapped within it. Any movement through the webbing alerts the 3 **ettercaps** and 7 **giant spiders** lurking nearby. The ettercaps attack with web garrotes, while the spiders use the webs to drop into the party's midst. If two ettercaps or five spiders are slain, the rest flee.

Neronvain's Stronghold

The Green Wyrmspeaker has established a stronghold for himself and Chuth within a cave complex in the Misty Forest, its entrance hidden behind a waterfall that tumbles down a high cliff. The green dragon has taken over the largest cavern of the stronghold as one of its many lairs.

Neronvain is served by a group of cultist bodyguards, while Chuth has won the service of a number of ettins to help guard the stronghold. The dragon also controls a terrified group of elf prisoners Neronvain brought back from one of their raids, who fight for the dragon and the wyrmspeaker unless they can be convinced to flee.

Chuth is an **adult green dragon**. Statistics for **Neronvain** can be found in appendix D.

General Features

Secret Doors. Secret doors inside the stronghold are little more than cracks between chambers, just large enough for Medium creatures to squeeze through. They are obscured behind loose rocks or other cover, and require a DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check to notice.

Light. The stronghold is dark unless otherwise noted.

1. Pool

The pool at the foot of the waterfall is 20 feet deep at its center, its surface obscured by an emerald haze that marks this place as a green dragon's lair.

A steep slope descends from the cave behind the waterfall to the entrance to area 2, its surface slick from billowing mist. A character must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check or a DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check to climb or crawl down the slope. Failure indicates that the character tumbles 40 feet down the slope, taking 9 (2d8) bludgeoning damage. Characters using a rope to descend the slope can do so safely.

Dragon Attack

If the characters wear the garlands given to them by the druid, Chuth has no idea of their approach, allowing them to safely pass through this area and into the caves.



If the adventurers did not receive the garlands, or if they took them off for any reason while within a quarter mile of Chuth's lair, the dragon's many animal spies alert him to the party's approach. He waits at the mouth of the cave, clinging to the wall near the entrance. A character who succeeds on a DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check notices movement inside the cave but can't tell what it is (or how large a creature it might be).

Chuth uses his blindsight to detect when the characters are approaching the entrance to the cave. He then dives through the waterfall, soaring above the characters as he uses his Poison Breath, attacking with surprise if no one in the party noticed him. Characters not wearing the garlands are also exposed to the dragon's Frightful Presence. Characters who fail their saving throws against Frightful Presence likely flee back into the woods, where spiders might be waiting. On the dragon's next turn, it retreats back to area 2 to await the heroes' next move.

2. Island Chamber

This large chamber has a 40-foot-high ceiling set with massive stalactites and smaller stalagmites. A pool with a small island in the southeast corner of the cavern is fed by streams of water dripping down through the rock. The southwest face of the cavern is a 25-foot-high bluff, part of which is area 4.

The pool is 50 feet deep, and the island is a column of stone rising from its bottom. To the southeast, 25 feet below the surface of the lake, a 20-foot-wide underwater passageway leads to Chuth's lair in area 10.

If the characters did not alert Chuth to their approach, a group of elf guards (3 **commoners** and 1 **noble**) stand at the northwest entrance to this area, driven by fear into serving the dragon. They are expecting more cult-

No One Home

When the characters approach the stronghold, there might be a chance that Chuth has left the caves to hunt, or that he and Neronvain are out scouting future raids. You can determine this randomly as you see fit, or allow the characters to hole up within sight of the stronghold and simply wait for the dragon and the wyrmspeaker to leave.

Removing Chuth and Neronvain from the stronghold for an initial foray allows the characters to explore and eliminate the guards without the pressure of an imminent dragon attack. This dungeon is a tough adventure even for higher-level characters, especially with the legendary actions Chuth can use in his lair. Attacking head-on if the dragon is aware of the adventurers' approach is likely a suicide mission.

JARED BLANDO

ists to arrive at the lair, and savvy characters might be able to bluff or roleplay past them. The elves demand the characters' names and ask questions they believe only true cultists would know the answers to, including knowing the identities of the cult's leaders and the structure of its ranks.

Even if they are fooled initially, the elves become suspicious if the characters begin to ask any questions that cultists should know (including questions about Neronvain, Chuth, or the stronghold). In this event, the elves call out for help and attack at once.

Any fight here draws the creatures in areas 3, 4, and 5, which fight as described below. Chuth emerges from the pool and joins the fight 3 rounds later.

Dragon Attack

If the characters were attacked by Chuth in area 1, the dragon clings to the ceiling in this area, using his breath weapon on the characters as soon as they enter the caves. He then crashes down on the party, focusing on elves over any other humanoids with his melee attacks. Chuth refrains from using his breath weapon if doing so might hurt or hinder his allies.

The dragon's roar signals the start of the fight for the servants of Chuth and Neronvain lying in wait for the adventurers. The elves fire bows from atop the bluff of area 4, while the ettins and cultists wade into melee beside their master. See areas 3, 4, and 5 for creature stats and information. Neronvain attacks at range from behind the cultists, staying close to the entrance to areas 5 and 6.

If the characters kill or incapacitate all of Neronvain and Chuth's servants, the dragon hides in the pool and emerges each time his breath weapon recharges. While hiding in the water, the dragon is heavily obscured. Chuth is amphibious and can use any of his attacks underwater, as well as his lair actions. Characters swimming through the underwater passage might be suddenly restrained by underwater vines, making them easy targets for the dragon's breath weapon, or putting them at risk of drowning if they cannot free themselves.

If Neronvain is reduced to 54 hit points or fewer, he summons Chuth to his side and consumes a *potion of healing*. If Chuth is reduced to 78 hit points, he likewise seeks out Neronvain in the fight. The two then fall back to area 10 through the pool.

3. Ettin Lair

This filthy chamber has three huge trash mounds piled against the west walls. This place is home to 3 **ettins**, all of which hate each other. If the adventurers make it this far undetected, the ettins assume them to be more stupid human cultists doing stupid human things. They ignore the characters as they go back to pushing each other around.

With a bit of clever roleplaying, the characters might be able to incite the ettins to fight one another. This costs each ettin 21 hit points and keeps them busy for 10 minutes as they wrestle and shout.

The leader of the ettins is a female named Grunda-Gurga. She has a *belt of hill giant strength* but wears it improperly as a sash, receiving none of its benefits and having no awareness of its magical potential.

4. Elf Quarters

The tunnel leading to this area rises 20 feet to end in a rickety wooden door, constructed by the elves to keep some of the ettin smell out. This area sits atop an open bluff, with its northeast edges looking out over area 2.

Neronvain and Chuth brought a dozen elves back from their raids in the Misty Forest as prisoners—8 **commoners**, 3 **nobles** with whom Neronvain converses on occasion, and a **knight** and **mage** who are Chuth's playthings.

If the characters have entered the caverns undetected, any elves not on guard duty (see area 2) are here. As long as no alarm has been raised, the elves are hesitant to attack possible guests of Neronvain or Chuth, but they remain suspicious.

The elves are terrified of Chuth, and the cunning dragon has convinced them that he will free them in time if they are loyal. It takes convincing roleplaying and a DC 17 Charisma (Persuasion) check to convince the elves to flee rather than wait around for the dragon to eventually tire of and eat them. If the characters received the garlands from the druid and place them on the elves, this automatically convinces them to safely flee.

Forgotten Shrine

An ancient shrine stands in the southwest corner of the cavern, showing a young female human holding a basin. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Religion) check recognizes the shrine of Eldath, goddess of waterfalls. Water flows from cracks in the ceiling and onto the statue's head, then into the basin. The long years have etched thin white lines resembling the tracks of tears across the statue's face.

The goddess Eldath still listens at this shrine. Characters who pray for her assistance in fighting the dragon can receive a boon at your discretion, including *water breathing*, *bless*, or other useful spells.

5. Cultist Common Room

This area is brightly lit by torches set into roughly carved wall sconces. Long tables made of split logs are where the cultists sit to eat or entertain themselves. A cooking fire burns in the center of the room, its smoke rising out to the central cavern and then out of the caves.

If the alarm hasn't been raised, 5 **dragonclaws** and 1 **dragonfang** (see appendix D for statistics) are at leisure here. Unless the characters are wearing cult garb and can roleplay effectively, the cultists immediately recognize them as intruders and attack.

6. Cultist Quarters

Rough bunks, bedrolls, and backpacks fill this area. If the alarm hasn't yet been raised, 5 **dragonclaws** and 1 **dragonfang** (see appendix D for statistics) are asleep here.

Treasure

Hidden under the mattresses in the bunks are a total of 30 gp, 120 sp, 23 ep, and 200 cp, plus a single 5 pound silver trade bar from Baldur's Gate (20 gp).

7. Storeroom

The cult keeps considerable quantities of food and alcohol here. Judging by the volume of these stores, Neronvain is planning a long series of assaults against the elves of the Misty Forest.

Treasure

The food is mostly common fare, but Neronvain's personal stock includes 8 bottles of Evermead, each worth 100 gp. Since contact with the elven island of Evermeet is so rare, it is easy to find a buyer.

8. Neronvain's Chambers

Neronvain has created a lush living space in this rough-walled cavern, decorating it with select art and craftworks from his raids. Rich carpets and tapestries cover the floor and walls of the cavern, which features a hewn-log bed, a large mirror, and a trunk. A secret door is hidden behind a tapestry.

The entrance tunnel to this chamber is protected by a *glyph of warding* attuned to Neronvain. A search for traps accompanied by a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check notices the glyph. If any creature but Neronvain steps within 5 feet of the glyph, it erupts. All creatures within 20 feet of the glyph must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, taking 22 (5d8) acid damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful save.

If Neronvain is in the stronghold, he is found in this area only if the characters have managed to come this far without engaging in any combat or causing any alert to be sounded. He is otherwise encountered when he enters the fight against the characters.

Treasure

If the characters can collect all the furniture, carpets, tapestries, and art objects from this area, the lot is worth a total of 1,500 gp. However, it should occur to the characters that these goods are the rightful property of the elves they were stolen from.

The trunk is protected by a poisoned needle trap, which can be detected with a successful DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check. If the trap is triggered, it makes an attack against the character who triggered it: +10 to hit, 1 piercing damage, and the character is subject to an unusual poison and must attempt a DC 16 Constitution saving throw. On a success, the affected area (usually the hand struck by the needle) becomes numb in 30 minutes, then becomes transparent 1 hour later. After another 2 hours, the affected area painfully returns to normal as the victim takes 27 (6d8) poison damage. On a failed save, the effect progresses as above but the victim takes 54 (12d8) poison damage instead.

9. Secret Passage

This secret room is for Neronvain's personal use only. A small shrine to Fenmarel Mestarine—the elven god of outcasts, scapegoats, and solitude—resembles a pair of white eyes peering out from the dark wall above a basin.

Also present here is a journal that reveals Neronvain's relationship to King Melandrach, whom Neronvain refers to frequently as "my poor father." The journal also reveals that the *Green Dragon Mask* is already at the Well of Dragons, under Severin's protection and ready to be assembled into the *Mask of the Dragon Queen*.

10. Chuth's Lair

No one but the dragon and Neronvain are allowed in this area. Along the east wall is Chuth's portion of the hoard collected from the elves of the Misty Forest, though this pales in comparison to what the cult claimed for Tiamat and what the dragon possesses in his other lairs. The vaulted ceiling is 60 feet high here.

If Chuth is in the stronghold, he is initially found here only if the characters have come this far without engaging in any combat or sounding any alarm, or if he and Neronvain have retreated to the lair. If Chuth is encountered here, he uses his breath weapon, legendary actions, and lair actions indiscriminately. He tries to push powerful melee combatants back to the walls, then creates a wall of thorns to fence them in.

Because this is only a small portion of his total hoard, Chuth has no interest in dying to protect it. He flees when he is reduced to half his hit points or fewer. Neronvain fights until similarly reduced, then makes his way to Chuth and convinces the dragon to flee the caverns.

Treasure

Chuth's small hoard contains ten gold trade bars from Baldur's Gate worth 50 gp each, plus 10 pp, 120 gp, 2,400 sp, and 8,000 cp. Feel free to add a couple useful potions or scrolls to the hoard as well.

Conclusion

This chapter can end either with one or both of Chuth and Neronvain dead or escaped from the stronghold. If either survives, they retreat to the Well of Dragons and report the adventurers' actions to Severin. (If appropriate, you might let either Chuth or Neronvain seek revenge as part of the force that attacks the adventurers in chapter 13.)

In any event, the threat against the Misty Forest is ended. King Melandrach hears of the party's actions and is grateful for the heroes' bravery. However, the discovery that his lost son Neronvain is a wyrmspeaker fills him with shame and rage.

The characters gain a level at the end of this chapter.



Chapter 13: The Cult Strikes Back

During the course of this adventure, the heroes undertake various activities to thwart the plots of the Cult of the Dragon. The cult's awareness of the characters' opposition to their goals will have started even earlier if the characters played *Hoard of the Dragon Queen*. Either way, it doesn't take long for the cult to target the characters as a threat that must be eliminated.

Like "Chapter 9: Council of Waterdeep," this chapter is played out as separate encounters. However, these attacks work best if they are incorporated into other chapters, rather than played out between chapters.

Think about the pacing of other chapters and the placement of these encounters so that the cult's attacks can be spaced out over time. In particular, the third attack should be placed for maximum effectiveness.

The cult's attacks can happen anywhere, but the characters are at greatest risk while on their home ground. The cult wants its enemies to know that they aren't safe anywhere. If the characters ever split up to pursue separate missions in what seem like safe environments, the cult is almost certain to strike.

Character Death

Character death should always be handled carefully, but don't be afraid to kill party members in this adventure. The characters should be high enough level to cast *raise dead*, or to seek out such magic from their allies. Especially if they played through *Hoard of the Dragon Queen*, the characters have had ample opportunity to prove their worth to the Harpers, the Order of the Gauntlet, and the other factions.

First Attack

The cult's first attack against the heroes is a measured assault designed to deliver a warning.

Location and Timing

This attack can occur anywhere. The cult has no concern for innocent bystanders, but the encounter will be easier for you to run without a panicking crowd to deal with. This combat encounter should occur after a previous combat encounter has drained some of the characters' resources, but before they can finish a long rest.

BRYAN SYME

Cult Forces

The assailants the cult throws against the characters should be adjusted for the strength of the party. Using foes from the First Attack Cult Forces table, construct this first attack as a hard encounter using the guidelines in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

First Attack Cult Forces

Creature	XP Value
Dragonclaw	200
Dragonwing	450
Dragonfang	1,100
Half-blue dragon gladiator*	1,800
Young blue dragon	5,000

*Use the **gladiator** statistics but add resistance to lightning damage and the breath weapon of a blue dragon wyrmling.

Plan of Attack

The cultists try to attack with surprise, using one of two different plans outlined below. Feel free to adapt one of these plans or devise a plan of your own. Assume that the cultists have either observed the characters for a few days or have been briefed about their targets by other spies.

Option 1: Attack at an Inn

If the characters are staying at an inn, the cultists might opt for a direct assault, crashing through the front door. A more subtle approach sees them enter the inn a few at a time disguised as customers, then attacking when they have the characters outnumbered and surrounded. The dragon is unlikely to enter the inn building, opting to use its breath weapon through the windows or attacking any characters or bystanders who step outside.

Option 2: Attack on the Road

As the characters are traveling, the cultists can get ahead of them and lay an ambush. Alternatively, cultists might follow the party at a distance by day, then move closer when the characters stop to rest for the night. A surprise attack in the dark or at dawn is particularly dangerous, granting the dragon complete freedom of movement and creating the possibility that some party members will be asleep or unarmored.

Conclusion

Because the cult has underestimated the heroes' strength, this first assault is doomed to fail. However, try to ensure that at least one cultist escapes to report what happened. If no one gets away alive, leave signs that other cultists were hanging back as reinforcements, but fled when the original force was overwhelmed.

Make sure the characters understand what this attack was about. If it makes sense for the circumstances of the attack, the cultists will be dressed in full regalia, complete with masks and dragon-wing capes. With their last breaths, dying cultists should curse the characters and exclaim, "The dragons rise! You cannot stop us!"

The characters gain a level at the end of this event.

Second Attack

The first attack established that the heroes are an even more dangerous threat than the cult believed. In this second encounter, a stronger cult force attacks to kill.

Location and Timing

Place this encounter at a point when the characters are not at their strongest or most well prepared. Wait until they are scattered, their spells and features are depleted by previous fighting, or they are injured and low on healing. In particular, if the attack comes during a long rest but before the characters have finished that rest, they won't yet have recovered full hit points, spells, and other resources. Such an attack puts the characters at a huge disadvantage, but reinforces that the Cult of the Dragon wants the adventurers dead.

A dramatic location works best for this attack. The cultists not only want to eliminate a threat, they want to send a message to all others who oppose them. Attacking at an important public building such as a major temple or a palace declares that no place is safe from the cult, while an assault at a large marketplace or a royal garden guarantees a maximum number of witnesses.

Cult Forces

The second attack force comprises a team led by a **dragonsoul** (see appendix D for statistics). If this is an isolated fight with the characters at or near full strength, choose adversaries that create a deadly encounter. If the adventurers are weakened from earlier encounters, aim for a hard encounter instead.

Don't be reluctant to use forces that are likely to kill one or more characters. The destruction of the heroes is the goal of this attack, and if the risk of death doesn't feel real, the players won't take the threat of the cult seriously.

Second Attack Cult Forces

Creature	XP Value
Dragonwing	450
Dragonsoul	1,800
Mezzoloth	1,800
Nycaloth	5,000
Adult black dragon	11,500

Plan of Attack

These attackers know more about their targets than the first group did, thanks to the survivors from that battle.

Option 1: Indoor Attack

The attackers launch their assault while the characters are visiting an important location crowded with innocent bystanders. The black dragon begins by tearing off a section of the roof to incite as much terror as possible. While the characters are distracted by that assault, invisible nycaloths move in and attack with surprise. The mezzoloths use *cloudkill* to surround the characters, unconcerned about NPCs caught up in the attack.

Option 2: Outdoor Attack

An attack in a marketplace, garden, or some other outdoor location opens with the black dragon and one or more flying nycaloths appearing overhead to create a panic. The cultists are hanging on to the dragon, but they drop down to engage the party in melee while the dragon circles above, attacking with its breath weapon and using its Frightful Presence on rounds when its breath is still recharging. While the crowd inhibits the characters' movement, mezzoloths can easily and rapidly teleport through it.

Developments

Don't be afraid to engage in some triumphal monologuing by the dragonsoul cultist leading the attack. Whether the attackers are winning or losing, the cultist fights with cries of "The dragons rise!" and "We are unstoppable!" At some point, the leader lets important information slip: "The Masks are joined, the call has sounded! Soon the Gates of the Nine Hells shall swing wide and She shall return!"

As with the first assault on the adventurers, try to ensure that if the attackers are defeated, at least one escapes to report the outcome of the battle. Most easily, the dragon can fly away if the battle turns against it.

The yugoloths were summoned by Red Wizards and paid by the cult to kill the adventurers, but they have no loyalty to their benefactors. If a yugoloth takes damage from a single attack that deals more than half its remaining hit points, it withdraws from combat on its next turn. If it hasn't already tried to summon another yugoloth, it does so immediately. If it's already used that power, it simply flees, intending to regroup with other survivors later.

Because the yugoloths are mercenaries, the characters can attempt to buy them off with a better offer—one that not only exceeds what the cult is paying but covers the damage to reputation that comes from changing sides in the middle of battle. A good starting offer is 10,000 gp, or 2,000 gp per yugoloth if more than five of them are in the fight.

In addition to damaging bystanders, this encounter can easily destroy buildings and great landmarks. This formidable assault should provide a sense of the destruction that will wash over the Sword Coast if the Cult of the Dragon is successful in its plans.

Conclusion

The attackers might win this fight and kill all the characters. However, that doesn't need to end the adventure. Healers in the Order of the Gauntlet, the Harpers, and the Emerald Enclave can restore the characters to life so they can continue waging war for the forces of good. Surprisingly, dying in this battle might give the characters an advantage. When the attackers report to Severin that the meddling adventurers are dead, they'll be written off as a threat. If the raised characters make an effort to keep out of sight of the cult's spies, their next blow against the cult could come as a complete surprise.

The characters gain a level at the end of this event.

Third Attack

The second attack was meant to finish off the heroes. If a third attack proves necessary, the cult escalates to the highest level.

If nothing else, the second attack should impress on the characters that the first attack wasn't a fluke or a one-time event. They have a price on their heads. Additionally, the potency of the second attack should make the characters understand that if a third strike is even more powerful than the second, they won't survive. If it doesn't occur to the players that the characters should take steps to protect themselves, a concerned NPC can make the suggestion.

Location and Timing

This attack can occur in any settlement the characters are staying in or passing through. Ideally, use a location where one or more characters have homes or family.

After the second cult attack, allow the characters to complete one or two chapters of the adventure before the cult makes this final attempt on their lives. Because this attack is an all-out assault, the characters should have full access to spells, healing, and other resources.

Cult Forces

Enough chromatic dragons have responded to the *Draakhorn's* call that a full flight of young red dragons can be dispatched to deal with the heroes once and for all. For this final assault, the cult bolsters the red dragons with a handful of cultists, half-dragons, and Red Wizards (**mages**) who are members of Rath Modar's splinter sect. The cultists and Red Wizards arrive on the backs of the red dragons.

Make this a deadly encounter—and not just by the numbers prescribed in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. By now, the cult knows how the characters fight, and so do you. Sometimes players can make a group of characters tougher than their basic game statistics indicate. If that's the case for your group, take that into account when selecting the attacking force.

Third Attack Cult Forces

Creature	XP Value
Dragonwing	450
Dragonfang	1,100
Half-red dragon gladiator*	2,300
Mage	2,300
Half-green dragon assassin**	3,900
Young red dragon	5,900

*Use the **gladiator** statistics but add resistance to fire damage and the breath weapon of a red dragon wyrmling. These changes increase the gladiator's challenge rating to 6.

Use the **assassin statistics but add the breath weapon of a green dragon wyrmling. This change doesn't affect the assassin's challenge rating.

Plan of Attack

This encounter should challenge the adventurers in every way. The characters should be no easy match for the attacking force, such that retreat and escape might be their best option if they hope to survive. However, if the characters haven't made escape plans ahead of time, the attackers will have taken steps to make retreat impossible. The specifics are up to you, but should be based around any obvious features of the encounter area. Standard escape paths such as back doors and known sewer entrances will be watched, and tactics the characters have used before will be known. Only a special escape route—a secret passage known only to a palace's most trusted servants, for example—should come as a surprise to the cultists and Red Wizards.

Frontal Assault

Because clever ruses and ambush have failed in previous attacks, the cult's third assault opts for overwhelming force. The dragons attack the characters from the air, attempting to draw them outside if they are indoors. When they finally face off against the adventurers, the attackers fight to kill. If the characters try to stay inside and under cover, the dragons attack whatever building they hide in, setting it ablaze. Half-dragons, cultists, and mages watch all known exits, including underground ones, to prevent the characters from slipping away.

Developments

This battle will likely be a challenge to run. It is designed to create an emotional low spot in the adventure, during which overall defeat for the forces of good looks like a real possibility. Character death—even if temporary—can crush some players' spirits.

For those players, don't make this battle just a relentless slog toward death. Give the adventurers opportunities to save innocent townsfolk from being slaughtered and turn dragons away from fleeing crowds. The characters can clear burning buildings, use magic to douse flames or save the dying, and stand up for those who cannot defend themselves. Let their sacrifice during this fight mean something.

Conclusion

Great heroes rebound from losses to fight even harder for the cause they believe in. Thanks to *raise dead*, a lost battle is a setback, not a defeat. It's a wake-up call to any players who assumed that the characters' victory was assured. The Cult of the Dragon is committed to its goal and will stop at nothing to achieve it. The characters must be even more committed to theirs.

The characters gain a level at the end of this event.

Sequence of Events

Depending on how the adventure unfolds, feel free to alter the forces and tactics in the second and third attacks as you see fit. For example, you might want to hold off with the yugoloths until the third attack, or you might want Red Wizards showing up in the second attack rather than the third.



Dragon Cultist

JOHN-PAUL BALMET



Chapter 14: Metallic Dragons, Arise

When the Cult of the Dragon sounded the *Draakhorn*, its tremors were felt across the North. In response, many metallic dragons began to investigate what the sounding meant, and to gather what information they could on the cult from nearby humanoid cultures.

One of those dragons, an ancient gold wyrm named Protanther, invoked an ancient draconic rite of council, summoning ambassadors from among the metallic dragons. Meeting in the Nether Mountains, the council will determine what metallic dragons should do in the face of the looming threat of Tiamat.

The council includes representatives from each of the five metallic dragon races, who will spread word to their fellows of the council's decision. Of specific importance to the factions of Waterdeep is the question of whether the dragons should aid the civilized humanoid races in their fight against the cult, or whether they will act on their own.

During the council, the adventurers have a chance to engage and debate some of Faerûn's wisest and most powerful creatures. They must convince the dragons that the cause of the humanoid folk of the Sword Coast is just, and that dragons and non-dragons need to support each other in this conflict.

To broker such an alliance, the characters might need to promise concessions on behalf of different factions—whether they have those factions' permission to offer concessions or not. If they are successful, the adventurers can gain not only the support of the dragons as a whole but also the specific favor of certain councilors, including valuable magic items from those dragons' own hoards.

Unlikely Ambassadors

By ancient tradition, the draconic council includes ambassadors from the diminutive humanoid races. The silver dragon Otaaryliakkarnos—in the guise of the human Elia—comes to the Council of Waterdeep to extend the invitation to the draconic council, at which point, the delegates discuss who should be sent as ambassadors for the humanoid factions of the Sword Coast. As a group not aligned overall with any specific faction or cause, the party is deemed to be the best fit.

MARCEL MERCADO

Journey to the Nether Mountains

The journey from Waterdeep to the Nether Mountains is more than six hundred miles. Otaaryliakkarnos is willing to grant the characters the special boon of flying them there on her back in only two days. However, this offer is extended only if the adventurers leave directly from the council, rather than first pursuing any other business.

The journey takes the characters through areas suffering under the cult's attacks. Whether from horseback or by air, they see the ruins of isolated settlements and smoke hanging on the horizon. If the characters travel overland, they might pass through some of these ruined settlements, or encounter cult marauders, brigands, refugees, and chromatic dragons bent on destruction. Use your own discretion when choosing how many combat encounters the journey should encompass.

Council of Dragons

Five ancient dragons make up the council charged with deciding their metallic kin's response to the cult. Though they are not necessarily the wisest or most powerful specimens of dragonkind, all are well respected. Any decision made by these dragon councilors will be accepted by the metallic dragons as a whole.

The dragons have no need to judge the different factions of the Sword Coast, for they know of their reputations and actions already. The dragons' attitudes are effectively fixed in that regard. However, they know also that among all the humanoid races, leaders often determine the character of societies. Though they understand that the adventurers are not the nominal leaders of any faction, the dragons already know that the heroes' actions have set the course of the factions' battle against Tiamat. As such, if the dragons side with the humanoids, it will be as a statement of personal faith in the party—and in the party's ability to bring all the factions into the fight.

Attitudes

Each dragon councilor has one of four attitudes in this chapter, ranging from **unfriendly** to **cautious**, **neutral**, and **friendly**. To secure the cooperation of the metallic dragons as a whole, the party must conclude this chapter with at least three dragon councilors having a friendly attitude and with none unfriendly. If the characters make a promise or perform an act aimed at a specific dragon, they gain a two-step improvement in the attitude of that dragon (for example, from unfriendly to neutral, or from cautious to friendly). A general concession grants a one-step improvement to a single dragon of your choosing.

Metallic dragons are exceedingly wise, but they sometimes have difficulty distinguishing individual humanoids from each other. As such, an individual dragon's initial attitude depends on the party's racial makeup—and on ancient interactions and past wrongs.

Have We Met Before?

The dragons on the council have lived for centuries. Given how quickly humanoids build up progeny, it is possible that one of the dragons encountered a particular character's ancestors and recognizes the character by smell. Perhaps the dwarf who killed Otaaryliakkarnos's relative was the long-lost grand-uncle of the party's dwarf cleric. Or perhaps Tazmikella's stolen magic item is not something currently possessed by one of the adventurers, but she recognizes an ancestor of a party member as the sweet-talking bard who stole it generations before. The character can recognize the item as a family heirloom, and will need to make arrangements to have it returned.

See "Chapter 9: Council of Waterdeep" for information on the effects of the concessions offered by the adventurers to secure the metallic dragons' allegiance.

Protanther

Male Gold Dragon

Protanther is the leader of the council. A former King of Justice—a royal title among the gold dragons—he does not care for humanoids, particularly humans and elves. Though he sees both good and bad in the lesser races, he believes that their capacity for attaining great power despite their physical limitations makes them dangerous. For all their capability, humanoids have little time to learn the wisdom to direct that capability.

The gold dragon knows that many of the world's most blighted creatures descend from humans who bargained with dark forces for power, including yuan-ti and tieflings. He considers the cycle of failed human civilizations across Faerûn as a sign of a quintessential flaw in human nature. Moreover, he is quick to point out that humans make up the majority of evil archmages and liches—including Sammaster, who founded the Cult of the Dragon, and Szass Tam's Red Wizards. Even the current leader of the Cult of the Dragon, Severin, and a majority of the cult's members are human.

Protanther can at least appreciate that the crimes of the humanoid races are usually directed against each other. He knows that the short lives of many humanoids means they might not even recognize their own evil. The elves, however, live for long years and possess great knowledge—and have used that knowledge to the detriment of dragonkind in the past. It was the elves who shaped the magic of the *Dracorage mythal*, causing dragons across Faerûn to go mad with rage. Convincing Protanther to trust humanoid factions that include elves is a difficult task.

Desire. Protanther would prefer that the dragons rally their forces with no regard for the humanoid factions, striking immediately and decisively before the cult and its chromatic dragon allies can muster their full strength. If this puts the humanoids at risk, so be it.

Attitude. Neutral. If there are humans or tieflings in the party, Protanther is instead cautious. If there are elves in the party, he is unfriendly.

Concession. Protanther wants a formal apology from one who speaks for elvenkind for the abomination that was the *Dracorage mythal*. He is willing to trust that the adventurers can wring such an apology from King Melandrach on the council.

Ileuthra

Male Brass Dragon

Ileuthra is an ancient brass dragon who travels the planes in search of knowledge and ever more challenging games. Legend has it that he resides with Oghma, god of knowledge, but the dragon is cagey on that point.

Seeing good and bad in equal measure among the lesser races, Ileuthra recognizes that helping the humanoids is less a case of deciding whether they are worthy of aid, and more about deciding whether these adventurer ambassadors can be trusted to properly lead the factions.

Desire. Ileuthra has no preconceived sense of what might be the best course, and he is willing to hear all sides of the discussion.

Attitude. Neutral. Ileuthra has watched the lesser races for long centuries from the planes, and he understands that every individual humanoid possesses the potential for good or evil in equal measure. He is truly undecided, and will weigh all options for action against the cult.

Concession. Ileuthra believes that the dragon masks are too dangerous to remain in the world if the humanoid races are aware of where they are. If the characters agree that all dragon masks will be handed over to the metallic dragons as soon as they are found—including any masks captured after the final battle—his attitude can be improved.

Otaaryliakkarnos

Female Silver Dragon

The representative of the silver dragons believes that among the lesser races, neither good nor bad is ever absolute. The humanoids are in need of protection and guidance, and should be shown Bahamut's righteous way of living rather than ignored and treated as children. If the dragons refuse to engage the humanoids and focus only on their own advancement, the humanoids will persist in making the same mistakes again and again.

Otaaryliakkarnos's faith in the potential of humanoids has something of a blind spot when it comes to dwarves, however. She resents the dwarves for their Dragonmoots of old—great hunts during which clans would come together to end the perceived threat of a particular dragon. Centuries before, Otaaryliakkarnos's niece was killed in a Dragonmoot, and with the long ancestral memory of the metallic dragons, she holds all dwarves responsible.

Attitude. Neutral. If the party includes one or more dwarves, Otaaryliakkarnos is instead unfriendly.

Desire. Otaaryliakkarnos would like the metallic dragons to strike now as Protanther suggests, but she does not know if they can succeed alone. An alliance would reduce casualties for all parties, but the dragons must be certain of the intentions of the factions and their leaders.

Concession. Otaaryliakkarnos knows that the skin of her slain kin was used to make armor for the dwarf lord who slew her. She demands the remains be returned and that Ambassador Brawnanvil make an apology on behalf of all dwarves for the wrongful deaths the Dragonmoots have caused.



The Draakhorn

BRYAN SYME

Nymmurh

Male Bronze Dragon

Of all the dragons on the council, Nymmurh disagrees most strongly with Protanther. He knows that the metallic dragons are made in the image of Bahamut, and have no choice in the matter of being good or evil. Thus, how much greater and more precious is good when it is freely chosen by the humanoids, who must consciously turn away from villainy?

Nymmurh's belief in the potential of humanoids is partly driven by his affection for and protection of the noble Silmerhelve human family in Waterdeep (including Dala Silmerhelve; see "Chapter 9: Council of Waterdeep").

Desire. Nymmurh would like to help the factions, looking to the Harpers and the Order of the Gauntlet as epitomizing the best traits of humanoid aspiration.

Attitude. Unless the party has engaged in problematic behavior in his presence (or where he would hear of it), Nymmurh is friendly. He knows that the characters come to the council on the recommendation of those he respects and loves.

Concession. Nymmurh needs no concession unless the characters have somehow offended him. In such a scenario, the adventurers must prove their worth and goodness in a way you deem suitable.

Tazmikella

Female Copper Dragon

Tazmikella is fond of humans and has spent a great deal of time living among them, but she has reservations about supporting the factions. Her lair and hoard have been the target of cunning thieves and fast-talking swindlers more than once, and she perceives betrayal as a humanoid trait. She fears what might happen if one or more factions turn against the metallic dragons to demonstrate loyalty to Tiamat.

The copper dragon also believes that unrestricted interaction between humanoids and dragons has been disastrous for both races. The *Dracorage mythal* serves as a sore reminder of the animosity that has often arisen between the two peoples.

Desire. Tazmikella agrees with Protanther that the metallic dragons could strike against the chromatic dragons themselves. However, she is not convinced they would succeed, and having humanoid allies would reduce casualties for both sides.

Attitude. Neutral. If any character is a dragonborn, Tazmikella is instead cautious. If the party contains any character with a personal reputation for shady dealings (particularly a rogue or bard), she is unfriendly.

Concession. Pick one magic item owned by a member of the party, and which was found during a previous adventure. That item turns out to have once belonged to Tazmikella, and was part of a hoard she took from an ancient black dragon she defeated. (*Legend lore* or similar magic used on the item confirms this story.) The item holds sentimental value to her—or it did until a thief stole it from her hoard. Returning the item to her with an apology improves Tazmikella's attitude.

A Relic for Just Such an Occasion

Metallic dragons are known to bestow magic and treasure from their hoards to help heroes from time to time. If the characters do an excellent job impressing the dragons—for example, bringing all five dragons up to an attitude of friendly—or if they roleplayed the encounter well, the council dragons might grant one or more characters with a token of their esteem. This is likely a set of 3 *arrows of slaying* (dragons) or *armor of resistance* (lightning). Either proves useful against the cult, especially if the characters have yet to play through chapter 15. Tazmikella can even return the item the characters gave to her as a concession. (She does not covet it when it might do others good, but simply resents having had it stolen.)

General Concessions

The party can make general concessions to the dragons to appease them as a group, rather than make personal concessions to individual dragons. A general concession improves the attitude of a single dragon of your choice by one step.

Wealth

Even good dragons love treasure, and bestowing a share of the hoard the cult has collected goes a long way toward improving the attitudes of the council dragons. The party can effectively treat the dragons as another faction receiving an equal portion of the hoard, granting one share of the total treasure divided among eleven factions. Doing so improves the attitude of a single dragon by one step. For every additional share the dragons are promised (two shares among twelve factions, three shares among thirteen factions, and so on), the party improves the attitude of another dragon by one step.

The attitude of the dragons is improved by wealth in the following order: Tazmikella, Otaaryliakkarnos, Ileuthra, Protanther, and Nymmurh. Promising one-third (five shares among fifteen factions) or more of the treasure improves the attitude of all five dragons.

Other Promises

The dragons do not prompt the party with options, but the characters can potentially sway them with other offers. Reward player ingenuity for options such as the following:

- Promise to turn over Severin as a prisoner if captured, or to deliver his body to the dragons if slain
- Consecrating a major monastery or temple to Bahamut
- Dedicating a historical plot of land as belonging to the dragons

Conclusion

When the characters have reached a satisfactory agreement with the dragons, Otaaryliakkarnos offers to return to Waterdeep to let the council know an agreement has been reached. The details and terms—including any concessions promised by the characters—can be discussed during the next council session. If the characters do not reach an agreement because they cannot or will not meet the dragons' demands, Otaaryliakkarnos flies them back but departs Waterdeep at once.



Chapter 15: Xonthal's Tower

Though Severin's hold on the Cult of the Dragon is strong, there remain traditionalist elements within the cult that long for the old ways of reverence for the dracoliches. Many such elements center around scholars and academics, for whom the cult's new focus has made their knowledge and research irrelevant. Others think that Severin is being taken in by devils and that Tiamat will play him for a fool—a notion fairly close to the truth.

Two of the leading dracolich traditionalists—a dragonsoul named Jorgen Pawl and his trusted lieutenant Iskander—have been most vocal in their objections. As the time of the summoning ritual approaches, Severin understands that he can't risk losing loyal troops to infighting and insurrection. He has thus agreed to give Jorgen Pawl and his followers a dragon mask to examine, allowing them to determine whether Severin's understanding of the masks' power is correct. If Severin is wrong, he will know before risking everything on a do-or-die gamble. If he is right, the traditionalists will give their support to Severin's plans.

What Jorgen does not know is that Severin asked his Red Wizard allies to create a false mask, supplying the scholar with a duplicate of the *Blue Dragon Mask* that appears both powerful and inscrutable, though it holds little in the way of real magic. Severin knows the scholars will discover the deception eventually, but he hopes that the false mask will keep the traditionalists occupied while he completes his plans.

The Cult of the Dragon recently took control of Xonthal's Tower—an ancient and mysterious wizard's tower on the southern slope of Mount Hlim. Although not all the cult members at Xonthal's Tower are dracolich traditionalists, Jorgen Pawl and Iskander are in command there, and they have drawn many like-minded individuals under their sway.

Iskander

The young second-in-command at Xonthal's Tower stands an impressive 6-feet-5-inches tall. Iskander is not overly brave, but he is observant. One fact that hasn't escaped his notice is the number of rising stars in the Cult of the Dragon who meet mysterious ends before reaching their full potential. The suspicion that some cultists practice "advancement through assassination" or eliminate ambitious underlings to safeguard their own positions preys heavily on Iskander's mind.

Four tendays past, Iskander came down with a stomach affliction that left him critically weak. During the illness, his suspicions blossomed into full-blown paranoia. He is convinced that someone at Xonthal's Tower poisoned him, and he now trusts no one. To save himself,

MARCEL MERCADO

Iskander has decided to betray the cult and seek safety elsewhere. Having heard the exploits of the adventurers, he has decided that the cult's most effective enemies are his best bet as allies—and that a dragon mask should be more than enough to attract their attention.

An Unexpected Message

Iskander's message to the party can arrive in any manner you see fit, including through contacts in the Zhentarim. Whether it comes directly to the characters or to an NPC on the Council of Waterdeep, the message could be a hastily scribbled note, an eloquent appeal delivered by bonded messenger, or a whispered plea in a dark corridor.

> "You don't know me, but we can help each other immeasurably. My name is Iskander, and I made a terrible mistake in joining the Cult of the Dragon. The cult's horrifying plans are sure to bring doom to all, but I can stop those plans with your help. Rescue me from the cult's clutches, and I will deliver to you the prize of prizes: the *Blue Dragon Mask*. Without it, Severin faces an insurmountable setback in his effort to call Tiamat back to our world. The mask is here in Xonthal's Tower, being studied and guarded by only a handful of wizards, including myself.
>
> "The danger of my treason becoming known grows with every passing day, and if I'm discovered, I'll surely be killed. Please hurry, for the sake of everyone and everything you value."

The adventurers are likely to be suspicious of Iskander, intuiting that his offer is motivated by concern for his own survival, or that he's luring them into a trap. If divination spells are used to assess the situation, give the characters a strong sense that Iskander is on the level, and that the *Blue Dragon Mask* is in his possession.

If the characters ask the members of the Council of Waterdeep their opinions, the NPCs are unanimous: the risk is enormous, but the potential payoff is even greater. Losing one of the five dragon masks will be a huge setback for Severin's plans.

Xonthal's Tower

Xonthal's Tower is legendary among the wizards and tale-spinners of Faerûn for its unusual magical defenses, including a magical hedge maze that surrounds it. The cultists avoid the hedge maze by accessing a portal inside the tower that they use to travel in and out.

The wizard Xonthal was an extraordinary figure. Beginning as a lowly adventurer, he traveled across Faerûn and beyond, reaching distant Zakhara, Kara-Tur, and even Maztica. His work focused on conjuration and elemental evocation, so he often kept elementals and genies for company.

Xonthal prized solitude, so he designed his tower and its surrounding hedge maze to deter intruders and unwanted visitors. Over a century ago, the wizard kicked his apprentices out and sealed the tower. No one knows what Xonthal has been up to in the intervening decades, or whether he's even still alive. Some think he must have become a lich, while others believe he's just dead. All that's certain is that the hedge maze remains a frustrating barrier, and the spells and wards protecting the tower against entry remain as powerful as ever.

The Village

Spreading out along the edge of the hedge maze is a village, also called Xonthal's Tower. The settlement began as a place where Xonthal's many apprentices established homes of their own. As years passed, more settlers were drawn to the area as word spread that the wizard and his apprentices offered excellent protection against marauding orcs and monsters. The village is smaller now than in the tower's heyday, but about three hundred people still live there.

The locals are friendly enough, but they're wary of strangers who ask too many questions about the tower. Things were quiet there for a long time, but for almost a year now, the villagers have seen lights through the windows at night and heard unearthly sounds. A few claim to have seen a blue dragon lingering in the sky high above. Some villagers scoff at that idea, but everyone agrees that the tower has been reoccupied.

Once the villagers are satisfied that the adventurers haven't come to lay waste to the tower (fearing that an all-out battle would likely destroy the village too), they're interested in talking of little else besides who could be inside. The most popular theories are that Xonthal has returned or has awakened as a lich, or that one of the genies and elementals he once imprisoned finally broke free of its restraints but remains trapped inside the tower.

The villagers warn the characters sternly about the danger of entering the maze. Few who enter it ever come back out, and those who do come out are much worse for wear. Even animals and birds avoid the maze.

The tower and the maze are protected by brilliantly crafted *wishes* cast by Xonthal. The tower is impervious to all scrying and divination, and invulnerable against all forms of attack and alteration. Approaching through the maze and overcoming the puzzles designed by Xonthal is the only way to get inside.

The Maze

The hedge maze surrounding the central tower is an astounding work of magical construction. In certain regards, it's even more impressive than the tower because of the powerful ways it manipulates space.

A gently curving path leads into the maze from the edge of the village. The villagers built a low fence across the entrance to keep young children and animals from wandering in. Fear of the maze is hammered into all other residents of the village from the time they're old enough to appreciate its dangers, and they shun it diligently.

Seen from above—either by a flying character or from nearby rooftops—the maze appears to be an overgrown, tangled mess with no discernible paths longer than

a dozen yards. It looks exactly like what it is: a hedge maze left untended for more than a century, grown into a nearly solid mass of hedge and thorn.

Seen from ground level, however, the maze appears to be a pleasant, hedge-ringed garden with no resemblance to a maze at all. Villagers are quick to point out this anomaly, to prove to the characters that the maze is nothing to take lightly. The view from above reveals the maze as it exists in the real world. The view up the path from ground level looks into the extradimensional space that Xonthal crafted as a barrier around his home.

The tower's entrance exists only within this extradimensional space. Entering the maze any other way than walking up the main path quickly leads characters into densely tangled brush that is all but impassable, and that doesn't physically connect to any tower entrance. Characters who cut their way through to the tower, fly across to it, or tunnel beneath the maze to the outside wall find only smooth, unbroken stone that cannot be breached or bypassed by any means. A balcony juts out from the top level of the tower, but it is surrounded by an invisible, impenetrable barrier that deflects all objects and effects. The only way to reach the tower's entrance is through Xonthal's extradimensional maze.

General Features

Because the maze doesn't exist in normal space, it cannot be traditionally mapped. Instead, it is shown here as a set of seven nodes where encounters occur. Moving between two nodes takes 2d6 rounds regardless of whether characters walk or run. Characters experience such movement as if walking down a well-groomed path in a hedge garden. The path curves so that characters can't see more than 15 feet ahead, exactly as if they were in a circular garden with concentric paths. Cutting through hedges has no effect on how long it takes characters to get from one node to the next. Characters who return to look for a spot previously cut through will never find it.

The hedge walls are 8 feet tall, allowing the adventurers to see the tower above them from many locations. This view provides no clue to direction, however. Characters who see the tower to the left one moment might spot it to the right, or behind, or closer or farther away a moment later. When trying to focus on the tower's new location, characters suddenly find that they can't remember its old location clearly, or begin to wonder if it was in its current spot all along.

If a character who entered the extradimensional maze along the path tries to fly above it once inside, the tower immediately fades from view, and the view becomes endless hedge-lined paths stretching to the horizon in every direction. Alternatively, characters who fly above the maze are shunted back into the real world, emerging above the hedge tangle with their companions nowhere in sight. The only way for them to rejoin the party is to enter the maze again and retrace their steps, dealing with all encounters along the way. (Use this option carefully if you're not a fan of splitting the party.)

If the characters enter the maze at night, starlight from a clear sky is bright enough for them to find their way through—and even bright enough for the sundial in area 1 to cast a shadow. However, anyone with a passing familiarity of the sky notices that the constellations are completely unfamiliar.

Area 1 is the heart of the maze, and characters will return there many times as they seek the entrance to the tower. If they do things correctly, they won't need to face any of the maze's dangers. That's unlikely, though.

Although the maze is devilishly hard to get through, it's easy to leave. All the characters need to do is express a desire to leave the maze while they're in area 1, and whatever route they take next leads them back to the entrance and the path at the edge of the village. They can turn around and come back in again, and they'll wind up in area 1, at the start of the maze.

Rescue Mission

Unless the characters took extreme measures to hide their approach to the maze, they are spotted by the cultists in the tower. (The cultists watch the village closely, and immediately recognize any stir caused by the adventurers' arrival.) The cultists don't know the adventurers' plans, but with the *Blue Dragon Mask* on hand, they don't intend to take chances. Their preparations alarm Iskander, who sees his chance for escape dwindling. In a panic, he grabs the *Blue Dragon Mask* and dashes to the tower balcony.

As the characters prepare to enter the maze for the first time, or if they are spending too long in the village, read or paraphrase the following.

> As you prepare to step onto the garden path, you notice movement high up on the tower. A human male dressed in black robes stands on the balcony, waving something over his head. It's hard to make out details from this distance, but it might be a blue mask.
>
> "Heroes," the figure screams, "they saw you in the village! I've taken the mask, but they'll realize it's missing within minutes! Look for me beneath the tower, for it's the only place I have a chance to hide. This is the key that will let you teleport into the dungeon." As he speaks, the figure holds aloft a second item—some sort of white, glimmering hourglass. "I will leave it behind after I use it, but others may find it before you do."
>
> The speaker looks over his shoulder as another figure suddenly dashes out onto the balcony. A flash of blades and spell-fire erupts. Then the figure who spoke pitches his attacker over the railing before dashing back inside.

1. The Sundial

After walking up the entrance path into the maze, this is the first area the characters arrive at, entering along pathway E.



JARED BLANDO

You've entered an intersection where eight paths converge symmetrically. You can see Xonthal's Tower dead ahead above the hedge wall, but the way the paths curve, there's no telling which one might lead to it.

A sundial stands in the center of the intersection, the shadow from its gnomon pointing straight toward the tower—which is highly odd, because the sun isn't behind you. Your shadows point in the proper direction. Only the sundial's shadow points ahead.

The sundial is anchored to the ground and cannot be moved or shifted. The eight paths leading out of this area are identical. If the characters try to make any identifying marks on the ground or leave items in this area, the marks and items are gone the next time they arrive here. The adventurers shouldn't know whether they're coming back to the same spot each time or whether more than one identical sundial intersection exists in the maze.

The sundial's shadow indicates the correct path. If the characters follow one of the paths not indicated by the sundial, it leads them to one of the other areas of the maze (your choice). There is no turning back from a wrong path. Once the last character has gone out of sight of the sundial (15 feet along the curving path), reversing direction delivers all characters to the same area they would have reached if they'd kept going forward.

If the characters take the correct path, they return to area 1 after 2d6 rounds. Each time they return, the sundial points toward a different path, in the order presented below. However, each time the characters enter this area after the first, the gnomon casts more than one shadow. The adventurers must deduce the correct path from among multiple shadows, but those solutions aren't obvious or even fair. Xonthal was trying to keep enemies and curiosity-seekers out—not just to present them with an enjoyable mental challenge.

Sundial Shadows

Sundial	Shadows Point At	Correct Path
1	A	A
2	A, C	B
3	A, D, F	E
4	B, D, F, H	Sundial
5	A–H	Edge of hedge

The **first three sundials** are straightforward, even if the solutions are not always obvious.

The **fourth sundial** casts four shadows in an "X" shape. As the characters examine them, the shadows start slowly rotating around the face of the sundial, spinning faster and becoming shorter until they shrink into the gnomon and the sundial shows no shadow at all. The correct path in this case is the sundial itself. A character who jumps or climbs onto the sundial is drawn into its stone surface, then is suddenly dropped out of the sky to land harmlessly around sundial 5.

Splitting the Party

Some parties are going to try splitting up in the hope of outwitting the maze. No matter how the characters attempt to do so, however, they always wind up back together. If groups take separate paths, they meet at the same destination. If one character stays at the sundial while others take a path, that path leads back to the sundial where the character is waiting. Moreover, that character swears that the others have been gone for 1d6 hours—long enough to gain the benefit of a short rest (though taking a long rest is impossible in the maze). As usual, any identifying marks made in the area vanish during those hours without anyone noticing.

The **fifth sundial** casts eight shadows that point at every possible pathway. No path is the right one. To correctly bisect the shadows, characters must move between the paths, straight into the end of any hedge. As soon as a character steps, runs, or dives headlong into a hedge, he or she emerges safely at the foot of the tower.

Each time the characters choose a wrong path, they emerge at one of the other maze areas described below, which you can use in any order you like. If the characters make the wrong choice more than six times, you can reuse areas, create new ones of your own, or let the characters wander down a path much longer than usual before encountering the sundial again.

Characters always return to the same sundial puzzle they most recently departed (sundial 1 through 5), so that they do not need to retrace their steps from the very beginning after each wrong turn. However, they have no way to tell whether they have returned to the same specific sundial, as noted above.

Completing the Maze

When the characters complete the maze by successfully entering the hedge at the fifth sundial, they emerge within sight of a teleportation circle at the foot of the tower. The body of a dead cultist lies sprawled on the ground (the one Iskander threw off the balcony earlier). Behind them, the characters see a straight path that leads directly to the sundial intersection. Another path extends thirty yards beyond the sundial, ending at the exit to the village.

A few seconds after the first character steps onto the circle, all creatures in the circle are teleported to area 8. Alternatively, the characters can walk out of the garden from the foot of the tower without any detours or difficulties. However, any gems they collected in the maze (see below) will mysteriously vanish from their possession.

2. Chuul Pool

Filling the center of this eighty-foot-square courtyard is a circular pool of water sixty feet across. The water is dark and murky, reducing visibility to about one foot. A garnet gemstone hovers one foot above the center of the pool Another path leaves the area through the hedge wall on the far side of the pool, directly opposite where you entered.

Four **chuuls** dwell in this dark water. They stay hidden as long as the characters remain in the courtyard, but attack any creature that enters the pool or touches the gem. Attacking chuuls try to paralyze characters, then drag or throw them into the 50-foot-deep pool to drown them. They are fascinated by magic, though, and if any magic item is dropped into the pool, the chuuls are distracted for 5 rounds. They won't attack during that time, and if they were already attacking, they stop and dive to the bottom of the pool to inspect their new treasure.

If the characters attempt to leave the area without retrieving the garnet, both paths curve away and bring them back here after a short walk. If the characters leave any marks, items, or companions behind in this area, all the same conditions apply here as in area 1.

If the garnet is carried out of this area, either path leads the characters back to the sundial.

Treasure

The bottom of the pool holds the treasure that's been dropped in by various visitors: six *potions of healing*, one *potion of growth*, one *potion of fire breath*, a *wand of fear*, three *+1 daggers*, a *driftglobe*, and an *elemental gem* (clear sapphire/air elemental).

3. Cyclopes' Pasture

You emerge from the path into an area far larger than any open area you expected to encounter in the maze garden. This rectangular space must be ninety feet across, with its far side almost 150 feet away. It looks like a boulder-strewn pasture, with a large pond to one side and a fenced vegetable garden and oversized cottage on the other. Sheep graze in the pasture, tended by a pair of cyclopes, but none of them are moving. They all appear frozen in time.

As soon as any character advances into the area, the creatures here spring to life, with the sheep grazing and the cyclopes chatting idly with each other. When the cyclopes notice the characters, they exchange a few unheard words, then play some sort of game analogous to rock/paper/scissors. One loses, and both cyclopes approach the characters. They don't appear to be carrying weapons.

When the cyclopes are within 20 feet of the characters, the one that lost the game scoops up a small boulder from the ground and gestures toward the party. He then looks downfield and heaves the boulder 100 feet, where it bounces and rolls another 20 feet. Both cyclopes then turn and look at the characters expectantly.

The boulders at this end of the field are all at least 2 feet in diameter and weigh 500 pounds or more.

The cyclopes speak only Giant. If any character addresses them in that language, they ignore any questions but explain the rules of their game: the characters' boulder must fly farther than the cyclops's. How the characters accomplish this is unimportant to the cyclopes, but the boulder can't be dragged or carried—it must fly at least part of the distance.

The characters can beat this challenge in several ways. The most straightforward solution is to reduce the boulder with an *enlarge/reduce* spell, then use the same spell to enlarge a strong character to throw it. Other solutions might involve casting *levitate* on the rock and giving it a push, digging a trench for the rock to roll down the length of the field, or propelling it with magic in some other way. The cyclopes will accept any solution the characters attempt, as long as it propels the stone farther than the cyclops did.

Each **cyclops** defends itself if attacked, and killing them changes nothing. The characters still need to propel a stone farther than the cyclops did to get back to the sundial.

When the characters beat the challenge, the stone that the cyclops threw splits in half, revealing a topaz gemstone inside. If the topaz is carried out of this area, either path leads the characters back to the sundial.

If the characters attempt to leave the area without winning the contest, both paths curve away and bring them back here after a short walk. If the characters leave any marks, items, or companions behind in this area, all the same conditions apply here as in area 1.

4. Carnivorous Garden

Ahead, you see a bubbling fountain filling the pathway. Large bright flowers grow in the hedges on both sides of the fountain, each blossom shimmering in the light. The air smells particularly fresh and sweet here.

A large flower grows on each northern and southern side of each square on the map except the square with the fountain. As the characters get closer, they can see that the shimmering of the flowers comes from a large pearl set into each one. However, if any of these carnivorous flowers is attacked, or if a character tries to remove a pearl from a flower, all twelve flowers attack any enemy they can reach. Use the statistics of an **otyugh** to represent each flower, except they have speed 0, and they have the plant type.

Once a flower is killed, its pearl can be removed. If a pearl is carried out of this area, either path leads the characters back to the sundial.

If the characters attempt to leave the area without a pearl, both paths curve away and bring them back here after a short walk. If the characters leave marks, items, or companions behind in this area, all the same conditions apply here as in area 1.

5. Pagoda

A placid pond fills the center of this open space. A stout pagoda rises from a huge boulder that stands in the water like an island. An arched bridge crosses the water to the pagoda, whose red roof is held up by six sturdy pillars and capped with carved fish. A human male wearing yellow silk robes embroidered with red and gold fish stands in the pagoda. You hear exotic music being played on a stringed instrument.

When the characters arrive, the robed figure bows to them, and sits down on the boulder where it protrudes through the floor of the pagoda. He waits patiently for the party to join him. Around the boulder, the floor of the pagoda is not wood, but rather is a rock garden of decorative stones and brushed sand. A charcoal pit smolders beside the boulder where the man sits.

The master of the pagoda does not speak, and he waits as long as it takes for the adventurers to join him. When they enter the pagoda, he gives a brief smile and proffers silk cushions. He then waves his hand and an iron tea kettle rises up from beneath the embers. The kettle resembles a scowling face with thick features, and a character who studies it may recognize it as a dao with a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Arcana) check. The man pours clear water from a clay jug into the kettle and adds tea leaves. He bows to the kettle and shows great reverence to the vessel, then lowers his head in meditation. Soon steam rises from the kettle.

The tea brewer is a **dao** magically disguised as a human, and the pot brews not tea but a deadly gaseous poison. The tea kettle is also the dao's *magic jar* (described below).

With a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check, a character realizes that an innate ability lifted the teapot from the coals (*move earth* acting on a small clay column). Characters who watch the leaves going into the kettle can attempt a DC 13 Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Medicine) check. Success indicates the character recognizes drakeswort, a potentially lethal herb.

If characters do nothing, the steeping drakeswort fills the pagoda with poisonous vapor, and the dao encloses the pagoda in a *wall of stone* (including the roof), trapping the poison and the characters inside. He uses Earth Glide to sink into the boulder. With his body safe beneath the ground, his soul jumps into the tea kettle, and he monitors the characters' escape attempts and enjoys watching their suffering. For the next 3 minutes (30 rounds), creatures inside the pagoda (except the dao in his *magic jar*) must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw against poison at the start of each of their turns. On a failed save, a creature takes 14 (4d6) poison damage, or half as much damage on a successful save. Three successful saving throws in a row confer immunity to the poison.

Trapped characters have several options for escape:

- The stone walls are AC 5, 6 inches thick, and have 15 hit points per inch of thickness (90 hp total). Motivated characters can create air holes in the walls.
- Dumping the kettle into the fire reduces damage to 7 (2d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful save. Smoke from burning drakeswort is less dangerous than steam.
- Plugging the kettle's spout or extinguishing the fire reduces the saving throw DC to 8.
- Damaging the tea kettle forces the dao to return to the pagoda. When the dao's soul inhabits the kettle, the face is slightly animated. Anyone touching the kettle notices the eyes looking around the pagoda. The kettle has AC 5 and 20 hit points. If it takes more than 10 points of damage, the dao returns to his body, emerges from the stone, drops the *wall of stone* (because he can't breathe the poison either), and attacks.

If characters attack the dao before his trap is sprung, he fights back, making full use of *invisibility*, *move earth*, and his other abilities. He shifts the odds in his favor by killing the weakest characters first. The dao fights to 45 hit points or fewer, then retreats into the earth.

A jade gemstone sits inside the teapot. If it is carried out of this area, either path leads characters back to the sundial.

If characters leave the area without the jade gemstone, both paths curve away and bring them back here after a short walk. If the characters leave marks, items, or companions behind in this area, all the same conditions apply here as in area 1.

6. Statue Gallery

Six suits of ornate plate mail stand in this area as if on guard. Battered and bashed pieces of armor and weapons are scattered across the carpeted floor before them. Moss and lichen cover the armor. Another pathway opens up at the far side of this area.

When the characters begin exploring the area, two suits of **animated armor** swing into motion and attack. Each time a suit of armor is destroyed, two more activate. When there are no more suits of armor to activate, the suits reassemble themselves from the components littering the ground. Reassembling takes a suit's entire action—it can do nothing else on that turn. After reforming, the animated armor resumes attacking. This continues as long as any character remains in this area.

Each time a suit of armor is destroyed, roll a d6. On a roll of 6, a large bloodstone rolls out of the armor as its pieces fall to the ground. If the bloodstone is carried out of this area, either path leads the characters back to the sundial.

If the characters leave the area without a bloodstone, both paths curve away and bring them back here after a short walk. If the characters leave marks, items, or companions behind in this area, all the same conditions apply here as in area 1.

7. Gorgon Maze

As they follow the path, the characters are drawn into a maze within the larger maze of the magical garden.

> The curving path you follow suddenly twists to reveal a proper maze cut out of the surrounding hedges. Moments later, the pounding of hooves rings out, and a gorgon charges out of the greenery toward you.

This area is ringed by unbroken hedge walls that make it impossible to escape. The characters won't know this until they explore the area fully, and they won't have time to do that with a **gorgon** on the loose.

The maze permits the gorgon to move freely through the hedges when it uses its Trampling Charge attack. As it races after the adventurers, it attacks with its Petrifying Breath as often as it can. Each time it does so, a diamond crystallizes from its breath and drops to the ground. A character can spot the gem with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check. A character can pick the diamond up before the start of the gorgon's next turn, but if not picked up, it dissipates to mist.

When a character picks up the diamond, a pathway opens up in the middle of each of the four sides of this area, any of which lead the characters back to the sundial.

The gorgon won't follow the characters out of the maze. If the gorgon is killed, another **gorgon** materializes somewhere in the area 1 minute later.

The Tower

After making their way through the dangers of the hedge maze, the adventurers can enter Xonthal's Tower. Once inside, they learn that Iskander's fellow cultists have discovered his treason and are trying to kill him. The characters must figure out the tower's magical teleportation system, then defeat both the cultists and some of Xonthal's original defenses to rescue Iskander and claim the dragon mask he promised them. Before the characters can leave, however, they must deal with the blue dragon summoned to protect the mask.

Though the tower appears square from the outside, its chambers and walls are circular when seen from inside. This strange incongruity is another manifestation of Xonthal's ability to manipulate space.

General Features

Ceilings. Chambers in the tower have 10-foot-high ceilings.

Light. Areas 8 to 13 are brightly lit by narrow windows and magic lamps.

Sound. The structure of the tower muffles sound between levels. Only the loudest shouting or noise can be heard on an adjacent level, and nothing short of an explosion or a *thunderwave* spell can be heard more than one level away.

Teleport Circles. The aboveground levels of Xonthal's Tower contain no stairs. The only way to pass from one level to another is by using teleport circles built into the tower (marked "T" on the map). Because they aren't climbing up or down, characters have no way to know which level they're on after teleporting except by looking out the windows. The tall windows in the tower are too narrow for any creature more than a few inches wide to pass through.

On the wall behind each teleport circle is a metal panel inscribed with symbols. Touching a symbol causes it to glow softly. A few seconds later, all creatures standing in the circle teleport to the area selected by the symbol.

Teleport Symbols

Symbol	Destination
Chair	Audience chamber (area 8)
Two chairs*	Audience chamber balconies
Upside-down "L"	Closed chambers (area 9)
Rectangle	Shrine (area 10)
Flame	Lounge (area 11)
Star	Observatory (area 12)
Square	Bedroom (area 13)
Hourglass	Dungeon teleporter (locked—area 14)
Right triangle	Sundial area of the hedge maze (area 1; not accessible from the dungeon)

*Appears in the audience chamber (area 8) only. The specific balcony is determined by which chair is touched.

Characters who touch the right triangle return to the sundial seen from the foot of the tower, allowing them to return to the tower along the straight path or to exit the maze to the village (see "Completing the Maze," above).

To teleport down to the dungeon level, the symbol must be touched by the hourglass-shaped key that Iskander waved from the balcony. Xonthal conducted many dangerous experiments in the dungeons, and he didn't want anyone getting into that level—or getting out of it—without his approval.

The key is a representation of an hourglass made of ivory and crystal. Iskander used the key to escape into the dungeon from the observatory, but tossed the key back into the room after using it so the adventurers could follow him down. Jorgen Pawl found the key and has it now. The characters must take the key from him to reach the dungeon level.

8. Audience Chamber

> The walls of this chamber bear exotic geometric designs representing feathers, eagles, and snakes, all rendered in a style you've never seen before. To one side of the room, a human female is sprawled face down in a pool of blood. She is dressed like a high-ranking member of the Cult of the Dragon.

The dead cultist was slain by Iskander. They argued, the dead cultist turned to step onto the teleport circle, and Iskander stabbed her before stepping through the teleporter himself. A character who inspects the body and makes a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Medicine) check can tell that the cultist was killed by a *dragontooth dagger* (see appendix C).

The balconies are set 8 feet above the floor and can be easily reached by climbing. The floor of each balcony bears a teleport circle similar to those found throughout the tower. The controls are located beneath the railing of the balcony, and can be found with a DC 8 Intelligence (Investigation) check. These controls can take characters only back to the main circle in this area.

The decorations in the room are reminiscent of a Maztican style of architecture. Xonthal studied the culture of Maztica extensively and incorporated many Maztican motifs into his home.

9. Closed Chambers

What use Xonthal put these rooms to is unknown. Empty when the cultists arrived, they were quickly repurposed as barracks. Bedrolls scattered about show that between four and six cultists use each room.

The teleporter on this level is located inside a circular chamber with a closed door. The door and the walls of the room are made of thin, unpolished steel. The door swings outward if a simple latch is turned.

When the characters arrive, one **cult fanatic** and four **cultists** are searching the floor for Iskander. The cultists quickly realize they can't defeat the adventurers, and they make a dash for the teleport room. They try to escape to the lounge (area 11), where they expect to find reinforcements.

10. Shrine

When Xonthal lived in the tower, this shrine was dedicated to Oghma. The cult traditionalists turned this chamber into a laboratory for their studies.

> Painted renditions of dracoliches line the walls of this chamber, and a stone altar in the center of the area features the skeletal limbs and claws of a dragon. A half-dozen cultists look up in surprise at your appearance.

The skeletal forelimbs of a black dragon have been mounted to the altar and enchanted with a permanent *animate objects* spell. When the characters enter, it won't be apparent that the limbs are connected to the altar or that they can be animated. Each limb has AC 10 and 50 hit points and can make one melee attack per round at a creature within 5 feet of it: +4 to hit; 6 (1d10 + 1) piercing damage.

The room is occupied by two **mages** and five **cult fanatics** who attack at the first sign of intruders. As an action, one of the mages screams the command word to activate the skeletal dragon limbs. If the cultist who activated the limbs is killed, the limbs stop attacking, but both mages know the command word. The cultists all fight to the death.

This room contains many notes and scrolls about dracoliches but nothing of value.

11. Lounge

This chamber was Xonthal's combination living room, office, and den, used for studying, relaxing, and writing. When they took over the tower, the cultists turned this chamber into another dracolich laboratory.

> A large fireplace in the center of the room keeps this chamber warm and cozy, its smoke magically vented outside. About two-thirds of the skeleton of an adult dragon is laid out on the floor, curled around the fireplace. Before you have time for further assessment, however, a half-dozen black-cloaked figures move to attack you.

The six **cult fanatics** in this room move in as soon as anyone appears in the teleporter. If they can, the cultists try to reach the teleport circle and activate it while one or more characters are still on it. The teleport circle takes only a few seconds to activate, so characters standing in the circle won't be able to move away unless they have the ability to move as a reaction. The cultists select area 10 as the adventurers' destination.

When the characters have time to examine the skeleton (a black dragon), they can see that the bones are disconnected and placed roughly, and that the creature's forelimbs are missing. They also see signs that the cultists do their cooking here, finding a collection of simple dishware stacked along the north wall, along with sacks containing potatoes, turnips, jerky, and flour.

Aside from the lovingly cleaned skeleton and notes that a scholar might find interesting, this level holds nothing of value.

12. Observatory

Jorgen Pawl (**mage**) and 3 **cult fanatics** are outside this chamber on the balcony when the characters teleport in. All four wait to ambush the first character who steps onto the balcony. If the characters explore the observatory before investigating the balcony, the cultists rush into the room, hoping to attack with surprise.

> This chamber is clearly the workplace of a wizard. A pair of voluminous tomes on astronomy and astrology lie open on a table. A massive telescope of brass, crystal, and polished mahogany rests on an intricate stand in the middle of the chamber. A ladder rests against one wall, and an immense crystal lens is embedded in the ceiling.

Xonthal used this chamber for making observations of the starry sky. The ladder is for reaching the ceiling-mounted lens, which looks upward from the tower. Little can be seen through it during daytime, but at night, the lens gives the telescope a view of the entire sky from horizon to horizon.

Jorgen Pawl has the hourglass-shaped key that allows access to the dungeon level of the tower. Touching the key to the hourglass symbol on any teleport circle control panel activates the circle for a jump to the teleport circle in area 14.

13. Bedroom

Jorgen Pawl and Iskander share this presently empty chamber, which might have been luxurious before being subjected to the ravages of time. A table assembled from planks laid across barrels is covered in notes and scrolls, all pertaining to dracoliches and having no bearing on the current crisis.

Dungeon

Though the cultists have claimed the upper levels of Xonthal's Tower, they have no control over the dungeon beneath it. The secrets and ancient guardians of this area remain a mystery to them. Xonthal performed most of his experiments here, and the dungeons once included numerous extradimensional spaces accessible from the main corridor (area 17).

When the first two groups of cultists sent down here to explore were killed by the elementals in area 15, Jorgen Pawl quickly declared the dungeon off limits. Iskander understood the risks of fleeing here, but he knew it was the one place where Jorgen's fanatical followers would be reluctant to pursue him.

General Features

Ceilings. Chambers in the dungeon have 10-foot-high ceilings unless otherwise noted.

Light. Unless otherwise noted in the area description, areas 14 to 23 are unlit until a creature steps into the room. Magic lamps then activate and provide bright light.

Sound. Sound carries well through these rooms and corridors. The sound of fighting or other loud noises in one area can be heard through a closed door in an adjacent area.

14. Dungeon Teleporter

The bodies of three dead cultists lie on the floor here. A successful DC 13 Wisdom (Medicine) check determines that two of them were killed by bolts of magical force (Iskander's handiwork). No check is needed to see that the third was stabbed to death. A trail of blood runs into this room from area 15.

Iskander was waiting in this chamber for pursuers to appear. He killed two immediately but the third chased him into area 15, where the elementals attacked both of them.

The teleporter here can reach any teleport circle in the tower above, but its controls do not allow characters to return to the sundial.

15. Elemental Checkpoint

> Blood streaks the floor here, including the smeared trail leading back to the teleport chamber and a second trail of bloody boot prints heading up the corridor to the north. Standing amid the gore are three humanoid figures—two that look like misshapen statues of clay and stone and one appearing as a humanoid made of flame.

The creatures are 2 **earth elementals** and a **fire elemental** Xonthal called forth to guard his workshops. In the absence of new orders, the elementals eternally follow Xonthal's last command to slay intruders. When any character enters the room, the elementals attack. They fight until destroyed, or until the party flees back to area 14 or moves further into the dungeon. The elementals do not pursue outside this area unless attacked from a distance.

A large, round table with four chairs sits in one corner of the room, with shelves and workbenches arranged along the walls. Books and papers are scattered on the table, along with a locked wooden chest about the size



Iskander

BRYAN SYME

of a shoebox. Opening the lock requires thieves' tools and a successful DC 15 Dexterity check. A failed check sets off a magic *glyph of warding* trap that triggers a *slow* spell affecting all creatures in the area except elementals. Creatures affected by the spell can attempt the saving throw again at the end of each of their turns. Otherwise, the effect ends after 1 minute.

The writing on the papers and books in the room has become illegible, and the paper is so brittle from the fire elementals' heat that it crumbles at a touch.

Treasure

The chest contains three scrolls: two *scrolls of protection* (fire elementals) and one *scroll of protection* (earth elementals). Characters who claim these scrolls can use them to move safely past the elementals. With only one *scroll of protection* against earth elementals, characters will probably be forced to deal with the earth elementals at least once.

16. Laboratory

It's obvious at a glance that this area was once a wizard's workroom. Worktables are covered with notes, alchemical flasks, beakers, braziers, and other arcane apparatus. More startling is the whirlwind occupying the center of the room. Ten feet across and stretching from floor to ceiling, it swirls endlessly, revealing a number of sparkling gems within it.

The whirlwind is not a creature, but one of Xonthal's experiments. The gemstones swirling inside it are *elemental gems*. If a hand or any other material object is pushed into the whirlwind, it disrupts the perfect balance of the airflow, causing an *elemental gem* to spin out and smash on the floor, summoning an angry elemental. You can choose the elemental's type or determine it randomly. The whirlwind contains eight gems, two of each elemental type. Every time the whirlwind is disturbed, another gem is ejected and breaks.

The equipment here is now useless, and any reagents or components have long since dried up, decayed, or lost their potency. A character who spends a day poring over the notes can attempt a DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana) check to understand that Xonthal was involved in a complex attempt to create elementals that fused the best traits of earth, air, fire, and water.

17. Cosmic Hallway

Steps descend to a walkway that appears to stretch across infinite space. Thousands of stars twinkle in unfamiliar constellations, and meteors streak through the vastness above and below the path. Just past the base of the stairs, a door framed by nothingness rises from the path. Fifty feet beyond that, the path meets an intersection, with another door straight ahead.

This corridor is a relic of Xonthal's experimentation with extradimensional space. The path is formed by the floor of the corridor, which is perfectly solid and secure despite appearing to extend into the void. Reaching beyond the edge of the walkway confirms the absence of walls or ceiling. The atmosphere is thin and cold, but not uncomfortably so.

At an opportune moment when one or more characters are moving along the path, a swarm of tiny meteors shoots past, threatening to knock them off the walkway. All creatures on the path must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw to dodge the meteors. On a failed save, a creature is struck, takes 9 (2d8) bludgeoning damage, and is knocked off the walkway.

A creature knocked off the walkway appears to fall into infinite space. Unless the creature can fly or teleport back to the walkway, it quickly vanishes from sight. Roll 1d4 + 17; the number rolled is the number of the room where the character materializes and crashes to the floor on the following round, taking 14 (4d6) bludgeoning damage from the fall.

Though having a character fall off the walkway is dangerous (and potentially exciting), it makes it less likely that the adventurers can be tricked by the efreeti in area 22.

18. Study

This circular room is obviously a library or study, its walls lined with bookshelves that extend from the floor to the gently domed ceiling twenty feet overhead. A wheeled ladder is connected to a rail that runs around the curved wall, allowing access to the upper shelves. A delicate, ornate desk stands at the center of the room, surrounded by piles of blank paper. A large map sits on the desk, its corners held down with stones.

The two secret doors in this area are concealed behind swinging bookshelves, and can each be found with a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check. The door to the spellbook study (area 20) is opened by shifting a book at floor level. The door to the observation room (area 19) is located 10 feet above the floor. It is opened by positioning the rolling ladder in front of the door and pushing on the shelf 15 feet above the floor.

If anyone but Xonthal opens either secret door, the papers piled throughout the room begin to ruffle as though a breeze blows through the area. Thousands of sheets of heavy paper then fly into the air in a great whirlwind, slashing at any creature in the area. One distinct storm of paper forms around each character on the first round. Every round after that, two more cyclones form, to a maximum of three per character.

Treat these paper whirlwinds as **swarms of ravens**, but they are constructs instead of beasts, and they have vulnerability to fire. When the paper swarms form, they remain on guard in the study for 30 minutes, then collapse to piles of paper once more. They won't pursue characters into the hallway, but will chase them into the two adjoining rooms.

Treasure

The contents of Xonthal's library are as valuable as they are voluminous. The wizard's collection includes nearly five thousand books, pamphlets, folios, quartos, scrolls, and tablets with a combined weight of more than a ton. The entire collection would be worth 50,000 gp if it could be moved. Alternatively, the characters can pick out a few especially valuable volumes.

A character trained in one of the following skills can make a check to search the library for a work on that subject: Animal Handling, Athletics, Arcana, History, Medicine, Nature, Performance, Persuasion, Religion, or Sleight of Hand. Multiply the total of the check by 10 to get the gp value of the single most valuable book a character can find on that subject. Each skill check takes 10 minutes, but many characters can be searching at the same time. Characters who search for more books take a cumulative –10 penalty to subsequent checks.

The map shows the region of the Elemental Plane of Fire surrounding the fabled City of Brass. The map cannot be harmed by fire, and is worth 500 gp to a planar scholar or explorer.

19. Observation Room

The floor of this room is 10 feet higher than the floor of area 18.

> A circular pane of crystal ten feet in diameter hangs vertically in this chamber, anchored to the ceiling, walls, and floor by chains. A scene of roiling fire can be glimpsed within the crystal. In front of the crystal, an ornate rod is set into the floor.

The scrying crystal allowed Xonthal to peer into other planes, and is currently set to view the Elemental Plane of Fire. The view is controlled by the rod set into the floor, and moving it shifts the scene. Doing so properly is challenging, however. A character can attempt a DC 20 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check to move the rod. Success indicates that the crystal displays a brief glimpse of a stunning fiery vista near the City of Brass. Failure indicates that the crystal shows only flames.

20. Spellbook Study

> A large, simple desk with several ink pots, quill pens, and a single chair occupy the center of this otherwise empty room.

Xonthal used this room for writing his spellbooks, but those books went with him when he vanished. The ink pots are dried up, but any character trained in Arcana will recognize the specific type of ink used for magical writing. The quill pens are exquisitely fashioned and still usable.

21. Storage Closet

This area is lined with shelves holding hundreds of mundane and exotic reagents and components used by Xonthal in his experiments. Most of the supplies have evaporated, congealed, or decayed over long years, but any spellcasting characters can find enough usable materials here to replenish their material components if necessary.

22. Taraz the Fair

Where the hallway bends to the northeast, it once again takes on the appearance of a stone corridor.

> Light shines out ahead as the corridor opens into a room set with comfortable-looking oversized furnishings. In the center of the room, a red-skinned creature wearing armor of flame, bronze, and volcanic stone sits cross-legged on the floor, studying a chessboard.

The creature is an **efreeti** named Taraz the Fair. The name has nothing to do with his sense of justice or fair play, however, but refers to the light hues of his fiery hair. Xonthal trapped Taraz and was trying to bend or trick the efreeti into service when he disappeared. The trapped creature has had over a century of solitude to rue its fate.

Taraz is held in this area by a thin line of magical salt. Imbued with potent wards by Xonthal, the salt rings the bases of all four walls and extends across the doorway in the joints between paving stones. A character with a passive Perception of 18 or higher notices the salt automatically. Otherwise, a character who looks carefully spots the salt with a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana or Investigation) check.

Taraz greets the adventurers with a fiery smile. He assumes correctly that the characters' arrival so soon after Iskander's appearance is no coincidence, and he uses the missing mage as leverage for negotiating. Taraz's only concern is escape, and he will do anything to win his freedom.

Taraz's conversation with the adventurers covers the following points—many of which are utter lies designed to help him gain the characters' trust:

- Xonthal stripped Taraz's power to grant wishes when he trapped the efreeti here, to prevent him from escaping. He will recover his power only when he is freed. (Both false.)
- Xonthal warded the chamber to prevent the efreeti from harming anyone, so that the wizard and the genie could play chess. Xonthal promised to set Taraz free if he ever won a match. (False on all counts. Xonthal never entered this area, because Taraz can and will harm creatures in his chamber.)
- The characters are perfectly safe in the corridor. (True, as long as Taraz is confined to area 22.)
- Taraz has no desire to harm the characters, and couldn't even if he wanted to, thanks to Xonthal's protective magic. (False. Xonthal's wards confine the

efreeti and its magic to area 22, but they don't protect other creatures in that area.)

- Taraz saw a human (Iskander) come down the corridor ahead of the adventurers. He was carrying a mask that resembled a dragon's face, and he looked badly wounded. (All true.)
- Iskander stumbled and fell off the walkway with the mask into the infinite space beyond, where he undoubtedly is still falling. To rescue him and recover the mask, the characters will need Taraz's help, for the only way to get the mask back from the cosmic well around the walkway is with a wish. The efreeti will bestow this powerful magic on the party in exchange for his freedom. (False on all counts, including the efreeti's ability to bestow a wish.)
- Freeing Taraz is as simple as breaking the line of salt across the entryway. (True.)

In the end, Taraz is desperate to escape the dungeon, and he will promise almost anything—short of continued servitude—to win his freedom. Unless the terms of the deal are ironclad, however, the efreeti will seek a way to weasel out of any bargain once he is free, and to attack the characters out of sheer malice. Because he can fly, Taraz has no fear of falling off the walkway, and he will push characters off it.

23. Time Chamber

Two massive hourglasses occupy this irregularly shaped chamber. Their glass globes are nearly fifteen feet across, with each hourglass rising almost to the ceiling thirty feet overhead. Each is suspended by chains, pulleys, and gears in such a way that it can be turned over to set its sand running.

Slumped against the wall at the far side of the chamber is the cultist who called to you from the balcony of the tower. His dark robes are charred and torn, and a blue dragon mask is clutched in his red-stained hands.

In addition to his mastery of spatial magic, Xonthal dabbled in the manipulation of time. These hourglasses were part of his attempt to control the flow of time, though he abandoned that research. The hourglasses can be rotated by pulling on their chains, but the only effect is a hideous, ear-grating groan. The sand runs, but the hourglasses' magic has long since dissipated.

Casting a *detect magic* spell reveals faint auras of transmutation magic within the sand of each hourglass. An hourglass has AC 5, 25 hit points, and vulnerability to bludgeoning and thunder damage. An hourglass that drops to 0 hit points shatters, spilling its sand onto the floor. Sifting through the pile reveals 1d4 + 2 tiny diamonds amid the grains of sand. Each diamond has an apparent value of 100 gp, and a character in possession of a diamond can use a bonus action to teleport to a space it can see up to 30 feet away, whereupon the diamond disappears.

Iskander has been dead since shortly after he arrived here, slain by the wounds inflicted by the elementals. The (false) *Blue Dragon Mask* is bloody but undamaged.

Exiting Xonthal's Tower

The teleport circle in area 14 can take the characters back to any level of the tower (areas 8 to 13). The teleport circles in those areas can take them back to the sundial, from which they can exit the maze. The characters are not yet in the clear, though.

However much Jorgen Pawl opposed Severin, he remained loyal to the Cult of the Dragon. As soon as he understood that the traitorous Iskander was somehow in league with the adventurers, he used *sending* to call an **adult blue dragon** from its nearby lair, telling it of Iskander's theft of the dragon mask.

When the characters teleport to the sundial, they are greeted by the terrible sound of villagers screaming, a dragon roaring, and lightning bolts tearing houses to splinters. When they reach the edge of the garden, they see the dragon swooping over the village and terrified villagers fleeing in every direction. A character with a passive Perception score of 14 or higher recognizes this dragon as Lennithon, the adult blue dragon the party faced in the *Hoard of the Dragon Queen*.

Like any smart foe, Lennithon tries to fight on its terms, not the enemy's. It stays in the air and uses its breath weapon to maximum effect. If the characters refuse to face it, Lennithon is happy to wreck the village and murder innocents in an effort to bring the heroes into the open.

When the characters face the dragon, read or paraphrase the following.

"The mask, fools! The mask is what I've come for. Give it to me, and I'll leave these crawling ants with their miserable lives. The Queen is returning! Who are you to hope to stop her? Give me the mask!"

This dragon is loyal to the cult, but it has no intention of getting killed before Tiamat's glorious return. It fights until it is reduced to 75 hit points, then flies away to recuperate.

Conclusion

If any of the cultists in the tower are left alive for questioning, or if the characters use *speak with dead* to converse with either Jorgen Pawl or Iskander, they learn nothing new of Severin's plots. The cultists here are motivated primarily by self-interest.

The fact that the *Blue Dragon Mask* is a forgery is quickly discovered by experts at Waterdeep. It becomes a cause for much concern among the members of the council, some of who see it as a sign that the cult might have placed spies within the council. *Speak with dead* used to contact either Iskander or Jorgen Pawl can shed some light on why a false mask might have been supplied to the cultists at Xonthal's Tower, but the false mask might otherwise remain a troubling mystery.

The characters gain a level at the end of this chapter.



Chapter 16: Mission to Thay

Early during his rise to power, Severin enlisted the aid of a group of Thayan exiles in his scheme to return Tiamat to the world. He needs the Red Wizards' expertise in the rituals that will open the portal between Tiamat's home on Avernus and the Well of Dragons. Without the Red Wizards, Severin's plan can't succeed.

The Red Wizards enlisted by Severin are among the many exiled Thayans who have fled the rule of Szass Tam, the lich lord of Thay, and his council of undead zulkirs. So great is the lich lord's wrath that all such exiles are under a sentence of death. The leader of the Red Wizard exiles allied with Severin is Rath Modar, a human illusionist.

Though he has no particular bond with dragons, Rath Modar believes that when Tiamat returns, she will be willing to do favors for those who supported her. In comparison to the feeble members of the Cult of the Dragon, who offer Tiamat devotion but little else, the Red Wizards who opened the gate for her can wield great magical power in her name. All Modar plans to ask in return is the Dragon Queen's aid in overthrowing the hated Szass Tam and restoring Thay to its former glory. Rath Modar and his splinter sect refer to their movement as the Thayan Resurrection.

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The Enemy of My Enemy

At the start of this chapter, the characters are summoned to a secret meeting by someone they trust on the Council of Waterdeep. At the meeting, they learn that the council has been approached by a Red Wizard of Thay named Nyh Ilmichh. Ilmichh has extended an invitation to the council to send an envoy to Thay, to discuss ways in which Thay and the Sword Coast might aid each other during the current crisis. The adventurers have been specifically requested to represent the Sword Coast at this meeting, after which the characters will be returned to Waterdeep unharmed.

The visit to the embassy will last only a few days, but the location of the meeting is not negotiable. The duties of the tharchion (a Thayan governor) the characters will meet precludes her leaving her post. The characters' council contact tells them that Ilmichh has been carefully questioned and subjected to a *zone of truth*, and that all she said has been confirmed.

The characters should understand that without the Red Wizards, Severin's plans are severely compromised. Moreover, it is common knowledge that Szass Tam wants all exiled Red Wizards dead in the worst possible way. Despite reservations from some on the council, most believe that since the factions and Szass

Tam have a common goal, the invitation is worth accepting.

The final decision is up to the characters, of course. No one will compel them to go to Thay. But in the council's estimation, the potential to delay or even undo Severin's plan at a single blow is too much to pass up.

A Dark and Forbidding Land

Thay is an isolated and arid windswept plateau some twenty-five hundred miles east of Waterdeep, its dark skies constantly clouded by volcanic ash. This land is defined by the prevalence of undead within its borders. The supreme leader of Thay is the lich Szass Tam, whose council of advisers—the zulkirs—are powerful liches themselves. Everyone of consequence in Thay is a spellcaster, and necromancers are common there. Undead servants are everywhere, and many of the commanders in Thay's armies are the free-thinking undead soldiers (use the **wight** statistics).

Travelers to this land must be wary of its dark politics—rampant paranoia, a police-state mentality, and necromancers commanding the top of the social order—as much as the threats of the undead and Red Wizards that dwell here. Thay is a place filled with extraordinary danger.

Preparations and Departure

The Harpers keep a close watch on developments in Thay, and they are the characters' best resource for current information on that land. If the characters don't seek advice from the Harpers, Leosin Erlanthar approaches them.

In addition to providing the characters with the information about Thay above, Erlanthar arranges for them to receive sealed warrants indicating that they are acting on behalf of the Lords of Waterdeep and the Lords' Alliance. The party is under the protection of both groups, though such warrants are no guarantee of safety in Thay. Erlanthar advises the characters to address anyone of importance deferentially and by title, never by name only. As well, characters who know any necromantic magic should feel free to show it off.

When the adventurers are ready to depart, Nyh Ilmichh teleports with them to Nethwatch Keep in the Tharch of Lapendrar, just inside the Thayan frontier.

Reception and Audience

Nethwatch Keep is under the command of Tharchion Eseldra Yeth. She has been tharchion of Lapendrar for nearly a century—long enough to have firsthand memories of the past rebellion.

At the fortress, the characters are assigned to luxurious individual rooms, though the doors have no locks. Nyh Ilmichh tells anyone who asks that they are utterly safe in the tharchion's keep. The adventurers see no other living creatures until their audience with Eseldra Yeth. All the servants and staff are undead, but the food and comforts of the fortress are of excellent quality and entirely safe.

Tharchion Eseldra Yeth is a female human **vampire** spellcaster. In the audience chamber where the meeting takes place, she is accompanied by 10 Red Wizards (use **mage** statistics if necessary) and 5 **wights**. Eseldra Yeth reviews the characters' warrants briefly, then delivers a prepared message.

> "We find ourselves bound in common cause against common enemies. Those who sought to destroy us in ages past now seek to destroy you. Our thirst for vengeance is strong, as is your thirst for continued life.
>
> "Our enemy has become your enemy. We know their weaknesses and the ways of destroying them forever, without destroying their usefulness. You have the opportunity to discover their hiding places in your struggle against their cult allies. Together, we can remove them as a threat to us both.
>
> "Our agent, Nyh Ilmichh, will return with you to your city of Waterdeep, there to serve as our liaison to your council. What you learn of the enemy, she will relay to us by means of our own. You need only find the enemy. We will deal with them, as is our custom.
>
> "I am authorized by our eternal master, Szass Tam, to say these things, for I act in his name."

The tharchion waits for the characters' response, and engages them in a discussion of what is known of the plot to release Tiamat and the Red Wizards aiding that plot. Her questions are straightforward and intelligent, and offer little opportunity for sly or clever responses. If a character is less than truthful, Eseldra Yeth probes for more information. She addresses questions to specific characters, never to the group in general. If she detects a lie (see below), she never addresses that character again.

Toward the end of the audience, each character must make a DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check. (To maintain an aura of menace, ask for the check without revealing the DC.) The following modifiers apply to the check:

- Arcane spellcasters gain a +6 bonus.
- Characters who openly worship a deity associated with death gain a +4 bonus.
- Clerics and paladins of good-aligned deities take a –6 penalty.
- Other characters wearing visible signs of worshiping any good-aligned deity take a –4 penalty.
- A character takes a –4 penalty each time he or she addresses Eseldra Yeth without using her title of tharchion.
- Any character who lies to Eseldra Yeth takes a –8 penalty, unless he or she succeeds on a DC 18 Charisma (Deception) check for each lie. (Don't reveal the DC of this check.)

Feel free to introduce additional modifiers based on specific arguments the characters present and their overall behavior. Sincere (or at least convincing) praise for necromancy and for Thay's twisted social order might

earn a +2 or +4 bonus. Insincere praise, obvious hollow flattery, or outright hostility should invoke a penalty.

Make note of which characters succeed at the saving throw and which fail. The outcome determines what happens to them that night.

At the end of the audience, the characters are dismissed. Before being returned to their rooms and fed a sumptuous evening meal, Nyh Ilmichh tells them they will meet again in the morning.

Dreams and Nightmares

That night, each of the adventurers are targeted by a customized version of the *dream* spell, cast and crafted by Red Wizard illusionists. Each character is confronted in a vision by a pale Red Wizard who says, "We have further questions for you." Elves and other creatures that do not sleep are not subject to this effect.

Those subjected to the *dream* effect must make a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw with disadvantage. On a successful save, a character remembers vague, disturbing dreams in the morning, but suffers no other effects.

Each character who fails the saving throw experiences a similar nightmare. He or she is paralyzed and magically bound within a mystic cauldron among animated chains and tentacles. A dozen Red Wizards observe placidly while three more Red Wizards subject the helpless character to agonizing tortures. The character is questioned about why the party came to Thay, about Severin's plots, about Rath Modar, about his or her own past and the lives of the other adventurers, about the party's attitude toward Szass Tam, and anything else you care to ask.

Each answer the character gives must be accompanied by a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check if the character answers truthfully, or a DC 15 Charisma (Deception) check if the response is even partially false. A character who succeeded on the Charisma (Persuasion) check made during the audience has advantage on each of these checks. On each failed check, a character suffers excruciating pain as a Red Wizard shouts out a tally of the character's failed answers. Refusing to answer is treated the same as failing the check.

A character who struggles against the bonds or who tries to cast a spell or use some other ability not hindered by physical restraint is struck by pain so severe that he or she is briefly incapacitated. That character's next Charisma check made within the dream takes a –2 penalty.

The nightmare ends when a character answers five questions successfully or eight questions in total. If the last question was answered successfully, the character sleeps fitfully the rest of the night. If the last question was answered unsuccessfully, the character wakes up screaming and drenched in sweat. Blood stains the bed sheets, though the character has no visible wounds. The character also takes 10 (3d6) psychic damage and does not gain the benefit of a long rest from the night's sleep.

In the morning, any character who underwent this questioning has a deathly pallor and dark, hollow-looking eyes. The character's appearance returns to normal when he or she finishes a long rest.

Outcome

In the morning, after another delicious meal, the characters are ushered back to the audience chamber. Eseldra Yeth is not there. Instead, they're greeted by Nyh Ilmichh and one of the Red Wizards present at the audience the previous day. Only Nyh Ilmichh speaks.

What she says is determined by the number of characters who answered five questions successfully during the dream. If that number accounts for more than half the non-elven party (that is, elves don't count toward the party total, because they cannot be affected by the Red Wizards' *dream* spell), Nyh Ilmichh informs the characters that the Red Wizards have agreed to aid the factions of the Sword Coast, and that she will accompany them as Thay's ambassador to the council. When the characters have gathered their belongings, the Red Wizard teleports with them back to Waterdeep.

If the tally is half the number of non-elven characters in the party or fewer, Nyh Ilmichh states that Tharchion Yeth thanks them for their information, but that Thay's attention is commanded by matters within its own borders and the Red Wizards cannot help. Before the characters can react, the other Red Wizard waves his hand and a previously invisible magic circle on the floor around the characters flares to life. A moment later, the adventurers are standing in an abandoned and ruined farmhouse a mile north of Waterdeep. The barely visible outline of a Thayan teleportation circle fades around them and their neatly packed belongings.

Conclusion

If the mission to Thay was a success, it benefits the factions during chapter 17. Additionally, hidden in a backpack or pocket, each character finds a human finger bone tied to a loop of dried gut. Each bone acts as a *scroll of protection* (undead) that is activated and spent by snapping it in half.

If you choose, the characters gain a level at the end of this chapter.





Chapter 17: Tiamat's Return

Tyranny of Dragons reaches its conclusion at the Well of Dragons, where dragons, giants, spellcasters, and armies clash spectacularly around the risen Temple of Tiamat. As they do, the adventurers take on the crucial assignment of infiltrating the temple and making a final stand against the servants of the Dragon Queen and their dark goddess.

The climactic finale of *The Rise of Tiamat* should be played only after all the other episodes of the adventure are complete and the characters have reached 14th or 15th level. In the episodes leading up to this one, both the Harpers and the Zhentarim have spies among the Cult of the Dragon. As such, both organizations can report that the cult's preparations are nearing completion. That same information could also come from prisoners questioned directly by the characters during any of the incidents in chapter 13.

However it happens, from the moment this episode kicks into action, events escalate rapidly. There is no turning back from that point onward, and characters who hesitate risk losing everything.

The Final Battle

The battle between the factions of the Sword Coast and the Cult of the Dragon plays out as a huge clash between armies and monstrous forces. The manner in which that battle plays out depends on the outcome of the "Council of Waterdeep" episode, and on how successful the heroes have been bringing the various factions together. See "Enemies and Allies," later in this section, for more information.

Before or during the final battle, the adventurers have a chance to reconnoiter the Well of Dragons and undertake a stealthy infiltration of the cult's redoubt and the Temple of Tiamat.

The Draakhorn

Since it began sounding, the *Draakhorn's* mournful tones have been an ever-present reminder of the threat rising in the Sword Coast. When Severin's plan swings into its final stage, the *Draakhorn's* call shifts from being barely perceptible to a clear and distant sound that gives a sense of impending doom to all who hear it.

See area 8 in "The Well of Dragons" for more information on the *Draakhorn*.

Severin's Triumph

Severin's plan to bring Tiamat back to the world has been set up in five distinct stages:

- Assemble a treasure hoard worthy of Tiamat.

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- Gather an army of dragons and other evil creatures to defend the Well of Dragons against interference.
- Capture hundreds of prisoners whose souls will power the magic that draws Tiamat to Faerûn.
- Perform the ritual that raises Tiamat's Temple in the caldera of the Well of Dragons.
- Sacrifice the prisoners while performing the ritual that guides Tiamat from the Nine Hells to the world.

The first three stages of Severin's plan are complete. Stage 4 will be completed by the time the characters arrive at the Well of Dragons. Stage 5 begins soon after the heroes and their factional allies arrive, and becomes the focal point of this final battle against the cult.

Stopping Severin

The heroes' goal is to thwart Severin's plans and prevent Tiamat from passing from the Nine Hells into Faerûn. The characters' accomplishments up to this point have frustrated Severin and slowed his plans. But the only thing that can truly stop him now is ending the ritual performed by the cult's Red Wizard allies inside the Temple of Tiamat.

Approaching the Well

As the characters and the forces commanded by the factions of the Council of Waterdeep approach the Well of Dragons, they should have no doubt that they are moving deep into enemy territory. The landscape for a hundred miles in all directions is a grim harbinger of what Tiamat's rule would mean for the world.

> Little remains in the territory surrounding the Well of Dragons, and the constant drone of the *Draakhorn* has forced the local animals to flee or driven them mad. A handful of villages in the area are bloodstained ghost towns, and every farmstead is a charred ruin. The few survivors you encounter are headed in the opposite direction, all of them watching the sky for the telltale shape of a dragon on the wing.

Chromatic dragons patrol the area by day and night. You can call for DC 12 Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Survival) checks to determine whether the characters find shelter or camouflage themselves in time to avoid a passing dragon. Alternatively, simply ask what precautions the characters are taking against being spotted and judge for yourself whether that will keep them safe. Sticking to wooded areas, following ravines, spending as little time as possible on open ground, and even dressing as cultists are all useful ploys.

Flying to the Well of Dragons is problematic. Whether they're on metallic dragons or flying under their own power, the characters will be attacked by chromatic dragons long before they reach their destination.

The Well of Dragons

The Well of Dragons is the caldera of an extinct volcano at the northern end of the Sunset Mountains. For reasons no mortal understands, many dragons reaching the end of their lives come to the Well of Dragons to die, and have been doing so for millennia.

> The caldera of a long-dead volcano rises from an ashen plane ahead. Along the cinder cone's steeply sloped sides, thousands of creatures mill about or are lining up into ordered infantry ranks. In the air above, dozens of chromatic dragons wheel and shriek like a flock of immense crows, awaiting the bloodshed of the battle to come.

The Cult of the Dragon discovered the Well of Dragons long ago. Lava tubes snaking beneath the now-dormant volcano formed natural corridors connecting caverns that the cult enlarged for their own use. Within the central caldera, they raised a ritual space for creating dracoliches from dragons drawn to the site knowing they would soon die. Under Severin's leadership, the caldera and the catacombs beneath it have been repurposed as the site where Tiamat's vast temple will be raised and the Dragon Queen's new reign begun. The floor of the caldera is blanketed with the bones of dragons, mounded into immense, tangled heaps.

The caldera of the Well of Dragons is roughly oval-shaped, with high, steep walls. The dragons flying above it are not scouting for infiltrators, thankfully, but are quarreling and posturing for each other before the battle.

In the past, the number of cultists at the Well of Dragons seldom exceeded one hundred. Now, with ultimate victory near at hand, their numbers have swelled. Only cultists live and work in the warrens beneath the caldera. The thousands of mercenaries, giants, devils, and monsters serving the cult are camped chiefly along the north and east slopes.

The Temple of Tiamat

The map of the caldera shows the outline of where the Temple of Tiamat will appear when it is raised by the Red Wizards' magic. That job will be finished by the time the characters and their allies arrive to do battle with the cult.

> A mind-numbing structure has pushed up from beneath the tangled bones to tower above the blasted volcano. Partly volcanic ash fused with dragon bones and partly stone imbued with the dark magic of the Nine Hells, the Temple of Tiamat is all chaotic angles and jutting buttresses. Within that snarl of cornices and soaring angulation, you make out five asymmetric towers topped by twisted steeples.



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Lava Tubes and Warrens

Lava tubes form natural pathways beneath the caldera of the extinct volcano. Over the decades since the Cult of the Dragon claimed the Well of Dragons, cultists enlarged the natural caverns connected by the lava tubes and excavated new ones.

Most of the lava tube entrances are marked by visible paths along the slopes of the volcano. Entrance 2A sees little use, so the characters are likely to overlook it without a careful search. Entrance 3 is never used; the cult believes that this tunnel is still blocked after a collapse sixty years before.

General Features

Corridors. The lava tubes range from 15 to 25 feet in diameter. They are large enough for dracoliches and dragons to move through easily.

Light. The lava tube corridors are dimly lit by lamps or torches hung on the walls at wide intervals. Chambers within the Well of Dragons are brightly lit by lamps unless otherwise noted.

Sound. The sound of the *Draakhorn* constantly moans throughout the Well of Dragons, originating from area 8. Combined with the cult's activity in and above the caverns, it creates a constant thrum of background noise transmitted through the stone. Sounds of combat go unnoticed if a fight is over in 3 rounds or fewer, or if the combat is more than 200 feet away from creatures that might hear it. Especially loud noises, such as a *thunderwave* spell, are easily heard.

Within the Well of Dragons

As the time for the ritual draws near, the Well of Dragons is crawling with cultists and their allies. Whether using stealth or disguising themselves as cultists, the characters can easily survey the entrances to the lava tubes or see the risen temple from the edge of the caldera. However, once the adventurers enter the Well of Dragons, disguises prove ineffective. The cultists working in and patrolling the caverns are on high alert, and use a complex system of checks and passwords as proof against spies and enemy agents.

The advanced state of the ritual means that all cultists have been ordered to patrol or prepare for battle. If the characters tarry too long in one place or wander around the Well of Dragons without purpose, add additional guard patrols based on existing encounters.

1A, 1B, 1C. North Entrances

Entrance 1A sees the heaviest use of all the tunnel entrances along the north side of the caldera. All the treasure brought to the Well of Dragons passes through it on the way to area 6 or area 7. Each of these entrances is guarded by 3 **dragonwings**, 3 **dragonclaws**, and 2 **guard drakes** (see appendix D for these creatures' statistics).

Entrances 1B and 1C are within sight of each other, but 1A is hidden from the other two by the curve of the mountainside.

2A, 2B, 2C. East Entrances

Of the tunnel entrances on the east side of the caldera, only 2C is heavily used. All the prisoners held in the warrens are brought through that tunnel on their way to areas 16, 17, or 18. Entrance 2A is seldom used. Entrance 2B is used by the cultists who live in areas 12 and 13, but by no one else.

Entrances 2A and 2B are guarded by 1 **dragonwing** and 3 **dragonclaws** each. Entrance 2C is guarded by 1 **dragonfang**, 3 **dragonwings**, 5 **dragonclaws**, and 3 **guard drakes**. See appendix D for these creatures' statistics.

3. Forgotten Entrance

No cultist has used this entrance since the tunnel collapsed at the three-way intersection sixty years ago, rendering the passageway useless. Recently, an umber hulk burrowed by accident into these tunnels, reopening the passage in all three directions. As a result, this tunnel offers an unguarded entrance into the caldera and the warrens.

A character who scouts the mountain before charging in notices this entrance with a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception) check. Any exploration of the entrance reveals that it is used by bats but shows no sign of cult activity.

A thin wall of rubble still standing to the east of the three-way intersection makes the cultists believe the passage remains completely blocked. However, the wall can be carefully taken down to allow movement in that direction. Characters at the three-way intersection can feel air moving along the northern part of the tunnel, suggesting open space beyond.

4. Naergoth Bladelord

Before Severin assumed control over the Cult of the Dragon, the Well of Dragons was used to transform dying dragons into dracoliches. **Naergoth Bladelord** (see appendix D for statistics) is a wight who commanded this site for centuries in the name of the Cult of the Dragon. After devoting many lifetimes of selfless service to the cult, he was shunted aside in favor of the new order. Though his loyalty remains unshakable, Naergoth fears that Severin will succeed in his plans, and that Tiamat will destroy the cult that freed her.

As a wight, Naergoth has little use for quarters, but the presence of objects that belonged to him in life make this a pleasing spot for him. The chamber looks like the home of a noble knight that was abandoned centuries ago, its contents now covered in dust and hung with cobwebs and pathos.

Intruders skulking through the warrens can run into Naergoth anywhere. Use him as a roleplaying encounter or add him to a battle that is going well for the party at a time of your choosing.

5. Unused Chamber

Whatever purpose this empty chamber served during the years of the dracoliches is long forgotten.



Naergoth Bladelord

6. Main Treasure Chamber

The well-traveled entrance to this chamber is guarded by 1 **dragonfang** (see appendix D for statistics) who commands 2 **flesh golems**.

The treasure that the cult has stolen from across the Sword Coast to create a hoard for the Dragon Queen is stockpiled in this chamber, creating a sight beyond even the greediest character's dreams.

> You see gold—mountains of it. And jewels ... and pearls ... silver plate and gilded mirrors ... jeweled swords and the armor of kings ... caskets and boxes and barrels filled to overflowing with the treasure of the Sword Coast, packed into a cave the size of a cathedral and stacked to the height of a giant! Pathways wind through a glittering mass whose reflected light dazzles your eyes, like a million twinkling stars close enough to touch.

Prowling through the narrow paths between the heaped treasures are 4 **guard drakes** (see appendix D for statistics). They are used to the vaults being unoccupied (rank-and-file cultists are not allowed here), and attack intruders or move to join fighting at the entrance at once.

Treasure

This cavern holds treasure beyond counting. If the characters seek a particular item and have hours to spend searching, they can probably find it here. A *detect magic* spell is blocked by the metal of the coins, so only items on the surface can be easily found. Place whatever common or uncommon magic items you wish on the surface, but finding something rare should take a long and noisy search.

7. Secondary Treasure Chamber

Art objects, valuable books, fine linen, crystalware, and especially fragile magic items are stored here less haphazardly than in area 6, piled carefully on shelves and tables.

8. The Draakhorn

As the characters advance up the lava tube toward this chamber, the tones of the *Draakhorn* become noticeably louder. Within 50 feet of the entrance to area 8, the air begins to shimmer from the sound. Any character within 20 feet of the doorway must succeed on a DC 12 Strength check to continue pushing against the pressure of the sound. A failure indicates the character can advance no farther toward area 8.

For any character entering area 8, the sound fades to silence—because any creature that enters the chamber is temporarily deafened and must make a DC 12 Constitution saving throw. Success indicates the deafness ends 2 minutes after the *Draakhorn* ceases to sound. Failure indicates the character remains deafened for 1 hour after the *Draakhorn* ceases to sound.

> After the din of the tunnel, this chamber seems preternaturally silent—until you realize you are completely deafened in the presence of the fearsome *Draakhorn*. Carved from the massive horn of an ancient red dragon, it hangs suspended by chains from the ceiling of this chamber, blasted with fire to a dark ebony hue and bound by thick bands of bronze. Draconic runes etched into its surface glow with a purple eldritch fire.

An **air elemental** sounds the horn with its endless breath, guarded by a **stone golem**. If the characters interfere with the horn or the air elemental, the golem and the elemental attack.

The *Draakhorn* hangs in the northern half of the room and is pointed toward the southwest corner. While the horn is sounding, a creature must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw the first time on a turn the creature enters a 150-foot cone in front of the horn or starts its turn there. On a failed save, the creature takes 27 (6d8) thunder damage and is knocked prone. On a successful save, the creature takes half as much damage and isn't knocked prone. The horn can't be turned or aimed at a specific target.

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If the horn's sound ceases for more than 1 minute, 1 **dragonsoul**, 1 **dragonfang**, and 4 **dragonwings** arrive to investigate. See appendix D for these cultists' statistics.

Draakhorn

The *Draakhorn* was once the horn of Tiamat's ancient red dragon consort, Ephelomon, which she gave to the dragons to help them in their war against the giants. The *Draakhorn* is a signaling device, and it is so large that it requires two Medium creatures (or one Large or bigger creature) to hold it while a third creature sounds it, making the earth resonate to its call.

The low, moaning drone of the *Draakhorn* discomfits normal animals within a few miles, and it alerts all dragons within two thousand miles to rise and be wary, for great danger is at hand. Coded blasts were once used to signal specific messages.

Those with knowledge of the *Draakhorn's* history know that it was first built to signal danger to chromatic dragons—a purpose the Cult of the Dragon has corrupted to call chromatic dragons to the Well of Dragons from across the North.

9. Planning Room

In this currently empty chamber, Severin meets with his inner circle and other cult leaders to make plans and issue orders. A long table is flanked by several benches and chairs, with a few small writing tables along the walls for scribes who keep notes.

10. Leaders' Quarters

This well-appointed dormitory houses the most important Wearers of Purple staying at the Well of Dragons. Rows of beds line the north and east walls, with locker-style wardrobes holding mundane gear along the west wall. As the activity at the Well of Dragons reaches its peak, this chamber is empty.

11. Severin's Quarters

This chamber is the personal quarters of Severin, and contains a bed, a trunk holding mundane personal belongings, a wardrobe for robes and regalia, a large writing desk, and a wood-and-iron display stand for the dragon masks. The stand's construction allows for the masks to be displayed separately or combined into the single *Mask of the Dragon Queen*. The combined mask is presently with Severin.

12, 13. High-Ranking Cultists' Chambers

Cultists of dragonsoul and dragonfang rank stationed inside the warrens use these quarters. The chambers are arranged like barracks, with cots for sleeping and trunks for storing personal belongings. With so many strangers presently in and around the Well of Dragons, the cultists who use these chambers have arranged for 4 **guard drakes** (see appendix D for statistics) to watch the area.

14. Prisoners' Effects

Personal items taken from prisoners are tossed into this chamber. Nothing of value can be found among the odds and ends, but daggers, darts, and shortswords here can be used to equip prisoners still capable of fighting.

15. Low-Ranking Cultists' Chamber

The cultists who stand guard over the prisoners in areas 16 to 18 sleep here. The chamber contains only straw mattresses spread on the floor, a few tables made of planks laid over barrels, and roughly made benches. When the characters enter, the room contains 3 **dragonwings** and 9 **dragonclaws** eating a quick meal before the battle. See appendix D for these cultists' statistics.

16, 17, 18. Prisoner Pens

Prisoners captured by the cult have been held in these dark, filthy chambers pending the day of the ritual and their eventual sacrifice. Two groups of guards patrol these areas while the prisoners are here, each consisting of 1 **dragonwing**, 2 **dragonclaws**, and 1 **guard drake**. See appendix D for these creatures' statistics.

If the characters pass this way while the sacrifices are taking place, area 16 is empty except for a dozen corpses of prisoners who died of starvation. However, a half-starved fifteen-year-old human male named Stirleng is hiding amid the corpses. Stirleng can tell the characters that cultists ushered prisoners toward the caldera a few hours ago, but he knows little else.

With area 16 empty, a prisoner escort consisting of 5 **dragonclaws** has begun to move prisoners from area 17 up to the temple. Additionally, a **dragonfang**, 5 **dragonclaws**, and 2 **guard drakes** working nearby arrive within 2 rounds if a disturbance breaks out. (See appendix D for these creatures' statistics.) The prisoners aren't shackled together, but most of them are weak from starvation. Ten human **commoners** can fight alongside the characters if they acquire weapons. The characters are free to make use of these allies any way they see fit. If sent into combat, they quickly perish.

19. Drake Pens

The drakes that patrol the lava tunnels are kenneled in this chamber. When the characters investigate this chamber, 4 **guard drakes** (see appendix D for statistics) are present, fighting over hunks of meat that are best left unidentified. Gnawed humanoid bones are scattered throughout the room, along with belt buckles, tattered boots, and scraps of blood-soaked clothing.

20, 21. Red Wizards' Quarters

The Red Wizards whose magic raises the Temple of Tiamat in the caldera and who will summon the Dragon Queen into the world are housed in these two caverns. Both areas are luxuriously furnished, but the Red Wizards keep their belongings packed in trunks and ready to teleport away at a moment's notice. The larger area 20 is the residence of Rath Modar. All the Red Wizards are presently in the Temple of Tiamat.



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22. Sinkhole

This portion of the caldera collapsed into an underground cavity ages ago to form a large sinkhole. The only current member of the Cult of the Dragon who is aware that a branch of a lava tunnel exits into this sinkhole is the wight Naergoth Bladelord (area 4), and he believes the tunnel is still blocked.

The sinkhole is 30 feet deep. The sides are steep but composed of rough volcanic rock that's easy to climb. Dragon bones cover the bottom of the pit to a depth of 5 feet, making the floor of the pit difficult terrain. Cultists never come to the sinkhole; the only creatures that might spot infiltrators in this area are flying dragons.

23. Northern Exits

The dragon bones that blanket the caldera have been pushed away from these exits to create a bleak open plaza connecting both tunnel exits to the entrance to the temple. This space extends 250 feet from east to west and 100 feet north from the temple gate, and is the scene of horrendous slaughter during the sacrifice ritual. Prisoners are ushered from the temple into the plaza, where five waiting dragons (one of each color of any age category) tear into them with teeth and claws.

Though these exits are not normally guarded, during the prisoner sacrifice, the each tunnel is blocked by 2 **barbed devils** and 4 **guard drakes** (see appendix D for statistics). The devils' attention is focused toward the plaza, however, not down the tunnels or on what the guard drakes do. The guard drakes might notice approaching characters before the devils do, but they attack only if the fiends give the order. Therefore, the party might get the drop on these guards.

For characters who move beyond the cleared plaza, or who approach this area from the sinkhole, the piles of bones are difficult terrain.

24. Temple Exit

The main lava tunnel of the southern warrens exits inside the black chapel (area 5) of Tiamat's temple. Prisoners intended for sacrifice are brought up to the black chapel and marched to the temple entrance, and forced out into the plaza for the waiting dragons to feast on. This exit is unguarded.

Tiamat's Temple

The temple in the caldera of the Well of Dragons is the same temple that marks the center of Tiamat's realm on Avernus. The Red Wizards' ritual has brought it here to act as a beachhead and beacon for the Dragon Queen, melding it into the caldera floor in the process. The main gate into area 1 (the blue chapel) is the only apparent entrance, but a lava tube corridor from the cult's subterranean warrens leads into area 5 (the black chapel).

When the ritual begins, the temple is the focus of the cult's activity, with Severin's Red Wizard allies (use **mage** statistics) at the center of the action. The souls of sacrifices provide the magical power to open a pathway between the Nine Hells and the Material Plane. The Red Wizards will then guide Tiamat as she claws her way into the mortal realm.

Temple Layout

The interior of the temple is a single open expanse. Though divided into distinct areas, the cathedral-like space has no interior walls or upper floors. Chapels are devoted to the five aspects of Tiamat, all surrounding a central apse. The apse and all five chapels rise in separate spires, culminating in the sanctuary atop the central spire. Level 2 is a zone 50 feet above ground level; level 3 is a zone 100 feet above ground level, both of which can be reached only by flying.

> Once your eyes adjust to the stunning chaos of Tiamat's Temple, you see that its interior is a single, cathedral-like space that towers overhead. Five distinct vaults branch off the central gallery. Though the overwhelming color of the place is a lifeless, ashen gray, each of the side vaults shimmers dimly blue, green, red, white, or black—the hues of evil dragons and their world-consuming queen.
>
> Red Wizards stand in each of the five vaults, chanting and channeling magical force into the central apse. There, a kaleidoscopic whorl of arcane energy rises above the blackened floor, stretching up into the twisting recesses of the temple's central spire.

The numbered areas on the map are identified in the table below, which also identifies key NPCs during the ritual that will bring Tiamat to the Well of Dragons.

Key to Tiamat's Temple

#	Name	Occupant and Activity During Ritual
1	Entrance/blue chapel	Red Wizard performing ritual
2	Least apse	
3	White chapel	Red Wizard performing ritual
4	Green chapel	Red Wizard performing ritual
5	Black chapel	Red Wizard performing ritual; also the exit from the warrens
6	Red chapel	Rath Modar performing ritual
7	Great apse	Portal through which Tiamat emerges from Avernus
8	Blue spire	Red Wizard (flying) performing ritual
9	White spire	Red Wizard (flying) performing ritual
10	Green spire	Red Wizard (flying) performing ritual
11	Black spire	Red Wizard (flying) performing ritual
12	Red spire	Red Wizard (flying) performing ritual
13	Sanctuary	Severin (levitating) wearing the *Mask of the Dragon Queen*

Any free wyrmspeakers the characters have previously interacted with can be present in their respective chapels in the temple if you wish, but their presence isn't required. Wyrmspeakers not here are outside leading the Well of Dragons' defense.

Performing the Ritual

To successfully bring Tiamat from the Nine Hells into the world, the Red Wizards must successfully focus the summoning ritual for 10 rounds after the adventurers enter the Temple of Tiamat. Each round, at least five Red Wizards must use an action to perform the ritual in order for it to be successfully focused for that round, helping guide Tiamat across the planes.

At the end of the Red Wizards' turn, if fewer than five Red Wizards used an action to perform the ritual, the portal floating in the great apse (area 7) wavers and no progress in the ritual is made. If fewer than five Red Wizards perform the ritual for 2 rounds in succession, the portal collapses and the count of successfully focused rounds is reset to 0.

The *Mask of the Dragon Queen* is essential to the ritual, and Severin cannot leave the sanctuary. His *levitate* spell will last the duration of the ritual, and it keeps him floating in the sanctuary even if he is incapacitated or killed. Severin can attack and defend himself while he wears the *Mask of the Dragon Queen*. He need not even be alive for the ritual to continue, as long as his body wears the mask and remains in the sanctuary.

Enemies and Allies

By consulting the scorecard filled out during the four sessions of the Council of Waterdeep (see appendix B), you can assess the strength of the forces brought to bear against the Cult of the Dragon. The alliances forged by the characters during the adventure are essential to stopping the cult.

The Final Battle Assets table lists the creatures and forces fighting on both sides. "Factional Assets" covers the main possibilities for alliances created during the adventure, but you can modify the list as needed depending on events in your campaign.

Assigning Assets

When you've noted which assets are fighting against the cult, it's time to decide how those forces of good attack. The characters are key figures in the allied force marching on the Well of Dragons, and their voices carry tremendous weight. As such, make sure the players know they have a key role to play in planning the battle.

The simplest approach is a one-to-one matchup, with specific good assets canceling out cult assets. Give the players free reign on matching assets, but weigh in on whether a specific plan has merit if you feel the need. For example, the players might decide that assassins provided by the Zhentarim should counter the sacrificial prisoners by infiltrating the cult complex and escorting those prisoners to freedom. In that case, you might remind the players that the Black Network's expert killers can be put to better use against the cult leaders of Severin's inner circle, while Harper agents or forces of the Lords' Alliance help in the tunnels beneath the caldera.

Certain matchups are obvious. The metallic dragons are instinctive foes of the chromatic dragons, and those two forces can be expected to keep each other occupied during the battle. More importantly, the metallic dragons will keep the chromatic dragons from interfering with the adventurers' plans.

Final Battle Assets

Cult Assets	Factional Assets
Severin	Order of the Gauntlet
Rath Modar	Emerald Enclave
Cult leaders*	Zhentarim assassins
Cultist troops	Harper agents
Chromatic dragons	Metallic dragons
Devils	Devils
Giants	Giants
Evil mercenaries	Lords' Alliance army
Temple of Tiamat	Skyreach Castle**
Red Wizards	Arcane Brotherhood
Mask of the Dragon Queen	

*Including any free wyrmspeakers the adventurers have interacted with.

**If it survived the previous adventure and remains in control of the player characters or was returned to the giants.

Cult Assets

Severin. The head of the cult remains in the temple sanctuary (area 13), wearing the *Mask of the Dragon Queen* while the Red Wizards weave their magic. He can fight defensively or offensively as needed, and rank-and-file cultists fight to the death as long as they know Severin is alive. See appendix D for Severin's statistics.

Rath Modar. Rath Modar leads the ritual of guidance, but any Red Wizard can take on that role. When the temple is attacked, he hands over his part in the ritual and leads the attack against the adventurers. See appendix D for Rath Modar's statistics.

Cult Leaders. Wearers of Purple are venerated leaders among the cultists, and most of them are powerful combatants in their own right.

Cultist Troops. The Cult of the Dragon has thousands of combatants at the Well of Dragons, all armed and dedicated to the glory of the Dragon Queen.

Chromatic Dragons. The exact number of chromatic dragons present at the Well of Dragons is up to you, and could range from a few dozen to a hundred or more.

Devils. Devils fighting for the cult have been summoned by the Red Wizards, and serve fiendish masters dedicated to seeing Tiamat leave Avernus.

Giants. The few giants who fight for the cult believe that Tiamat's return is inevitable, but they are sullen and uncooperative. They fight when they see easy victory but withdraw when they sense defeat.

Evil Mercenaries. Mercenary companies form the backbone of the cult's army. Better trained than the cultists, these mercenaries are capable of standing against the best warriors in Faerûn.

Temple of Tiamat. The temple is necessary as the site of the ritual. Damaging it can help weaken Tiamat if the ritual is successful.

Red Wizards. Red Wizards not performing the ritual are embedded with mercenary units and troops of armed cultists to provide extra firepower.

Mask of the Dragon Queen. The magic of the mask is central to the ritual's success. If it is claimed or destroyed, the ritual fails, but Severin uses all the power of the mask to keep it in his possession.

Factional Assets

Order of the Gauntlet. Troops of the Order of the Gauntlet are among the toughest, most steadfast soldiers on the Sword Coast. Besides serving in their own units, their leadership bolsters other troops.

Emerald Enclave. Druids and rangers of the Emerald Enclave answer the call to arms by bringing their treant and griffon allies from the forests and mountains of the Sword Coast.

Zhentarim Assassins. These silent killers stalk and kill enemy leaders and messengers. Though only a handful of Zhentarim assassins have joined the fight, they can paralyze an enemy unit at a decisive moment or prevent a crucial order from reaching its destination.

Harper Agents. Intercepting intelligence during battle is a Harper specialty, and Harper agents can provide key information about cult plans and deployments. As well, Harper archers, infantry, and spellcasters can have an enormous impact on the battle.

Metallic Dragons. The metallic dragons will be outnumbered by their chromatic cousins. However, they cooperate with allies better than the evil dragons do, giving them a greater impact on the battlefield.

Devils. Certain powerful devils don't want to see Tiamat unleashed on Faerûn, knowing that their own power will be curtailed in a world in which humanoids no longer rule. Agents of the Nine Hells are ferocious fighters, but their presence in the battle makes many other soldiers uneasy.

Giants. If the factions of Waterdeep secured the allegiance of giants, they delight in squaring off against the chromatic dragons. Trouble might arise between giants and metallic dragons, however, if the two contingents aren't given assignments of equal importance and kept apart.

Lords' Alliance Army. The massed forces of the separate members of the Lord's Alliance are second only to the Order of the Gauntlet in fighting power, and far more numerous. These form the backbone of the attacking force.

Skyreach Castle. If it's available, the flying castle could prove a great boon in the battle. Skyreach will be assaulted by chromatic dragons the moment it appears above the Well of Dragons, drawing those powerful combatants away from defending the caldera.

Arcane Brotherhood. Members of the Arcane Brotherhood are a match for the Red Wizards fighting for the cult. However, the spellcasters of the Arcane Brotherhood don't take orders from anyone except other powerful spellcasters—which almost certainly means another member of the Arcane Brotherhood.

Thwarting the Dragon Queen

The process of bringing back Tiamat involves four key components—the treasure amassed by the cult, the *Mask of the Dragon Queen*, the sacrifice of prisoners, and the ritual that is the culmination of all Severin's mad plans. The crashing or capture of Skyreach Castle has already set back the cult in its goal of collecting suitable treasure for the Dragon Queen, making the other three stages of the process that much more important.

The mask, the sacrifices, and the ritual can all be targeted by the characters. Doing so effectively might actually end the ritual and prevent the appearance of Tiamat. Even if the heroes cannot manage to end the threat before it begins, however, disrupting any part of the ritual process weakens the Dragon Queen.

Facing Tiamat

When the forces of good have been deployed and the battle begun, the characters will take on the most important goal of assaulting the Temple of Tiamat. Making their way through the caverns beneath the caldera provides a number of options for reaching the temple.

Whether the characters fight Tiamat directly or prevent the summoning ritual from being completed depends on their actions during the final battle. But when the characters see Tiamat's heads forcing their way through the Red Wizards' portal, they will understand that this is no mere monster they face. As should be clear from her statistics in appendix D, **Tiamat** is a god. If she manifests through the portal at full strength, she can demolish multiple 15th-level parties with ease. A huge battle against Tiamat while her temple collapses to ash and bone is a memorable way to wrap up a campaign—but the characters might not survive as anything more than memories.

During the battle in the temple, read the following text aloud after 10 rounds of the summoning ritual have been successfully focused by five or more Red Wizards.

> The maelstrom filling the central apse of the temple suddenly splits open with a crack of thunder. The gargantuan heads of five dragons begin to tear and gnash their way out of the rune-lined pit of fire that forms there. Tiamat the Dragon Queen is about to burst bodily from her confinement in the Nine Hells and enter the world.

Tiamat's Appearance

Tiamat's heads enter the battle starting on the second round after the ritual is completed, in the following order: white, black, green, blue, and red. Her red head announces the Dragon Queen's full appearance in the sixth round after the ritual is completed. Until that round, Tiamat can make use only of her bite attacks and breath weapons. This gives the characters a last chance to try to weaken the Dragon Queen before she appears.

Once Tiamat appears in full, she spends as many rounds as necessary to laughingly devour her hapless servants five at a time—Rath Modar, any remaining Red

Wizards, then Severin (or his corpse, as long as it is wearing the *Mask of the Dragon Queen*). The following round, she turns her wrath on the adventurers.

Weakening the Dragon Queen

The actions of the heroes in and prior to this final battle can reduce Tiamat's power before she appears. Make a note if any of the following events occurs:

- The count of rounds over which the ritual is successfully focused is reset to 0 because the ritual is interrupted for two successive rounds.
- The *Mask of the Dragon Queen* is destroyed, or is removed from Severin's body and taken from the temple sanctuary (area 13).
- The characters hold any of the dragon masks, or can otherwise prevent one or more masks from being used in the ritual. (The *Black Dragon Mask* might have been claimed in the previous adventure.)
- Severe damage is inflicted to the Temple of Tiamat, as from an *earthquake* spell.
- The sacrifice of prisoners in front of the temple is stopped. This might have been previously accomplished by attacking the dragons or by cutting off the flow of prisoners to the area.

When any of the previous events occur, the following penalties are applied to Tiamat, in this order:

- Tiamat's attack and breath weapon damage is reduced by 15, and her hit point maximum is reduced by 75.
- Tiamat loses her Regeneration trait, her hit point maximum is reduced by 75, and her immunity to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons becomes resistance instead.
- Tiamat loses Limited Spell Immunity, and her hit point maximum is reduced by 75.
- Tiamat takes a –5 penalty to attack rolls, saving throw DCs, and to her AC, and her hit point maximum is reduced by 75.
- Tiamat can take only three legendary actions, and her hit point maximum is reduced by 75.

If all the above penalties are successfully applied, Tiamat is effectively reduced to a challenge rating 21 foe—but that's still a deadly fight for four 15th-level characters. Without all five reductions, the characters stand little chance of surviving a battle against the Dragon Queen, much less winning it.

Banishing Tiamat. If the characters reduce Tiamat to 0 hit points, her Discorporation trait kicks in. The portal collapses as the shrieking Dragon Queen disintegrates and is dragged back to Avernus. She will remain trapped there until someone else can recreate the conditions of the ritual and try again to free her.

Ruthless Play and High Stakes. Except as noted, Tiamat should not be arbitrarily weakened in the interest of a fair fight. Presenting the Dragon Queen as anything less than a deity undercuts the whole adventure. No individual's survival matters against the goal of stopping the Dragon Queen's return, and heroes sometimes die for the greater good. Certainly, fallen characters can be raised again if Tiamat is defeated. And if she's not defeated, dying might not be the worst option.

Victory or Defeat

The fate of the world hangs on this final battle. Whether the heroes and their allies win or lose, the consequences will be felt across Faerûn.

The Horror of Defeat

A victory for the Cult of the Dragon is a real possibility in this adventure, and would be catastrophic for Faerûn. With Tiamat ascendant, the age of mortals comes to an end and the age of dragons begins. Nations and kingdoms shatter, civilization collapses into bloody war, and chaos reigns supreme.

None of the Dragon Queen's mortal agents receive the rewards they expected. The Red Wizards who freed her are devoured or driven away, hunted by the forces of Szass Tam. The cultists who orchestrated Tiamat's return fare little better, with the Dragon Queen not caring which mortals her draconic subjects hunt, consume, and enslave. The glorious reign of dragons that Severin hoped to usher in and rule becomes a brutal world where evil dragons dominate all.

Such dark times need not mean the end of your campaign, however. The characters have lost a crucial battle, but they might survive to continue the war. Their new goal is to find a way to banish or destroy Tiamat for good, bringing peace to the world once more.

Aftermath of Victory

Tiamat's threat ends if she is sent back to the Nine Hells, but the aftermath of victory can create challenges the adventurers must deal with. This includes helping the hundreds of prisoners remaining in the Well of Dragons. Severin's fall also leaves hundreds of unrepentant cultists still loose in the world, hungering for power and revenge in light of their recent failure.

Moreover, much of the wealth of the Sword Coast is sitting in the Well of Dragons. Along with dealing with vengeful cultists, the characters might take a lead role in getting the treasure back to its original owners or their next of kin, while dealing with con artists, thieves, and treasure hunters looking to exploit what has suddenly become the richest dungeon in Faerûn.

Among the cult's former allies, the vindictive chromatic dragons scatter back to their lairs, but only after many of them try to claim choice pieces of treasure or barrels bulging with gold and gems from the cult's hoard. Furious at having their queen vanquished, the chromatic dragons might engage in sprees of destruction not seen in Faerûn for centuries.

Even victorious, the armies of good will have paid a steep cost in the fight against Tiamat. In addition to soldiers, leaders representing the ruling nobility of countless regions and houses will have fallen in the fight. The situation is not all bleak, however. Stirring instances of generosity and cooperation will stand out amid the darkness—and none of those will be greater than the legend of the adventurers. For generations, folk will look to the exploits and sacrifices of the heroes for inspiration as they rebuild and set their sights on better days.



Appendix A: Backgrounds

This appendix provides players with an easy way to create characters with compelling ties to the events of *Tyranny of Dragons*.

Background Template

Below is a background template that applies to any background that you select or create. You can replace or augment some or all of the options in your chosen background with one or more of the elements given below. Each section tells you whether it replaces or adds to your background.

The Story Thus Far ...

As the Cult of the Dragon has grown bolder, its actions have drawn attention. Your character has stumbled into the cult's scheme in some manner or has a connection to dragons. The Campaign Bonds table provides bonds tailored to *Tyranny of Dragons*. Use them in place of or in addition to the ones you selected from (or created for) your background.

Campaign Bonds

d10	Bond
1	Leosin Erlanthar, a wandering monk, once saved your life. He's sent urgent word for you to meet him in a small town called Greenest. Looks like it's time to pay off that debt.
2	When an orc raid drove your family from your home, the people of Greenest took you in. Anyone who threatens Greenest is your sworn enemy.
3	Every five nights, you have a strange sequence of apocalyptic dreams. The world is destroyed by cold, choking fumes, lightning storms, waves of acid, and horrible fire. Each time, the dream ends with ten evil eyes glaring at you from the darkness. You feel a strange compulsion to travel to Greenest. Perhaps the answer to the riddle of your dreams awaits you there.
4	Ontharr Frume, a crusading warrior and champion of good, is your friend and mentor. He has asked you to travel to Greenest in search of rumors of increasing dragon activity.
5	You have heard rumors that your close childhood friend, a half-elf named Talis, has been kidnapped by a strange group of dragon cultists. Your investigations into the cult have led you to the town of Greenest. You must save her!
6	Being the grandchild of a renowned dragon slayer is usually a good way to impress people, but just last week a gang of ruffians attack you. You barely escaped with your life, but as you fled, the ruffians told you that the Cult of the Dragon never forgets and always avenges. You're hoping to lie low in a sleepy little town called Greenest until this blows over.
7	On his deathbed, your father confessed that he had become involved with a group called the Cult of the Dragon. They paid him to smuggle goods across the Sword Coast. Wracked by guilt, he begged you to investigate the cult and undo the evil he may have helped foster. He urged you to begin your search in a town called Greenest.
8	The dragons destroyed everything you hold dear. They killed your family and destroyed your home. Now, with nothing but what you carry on your back and a horrid scar of the near fatal wounds you sustained in the attack, you seek revenge.
9	You and your family were members of the Cult of the Dragon, until your rivals in the cult arranged to wipe you out. Though they slaughtered your kin, you survived, but they think you're dead. Now is your chance for vengeance! Your hit list consists of three names: a human cultist named Frulam Mondath, a half-orc named Bog Luck, and a half-dragon named Rezmir. You have arrived in Greenest, knowing it's next on the cult's list of targets.
10	You have a secret. You once were a gold dragon who served Bahamut. You were too proud and vain, to the point that Bahamut decided to teach you a lesson. You have been trapped in a weak, humanoid body, with your memories of your former life but a dim shadow. You remember only one thing with perfect clarity: Bahamut's command to go into the world and prove your devotion to the cause of good. If you prove worthy, on your death you will return to his side in your true form.

Optional Features

Below are two optional features that you can choose in place of the feature granted by your background.

Feature: Cult of the Dragon Infiltrator

You have infiltrated the ranks of the Cult of the Dragon. Having spied on the organization for quite some time, you are familiar with its inner workings and customs. You have a second identity as an initiate of the cult, enough of a facade to blend in as a simple grunt or servant.

Feature: Dragon Scholar

You have studied dragons and their lore for many years. You can automatically identify locations built or used by dragons and can identify dragon eggs and scales by sight. If you fail an Intelligence check to recall lore relating to dragons, you know someone or some book you can consult for the answer unless the DM rules that the lore is unknown.

Appendix B: Council Scorecard

In the course of *Tyranny of Dragons*, several factions and powerful individuals might be compelled to oppose the machinations of the Cult of the Dragon. Some groups eagerly lend their assistance. Others require more convincing.

This scorecard helps track various factions' support for the struggle against the Cult of the Dragon. If you didn't play *Hoard of the Dragon Queen*, assume that events marked with an asterisk (*) occurred, but that the unmarked events did not.

	Harpers	Order of the Gauntlet	Emerald Enclave	Lady Laeral Silverhand	Dagult Neverember	Connerad Brawnanvil	King Melandrach	Ulder Ravengard	Taern Hornblade	Sir Isteval	
First Council (*Hoard of the Dragon Queen*)	+/+	+/+	+	+	+/+	+	+	+/+	+	+	Kept possession of Skyreach Castle
	+	+	+	+	+	–/–	+	+	+	+	Skyreach Castle returned to giants
		+				+		+		+	Ontharr Frume supports characters*
	+			+					+	+	Leosin Erlanthar supports characters*
	–	+	–		–	+	+	+		+	Smashed dragon hatchery*
	+	–	+	+	+	–	–	–		–	Left dragon hatchery intact
	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	Killed Rezmir*
	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	Captured Rezmir
	–	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	Killed Rath Modar
	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	Captured Rath Modar
											Subtotal after First Council
Second Council	–	+	+	+	+	–	+	+	–	+	Killed Varram
	+	+	–	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	Captured Varram
	+	–	+	+	+		+	+	+	+	Arcane Brotherhood joins alliance
	+	+	+	+	+	+/+	+	+	+	+	Arauthator killed or driven from lair
											Subtotal After Second Council
Third Council	–	+	+	+	+	+	–/–	+	–	+	Killed Neronvain
	+	+	–	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	Captured Neronvain
	+	+	+	+	+	+/+	+/+	+	+	+	Chuth killed or driven from lair
	+	+/+	+/+	+	+	+/+	+/+	+	+	+	Rallied metallic dragons
	–	–		–	–	–/–	–/–	–	–		Made concessions to metallic dragons
	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	Metallic dragons aid faction territory
											Subtotal After Third Council
Fourth Council	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	Defeated cultists at Xonthal's Tower
	+/+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	Donated Xonthal's Tower to faction
	–	–/–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	Sold Xonthal's Tower to Zhentarim
	+	–/–	–		+	–	+	–	+	–	Brought Thay to the table
			–	–	–		–	–	–		No draconic aid gained at second council
	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+		Supported by Isteval
	+	+	+		+	+	+	+	+	+	Supported by Laeral Silverhand
											Subtotal After Fourth Council
											Final Tally
	5	**7**	**5**	**7**	**5**	**7**	**6**	**7**	**6**	**6**	**Score Needed For Support**

Downloadable scorecard available at DungeonsandDragons.com

Appendix C: Magic Items

The magic items introduced in this book are detailed here in alphabetical order, along with a section on dragon masks, which have a suite of shared properties.

Dragontooth Dagger

Weapon, rare

A dagger fashioned from the tooth of a dragon. While the blade is obviously a fang or predator's tooth, the handle is leather wrapped around the root of the tooth, and there is no cross-guard.

You gain a +1 bonus to attack rolls and damage rolls you make with this weapon. On a hit with this weapon, the target takes an extra 1d6 acid damage.

Draconic Potency. Against enemies of the Cult of the Dragon, the dagger's bonus to attack rolls and damage rolls increases to +2, and the extra acid damage increases to 2d6.

Hazirawn

Weapon (greatsword), legendary (requires attunement)

A sentient (neutral evil) greatsword, *Hazirawn* is capable of speech in Common and Netherese. Even if you aren't attuned to the sword, you gain a +1 bonus on attack rolls and damage rolls made with this magic weapon. If you aren't attuned to *Hazirawn*, you deal an extra 1d6 necrotic damage when you hit with it.

Increased Potency. While you are attuned to this weapon, its bonus on attack rolls and damage rolls increases to +2, and a hit deals an extra 2d6 necrotic damage (instead of 1d6).

Spells. *Hazirawn* has 4 charges to cast spells. As long as the sword is attuned to you and you are holding it in your hand, you can use an action to expend the required number of charges to cast one of the following spells from the sword: *detect magic* (1 charge), *detect evil and good* (1 charge), or *detect thoughts* (2 charges). Each night at midnight, Hazirawn regains 1d4 expended charges.

Wounding. While you are attuned to the weapon, any creature that you hit with *Hazirawn* can't regain hit points for 1 minute. The target can make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending this effect early on itself on a success.

Insignia of Claws

Wondrous item, uncommon

The jewels in this insignia of the Cult of the Dragon flare with purple light when you enter combat, empowering your natural fists or natural weapons.

While wearing the insignia, you gain a +1 bonus to the attack rolls and the damage rolls you make with unarmed strikes and natural weapons. Such attacks are considered to be magical.

Wand of Winter

Wand, rare (requires attunement)

This wand looks and feels like an icicle.

The wand has 7 charges, which are used to fuel the spells within it. With the wand in hand, you can use your action to cast one of the following spells from the wand, even if you are incapable of casting spells: *ray of frost* (no charges, or 1 charge to cast at 5th level; +5 to hit with ranged spell attack), *sleet storm* (3 charges; spell save DC 15), or *ice storm* (4 charges; spell save DC 15). No other components are required.

The wand regains 1d6 + 1 expended charges each day at dawn. If you expend the wand's last charge, roll a d20. On a 20, the wand melts away, forever destroyed.

Dragon Masks

Each *dragon mask* is a legendary wondrous item that reshapes to fit the face and head of a wearer attuned to it. While you are wearing any *dragon mask* and attuned to it, you gain the following benefits.

Damage Absorption. You have resistance against the mask's damage type. If you already have resistance to that damage type from another source, you instead have immunity to that damage type. If you already have immunity to that damage type from another source, whenever you are subjected to damage of that type, you take none of that damage and regain a number of hit points equal to half the damage dealt of that type.



Dragontooth Dagger



Wand of Winter

BRYAN SYME

Draconic Majesty. While you are wearing no armor, you can add your Charisma bonus to your Armor Class.

Dragon Breath. If you have a breath weapon that requires rest to recharge, it gains a recharge of 6.

Dragon Sight. You gain darkvision out to 60 feet, or to an additional 60 feet if you already have that sense. Once per day, you can gain blindsight out to 30 feet for 5 minutes.

Dragon Tongue. You can speak and understand Draconic. You also have advantage on any Charisma check you make against dragons that share the mask's color.

Legendary Resistance (1/Day). If you fail a saving throw, you can choose to succeed instead.

Black Dragon Mask

Wondrous item, legendary (requires attunement)

This horned mask of glossy ebony has a skull-like mien. Its damage type is acid. While you wear the mask, you gain the following benefit, in addition to those the *dragon masks* share.

Water Breathing. You can breathe underwater.

Blue Dragon Mask

Wondrous item, legendary (requires attunement)

This mask of glossy azure has spikes around its edges and a ridged horn in its center. Its damage type is lightning. While you wear the mask, you gain the following benefit, in addition to those the *dragon masks* share.

Lingering Shock. If you deal lightning damage to a creature, it can't take reactions until its next turn.

Green Dragon Mask

Wondrous item, legendary (requires attunement)

This mottled green mask is surmounted by a frilled crest and has leathery spiked plates along its jaw. Its damage type is poison. While you wear the mask, you gain the following benefit, in addition to those the *dragon masks* share.

Water Breathing. You can breathe underwater.

Red Dragon Mask

Wondrous item, legendary (requires attunement)

This mask of glossy crimson has swept-back horns and spiked cheek ridges. Its damage type is fire. While you wear the mask, you gain the following benefit, in addition to those the *dragon masks* share. (Severin's stat block incorporates properties from this mask.)

Dragon Fire. If you deal fire damage to a creature or flammable object, it starts burning. At the start of each of its turns, a creature burning in this way takes 1d6 fire damage. A creature that can reach the burning target can use an action to extinguish the fire.

White Dragon Mask

Wondrous item, legendary (requires attunement)

This gleaming mask is white with highlights of pale blue and is topped by a spined crest. Its damage type is cold. While you wear the mask, you gain the following benefit, in addition to those the dragon masks share.

Winter's Fury. While your current hit points are equal to or less than half your hit point maximum, you deal an extra 1d8 cold damage with your melee attacks.



Mask of the Dragon Queen

Mask of the Dragon Queen

Wondrous item, unique, requires attunement

Individually, the five dragon masks resemble the dragons they are named for. When two or more of the dragon masks are assembled, however, they transform magically into the *Mask of the Dragon Queen*. Each mask shrinks to become the modeled head of a chromatic dragon, appearing to roar its devotion to Tiamat where all the masks brought together are arranged crown-like on the wearer's head. Below the five masks, a new mask shapes itself, granting the wearer a draconic visage that covers the face, neck, and shoulders.

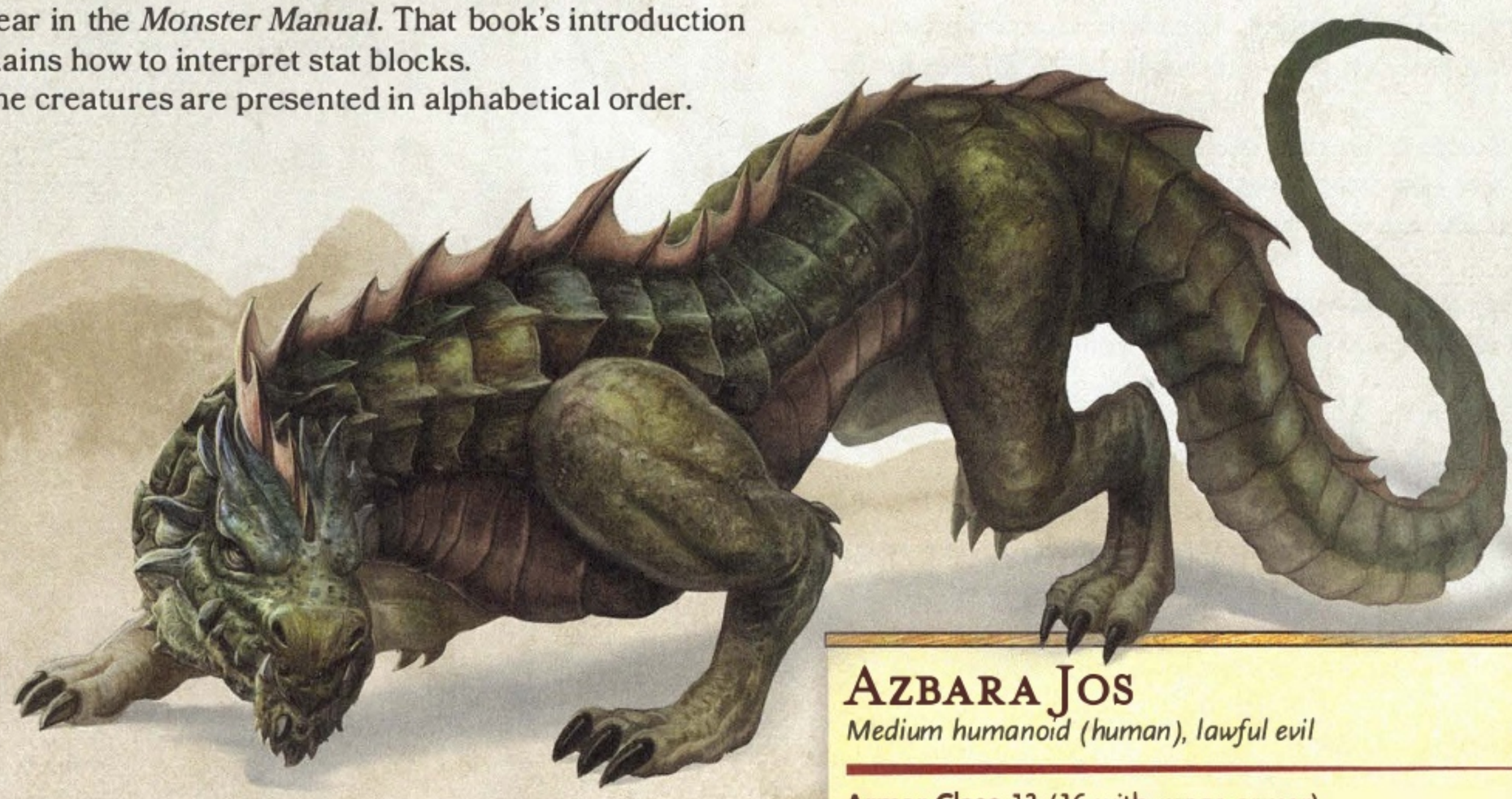
While you are attuned to and wear this mask, you can have any of the properties from any one mask. Additionally, you gain the Damage Absorption from each of the five *dragon masks*, and you gain five uses of the Legendary Resistance property.

BRYAN SYME

Appendix D: Monsters

This appendix details creatures and nonplayer characters that are mentioned in this book and that don't appear in the *Monster Manual*. That book's introduction explains how to interpret stat blocks.

The creatures are presented in alphabetical order.



Ambush Drake

Ambush Drake

Medium dragon, unaligned

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)
Hit Points 22 (4d6 + 8)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)	4 (–3)	11 (+0)	6 (–2)

Skills Perception +4, Stealth +4
Damage Resistances poison
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14
Languages understands Draconic but can't speak it
Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Pack Tactics. The drake has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the drake's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Surprise Attack. If the drake surprises a creature and hits it with an attack during the first round of combat, the target takes an extra 7 (2d6) damage from the attack.

Actions

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

Azbara Jos

Medium humanoid (human), lawful evil

Armor Class 13 (16 with *mage armor*)
Hit Points 39 (6d8 + 12)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (–1)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws Int +5, Wis +3
Skills Arcana +5, Deception +2, Insight +3, Stealth +5
Senses passive Perception 11
Languages Common, Draconic, Infernal, Primordial, Thayan
Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Special Equipment. Azbara has two *spell scrolls* of *mage armor.*

Potent Cantrips. When Azbara casts an evocation cantrip and misses, or the target succeeds on its saving throw, the target still takes half the cantrip's damage but suffers no other effect.

Sculpt Spells. When Azbara casts an evocation spell that affects other creatures that he can see, he can choose a number of them equal to 1 + the spell's level to succeed on their saving throws against the spell. Those creatures take no damage if they would normally take half damage from the spell.

Spellcasting. Azbara is a 6th-level spellcaster that uses Intelligence as his spellcasting ability (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). Azbara has the following spells prepared from the wizard spell list:

Cantrips (at will): *mage hand, prestidigitation, ray of frost, shocking grasp*
1st level (4 slots): *fog cloud, magic missile, shield, thunderwave*
2nd level (3 slots): *invisibility, misty step, scorching ray*
3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell, dispel magic, fireball*

Actions

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or ranged 20 ft./60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage.

CONCEPTOPOLIS



Blagothkus



Captain Othelstan

Blagothkus

Huge giant (cloud giant), neutral evil

Armor Class 17 (splint)
Hit Points 138 (12d12 + 60)
Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
26 (+8)	13 (+1)	20 (+5)	16 (+3)	15 (+2)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Con +9, Wis +6, Cha +6
Skills Arcana +7, Insight +6, Intimidation +6, Perception +6
Senses passive Perception 16
Languages Common, Draconic, Giant
Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Keen Smell. Blagothkus has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

Innate Spellcasting. Blagothkus can innately cast the following spells (spell save DC 15), requiring no material components:

3/day each: *fog cloud, levitate*

Spellcasting. Blagothkus is a 5th-level spellcaster that uses Intelligence as his spellcasting ability (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). Blagothkus has the following spells prepared from the wizard spell list:

Cantrips (at will): *light, mage hand, prestidigitation*
1st level (4 slots): *detect magic, identify, magic missile, shield*
2nd level (3 slots): *gust of wind, misty step, shatter*
3rd level (2 slots): *fly, lightning bolt*

Actions

Multiattack. Blagothkus attacks twice with his morningstar.

Morningstar. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 21 (3d8 + 8) piercing damage.

Captain Othelstan

Medium humanoid (human), lawful evil

Armor Class 19 (splint, shield)
Hit Points 93 (11d10 + 33)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Str +7, Con +6
Skills Athletics +7, Intimidation +4, Perception +5, Religion +4
Senses passive Perception 15
Languages Common, Draconic, Giant
Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Action Surge (Recharges when Othelstan Finishes a Short or Long Rest). On his turn, Othelstan can take one additional action.

Tiamat's Blessing of Retribution. When Othelstan takes damage that reduces him to 0 hit points, he immediately regains 20 hit points. If he has 20 hit points or fewer at the end of his next turn, he dies.

Actions

Multiattack. Othelstan attacks twice with his flail or spear, or makes two ranged attacks with his spears.

Flail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

Spear. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft. or ranged 20 ft./60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage.

BRYAN SYME

Dragonclaw

Medium humanoid (human), neutral evil

Armor Class 14 (leather armor)
Hit Points 16 (3d8 + 3)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (–1)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Wis +2
Skills Deception +3, Stealth +5
Senses passive Perception 10
Languages Common, Draconic
Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Dragon Fanatic. The dragonclaw has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened. While the dragonclaw can see a dragon or higher-ranking Cult of the Dragon cultist friendly to it, the dragonclaw ignores the effects of being charmed or frightened.

Fanatic Advantage. Once per turn, if the dragonclaw makes a weapon attack with advantage on the attack roll and hits, the target takes an extra 7 (2d6) damage of the weapon's type.

Pack Tactics. The dragonclaw has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the dragonclaw's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Actions

Multiattack. The dragonclaw attacks twice with its scimitar.

Scimitar. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) slashing damage.

Dragonfang

Medium humanoid (human), neutral evil

Armor Class 15 (studded leather)
Hit Points 78 (12d8 + 24)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Wis +4
Skills Deception +5, Stealth +6
Damage Resistances one of the following: acid, cold, fire, lightning, or poison
Senses passive Perception 11
Languages Common, Draconic, Infernal
Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Dragon Fanatic. The dragonfang has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened. While the dragonfang can see a dragon or higher-ranking Cult of the Dragon cultist friendly to it, the dragonfang ignores the effects of being charmed or frightened.

Fanatic Advantage. Once per turn, if the dragonfang makes a weapon attack with advantage on the attack roll and hits, the target takes an extra 10 (3d6) damage of the weapon's type.

Limited Flight. The dragonfang can use a bonus action to gain a flying speed of 30 feet until the end of its turn.

Pack Tactics. The dragonfang has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the dragonfang's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Actions

Multiattack. The dragonfang attacks twice with its shortsword.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) damage of the type to which the dragonfang has damage resistance.

Orb of Dragon's Breath (2/Day). *Ranged Spell Attack:* +5 to hit, range 90 ft., one target. *Hit:* 22 (5d8) damage of the type to which the dragonfang has damage resistance.

SIDHARTH CHATURVEDI



Dragonsoul

Medium humanoid (human), neutral evil

Armor Class 16 (studded leather)
Hit Points 110 (17d8 + 34)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Wis +4
Skills Deception +6, Stealth +7
Damage Resistances one of the following: acid, cold, fire, lightning, or poison
Senses passive Perception 11
Languages Common, Draconic, Infernal
Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Dragon Fanatic. The dragonsoul has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened. While the dragonsoul can see a dragon or higher-ranking Cult of the Dragon cultist friendly to it, the dragonsoul ignores the effects of being charmed or frightened.

Fanatic Advantage. Once per turn, if the dragonsoul makes a weapon attack with advantage on the attack roll and hits, the target takes an extra 10 (3d6) damage of the weapon's type.

Limited Flight. The dragonsoul can use a bonus action to gain a flying speed of 30 feet until the end of its turn.

Pack Tactics. The dragonsoul has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the dragonsoul's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Actions

Multiattack. The dragonsoul attacks twice with its shortsword.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage plus 10 (3d6) damage of the type to which the dragonsoul has damage resistance.

Orb of Dragon's Breath (3/Day). *Ranged Spell Attack:* +7 to hit, range 90 ft., one target. *Hit:* 27 (6d8) damage of the type to which the dragonsoul has damage resistance.

Dragonwing

Medium humanoid (human), neutral evil

Armor Class 14 (leather armor)
Hit Points 33 (6d8 + 6)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)	11 (+0)	13 (+1)

Saving Throws Wis +2
Skills Deception +3, Stealth +5
Damage Resistances one of the following: acid, cold, fire, lightning, or poison
Senses passive Perception 10
Languages Common, Draconic
Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Dragon Fanatic. The dragonwing has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened. While the dragonwing can see a dragon or higher-ranking Cult of the Dragon cultist friendly to it, the dragonwing ignores the effects of being charmed or frightened.

Fanatical Advantage. Once per turn, if the dragonwing makes a weapon attack with advantage on the attack roll and hits, the target takes an extra 7 (2d6) damage .

Limited Flight. The dragonwing can use a bonus action to gain a flying speed of 30 feet until the end of its turn.

Pack Tactics. The dragonwing has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the dragonwing's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Actions

Multiattack. The dragonwing attacks twice with its scimitar.

Scimitar. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) slashing damage plus 3 (1d6) damage of the type to which the cultist has damage resistance.

SIDHARTH CHATURVEDI



Dralmorrer Borngray

Dralmorrer Borngray

Medium humanoid (high-elf), neutral evil

Armor Class 16 (studded leather armor, shield)
Hit Points 52 (7d10 + 14)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	8 (–1)

Saving Throws Str +6, Con +4
Skills Arcana +5, Deception +1, Insight +2, Perception +2, Religion +5
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12
Languages Common, Bullywug, Draconic, Elvish, Goblin, Sylvan
Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Fey Ancestry. Dralmorrer has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put him to sleep.

Spellcasting. Dralmorrer is a 7th-level spellcaster that uses Intelligence as his spellcasting ability (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). Dralmorrer has the following spells prepared from the wizard spell list:

Cantrips (at will): *fire bolt*, *prestidigitation*, *shocking grasp*
1st level (4 slots): *longstrider*, *magic missile*, *shield*, *thunderwave*
2nd level (2 slots): *magic weapon*, *misty step*

War Magic. When Dralmorrer uses his action to cast a cantrip, he can also take a bonus action to make one weapon attack.

Weapon Bond. Provided his longsword is on the same plane, Dralmorrer can take a bonus action to teleport it to his hand.

Actions

Multiattack. Dralmorrer attacks twice, either with his longsword or dagger.

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) slashing damage.

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or ranged 20 ft./60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d4 + 4) piercing damage.

Frulam Mondath

Medium humanoid (human), lawful evil

Armor Class 16 (chain mail)
Hit Points 44 (8d8 + 8)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)	18 (+4)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Wis +6, Cha +4
Skills Deception +4, History +2, Religion +2
Senses passive Perception 14
Languages Common, Draconic, Infernal
Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Spellcasting. Frulam is a 5th-level spellcaster that uses Wisdom as her spellcasting ability (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). Frulam has the following spells prepared from the cleric spell list:

Cantrips (at will): *light*, *sacred flame*, *thaumaturgy*
1st level (4 slots): *command*, *cure wounds*, *healing word*, *sanctuary*
2nd level (3 slots): *calm emotions*, *hold person*, *spiritual weapon*
3rd level (2 slots): *mass healing word*, *spirit guardians*

Actions

Multiattack. Frulam attacks twice with her halberd.

Halberd. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d10 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

BRYAN SYME

Guard Drake

Medium dragon, unaligned

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)
Hit Points 52 (7d8 + 21)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	11 (+0)	16 (+3)	4 (–3)	10 (+0)	7 (–2)

Skills Perception +2
Damage Resistances lightning
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12
Languages understands Draconic but can't speak
Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Actions

Multiattack. The drake attacks twice, once with its bite and once with its tail.

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

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

Ice Toad

Medium monstrosity, neutral

Armor Class 12 (natural armor)
Hit Points 32 (5d8 + 10)
Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	8 (–1)	10 (+0)	6 (–2)

Skills Perception +2
Damage Immunities cold
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12
Languages Ice Toad
Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Amphibious. The toad can breathe air and water.

Cold Aura. While the toad is alive, any creature that starts its turn within 5 feet of the toad takes 3 (1d6) cold damage.

Standing Leap. The toad's long jump is up to 20 feet and its high jump is up to 10 feet, with or without a running start.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d8 + 1) piercing damage plus 4 (1d8) cold damage. If the target is a Medium or smaller creature, it is grappled (escape DC 11). Until this grapple ends, the toad can't bite another target.

BRYAN SYME



JAMNA GLEAMSILVER

Jamna Gleamsilver

Small humanoid (gnome), neutral

Armor Class 15 (leather armor)
Hit Points 22 (4d6 + 8)
Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (–1)	17 (+3)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Dex +5, Int +4
Skills Acrobatics +5, Deception +3, Insight +2, Perception +4, Persuasion +3, Stealth +7
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14
Languages Common, Gnomish, Goblin, Sylvan
Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Cunning Action. Jamna can take a bonus action to take the Dash, Disengage, or Hide action.

Gnome Cunning. Jamna has advantage on Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma saving throws against magic.

Spellcasting. Jamna is a 4th-level spellcaster that uses Intelligence as her spellcasting ability (spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks). Jamna has the following spells prepared from the wizard spell list:

Cantrips (at will): *mage hand*, *minor illusion*, *prestidigitation*, *ray of frost*
1st level (3 slots): *charm person*, *color spray*, *disguise self*, *longstrider*

Actions

Multiattack. Jamna attacks twice with her shortswords.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage, or 9 (1d6 + 3 plus 1d6) piercing damage if the target is Medium or larger.



Langdedrosa Cyanwrath



Naergoth Bladelord

Langdedrosa Cyanwrath

Medium humanoid (half-dragon), lawful evil

Armor Class 17 (splint)
Hit Points 57 (6d12 + 18)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Str +6, Con +5
Skills Athletics +6, Intimidation +3, Perception +4
Damage Resistances lightning
Senses blindsight 10 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14
Languages Common, Draconic
Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Action Surge (Recharges when Langdedrosa Finishes a Short or Long Rest). On his turn, Langdedrosa can take one additional action.

Improved Critical. Langdedrosa's weapon attacks score a critical hit on a roll of 19 or 20.

Actions

Multiattack. Langdedrosa attacks twice, either with his greatsword or spear.

Greatsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage.

Spear. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or ranged 20 ft./60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage.

Lightning Breath (Recharge 5–6). Langdedrosa breathes lightning in a 30-foot line that is 5 feet wide. Each creature in the line must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 22 (4d10) lightning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Naergoth Bladelord

Medium undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 18 (plate)
Hit Points 135 (18d8 + 54)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Dex +5, Wis +6
Skills Perception +6, Stealth +5
Damage Resistances necrotic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons that aren't silvered
Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities exhaustion, poisoned
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16
Languages Common, Draconic
Challenge 11 (7,200 XP)

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, Naergoth has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Actions

Multiattack. Naergoth makes three attacks, either with his longsword or longbow. He can use Life Drain in place of one longsword attack.

Life Drain. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 20 (5d6 + 3) necrotic damage. The target must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or its hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. This reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0.

A humanoid slain by this attack rises 24 hours later as a zombie under Naergoth's control, unless the humanoid is restored to life or its body is destroyed. Naergoth can have no more than twelve zombies under his control at one time.

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

Longbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d8 + 1) piercing damage plus 10 (3d6) necrotic damage.

BRYAN SYME



Neronvain

Medium humanoid (elf), neutral evil

Armor Class 17 (Charisma bonus)
Hit Points 117 (18d8 + 36)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (−1)	17 (+3)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Constitution +5, Wisdom +4
Skills Arcana +6, Perception +4
Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, poisoned
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14
Languages Common, Draconic, Elvish, Infernal
Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Draconic Majesty. Neronvain adds his Charisma bonus to his AC.

Fey Ancestry. Magic can't put Neronvain to sleep.

Actions

Multiattack. Neronvain makes two attacks, either with his shortsword or Eldritch Arrow.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage plus 13 (3d8) poison damage.

Eldritch Arrow. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +7 to hit, range 120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d10) force damage plus 9 (2d8) poison damage.

Poisonous Cloud (2/Day). Poison gas fills a 20-foot-radius sphere centered on a point Neronvain can see within 50 feet of him. The gas spreads around corners and remains until the start of Neronvain's next turn. Each creature that starts its turn in the gas must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.



Pharblex Spattergoo

Medium humanoid (bullywug), chaotic evil

Armor Class 15 (studded leather armor, shield)
Hit Points 59 (7d8 + 28)
Speed 20 ft., swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)	11 (+0)	16 (+3)	7 (−2)

Saving Throws Str +4, Con +6
Skills Perception +5, Religion +2, Stealth +3
Senses passive Perception 15
Languages Common, Bullywug
Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Amphibious. Pharblex can breathe air and water.

Poison Strike (3/Day). Once per turn, when Pharblex hits with a melee attack, he can expend a use of this trait to deal an extra 9 (2d8) poison damage.

Spellcasting. Pharblex is a 6th-level spellcaster that uses Wisdom as his spellcasting ability (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). Pharblex has the following spells prepared from the druid spell list:

Cantrips (at will): *druidcraft*, *guidance*, *poison cloud*
1st level (4 slots): *cure wounds*, *entangle*, *healing word*, *thunderwave*
2nd level (3 slots): *barkskin*, *beast sense*, *spike growth*
3rd level (3 slots): *plant growth*, *water walk*

Standing Leap. As part of his movement and without a running start, Pharblex can long jump up to 20 feet and high jump up to 10 feet.

Swamp Camouflage. Pharblex has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide in swampy terrain.

Actions

Multiattack. Pharblex attacks twice, once with his bite and once with his spear.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

Spear. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or ranged 20 ft./60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

BRYAN SYME

Rath Modar

Medium humanoid (human), lawful evil

Armor Class 13 (16 with *mage armor*)
Hit Points 71 (11d8 + 22)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws Int +7, Wis +5
Skills Arcana +7, Deception +3, Insight +5, Stealth +6
Senses passive Perception 12
Languages Common, Draconic, Infernal, Primordial, Thayan
Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Special Equipment. Rath has a *staff of fire* and three *spell scrolls*: *dimension door*, *feather fall*, and *fireball*.

Spellcasting. Rath is an 11th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). He has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *fire bolt*, *minor illusion*, *prestidigitation*, *shocking grasp*
1st level (4 slots): *chromatic orb*, *color spray*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*
2nd level (3 slots): *detect thoughts*, *mirror image*, *phantasmal force*
3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell*, *fireball*, *major image*
4th level (3 slots): *confusion*, *greater invisibility*
5th level (2 slots): *mislead*, *seeming*
6th level (1 slot): *globe of invulnerability*

Actions

Quarterstaff. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage, or 4 (1d8) bludgeoning damage when used with two hands.

Reactions

Illusory Self (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). When a creature Rath can see makes an attack roll against him, he can interpose an illusory duplicate between the attacker and himself. The attack automatically misses Rath, then the illusion dissipates.

Rezmir

Medium humanoid (half-black dragon), neutral evil

Armor Class 13 (15 with the *Black Dragon Mask*)
Hit Points 90 (12d8 + 36)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Dex +6, Wis +4
Skills Arcana +5, Stealth +9
Damage Immunities acid
Condition Immunities charmed, frightened
Senses blindsight 10 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 11
Languages Common, Draconic, Infernal, Giant, Netherese
Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Special Equipment. Rezmir has the *Black Dragon Mask*, *Hazirawn*, and an *insignia of claws* (see appendix C for all items).

Amphibious. Rezmir can breathe air and water.

Dark Advantage. Once per turn, Rezmir can deal an extra 10 (3d6) damage when she hits with a weapon attack, provided Rezmir has advantage on the attack roll.

Draconic Majesty. While wearing no armor and wearing the *Black Dragon Mask*, Rezmir adds her Charisma bonus to her AC (included).

Immolation. When Rezmir is reduced to 0 hit points, her body disintegrates into a pile of ash.

Legendary Resistance (1/Day). If Rezmir fails a saving throw while wearing the *Black Dragon Mask*, she can choose to succeed instead.

Actions

Greatsword (Hazirawn). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d6 + 6) slashing damage plus 7 (2d6) necrotic damage. If the target is a creature, it can't regain hit points for 1 minute. The target can make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending this effect early on itself on a success.

Caustic Bolt. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +8 to hit, range 90 ft., one target. *Hit:* 18 (4d8) acid damage.

Acid Breath (Recharge 5–6). Rezmir exhales acid in a 30-foot line that is 5 feet wide. Each creature in the line must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, taking 22 (5d8) acid damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Legendary Actions

If she is wearing the *Black Dragon Mask*, Rezmir can take up to two legendary actions between each of her turns, taking the actions all at once or spreading them over the round. A legendary action can be taken only at the start or end of a turn. Rezmir has the following legendary action options, some of which expend more than one action when taken:

Darkness (Costs 2 Actions). A 15-foot radius of magical darkness extends from a point Rezmir can see within 60 feet of her and spreads around corners. The darkness lasts as long as Rezmir maintains concentration, up to 1 minute. A creature with darkvision can't see through this darkness, and no natural light can illuminate it. If any of the area overlaps with an area of light created by a spell of 2nd level or lower, the spell creating the light is dispelled.
Melee Attack. Rezmir makes one melee attack.
Hide. Rezmir takes the Hide action.

Severin

Medium humanoid (human), neutral evil

Armor Class 16 (Charisma bonus)
Hit Points 150 (20d8 + 60)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	17 (+3)	12 (+1)	20 (+5)

Saving Throws Dexterity +5, Wisdom +5
Skills Arcana +7, Religion +7
Damage Immunities* fire
Damage Resistances* acid, cold, lightning, poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons
Condition Immunities* charmed, frightened, poisoned
Senses darkvision 60 ft.,* passive Perception 11
Languages Common, Draconic, Infernal
Challenge 11 (7,200 XP)
*Severin has these features while wearing the *Mask of the Dragon Queen*.

Special Equipment. Severin has the *Mask of the Dragon Queen* (see appendix C).

Draconic Majesty. Severin adds his Charisma bonus to his AC.

Ignite Enemy. If Severin deals fire damage to a creature while wearing the *Mask of the Dragon Queen*, the target catches fire. At the start of each of its turns, the burning target takes 5 (1d10) fire damage. A creature within reach of the fire can use an action to extinguish it.

Legendary Resistance (5/Day). While wearing the *Mask of the Dragon Queen*, if Severin fails a saving throw, he can choose to succeed instead.

Actions

Burning Touch. *Melee Spell Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 18 (4d8) fire damage.

Flaming Orb. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +9 to hit, range 90 ft., one target. *Hit:* 40 (9d8) fire damage.

Scorching Burst. Severin chooses a point he can see within 60 feet of him. Each creature within 5 feet of that point must make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw, taking 18 (4d8) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Legendary Actions

If Severin is wearing the *Mask of the Dragon Queen*, he can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. Severin regains spent legendary actions at the start of his turn.

Attack. Severin makes one attack.
Fiery Teleport (Costs 2 Actions). Severin, along with any objects he is wearing or carrying, teleports up to 60 feet to an unoccupied space he can see. Each creature within 5 feet of Severin before he teleports takes 5 (1d10) fire damage.
Hellish Chains (Costs 3 Actions). Severin targets one creature he can see within 30 feet of him. The target is wrapped in magical chains of fire and restrained. The restrained target takes 21 (6d6) fire damage at the start of each of its turns. At the end of its turns, the target can make a DC 17 Strength saving throw, ending the effect on itself on a success.



Nelvik the Pseudodragon

Severin has a neutral evil **pseudodragon** companion named Nelvik. The pseudodragon is never far from its master. During the ritual to summon Tiamat, it cowers on a ledge in the central spire of the Dragon Queen's temple. If Severin is slain, Nelvik attempts to befriend Severin's slayers, waiting for an opportune time to exact revenge.

Talis the White

Medium humanoid (half-elf), lawful evil

Armor Class 18 (*+1 scale mail*, shield)
Hit Points 58 (9d8 + 18)
Speed 30 ft.

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

Saving Throws Wis +6, Cha +6
Skills Deception +6, Insight +6, Perception +6, Persuasion +6
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16
Languages Common, Draconic, Elvish, Infernal
Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Special Equipment. Talis has *+1 scale mail* and a *wand of winter* (see appendix C).

Fey Ancestry. Talis has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put her to sleep.

Spellcasting. Talis is a 9th-level spellcaster that uses Wisdom as her spellcasting ability (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). Talis has the following spells prepared from the cleric spell list:

Cantrips (at will): *guidance*, *resistance*, *thaumaturgy*
1st level (4 slots): *command*, *cure wounds*, *healing word*, *inflict wounds*
2nd level (3 slots): *blindness/deafness*, *lesser restoration*, *spiritual weapon* (spear)
3rd level (3 slots): *dispel magic*, *mass healing word*, *sending*
4th level (3 slots): *death ward*, *freedom of movement*
5th level (1 slot): *insect plague*

Winter Strike (3/Day). Once per turn, when Talis hits with a melee attack, she can expend a use of this trait to deal an extra 9 (2d8) cold damage.

Actions

Spear. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or ranged 20 ft./60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

BRYAN SYME

Tiamat

Gargantuan fiend, chaotic evil

Armor Class 25 (natural armor)
Hit Points 615 (30d20 + 300)
Speed 60 ft., fly 120 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
30 (+10)	10 (+0)	30 (+10)	26 (+8)	26 (+8)	28 (+9)

Saving Throws Strength +19, Dexterity +9, Wisdom +17
Skills Arcana +17, Perception +26, Religion +17
Damage Immunities acid, cold, fire, lightning, poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons
Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, poisoned, stunned
Senses darkvision 240 ft., truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 36
Languages Common, Draconic, Infernal
Challenge 30 (155,000 XP)

Discorporation. When Tiamat drops to 0 hit points or dies, her body is destroyed but her essence travels back to her domain in the Nine Hells, and she is unable to take physical form for a time.

Innate Spellcasting (3/Day). Tiamat can innately cast *divine word* (spell save DC 26). Her spellcasting ability is Charisma.

Legendary Resistance (5/Day). If Tiamat fails a saving throw, she can choose to succeed instead.

Limited Magic Immunity. Unless she wishes to be affected, Tiamat is immune to spells of 6th level or lower. She has advantage on saving throws against all other spells and magical effects.

Magic Weapons. Tiamat's weapon attacks are magical.

Multiple Heads. Tiamat can take one reaction per turn, rather than only one per round. She also has advantage on saving throws against being knocked unconscious. If she fails a saving throw against an effect that would stun a creature, one of her unspent legendary actions is spent.

Regeneration. Tiamat regains 30 hit points at the start of her turn.

Actions

Multiattack. Tiamat can use her Frightful Presence. She then makes three attacks: two with her claws and one with her tail.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +19 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 24 (4d6 + 10) slashing damage.

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +19 to hit, reach 25 ft., one target. *Hit:* 28 (4d8 + 10) piercing damage.

Frightful Presence. Each creature of Tiamat's choice that is within 240 feet of Tiamat and aware of her must succeed on a DC 26 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to Tiamat's Frightful Presence for the next 24 hours.

Legendary Actions

Tiamat can take 5 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. Tiamat regains spent legendary actions at the start of her turn.

Tiamat's legendary action options are associated with her five dragon heads (a bite and a breath weapon for each). Once Tiamat chooses a legendary action option for one of her heads, she can't choose another one associated with that head until the start of her next turn.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +19 to hit, reach 20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 32 (4d10 + 10) slashing damage plus 14 (4d6) acid damage (black dragon head), lightning damage (blue dragon head), poison damage (green dragon head), fire damage (red dragon head), or cold damage (white dragon head).

Black Dragon Head: Acid Breath (Costs 2 Actions). Tiamat exhales acid in a 120-foot line that is 10 feet wide. Each creature in that line must make a DC 27 Dexterity saving throw, taking 67 (15d8) acid damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Blue Dragon Head: Lightning Breath (Costs 2 Actions). Tiamat exhales lightning in a 120-foot line that is 10 feet wide. Each creature in that line must make a DC 27 Dexterity saving throw, taking 88 (16d10) lightning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Green Dragon Head: Poison Breath (Costs 2 Actions). Tiamat exhales poisonous gas in a 90-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 27 Constitution saving throw, taking 77 (22d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Red Dragon Head: Fire Breath (Costs 2 Actions). Tiamat exhales fire in a 90-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 27 Dexterity saving throw, taking 91 (26d6) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

White Dragon Head: Cold Breath (Costs 2 Actions). Tiamat exhales an icy blast in a 90-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 27 Dexterity saving throw, taking 72 (16d8) cold damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

MICHAEL KOMARCK



Appendix E: Concept Gallery

Just as most adventurers don't walk into a dragon's lair without a plan, neither were D&D's iconic monsters developed without considerable forethought. This gallery explores some of the behind-the-scenes development that went into creating *Tyranny of Dragons*, as well as defining a spectrum of monsters, allies, and enemies that would feature in Dungeons & Dragons offerings for years to come.

On the following pages, you'll find a number of images designed to serve as story beats in the larger *Tyranny of Dragons* campaign. These images were created to define impactful moments in a hypothetical *Tyranny of Dragons* tale, one which then could be explored by multiple teams over the course of multiple projects—be they games, fiction, or otherwise. Some elements you'll recognize from the events of the *Tyranny of Dragons* adventures, while others were meant to provide inspiration for events parallel stories could detail.

Beyond these, this gallery also includes a number of designs focused on threats integral to the *Tyranny of Dragons* campaign. This includes explorations of well-known Forgotten Realms villains, like the Cult of the Dragon and the Red Wizards of Thay. The images herein show just a few avenues explored in updating these foes to the most current edition of the game, along with notes taken from internal concept and story documents. Some present ideas never fully expressed in *Tyranny of Dragons*, while others reveal deeper depths to adventure elements hiding whole conceptual icebergs. Certain components central to the adventure also see extensive exploration, like the garb of the Red Wizards, the iconography of the Cult of the Dragon, and—of course—the multiple deadly aspects of one of the campaign's central magic items, the *Mask of the Dragon Queen*.

Several other locations and characters also feature prominently in this collection, many being aspects of the Forgotten Realms or underpinning the wider D&D multiverse that have seen artistic evolutions over the years. The thorough design sketches of chromatic dragons, for example, hint at the depth of ecological detail that's gone into realizing D&D's most iconic monsters—and foes central to the *Tyranny of Dragons* plot.

How you choose to use this concept gallery is up to you. Perhaps these details will inspire you, just as they did the original *Tyranny of Dragons* designers. Maybe a particular image will resound with you, leading you to make your own addition to the wider campaign. Added insights on the tools and techniques of the adventure's villains can help you make them feel like more vital inhabitants of a wider world, while nuances of dragons and other can creatures aid in bringing these terrors to life. These pages might also be shared with players as you see fit, driving home the impact of the campaign's most climatic moments. Whether this gallery serves as a game aide or inspires your own designs, use it as you please, further detailing the existing adventures or exploring *Tyranny of Dragons* stories yet to be told!







Invasion of Icewind Dale

Attack on Luskan













Battle at Tiamat's Temple





RED WIZARDS



Red Wizards of Thay Stronghold

Red Wizards are the would-be magical overlords of Faerûn.

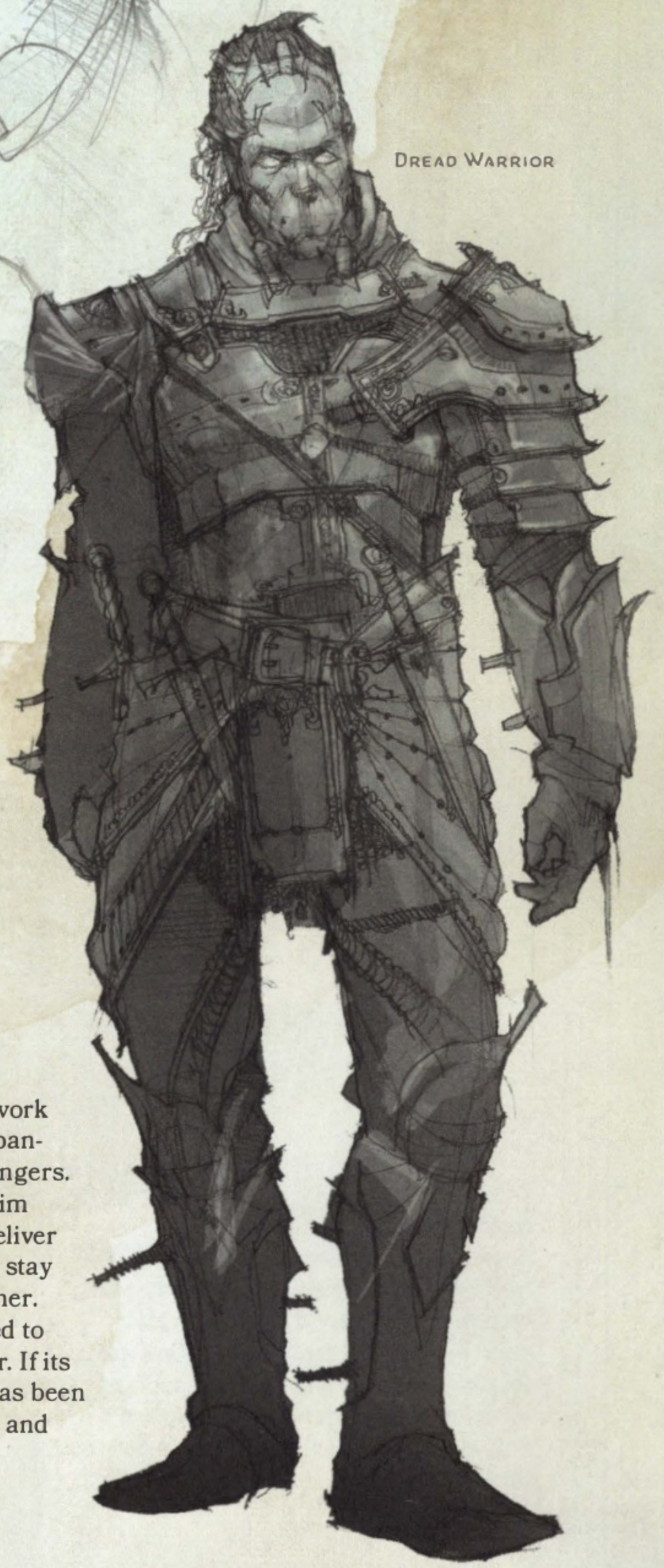
Rath Modar (formal)

Red Wizards
Feared by the general public as evil tyrants, Red Wizards trade their magical inventions for slaves, steel, silk, and gold. As magical artificers of great skill, they command high prices, and are not afraid to extend credit—for there are few who could survive an unpaid debt to these wizards.

DREAD WARRIORS MAKE UP THE TERRIFYING UNDEAD ARMY OF THE RED WIZARDS.







DREAD WARRIOR

ZHENTARIM, ALSO KNOWN AS THE BLACK NETWORK, AND WINGED SNAKE

The Black Network

Agents of the Black Network have winged snake companions that serve as messengers. Members of the Zhentarim use these creatures to deliver messages on scrolls and stay in contact with one another. A winged snake is trained to serve a particular master. If its master dies, the snake has been known to remain nearby and starve to death.

Dread Warriors
Created from the freshly dead bodies of skilled warriors, dread warriors are especially formidable zombie-like creatures, retaining some of their intelligence and much of the fighting skill they possessed in life.



No race is immune from being transformed into a dread warrior. Once set upon a task, these undead will do nothing—will not pause or turn aside—until they've fulfilled their orders.



Mask of Tiamat

A dragon mask enhances a person's ability to communicate with dragons of a particular color. If the wearer is exceptionally well versed in the behavior and mannerisms of the appropriate color dragon, the mask allows the wearer to become a "dragon whisperer."



Dragon Masks
Dragon masks allow the wearer to think like a dragon of the appropriate color, influence those dragons, and gain their favor. This ability is crucial to keeping dragons aligned with the cult.

The five dragon masks can be combined in a ritual to form the supreme Mask of the Dragon Queen. The wearer of this mask can channel its power to beckon Tiamat from her infernal realm, although she does so willingly—not because the mask compels her.





The Five Dragon Masks
(with Wyrmspeaker regalia)







Cult of the Dragon
Cultist Stronghold

Dragon Cult Assassin/Thief Elite Tier

Dragon Cultist: Rogue Ideations



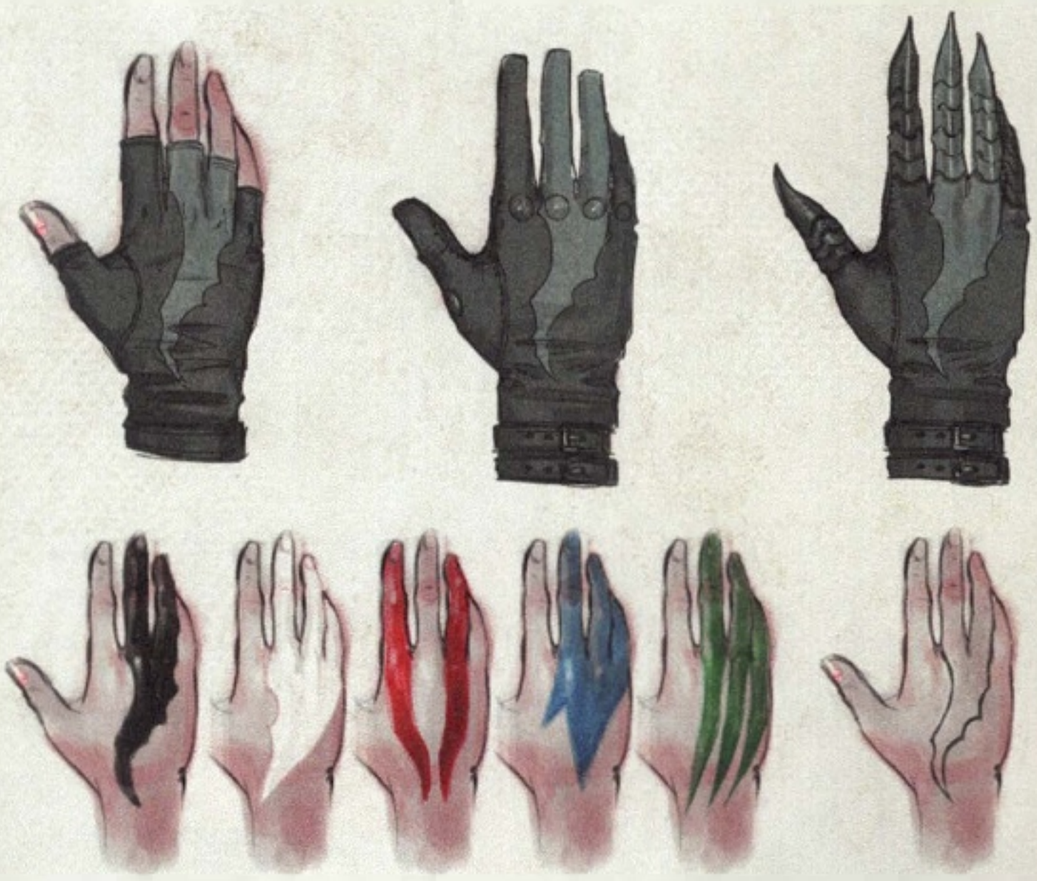


Cult of the Dragon
Decorative Regalia



Dragon fang (dagger)





Glove and hand tattooing details dragon loyalty



2nd Rank



4th Rank



Cult Initiate



1st Rank:
Dragonclaw



2nd Rank:
Dragonwing

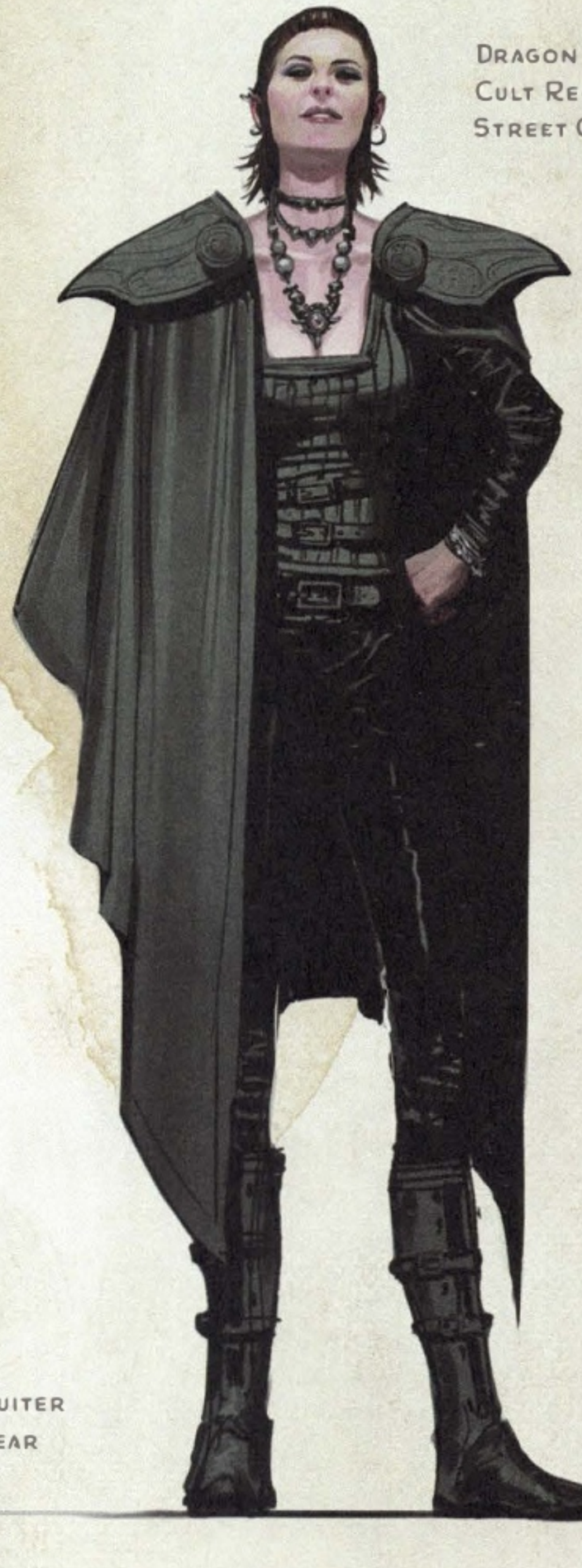


3rd Rank:
Dragonfang



4th Rank:
Dragonsoul





Dragon
Cult Recruiter
Street Clothes

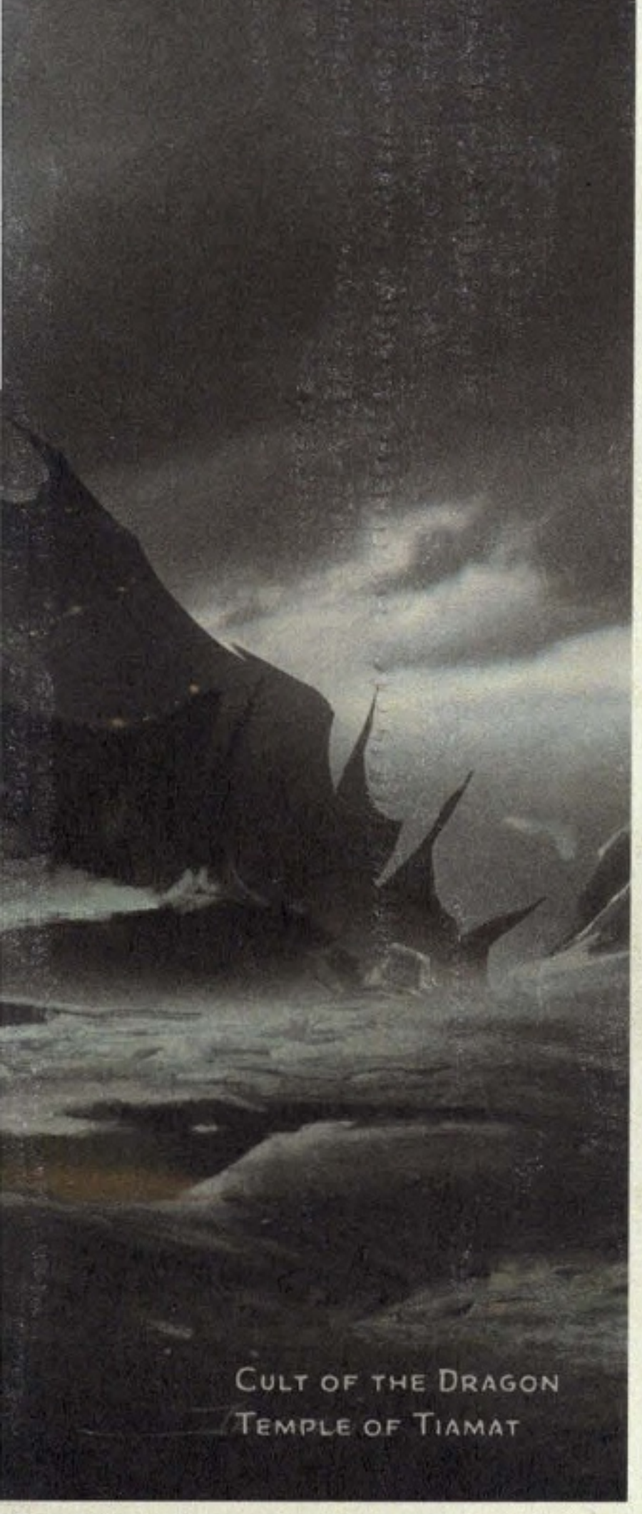
Dragon
Cult Recruiter
Formal Wear

WATERDEEP

Temple of Tiamat
The Cult of the Dragon seeks to raise Tiamat's temple from the Nine Hells, bringing it into being inside the caldera of an ancient volcano known as the Well of Dragons. From this bulwark, who knows what dire destruction the Queen of Evil Dragons might visit upon the realms?

Icewind Dale
The farthest north region along the Sword Coast, Icewind Dale is an unforgiving land where the rugged inhabitants of ten small towns dedicate themselves to carving a living from the ice and snow. The drow elf Drizzt Do'Urden numbers among the land's most legendary heroes.

Waterdeep
The City of Splendors is the greatest of the Sword Coast cities n. Home to as many as two million residents, Waterdeep is a stable and generally peaceful city. Still, there are parts of Waterdeep that can be dangerous for the unwary, such as the rough–and-tumble Dock Ward.



Cult of the Dragon
Temple of Tiamat



Drizzt Do'Urden

FABRIC LINING

SWORD HANDLE MADE OF POLISHED ROOT WOOD

Savage North

Remi Haventree,
Waterdhavian
Formal Wear

Remi Haventree,
Military
Commander
Uniform

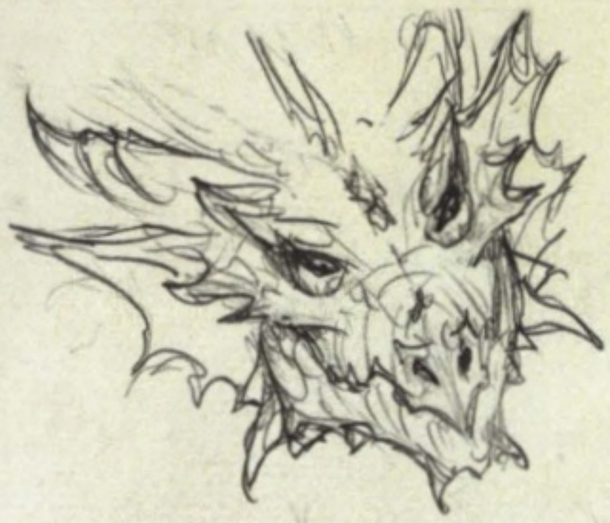
Mei,
Female
Human Rogue

People of the Sword Coast
Numerous people make their homes along the Sword Coast. Whether commoners or nobles, trades folk or adventurers, all have much to lose at the hands of the Cult of the Dragon, but also the potential for great heroism.

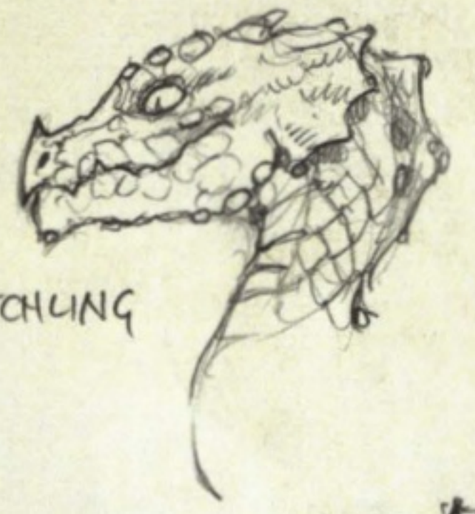
Calia, Female Human Ranger

Finan, Male Human Cleric

Tilo, Male Human Wizard



HATCHLING



TWISTED HORNS

RED DRAGONS

RED DRAGONS ARE VAIN, REFLECTED IN THEIR PROUD, UPRIGHT BEARING AND DISDAINFUL EXPRESSION

THEIR PUPILS FADE AS THEY AGE, UNTIL THE OLDEST HAVE EYES WITH THE APPEARANCE OF MOLTEN ORBS -

AN ANGRY RED MAY HAVE FLAMES LICKING UP FROM EYES AND NOSTRILS - AND AN ENVELOPE OF HEAT-SHIMMER AROUND THEM.

THEIR FRILL AND WINGS ARE AN ASHY BLUE OR PURPLE GREY TOWARD THE EDGES, BECOMING DARKER WITH AGE - NEARLY BLACK ON OLDER SPECIMENS.

REDS SMELL LIKE SMOKE AND SULPHUR

HORNS VARY GREATLY, & CAN BE BONE-WHITE TO BLACK, STRAIGHT OR TWISTED

NECK FRILL CONTINUES DOWN NECK TO THE TIP OF THE TAIL

SINGLE, BACK-SWEPT FRILL ON NECK

CHEEKBONE HORNS

TWO HORNS

BROW HORNS

SMALL NOSE HORN

BEAK

EXTERNAL EAR FRILL

FORKED TONGUE

CHIN HORNS

JAW HORNS (MAY MERGE WITH EAR FRILL ON OLDER DRAGONS.

LIZARD-LIKE SKULL (NOT AN ALLIGATOR!)

RED GREAT WYRM

RED DRAGON - IDENTIFIERS

STRONG THUMB CLAW ON WING CAN HELP DIG

FLATTENED TAIL HELPS SWEEP AWAY SAND WHEN DIGGING IN...

VERY OLD BLUE DRAGON

W/HORN REVISION

FOREARM SPINES HELP DISPLACE SAND WHEN BURROWING

LARGE, BADGER-LIKE FRONT CLAWS

LARGE, FRILLED EXTERNAL EAR

ROW OF HORNLETS EXTENDS BACK FROM BROW

EARS FURL SHUT AND DORSAL SPINES FLATTEN WHEN BURROWING

EYES, NOSTRILS SEAL SHUT

LARGE SINGLE BROW HORN W/ SLIGHT S-CURVE

SUB-HORN

DORSAL SPINES

ELECTRICAL ATTACK

1.

BUILD-UP (HUMS + ARCS)

NOSTRILS CLOSE TO EYE SOCKETS

SHORT SNOUT

2.

LARGE TRIANGULAR NECK SCALES

CHEEK HORNLETS

DISCHARGE (HUGE THUNDERCLAP)

UNDERSLUNG JAW

MOST TEETH PROTRUDE WHEN MOUTH IS CLOSED

CLUSTER OF CHIN SCALES

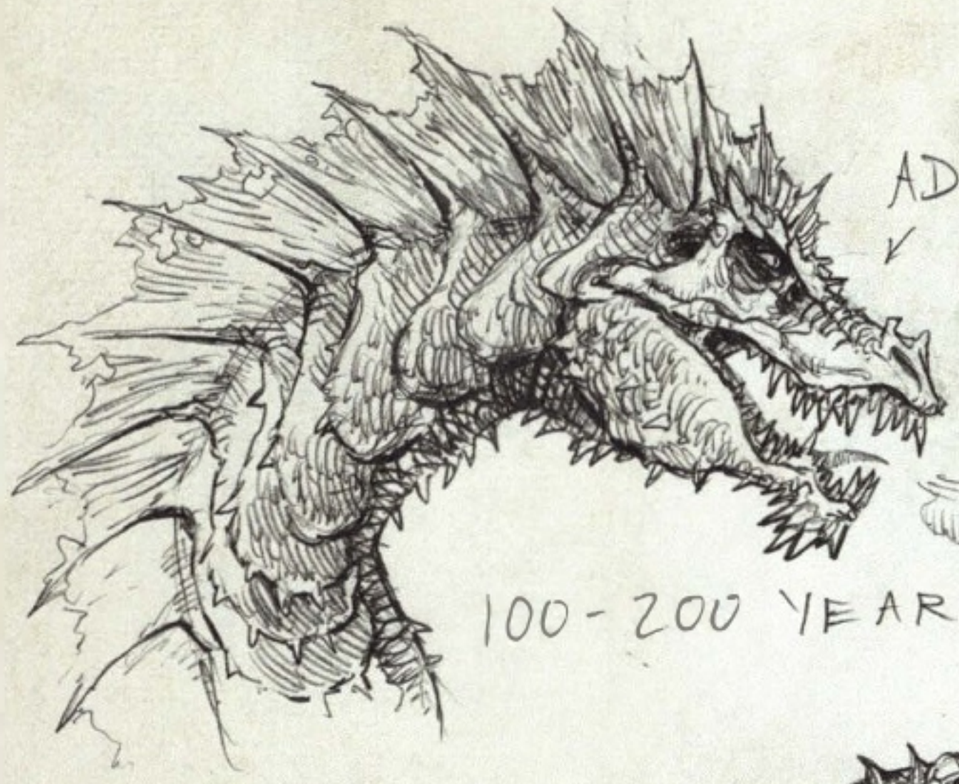
BLUES ARE VAIN AND TERRITORIAL. THEY ARE DISTINGUISHED BY THEIR DRAMATIC FRILLED EARS AND SINGLE, MASSIVE BROW HORN. THEY ARE ALSO ONE OF THE BEST-ADAPTED DRAGON BREEDS FOR DIGGING INTO SAND. THEIR HIDES TEND TO HUM AND CRACKLE FAINTLY WITH BUILT-UP STATIC ELECTRICITY, AND TO EMIT SMALL ARCS OF ELECTRICITY. THESE EFFECTS INTENSIFY WHEN THE DRAGON IS ANGRY OR ABOUT TO ATTACK. THEY SMELL OF OZONE + SAND.

BLUE DRAGON IDENTIFIERS

W/ HORN REVISION

GREEN DRAGONS

@ VARIOUS AGES



100-200 YEARS OLD

ADULTS





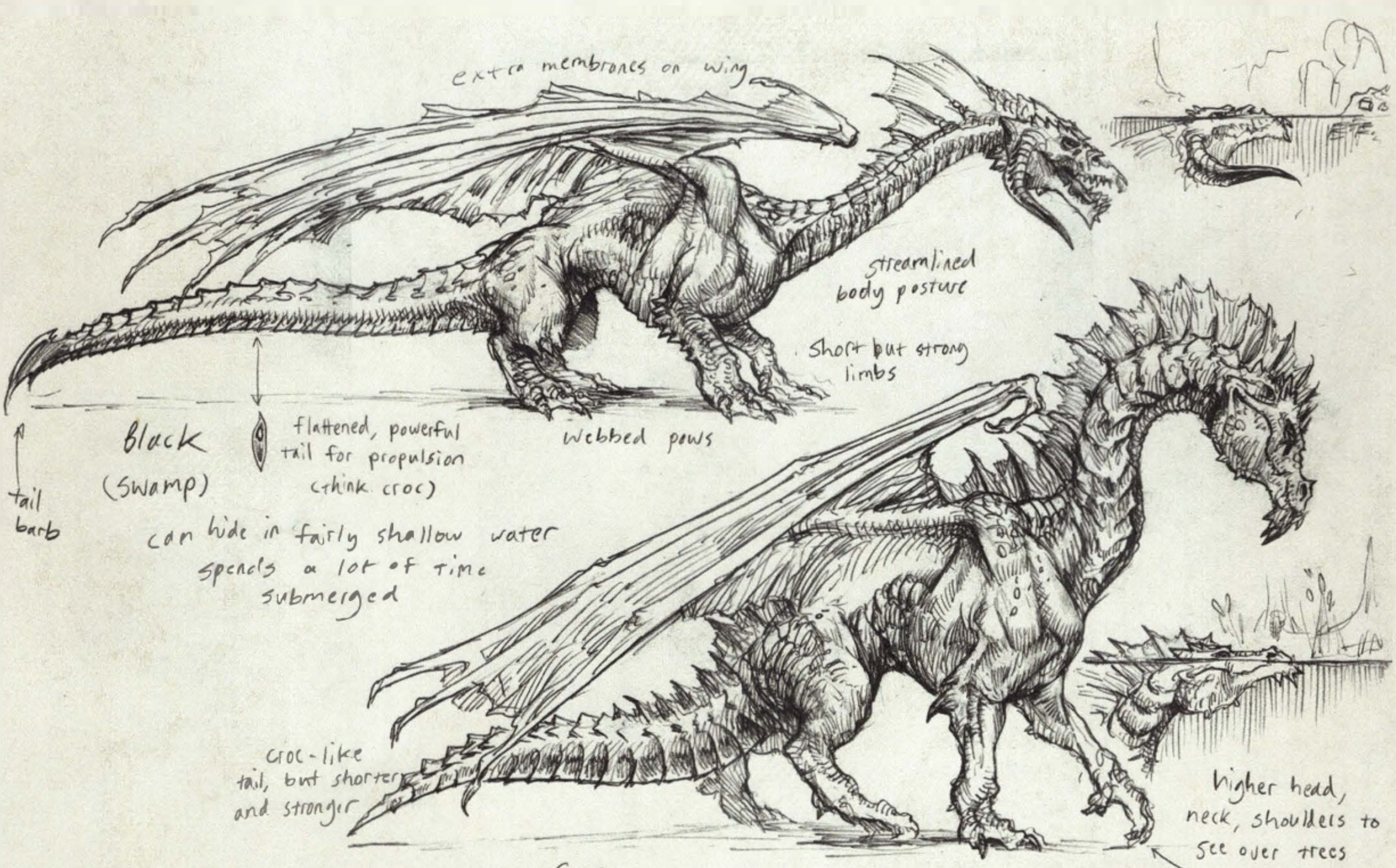
WYRMLING

0-5 YEARS OLD

GREAT WYRM



1,200+ YEARS OLD



Swimming Dragons
Round 2

BLACK DRAGONS

@ VARIOUS AGES

ADULTS
100-200 YRS.

SPRAYING ACID

WYRMLING
0-5 YRS.

GREAT WYRM
1200 + YRS.

HORNS BECOME LARGER

CHEEK HIDE WEARS AWAY AS THE ENTIRE CHEEKBONE BECOMES A BONY MASS SUPPORTING THE HORN

EYE DETAIL

HORNS ARE BONE COLORED HERE...

ROW OF HORNLETS

... BUT FADE TO A BLACK HORN SHEATH @ TIPS

TEETH STICK OUT WHEN MOUTH CLOSES

"BUTTRESSED" HORNS

THESE 2 CHIN HORNS BUTTRESSED (LIKE LARGE HORNS)

BIG SPIKES ALONG JAW LINE

FRILL PEAKS, THEN TAPERS OFF ABOUT 3/4 WAY DOWN THE NECK

EAR OPENING

EYE SOCKETS AND NASAL OPENING ARE SOMEWHAT SKULL LIKE

VIEW OF NECK PLATES FROM BELOW

NECK IS FAIRLY SLENDER, ELONGATED

NOSTRIL OPENING CAN SEAL SHUT

TONGUE IS FLAT, WITH FORKED TIP

SOME ACIDIC SLIME DROOLING FROM JAWS IS FAIRLY COMMON!

TOOTH DETAIL

BLACK DRAGONS SMELL OF ROTTING VEGETATION AND FOUL WATER, WITH AN ACIDIC UNDERTONE.

BLACK DRAGON IDENTIFIERS

BLACK DRAGONS ARE EVIL-TEMPERED, CUNNING, AND MALEVOLENT. THEIR CRAFTY, SINISTER FACE REFLECT THIS. THEY ARE SOMETIMES KNOWN AS "SKULL DRAGONS" FOR THEIR DEEPLY SOCKETED EYES AND DISTINCTIVE NASAL OPENING. ADDING TO THIS IMPRESSION IS THE GRADUAL DETERIORATION OF THE HIDE AROUND THE HORN BASE/CHEEKBONE. THIS DOES NO HARM TO THE DRAGON BUT INCREASES WITH AGE.

WHITE DRAGON IDENTIFIERS

SLEEK HEAD PROFILE

CREST SUPPORTED BY SINGLE CURVING SPINE

OVERLAPPING TRIANGULAR SCALES ALONG UPPER NECK

THICK LEATHERY HIDE ALONG UNDERSIDE OF NECK

NOSTRILS CLOSE TO END OF SNOUT

SMALL, SHARP BEAK

POINTED CHIN

CHEEK SCALES

SPINED DEWLAP

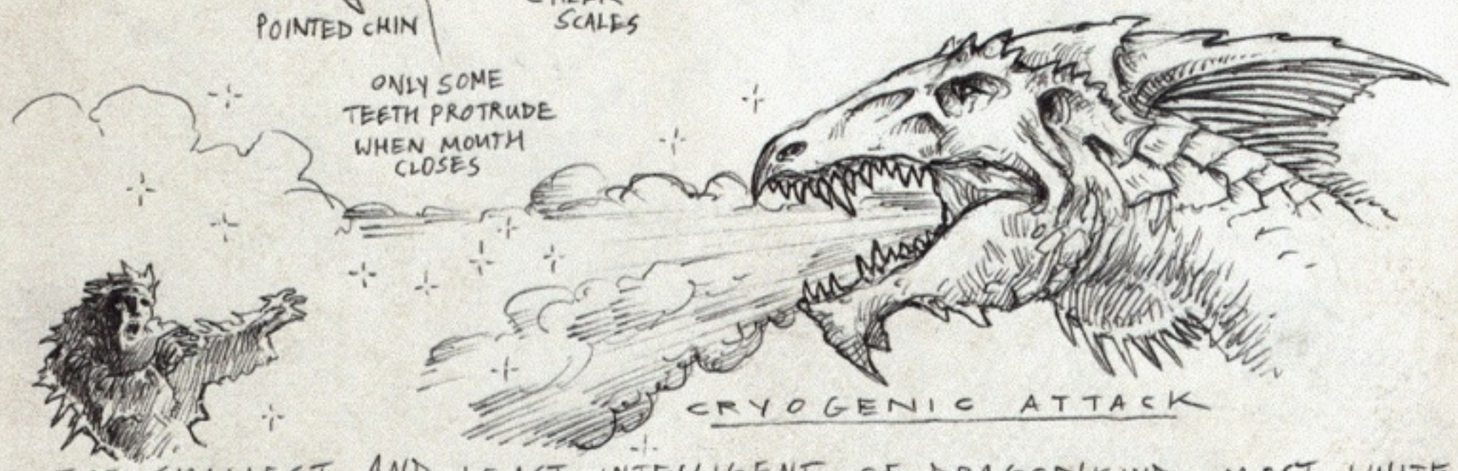
ONLY SOME TEETH PROTRUDE WHEN MOUTH CLOSES



WYRMLING

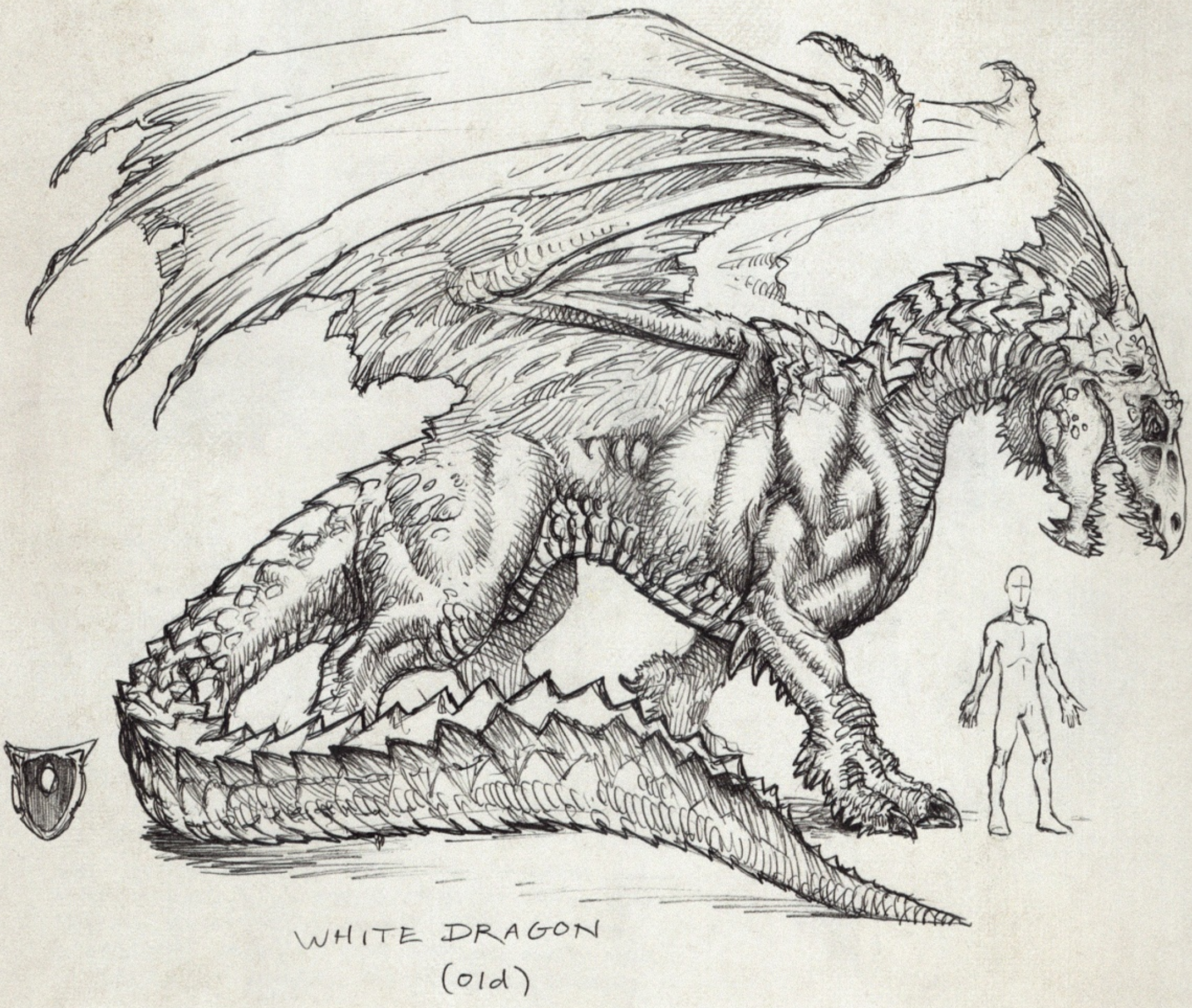


ADULT



CRYOGENIC ATTACK

AMONG THE SMALLEST AND LEAST INTELLIGENT OF DRAGONKIND, MOST WHITE DRAGONS ARE SIMPLY ANIMALISTIC PREDATORS. THEIR FACES EXPRESS A HUNTER'S SINGLE-MINDEDNESS AND FEROCITY RATHER THAN THE SHREWDNESS AND INSIGHT OF THE MORE POWERFUL EVIL DRAGONS. THEIR BEAKED, CRESTED HEADS ARE DISTINCTIVE. (A CRISP, FAINTLY CHEMICAL ODOR)



WHITE DRAGON
(old)

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