

CORE1-6

# INCIDENT AT THE GORGE OF GAUROS

A DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® *LIVING  
FORGOTTEN REALMS* ADVENTURE

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Powerful forces work, for both weal and woe, in the lands surrounding the decimated nation of Thay. Where the forces of good and evil clash great power can be unleashed, drawing those who seek destruction, and those who strive to prevent destruction. This adventure is a sequel to CORE1-2 *Radiant Vessel of Thesk*. A Living Forgotten Realms adventure set on the border between Rashemen and Thay for character levels 7-10.

Based on the original DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® rules created by E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson and the new DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game designed by Andy Collins, Rob Heinsoo, and James Wyatt.

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## PREPARING FOR PLAY

In order to play this adventure, you'll need copies of the following D&D 4th Edition rulebooks: *Player's Handbook*, *Dungeon Master's Guide*, and the *Monster Manual*. Any other rules referenced in this adventure will be noted in the **New Rules Items** section at the end of the adventure.

Throughout this adventure, text in bold italics provides player information for you to paraphrase or read aloud when appropriate. Information on nonplayer characters (NPCs) and monsters appear in abbreviated form in the adventure text.

Along with this adventure, you'll find a RPGA Session Tracking sheet. If you're playing this adventure as part of an RPGA-sanctioned event, complete and turn in this sheet to your Senior GM directly after play.

## READING MONSTER STAT BLOCKS

Most of the information should be easy to understand, as it mirrors the information presented in the *Monster Manual*. Attacks have a letter next to them designating the type: M for melee, R for ranged, C for close, and A for area. A lower-case letter (used only in some melee and ranged attacks) denotes that the attack can be used as a basic attack.

## IMPORTANT DM INFORMATION

As the DM of the session, you have the most important role in facilitating the enjoyment of the game for the players. You take the words on these pages and make them come alive. The outcome of a fun game session often creates stories that live well beyond the play at the table. Always follow this golden rule when you DM for a group:

**Make decisions and adjudications that enhance the fun of the adventure when possible.**

To reinforce this golden rule, keep in mind the following:

- **You are empowered to make adjustments to the adventure and make decisions about how the group interacts with the world of this adventure.** This is especially important and applicable outside of combat encounters, but feel free to use the "scaling the encounter" advice (usually for adjusting to different-sized groups) to adjust combat encounters for groups that are having too easy or too hard of a time in an adventure.
- **Don't make the adventure too easy or too difficult for a group.** Never being challenged makes for a boring game, and being overwhelmed makes for a frustrating game. Gauge the experience of the players (not the characters) with the game, try to feel out (or ask) what they like in a game, and attempt to give each of them the experience they're after when they play D&D. Give everyone a "chance to shine."
- **Be mindful of pacing, and keep the game session moving along appropriately.** Watch for stalling, as play loses momentum when this happens. At the same time, make sure that the players don't finish the adventure too early; provide them with a full play experience. *Living Forgotten Realms* adventures are designed to be played within 3.5 - 4 hours; try to be very aware

of running long or short. Adjust the pacing accordingly.

- **Give the players appropriate hints so they can make informed choices about how to interact with their environment.** Players should always know when enemies are affected by conditions and are bloodied. They should be given clues about how to interact with their surroundings so they can tackle skill challenges, combats, and puzzles without getting too frustrated over lack of information. This helps to encourage immersion in the adventure and gives players “little victories” for figuring out a good choice from a clue.

In short, being the DM for a *Living Forgotten Realms* adventure isn't about following every word on the page; it's about creating a fun, challenging game environment for the players. A great deal of good information on being a DM for a D&D game can be found in Chapters 1-2 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

## APPROPRIATE CHARACTER LEVELS

This adventure is designed for player characters (PCs) levels 7-10. Characters that fall outside of the level range may not participate in the adventure. Make certain to check the levels of the PCs before beginning play to ensure that they are the proper level.

Each adventure has a low-level version and a high-level version. The low level is meant for a group whose levels, on average, fall in the first two levels of the adventure's level spread. The high level is meant for a group whose levels, on average, fall in the last two levels of the adventure's level spread.

A group may decide to play riskier and play the high level when their levels are more suited to the low level if everyone in the group is in agreement to do so; however, some of the rewards may not be available to them. Conversely, a group may decide to play the low level when their levels are more suited to the high level if everyone in the group is in agreement to do so; however, some of the rewards may be less than what they'd ideally want from the adventure.

**Reading the Numbers:** Each encounter will have a level and other values (such as XP or sometimes skill checks) listed with two numbers divided by a slash. The number before the slash is always the value for the low-level version of the adventure; the number after the slash is the value for the high-level version of the adventure.

## FAILING TO DEFEAT AN ENCOUNTER

If a group fails to defeat an encounter - that is, if they have to flee from a combat because it's too tough or they reach the predetermined number of failures in a skill challenge before reaching success - they are only awarded half experience points (round down) for the encounter. If they manage to tackle the encounter later on and defeat it, award them the other half of the experience points for the encounter.

## CHARACTER DEATH

If a PC dies during the course of the adventure, the player of that character and the rest of the group have two options, provided that they have access to the Raise Dead ritual (either a PC has it and can use it or the characters return back to civilization), they have access to the body, and it is possible to return the dead PC to life.

- **Pay the component cost for the ritual.** If the group chooses this option, the cost should be divided evenly amongst the group (500 gp for heroic tier, 5,000 gp for paragon tier, and 50,000 gp for epic tier). Using a source outside the group to cast the ritual costs 20% more than the component cost. Total cost when using an outside source is 600 gp for heroic tier, 6,000 gp for paragon tier, and 60,000 gp for epic tier. A PC that dies and chooses this method of return gains full (or half, if the party was defeated) experience points from the encounter in which the character died, but no experience points for any encounters that were missed while the character was dead. If there's still more of the adventure remaining, the PC continues to earn experience as normal, and receives a normal cut of the rewards at the end of the adventure.
- **Invoke the Death Charity clause.** If the group cannot afford to pay for the ritual (or doesn't desire to do so), the PC can choose to return back to life at the end of the adventure. Doing so forfeits all rewards (including treasure and story rewards) earned for the adventure except experience points gained prior to the character's death (the character receives the experience point award for the encounter in which they died). The PC cannot participate in the same adventure a second time.

## MILESTONES

No matter if the characters succeed or fail in an encounter, they reach a milestone if it is the second encounter they've had since the start of the adventure or

their last extended rest. Encounters that do not give out experience points do not count for purposes of reaching a milestone. Make certain to mention this information to the players when applicable, as it gives each PC another action point and affects how some magic item powers are used.

## ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

This adventure is a sequel to *CORE1-2 The Radiant Vessel of Thesk*. In that adventure the PCs are asked to save a pregnant human female named Sibbya from orc mercenaries in the employ of an imp who worked for the forces of Szass Tam. In the final encounter, the PCs help her give birth to a baby boy while battling the orcs. The PCs also reunite Bhral, one of the orc mercenaries, with Fontin, his female human lover.

This story takes place ten months after the birth of the boy, when the baby boy is kidnapped by a Rashemen. This “Old One,” a male wielder of arcane magic, wishes to transfer his radiant power to the boy in an effort to thwart Szass Tam’s plot to capture or destroy all those who were granted the same radiant power. The Old One has selected a holy site in Rashemen to perform the ceremony. However, he is captured by Thayan forces before the ceremony can take place and taken to a cave system in the Gorge of Gauros, where Szass Tam’s forces plan to study him and the child to find where the radiant power originated from.

The PCs have been plagued with frequent dreams or visions of Sibbya, Bhral, and the child. In an effort to halt the dreams, the PCs travel to the city of Phsant in the land of Thesk to learn what their visions are about. Upon their arrival, Sibbya begs the PCs to find her missing son.

## PLAYER’S INTRODUCTION

This introduction takes place in the city of Phsant in the land of Thesk. Before reading the text in this introduction, provided the players with either Handout 1 (if their PC participated in *CORE1-2 The Radiant Vessel of Thesk*) or Handout 2 (if their PC did not play that adventure.)

NOTE: GMs familiar with *CORE1-2 The Radiant Vessel of Thesk* are encouraged to make references for those PCs who have played that adventure. For example, if you roleplay the introduction, the primary NPCs are very familiar with the PCs who played that adventure.

Read or paraphrase the following to the players after making sure they have read the appropriate Handouts:

***Your trip to the city of Phsant in the land of Thesk has been uneventful. However, your visions and nightmares have brought you here to find a woman named Sibbya, an orc called Bhral, and a young child.***

***Your reason for traveling to Phsant has been the nightly dreams of Sibbya’s son and Bhral. More than once, you’ve wakened in a terrible sweat screaming out “Beware the Gorge of Gauros!”***

***Perhaps Sibbya can help interpret your dreams? After some directions from the locals, you can see the roof of her simple home in the distance.***

After the PCs knock on the door, read or paraphrase the following:

***You see a woman in a chair crying hysterically while being comforted by another female. A male orc, possibly Bhral, stands nearby looking uneasy and unsure of what to do. As you enter, the orc looks up and exclaims, “The gods have answered our prayers! You must help us!”***

Let the PCs converse with Sibbya, Fontin (her cousin) and Bhral as long as you see fit. During the conversation, the following information should be mentioned:

- Sibbya’s son was kidnapped eight days ago. He was taken at night from the room that he and Sibbya share without Sibbya waking. The area near the house was searched, but the boy could not be found.
- Witnesses remember seeing an old man of Rashemen descent staying at a nearby inn and lurking in the area just before the boy was taken.
- Bhral has, since the time the boy was taken, had dreams similar to the PCs. His dreams focused on the Gorge of Gauros and an old mining town called Brimstone on the Rashemen side of the border. He visited the town during his adventuring career.
- Bhral is willing to guide the PCs to the old mining town in Rashemen that played such an important role in his dreams. He knows that the main building in the town is a seedy tavern called the Red Dragoon Tavern.
- Neither the boy nor Sibbya have displayed any of the radiant power Sibbya used to possess since her son’s birth.
- Sibbya refuses to name the boy. They all call him “little one.” If pressed as to why, she says that she knows the boy is not complete without the radiant powers she once possessed, and she waits to name him for superstitious reasons.

## DM'S INTRODUCTION

If the PCs participated in *CORE1-2 The Radiant Vessel of Thesk*, the adventure may run slightly differently. Handout 3 explains the story of Sibbya Dermark, which PCs who played the previous adventure would know. If the PCs playing this adventure did not play the previous one, Sibbya and Bhral may be a little hesitant to trust them, but the PCs share Bhral's dream and know Sibbya's son is in danger, which helps the NPCs trust that the PCs have their best interests at heart. In this case, they share Sibbya's story with the PCs (as described in Handout 3).

As the adventure begins, the PCs arrive in city of Phsant to find Sibbya to help them understand the dreams they have been having. They learn Sibbya's son was recently kidnapped.

A Rashemen wielder of arcane magic, called an Old One, was hoping to take the boy to the northern part of Rashemen and use the magic of his nation's land to help him transfer his own radiant power to the boy. Unfortunately, the Old One and the boy are captured by Thayan forces (Zhent mercenaries hired by Szass Tam to find the boy) before they can get to the north of Rashemen. The Zhents take the Old One and the boy to the Gorge of Gauros and hand the pair over to Szass Tam's undead servants, where they are help in a series of caves linked by teleporting portals in anticipation of Szass Tam coming for them.

These events take place at a time when this plane of existence converges with The Fugue Plane to create a demiplane which the Rashemen call "the spirit world." The Old One, Veruud of the Urling, knew that this connection to the spirit world, was necessary to transfer some of his radiant power to the boy. However, the conjoining of the spirit world and this one has other effects as well.

Bhral is able to show the PCs a route to the Gorge with a suggestion to start looking for the boy in an old mining town known as Brimstone, which has played a part in his dreams. The first encounter involves a seedy bar where the PCs are mistaken for mercenaries that were assisting in the captivity of the Old One and the boy. They partake in a skill challenge to find a map to the exact location of the captives.

After the PCs learn the location of the cave, they go through three combat encounters. The first encounter is with Zhent mercenaries, and the next two involve undead Thayan undead. These combats are meant to use up the PCs healing surges, which play a significant role in the final skill challenge. Time plays an important role in the module as well, as the PCs must get to the

Old One and the boy before the ritual period has passed and before Szass Tam can whisk the boy and the Old One to Thay for vile experiments.

The last event is a skill challenge where the Old One enlists the PCs' aid to enter the spirit world and help transfer part of his radiant power to the boy. The transfer of power involves the PCs using healing surges to power a ritual. In order to do this, the PCs must successfully complete four mini-challenges to aid in the ritual:

- They must find a way to navigate through the spirit world.
- Bypass a blockade.
- Balance the number of healing surges between party members so each PC has at least two surges.
- Each PC then transfers two healing surges to the Old One.
- If the PCs decide to take an extended rest of 6-8 hours any time after the first encounter starts, then the final encounter is significantly harder. If they take 2 extended rests, the Old One and the boy are taken to Thay for experimentation, and the last encounter never takes place.

Also, Task 3 from the "Zhentarim Infiltration" Player Reward Card can be completed if the PCs spare one of the Zhent mercenaries in Encounter 2. Be sure to give the PCs clues that these mercenaries are members of the Zhentarim.

In Encounter 6, the PCs take part in the final skill challenge. As part of that challenge, the players are called upon to do things outside of their character as a way to assisting in the challenge: stacking dice and telling an entertaining joke/story. While most players relish such things in their game, certain players lack the adventuresome spirit of doing things on the meta-game level. If you think that the players are going to be upset by this or somehow unable to do this, simply remove their ability to get assistance from their spirit guides.

## ENCOUNTER 1: MOONSHINE!

### SKILL CHALLENGE LEVEL 7/9, COMPLEXITY 1 (300/400 XP)

#### SETUP

**Number of Successes:** 4

**Number of Failures:** 3

**Primary Skills:** Bluff, Diplomacy, Endurance, Intimidate

*Bhral mentioned that the Red Dragoon Tavern in the old mining town of Brimstone, which played a part in his dream, catered to tough customers. He didn't lie! Several dangerous-looking patrons reach for their weapons and stare at you as you enter. Any of these scoundrels may know something about the kidnapping Sibbya's boy. Hopefully, you can obtain the information and make it out of the Red Dragoon in one piece.*

#### SKILL CHALLENGE

The PCs engage in a skill challenge to learn about what happened to the Old One and the boy and find a map of the Gorge of Gauros that can lead them to the captives. Describe the scene to them, ask them what they do, translate their actions into skill checks, and then describe the next scene. Continue this process until the group has achieved four successes or three failures.

The following scenes are provided as examples. Feel free to customize them based on what the PCs do, and give hints to the PCs about what skills might be useful if they're having trouble deciding what to do. If a PC wants to use a skill that's not listed here and you think it's applicable, they need to make a DC 19/21 check with that skill to garner a success.

A no-good elf named Urilyz acts as a recruiter for Thayan mercenaries in the area. He knows that a Thayan commander was seeking mercenaries to capture a Rashemen Old One traveling with a young child and then guard a cave in the Gorge of Gauros, and he remembers recruiting some Zhent mercenaries to carry out those duties. He was expecting another adventuring band to arrive, but they were late, and he is supposed to send them to the cave to help guard. He mistakes the PCs for that group.

#### SCENE 1 – DRINKS FOR EVERYONE!

*The aged dwarf bartender reaches for a dusty bottle on the top shelf and places it on the bar. He points to the*

*party and says, "This is the best drink in the house. Who wants the first? Only one silver!"*

**Endurance (DC 19/21):** This is the foulest tasting moonshine liquor to ever come from a dirty still. Any party member who drinks it must make an Endurance check to avoid spitting it out and coughing for several minutes. At least one PC must try in order to make the required Diplomacy check for this scene, and if more than half of the PCs fail, the party receives a -4 penalty to their Diplomacy checks.

**Perception (DC 14/16):** Any party member who succeeds on an active Perception check notices the bottle hasn't been opened in some time. This grants a +2 circumstance bonus to the Endurance check, assuming this fact is pointed out to the party members before they drink the foul liquid, so they can brace themselves.

**Diplomacy (DC 19/21):** The bartender is very reluctant to talk anyone in the party about their inquiries. At least one of the successes to the challenge must be a Diplomacy check. If successful, the bartender points out a dirty elf with ragged clothing sitting in the back of the bar. On a failure, every party member spends 5 gold pieces on over priced drinks and drinks before the bartender points out the elf as someone the PCs should talk to if they are looking for any information about questionable acts done in the area.

#### SCENE 2 – WOULD I LIE TO YOU?!

*A dirty elf in ragged clothing sits in the corner with his back against the wall. As the party approaches, he says, "About time you mercenary scum showed up! Did the crazy bard ask you to bring diapers and mother's milk to the Gorge of Gauros?"*

**Insight (DC 10/12):** On a successful Insight check, a PC realizes Urilyz the elf has mistaken the party for someone else. This grants a +2 circumstance bonus to each Bluff check.

**Bluff (DC 19/21):** The PCs must come up with a good story for being late. Also, they need to make a second Bluff check to convince the elf that the party has worked for "the crazy bard" in the past. At least two of the successes in the challenge must be Bluff checks. If both checks are successful, the elf admits he knows where Sibbya's son is and places a map of the Gorge of Gauros on the table. He also reveals that the Zhents have already captured the old man and the child to the Gorge for holding until "you know who" (Szass Tam) can come retrieve them.

If both checks are unsuccessful, the Urilyz keeps the map in his hand and says he has a map to sell the PCs. In either case, go to scene 3.

### SCENE 3 – BAR ROOM BUDDIES

*A well-armed mercenary group of six humans enters the inn and goes straight to the elf's table. One of the mercenaries points at the party and says, "Who in the Nine Hells are you? This is our job!" They glower at the dirty elf and demand he gives them the details of the job.*

**Thievery (DC 14/16):** Any party member can make a Thievery check to seize the map. Success grants a +2 circumstance bonus to the Intimidate check. If the elf keeps the map in his hand, add +5 to the DC.

**Athletics (DC 14/16):** One party member does something to look tough. Success grants a +2 circumstance bonus to the Intimidate check.

**Intimidate (DC 19/21):** Any party member can intimidate the mercenaries to walk away without the map. At least one success in the challenge must be an Intimidate check.

### ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

Completing the skill challenge usually takes the PCs about 30 minutes in game time unless they do something out of the ordinary. Success allows the party to leave the bar without any trouble with a copy of the map. Failure means a bar room brawl breaks out. The patrons assist the mercenary group in pummeling the PCs. To save time, simply roleplay the combat. At the conclusion of the brawl, the PCs lose one healing surge each.

Even if the PCs fail the skill challenge, the elf agrees to sell them a map of the boy's location in the gorge. The cost is 5 gold pieces per PC, which is more than the other mercenary group is willing to pay.

The trip to the place on the map takes about 4 hours. They PCs should be encouraged by Bhral not to spend time sleeping for the evening when the boy is in danger. If the PCs take an extended rest from this point forward, there are repercussions in the final encounter.

### EXPERIENCE POINTS

The characters receive 60/80 experience points for successfully completing the skill challenge.

## ENCOUNTER 2: THE SPIRIT WORLD

### SETUP

In this encounter, the PCs find the place where the map leads them in the Gorge of Gauros. However, the PCs must find the entrance to the cave, as well as deal with an incursion from the spirit world. They also learn the source of their visions and nightmares.

After leaving town, the PCs can use the elf's map to enter the Gorge of Gauros. As the adventurers enter the area marked on the map supplied by the elf, read:

*Your trip down into the Gorge of Gauros has been anything but peaceful. First were the large groups of Rashemen warriors patrolling the border between their lands and Thay, ever vigilant against the dangers posed by that horrible place. Then were the undead raiding parties of the forces of Thay, equally vigilant in their orders to take more territory for their liege, the lich Szass Tam.*

*But those threats and distractions pale in comparison to what you see now. You have arrived at the place where the map pointed, and nothing greets you but a single large boulder at the bottom of a ravine next to the River Gauros near the shores of Lake Mulsantir.*

*However, the night's peace is shattered by ghostly images. As the images fade into existence, they begin to take part in a phantom battle: undead and living Thayan soldiers cross the river as if it is not there, resisted by forces of Rashemen witches and berserkers. Both sides kill with no hesitation, until many of the Thayan forces are wiped out by a deluge of phantom water.*

PCs making a DC 20 History check know that many such battles between Thay and Rashemen have taken place here, although this battle was a bit more famous and it occurred in 1375 DR, and it was an important turning point in Szass Tam's plans to expand his power.

A DC 15 Arcana or Religion check tells the PCs that at certain times the fabric between this world and The Fugue Plane grows thin, especially in places that have known great strife. The Rashemen call this time the appearance of "the spirit world." They believe that such times have the potential to be useful in communicating with ancestors and other spirits.

### RESTLESS SPIRITS

As the phantom battle rages around them, and the Thayan forces are wiped out by the raging of the River Gauros, all of the PCs and Bhral experience the following:

*As the phantom battle continues, your vision blurs and your body burns with an inner heat. Ghostly forms pour from each of you, and Bhral falls to the ground. One of the spirits, in the form of a human male wearing plain brown robes, speaks in a voice like a strong breeze. "You must hurry. The spirit world is close by now. The two you seek do not have long. We brought you here to save them."*

*The spirits that came from you are quickly pulled into the battle happening all around you. A single ghostly form wearing the uniform of Thayan soldier seems to notice you for the first time, and it moves in your direction.*

As this is a spirit, nothing can be done to stop it. The spirit picks one PC at random and attacks (+14/+15 vs. Fortitude). The PC selected loses 1 healing surge if the attack is successful. However, if that PC has **Story Award CORE05 Gratitude of Bhral**, the orc throws himself between the PC and the spirit, and the orc collapses as he takes the attack instead. In this case, the PC does not lose a healing surge. Consider only attacking a PC who has the Story Award. After the spirit attacks, it dissipates.

### ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

If Bhral took the attack for the PC, he is alive but cannot move on his own. If he did not, he was attacked by a different spirit and injured. He tells the PCs to shelter him somewhere in the gorge, and they should continue on without him.

Searching the area, the PCs find no apparent life. A DC 25 Perception check finds that a trail leads up to the boulder, but an attempt was made to hide the trail so that it is impossible to tell what creatures, or how many, came through the area.

The players need to make a DC 20 Strength check to move the boulder. Once they do, the party finds stairs leading down into a cavern beneath the boulder.

## ENCOUNTER 3: CRASHING THE PARTY

ENCOUNTER LEVEL 8/10 (1650/2300 XP)

### SETUP

This encounter includes the following creatures:

- 2 Zhent soldiers (S)
- 1 Zhent war mage (W)
- 1 owlbear (O)

At the bottom of the stairs a piece of leather covers the opening leading into the chamber.

When the adventurers enter the cave area, read:

*This large chamber has been roughly worked from a natural cave. Several torches provide light. The room contains men dressed in dark clothes, wearing the symbols of the Zhentarim. The floors, walls and ceiling are blood red.*

### FEATURES OF THE AREA

**Illumination:** The area is brightly lit.

**Ceiling:** The ceiling is 10 feet off the floor.

**Blood Rock:** The entire cave (but not the stairs) is made of Blood Rock. (See *Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 67). Accordingly, every creature in the cave, including the PCs, can score a critical hit on a natural die roll of 19 or 20.

**Chairs and Tables:** Squares containing a table are impassible terrain. Squares containing a chair are difficult terrain.

**Two Columns:** The columns near the owlbear's niche are impassible terrain. They hold chains where the Zhents could chain prisoners for the owlbear to eat.

**Water Basin:** This basin does not hinder movement, and it holds fresh water for drinking or cleaning.

**Stairs:** The stairs are 10 squares long from the surface to the chamber entrance. It is normal movement going down the stairs or laterally, but moving up the stairs counts as difficult terrain.

### TACTICS

The Zhent mercenaries are prepared for the PCs, having heard the boulder being moved, unless the PCs took

precautions. There should not be a surprise round if the PCs can approach the leather curtain with a DC 18 Stealth check. Otherwise the mercenaries hear the PCs' approach and attack the PCs with ranged/area attacks through the leather curtain (which blocks line of sight but does not block line of effect).

The owlbear has been trained to remain in its niche, attacking anything coming into the room down the stairs unless the mercenaries command it not to. The owlbear tries to grab and bite any PCs it can get its claws on.

The Zhent soldiers interpose themselves between the PCs and the war mage, slowing or pushing the PCs back into the reach of the owlbear. They know to try to remain outside the area of the war mage's attacks if he has the PCs targeted in a cluster.

The Zhent war mage uses his ranged and area attacks on the PCs gathered in the entryway. He makes every effort to keep allies out of his attacks, but if the situation is desperate enough, he does not discriminate.

### SCALING THE ENCOUNTER

Make the following adjustments to the combat based on the number of PCs present.

**Four PCs:** Remove one Zhent soldier.

**Six PCs:** Add one Zhent soldier.

### ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

By sparing a Zhent mercenary, the PCs qualify for Task 3 of the "Zhentarim Infiltration" Player Reward Card. Captives can only say they were hired to capture an old Rashemen and a child, bring them here, and then guard the entrance. They know that undead inhabit whatever lies beyond the ladder, but they have only dealt with one such creature, and they don't know what it was.

Once the PCs defeat the monsters, they can use the ladder in the back of the cave to proceed to Encounter 3. The ladder descends 40 feet. The PCs should have no trouble using the ladder (Athletics DC 5).

### EXPERIENCE POINTS

The characters receive 330/460 experience points for successfully defeating the enemies.

### TREASURE

The Zhent war mage has a large sack of gold coins that totals 150/200 gp per PC.

## ENCOUNTER 3: CRASHING THE PARTY STATISTICS (LOW LEVEL)

<b>Zhent War Mage (level 8)</b>		<b>Level 8 Artillery</b>
Medium natural humanoid, human		XP 350
<b>Initiative</b> +7	<b>Senses</b> Perception +7	
<b>HP</b> 68; <b>Bloodied</b> 34		
<b>AC</b> 21; <b>Fortitude</b> 19, <b>Reflex</b> 21, <b>Will</b> 20		
<b>Speed</b> 6		
m <b>Dagger</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>		
+11 vs. AC; 1d4+1 damage.		
r <b>Magic Missile</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Force</b>		
Ranged 20; +13 vs. Reflex; 2d4+6 damage.		
C <b>Zhent Flash</b> (standard; encounter) ♦ <b>Radiant</b>		
Close burst 3; +12 vs. Reflex; 1d8+6 radiant damage, and the target is blinded until the end of the war mage's next turn.		
A <b>Fire Blast</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Fire</b>		
Area burst 1 within 10; +12 vs. Reflex; 1d6+6 fire damage.		
A <b>Black Vapors</b> (standard; daily) ♦ <b>Poison</b>		
Area burst 3 within 20; +12 vs. Reflex; 1d6+6 poison damage, and the target takes ongoing 5 poison damage and takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls (save ends both).		
<b>Wand of Accuracy</b> (free; encounter) ♦ <b>Implement</b>		
Requires wand; the war mage gains a +3 bonus to one attack roll.		
<b>Alignment</b> Evil		<b>Languages</b> Chondathon, Common
<b>Skills</b> Arcana +14, Diplomacy +10, Dungeoneering +12, Insight +12		
<b>Str</b> 10 (+4)	<b>Dex</b> 16 (+7)	<b>Wis</b> 16 (+7)
<b>Con</b> 14 (+6)	<b>Int</b> 20 (+8)	<b>Cha</b> 12 (+5)
<b>Equipment</b> robes, dagger, wand		

<b>Owlbear</b>		<b>Level 8 Elite Brute</b>
Large fey beast		XP 700
<b>Initiative</b> +6	<b>Senses</b> Perception +12; low-light vision	
<b>HP</b> 212; <b>Bloodied</b> 106; see also <i>stunning screech</i>		
<b>AC</b> 22; <b>Fortitude</b> 22, <b>Reflex</b> 19, <b>Will</b> 20		
<b>Saving Throws</b> +2		
<b>Speed</b> 7		
<b>Action Points</b> 1		
m <b>Claw</b> (standard; at-will)		
Reach 2; +12 vs. AC; 2d6+5 damage.		
M <b>Double Attack</b> (standard; at-will)		
The owlbear makes two claw attacks. If both claws hit the same target, the target is grabbed (until escape).		
M <b>Bite</b> (standard; at-will)		
Grabbed target only; automatic hit, 4d8+5 damage		
C <b>Stunning Screech</b> (free, when first bloodied; encounter)		
Close burst 1; +10 vs. Fortitude, the target is stunned (save ends).		
<b>Alignment</b> Unaligned		<b>Languages</b> --
<b>Str</b> 20 (+9)	<b>Dex</b> 14 (+6)	<b>Wis</b> 16 (+7)
<b>Con</b> 16 (+7)	<b>Int</b> 2 (+0)	<b>Cha</b> 10 (+4)

<b>Zhent Soldier (level 7)</b>		<b>Level 7 Soldier</b>
Medium fey humanoid		XP 300
<b>Initiative</b> +5	<b>Senses</b> Perception +3	
<b>HP</b> 79; <b>Bloodied</b> 39		
<b>AC</b> 23; <b>Fortitude</b> 20, <b>Reflex</b> 18, <b>Will</b> 18		
<b>Speed</b> 5		
m <b>Longsword</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>		
+12 vs. AC; 1d8 + 7 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the Zhent soldier's next turn.		
r <b>Crossbow</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>		
Ranged 15/30; +11 vs. AC; 1d8+3 damage.		
M <b>Sly Cut</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>		
Requires longsword; affects a target marked by the Zhent soldier; +14 vs. AC; 1d8+7 damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).		
M <b>Tide of Iron</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>		
Requires shield; +13 vs. AC; 1d8+5 damage, and target is pushed 1 square if it is Large or smaller. The Zhent soldier can shift 1 square into the space vacated by the target.		
<b>Marked Advantage</b>		
A Zhent soldier deals an extra 1d4 damage on all attacks against a target that is marked by it.		
<b>Alignment</b> Evil		<b>Languages</b> Chondathon, Common
<b>Skills</b> Endurance +8, Intimidate +10, Streetwise +10		
<b>Str</b> 18 (+7)	<b>Dex</b> 15 (+5)	<b>Wis</b> 11 (+3)
<b>Con</b> 15 (+5)	<b>Int</b> 10 (+3)	<b>Cha</b> 15 (+5)
<b>Equipment</b> scale armor, heavy shield, longsword, crossbow, 20 bolts		

## ENCOUNTER 3: CRASHING THE PARTY STATISTICS (HIGH LEVEL)

<b>Zhent War Mage (level 10)</b>	<b>Level 10 Artillery</b>
Medium natural humanoid, human	XP 500
<b>Initiative</b> +8 <b>Senses Perception</b> +8	
<b>HP</b> 80; <b>Bloodied</b> 40	
<b>AC</b> 23; <b>Fortitude</b> 21, <b>Reflex</b> 23, <b>Will</b> 22	
<b>Speed</b> 6	
<b>m Dagger</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	
+13 vs. AC; 1d4+2 damage.	
<b>r Magic Missile</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Force</b>	
Ranged 20; +15 vs. Reflex; 2d4+7 damage.	
<b>C Zhent Flash</b> (standard; encounter) ♦ <b>Radiant</b>	
Close burst 3; +14 vs. Reflex; 1d8+7 radiant damage, and the target is blinded until the end of the war mage's next turn.	
<b>A Fire Blast</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Fire</b>	
Area burst 1 within 10; +14 vs. Reflex; 1d6+7 fire damage.	
<b>A Black Vapors</b> (standard; daily) ♦ <b>Poison</b>	
Area burst 3 within 20; +14 vs. Reflex; 1d6+7 poison damage, and the target takes ongoing 5 poison damage and takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls (save ends both).	
<b>Wand of Accuracy</b> (free; encounter) ♦ <b>Implement</b>	
Requires wand; the war mage gains a +3 bonus to one attack roll.	
<b>Alignment</b> Evil <b>Languages</b> Chondathon, Common	
<b>Skills</b> Arcana +15, Diplomacy +11, Dungeoneering +13, Insight +13	
<b>Str</b> 10 (+5) <b>Dex</b> 16 (+8) <b>Wis</b> 16 (+8)	
<b>Con</b> 14 (+7) <b>Int</b> 20 (+9) <b>Cha</b> 12 (+6)	
<b>Equipment</b> robes, dagger, wand	

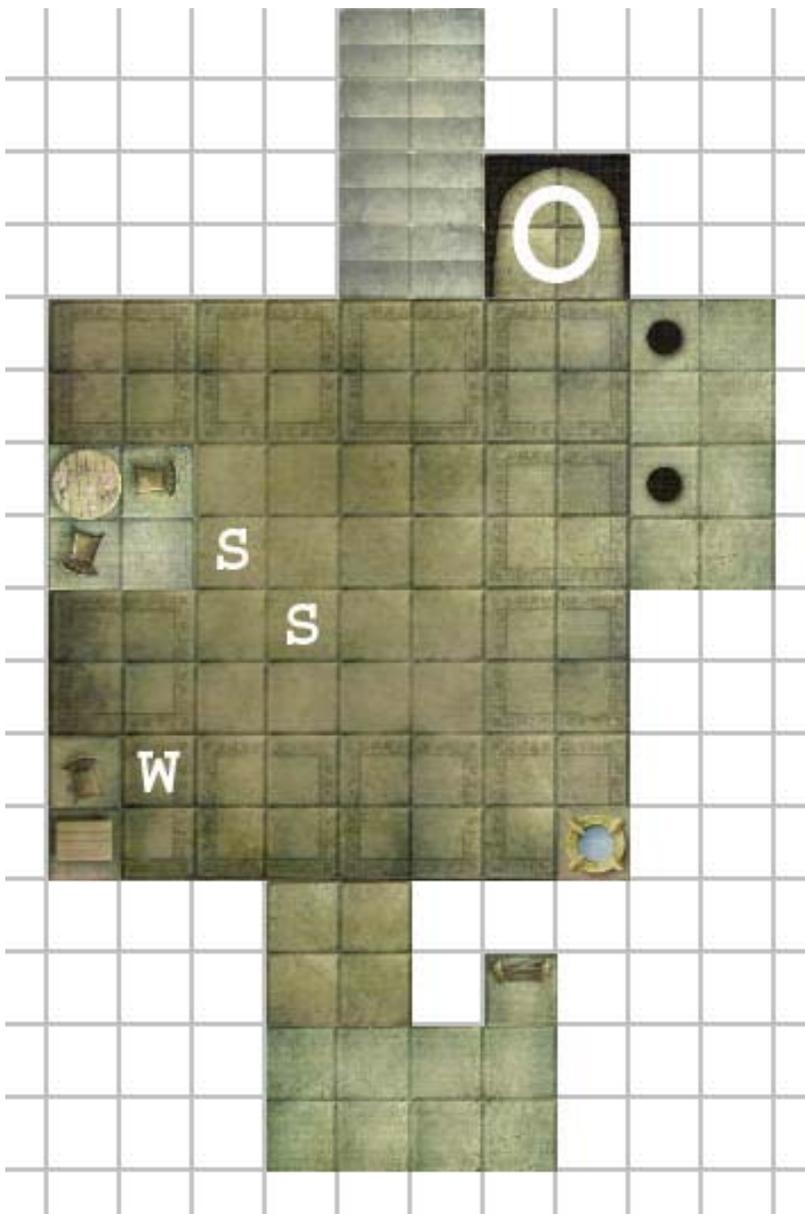
<b>Zhent Soldier (level 9)</b>	<b>Level 9 Soldier</b>
Medium fey humanoid	XP 400
<b>Initiative</b> +6 <b>Senses Perception</b> +4	
<b>HP</b> 95; <b>Bloodied</b> 47	
<b>AC</b> 25; <b>Fortitude</b> 22, <b>Reflex</b> 20, <b>Will</b> 20	
<b>Speed</b> 5	
<b>m Longsword</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	
+14 vs. AC; 1d8 + 8 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the Zhent soldier's next turn.	
<b>r Crossbow</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	
Ranged 15/30; +13 vs. AC; 1d8+4 damage.	
<b>M Sly Cut</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	
Requires longsword; affects a target marked by the Zhent soldier; +15 vs. AC; 1d8+8 damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).	
<b>M Tide of Iron</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	
Requires shield; +15 vs. AC; 1d8+6 damage, and target is pushed 1 square if it is Large or smaller. The Zhent soldier can shift 1 square into the space vacated by the target.	
<b>Marked Advantage</b>	
A Zhent soldier deals an extra 1d4 damage on all attacks against a target that is marked by it.	
<b>Alignment</b> Evil <b>Languages</b> Chondathon, Common	
<b>Skills</b> Endurance +9, Intimidate +11, Streetwise +11	
<b>Str</b> 18 (+8) <b>Dex</b> 15 (+6) <b>Wis</b> 11 (+4)	
<b>Con</b> 15 (+6) <b>Int</b> 10 (+4) <b>Cha</b> 15 (+6)	
<b>Equipment</b> scale armor, heavy shield, longsword, crossbow, 20 bolts	

<b>Owlbear (level 10)</b>	<b>Level 10 Elite Brute</b>
Large fey beast	XP 1000
<b>Initiative</b> +6 <b>Senses Perception</b> +12; low-light vision	
<b>HP</b> 252; <b>Bloodied</b> 126; see also <i>stunning screech</i>	
<b>AC</b> 24; <b>Fortitude</b> 24, <b>Reflex</b> 21, <b>Will</b> 22	
<b>Saving Throws</b> +2	
<b>Speed</b> 7	
<b>Action Points</b> 1	
<b>m Claw</b> (standard; at-will)	
Reach 2; +14 vs. AC; 2d6+6 damage.	
<b>M Double Attack</b> (standard; at-will)	
The owlbear makes two claw attacks. If both claws hit the same target, the target is grabbed (until escape).	
<b>M Bite</b> (standard; at-will)	
Grabbed target only; automatic hit, 4d8+6 damage	
<b>C Stunning Screech</b> (free, when first bloodied; encounter)	
Close burst 1; +12 vs. Fortitude, the target is stunned (save ends).	
<b>Alignment</b> Unaligned <b>Languages</b> --	
<b>Str</b> 20 (+10) <b>Dex</b> 14 (+7) <b>Wis</b> 16 (+8)	
<b>Con</b> 16 (+8) <b>Int</b> 2 (+1) <b>Cha</b> 10 (+5)	

# ENCOUNTER 3: CRASHING THE PARTY MAP

## FANE OF THE FORGOTTEN GODS

Semi Circle / Table & Chair	1x2	x1
Floor / Outdoor Temple	8x8	x1
Dragon Fountain / Floor	2x2	x1
Table & Chairs / Alcove	2x2	x1
Darkness / Alcove	2x2	x1
Wall / Mists	4x2	x1
Floor w/Columns / Stairs	2x4	x1
Blue Cistern / Statue	1x1	x1
Floor w/Divider / Floor w/Columns	2x4	x1
Ladder / Flaming Cauldron	1x1	x1



## ENCOUNTER 4: BURNING HATRED

### ENCOUNTER LEVEL 8/11 (1900/2700 XP)

#### SETUP

This encounter includes the following creatures:

1 gloomblade dread warrior (G)

2 battle wights (W)

2 flameskull (F)

After climbing down the ladder, the PCs travel 30 minutes through a tunnel until they reach this very large cave. The tunnel comes into the chamber five feet above the cave floor.

As the adventurers enter the cave area, read:

*This very large chamber has been expertly carved from a natural cave. Although the room is pitch dark, two torches give off dim light from their positions on the walls further into the room. The air is thick with the scent of decay and smoke. Towards the back of the cave, you see a red rune glowing faintly on the floor.*

The PCs need to make a DC 24/25 Perception check to realize the flameskulls are not torches. If they fail this check, the flameskulls get a surprise round.

#### FEATURES OF THE AREA

**Illumination:** The area is first illuminated only by the dim glow of the flameskulls. As soon as it is no longer advantageous for the enemies to move in the darkness, the flameskulls brighten to their full glow.

**Ceiling:** The ceiling is 25 feet off the floor.

**Raised Platform:** A column on the left side of the room is raised 10 feet. Climbing the column to get atop it takes a DC 20 Athletics check.

**Glowing Rune:** The rune at the south end of the chamber teleports anything stepping onto it to the area described in the next encounter. A DC 25 Arcana check reveals that anyone stepping on the rune is teleported. The Analyze Portal ritual can also be used. The portal's last user was a human (the Rashemen Old One) (DC 30 Arcana) and it was created by Szass Tam (DC 46 Arcana).

#### TACTICS

The gloomblade dread warrior was created by Szass Tam to guard this room. It begins the encounter

invisible and hiding below the tunnel entrance to the cave. It bides its time until it can get a good shot at a striker, hoping to blind the PC with its *gloomstrike*. It uses its action point and *shadow jaunt* before it is bloodied.

The battle wights begin the encounter in a place where they cannot be seen from the tunnel entrance. They engage the front line PCs using *souldraining longsword* to immobilize them. Any wight who has taken at least 10 points of damage and is within range of an immobilized PC attacks using *soul reaping* power.

The flameskulls use their *fireball* power as early as possible, centering the area attack on the party. The flameskulls exclude the gloomblade and any battle wights in the area. In later rounds, the flameskulls attack any PCs not engaged in melee with their *flame ray* power. The flameskulls avoid melee combat preferring to lead the PCs on a merry chase with their *fly* ability.

**Optional:** For some levity, if appropriate, have the flameskulls verbally taunt the PCs each round as a free action. Consider using phrases such as “You’re the worst [PC class] ever!” or “Have you tried practicing with that [weapon/implement]!” The flameskulls can even spend a minor action to use their *mage hand* ability to give themselves a “thumbs up” or give each other a “high-five” after hitting.

#### SCALING THE ENCOUNTER

Make the following adjustments to the combat based on the number of PCs present.

**Four PCs:** Remove one battle wight.

**Six PCs:** Add one battle wight.

#### ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

Once the PCs defeat the monsters, they can use the glowing rune in the back of the cave to proceed to Encounter 4.

#### EXPERIENCE POINTS

The characters receive 380/540 experience points for successfully defeating the monsters.

## ENCOUNTER 4: BURNING HATRED STATISTICS (LOW LEVEL)

<b>Battle Wight</b>		<b>Level 9 Soldier</b>	
Medium natural humanoid (undead)		XP 400	
<b>Initiative</b> +7	<b>Senses</b> Perception +3; darkvision		
<b>HP</b> 98; <b>Bloodied</b> 49			
<b>AC</b> 25; <b>Fortitude</b> 22, <b>Reflex</b> 18, <b>Will</b> 22			
<b>Immune</b> disease, poison; <b>Resist</b> 10 necrotic; <b>Vulnerable</b> 5 radiant			
<b>Speed</b> 5			
m <b>Soul draining Longsword</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Necrotic, Weapon</b>			
+15 vs. AC; 1d8 damage + 5 necrotic damage and target loses 1 healing surge and is immobilized (save ends).			
R <b>Soul Reaping</b> (standard; recharge 5/6) ♦ <b>Healing, Necrotic</b>			
Ranged 5; affects an immobilized target only; +12 vs. Fortitude; 2d8 + 5 necrotic damage, and the battle wight regains 10 hit points.			
<b>Alignment</b> Evil		<b>Languages</b> Common	
<b>Skills</b> Intimidate +14			
<b>Str</b> 20 (+9)	<b>Dex</b> 13 (+5)	<b>Wis</b> 9 (+3)	
<b>Con</b> 18 (+8)	<b>Int</b> 12 (+5)	<b>Cha</b> 20 (+9)	
<b>Equipment</b> plate armor, heavy shield, longsword			

<b>Flameskull (level 7)</b>		<b>Level 7 Artillery</b>	
Tiny natural animate (undead)		XP 300	
<b>Initiative</b> +6	<b>Senses</b> Perception +10		
<b>HP</b> 64; <b>Bloodied</b> 32			
<b>Regeneration</b> 5			
<b>AC</b> 20; <b>Fortitude</b> 17, <b>Reflex</b> 22, <b>Will</b> 20			
<b>Immune</b> disease, poison; <b>Resist</b> 10 fire, 5 necrotic; <b>Vulnerable</b> 5 radiant			
<b>Speed</b> fly 10 (hover)			
m <b>Fiery Bite</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Fire</b>			
Reach 0; +9 vs. AC; 1 damage plus 1d8 fire damage.			
R <b>Flame Ray</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Fire</b>			
Ranged 10; +11 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 5 fire damage.			
A <b>Fireball</b> (standard; encounter) ♦ <b>Fire</b>			
Area burst 3 within 20; +11 vs. Reflex; 3d6 + 5 fire damage. <i>Miss</i> : Half damage. The flameskull can exclude two allies from the effect.			
<b>Mage Hand</b> (minor; at-will) ♦ <b>Conjuration</b>			
As the wizard power <i>mage hand</i> (Player's Handbook 158)			
<b>Illumination</b>			
The flameskull sheds bright light out to 5 squares, but it can reduce its brightness to dim light out to 2 squares as a free action.			
<b>Alignment</b> Unaligned		<b>Languages</b> Common	
<b>Skills</b> Stealth +11			
<b>Str</b> 5 (+0)	<b>Dex</b> 16 (+6)	<b>Wis</b> 14 (+5)	
<b>Con</b> 16 (+6)	<b>Int</b> 22 (+9)	<b>Cha</b> 20 (+8)	

<b>Gloomblade Dread Warrior</b>		<b>Level 6 Elite Lurker</b>	
Medium natural shadow humanoid (undead)		XP 500	
<b>Initiative</b> +12	<b>Senses</b> Perception +5; low-light vision		
<b>HP</b> 96; <b>Bloodied</b> 48; see also <i>veil of shadows</i>			
<b>AC</b> 20; <b>Fortitude</b> 17, <b>Reflex</b> 18, <b>Will</b> 15			
<b>Immune</b> disease, poison; <b>Resist</b> 5 necrotic; <b>Vulnerable</b> 5 radiant			
<b>Saving Throws</b> +2 (+4 vs. charm effects)			
<b>Speed</b> 5; see also <i>shadow jaunt</i>			
<b>Action Points</b> 1			
m <b>Greatsword</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>			
+11 vs. AC; 1d10 + 3 damage; see also <i>gloomstrike</i> .			
<b>Gloomstrike</b>			
If the gloomblade hits a target that can't see him, the target is blinded until the end of the gloomblade's next turn.			
<b>Shadow Jaunt</b> (move; encounter) ♦ <b>Teleportation</b>			
The gloomblade teleports 3 squares and becomes insubstantial until the start of his next turn.			
<b>Veil of Shadows</b> (move; at-will) ♦ <b>Illusion</b>			
The gloomblade turns invisible and moves up to his speed. The gloomblade cannot use this power while bloodied.			
<b>Alignment</b> Evil		<b>Languages</b> Common	
<b>Skills</b> Acrobatics +14, Stealth +14			
<b>Str</b> 17 (+6)	<b>Dex</b> 20 (+8)	<b>Wis</b> 15 (+5)	
<b>Con</b> 12 (+4)	<b>Int</b> 10 (+3)	<b>Cha</b> 11 (+3)	
<b>Equipment</b> shadowmail, greatsword			

## ENCOUNTER 4: BURNING HATRED STATISTICS (HIGH LEVEL)

Battle Wight		Level 11 Soldier	
Medium natural humanoid (undead)		XP 600	
Initiative +8	Senses Perception +4; darkvision		
HP 114; Bloodied 57			
AC 27; Fortitude 24, Reflex 20, Will 24			
Immune disease, poison; Resist 10 necrotic; Vulnerable 5 radiant			
Speed 5			
m <b>Soul draining Longsword</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ Necrotic, Weapon			
+17 vs. AC; 1d8 damage + 6 necrotic damage and target loses 1 healing surge and is immobilized (save ends).			
R <b>Soul Reaping</b> (standard; recharge 5 6) ♦ Healing, Necrotic			
Ranged 5; affects an immobilized target only; +14 vs. Fortitude; 2d8+6 necrotic damage, and the battle wight regains 10 hit points.			
Alignment Evil		Languages Common	
Skills Intimidate +15			
Str 20 (+10)	Dex 13 (+6)	Wis 9 (+4)	
Con 18 (+9)	Int 12 (+6)	Cha 20 (+10)	
Equipment plate armor, heavy shield, longsword			

Flameskull (level 9)		Level 9 Artillery	
Tiny natural animate (undead)		XP 400	
Initiative +7	Senses Perception +11		
HP 76; Bloodied 38			
Regeneration 5			
AC 22; Fortitude 19, Reflex 24, Will 22			
Immune disease, poison; Resist 10 fire, 5 necrotic; Vulnerable 5 radiant			
Speed fly 10 (hover)			
m <b>Fiery Bite</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ Fire			
Reach 0; +11 vs. AC; 1 damage plus 1d8 fire damage.			
R <b>Flame Ray</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ Fire			
Ranged 10; +13 vs. Reflex; 2d6+6 fire damage.			
A <b>Fireball</b> (standard; encounter) ♦ Fire			
Area burst 3 within 20; +13 vs. Reflex; 3d6 + 6 fire damage. <i>Miss</i> : Half damage. The flameskull can exclude two allies from the effect.			
Mage Hand (minor; at-will) ♦ Conjuration			
As the wizard power <i>mage hand</i> (Player's Handbook 158)			
Illumination			
The flameskull sheds bright light out to 5 squares, but it can reduce its brightness to dim light out to 2 squares as a free action.			
Alignment Unaligned		Languages Common	
Skills Stealth +12			
Str 5 (+1)	Dex 16 (+7)	Wis 14 (+6)	
Con 16 (+7)	Int 22 (+10)	Cha 20 (+9)	

Gloomblade Dread Warrior		Level 7 Elite Lurker	
Medium natural shadow humanoid (undead)		XP 700	
Initiative +12	Senses Perception +6; low-light vision		
HP 108; Bloodied 54; see also <i>veil of shadows</i>			
AC 21; Fortitude 18, Reflex 19, Will 16			
Immune disease, poison; Resist 5 necrotic; Vulnerable 5 radiant			
Saving Throws +2 (+4 vs. charm effects)			
Speed 5; see also <i>shadow jaunt</i>			
Action Points 1			
m <b>Greatsword</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon			
+12 vs. AC; 1d10 + 4 damage; see also <i>gloomstrike</i> .			
<b>Gloomstrike</b>			
If the gloomblade hits a target that can't see him, the target is blinded until the end of the gloomblade's next turn.			
Shadow Jaunt (move; encounter) ♦ Teleportation			
The gloomblade teleports 3 squares and becomes insubstantial until the start of his next turn.			
Veil of Shadows (move; at-will) ♦ Illusion			
The gloomblade turns invisible and moves up to his speed. The gloomblade cannot use this power while bloodied.			
Alignment Evil		Languages Common	
Skills Acrobatics +15, Stealth +15			
Str 17 (+7)	Dex 20 (+9)	Wis 15 (+6)	
Con 12 (+5)	Int 10 (+4)	Cha 11 (+4)	
Equipment shadowmail, greatsword			



## ENCOUNTER 5: CLAWED AT THE GORGE!

ENCOUNTER LEVEL 7/9 (1450/2200 XP)

### SETUP

This encounter includes the following creatures:

11/10 vampire spawn bloodhunters (V)  
1/2 skull lord(s) (S)

After using the teleportation rune in the previous room, the PCs appear in the areas marked X (randomly placed) on the map of this chamber. If the PCs step on the teleporter in different rounds, the ones that go first must contend with the combat for that many rounds without help.

As the adventurers enter this room, read:

*There is no light here. This room is made of bricks and mortar. The air is thick with the scent of decay and rot. There are two statues in the chamber. An eerie silver wall of pulsating energy blocks the room's only exit.*

As the initial force of vampire spawn minions attack in the statue chamber, both of the statues speak simultaneously.

*“Only the most wicked and depraved of you may pass through the silver screen of acrimony. When the barrier has been broken by the worst of you, thirty heartbeats must pass before the rest of you pass.*

A DC 25 History check recognizes the statues as depicting Szass Tam, lich and supreme leader of Thay, one of the most dangerous, despicable, and cunning creatures in all the Realms. A DC 15 Spellcraft check recognizes the magic of the statues as a Magic Mouth ritual, but it was somehow altered in some way to make it much power powerful and versatile.

These instructions from the statues are a trick by Szass time. First, he hopes that make the PCs argue and debate about who among them is the most wicked, giving the skull lord(s) more time to restore minions killed already. Second, he hopes that the first PC might walk through alone and the others wait 5

rounds, given the skull lord(s) and vampire spawn the chance to slay that first PC through more easily.

### FEATURES OF THE AREA

**Illumination:** The area is dark.

**Ceiling:** The ceiling is ten-feet high.

**Statues:** The two statues depict the same skeletal figure in red robes that the PCs saw in their visions/nightmares (Szass Tam).

**Pulsating Eerie Wall:** This is nothing more than an exotic magical wall and is not a trap. The wall is pure energy that blocks line of sight and line of effect, as well as all sound. Also, no attacks can pass through the wall. The PCs take no damage from passing through the wall. Nothing can pass back through the wall from the main chamber into the statue chamber, even with teleportation.

**Three Runes:** The throne, rune circle, and swirling portal tiles represent the three runes. These runes take up large sections of the floor. They are simply etched into the floor until a living creature enters one, at which point it starts to glow. See Ending the Encounter below for more information on activating the runes.

### TACTICS

NOTE: These are a special version of vampire spawn from Thay. When they are reduced to 0 hit points, the spawn explode into a small swarm of bats and fly away (essentially dead). There are no in-game benefits/penalties for this ability but it should add to the DMs combat descriptions as flavor for the region. When the skull lord restores them, the bat swarm flies down and coalesces back into a spawn.

Half of the vampire spawn bloodhunters begin in the area with the statues. When the first PCs arrive via teleportation, the spawn immediately attack. After being killed by the PCs, each spawn turns into a swarm of bats and flies through the energy field into the main chamber with the skull lord. There, once per round using *skull of death's command*, the skull lord brings them back into existence with the rest of the minions there.

The skull lord avoids melee combat as much as possible and tries to keep the minions up and fighting. Once the PCs enter the main chamber through the silver wall, they get the full attack of all the minions. When a minion is killed here, it turns into a swarm of bats and flies around the ceiling. Make sure the PCs are aware that these bats are harmless in that form and cannot be hurt. When a skull lord uses its *skull of*

*death's command* to restore a spawn, it reappears in a square adjacent to the skull lord that restored it.

While the skull lord (or skull lords) fight, they mock the PCs, with their many skulls talking to one another. They talk about how that maybe they should let the PCs pass through and get to their goal, where Master Tam would enjoy pulling off their arms like wings off a fly.

The vampire spawn focus their attacks on PCs that are able to do damage to multiple targets, swarming them and trying to overwhelm them.

## SCALING THE ENCOUNTER

Make the following adjustments to the combat based on the number of PCs present.

**Four PCs:** Remove three bloodhunters.

**Six PCs:** Add four bloodhunters.

## ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

After all the minions and the skull lord(s) have been defeated, all that is left in the room are the runes and the swarms of bats flying around the ceiling. A DC 10 Arcana or Religion check reveals the following. If the PCs cannot make this check, they can take enough time to figure it out by observation:

- The runes are keyed to teleport anyone standing on them.
- All of the runes must be activated at the same time in order to make the teleportation occur.
- In order to completely activate a rune, both a living creature and an undead creature must be standing in the rune. If that happens, all of the living creatures in the room are teleported to the destination, but the undead creatures remain.

Studying the bats, the PCs can figure that with a DC 10 Religion check, or by directing necrotic energy/damage into the bat swarms, they can bring down a vampire spawn bloodhunter. If they can bring down three of these creatures, each attacks a different PC in a separate rune, thus activating the runes.

Using the Analyze Portal ritual, the PCs can learn that the portal's last user was a human (the Rashemen Old One) (DC 30 Arcana) and it was created by Szass Tam (DC 46 Arcana).

## EXPERIENCE POINTS

The characters receive 290/440 experience points for successfully defeating the monsters.

## ENCOUNTER 5: CLAWED AT THE GORGE! STATISTICS (LOW LEVEL)

Vampire Spawn Bloodhunter (level 8) Level 8 Minion	
Medium natural humanoid (undead)	XP 88
<b>Initiative</b> +7	<b>Senses</b> Perception +5; darkvision
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	
AC 23; <b>Fortitude</b> 20, <b>Reflex</b> 21, <b>Will</b> 20	
<b>Immune</b> disease, poison; <b>Resist</b> 10 necrotic	
<b>Speed</b> 7, climb 4 (spider climb)	
m <b>Claws</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Necrotic</b>	
+14 vs. AC; 6 necrotic damage (8 necrotic damage against a bloodied target).	
<b>Destroyed by Sunlight</b>	
A vampire spawn that begins its turn in direct sunlight can take only a single move action on its turn. If it ends the turn in direct sunlight, it burns to ash and is destroyed.	
<b>Alignment</b> Evil	<b>Languages</b> Common
<b>Str</b> 14 (+6)	<b>Dex</b> 16 (+7) <b>Wis</b> 12 (+7)
<b>Con</b> 14 (+6)	<b>Int</b> 10 (+4) <b>Cha</b> 14 (+8)

Skull Lord Level 10 Artillery (Leader)	
Medium natural humanoid (undead)	XP 500
<b>Initiative</b> +8	<b>Senses</b> Perception +7; darkvision
<b>Master of the Grave (Healing)</b> aura 2; undead allies in the aura gain regeneration 5 and a +2 bonus to savings throws. This aura ends when the <i>skull of death's command</i> is destroyed.	
HP 40; <b>Bloodied</b> 20; see also <i>triple skulls</i>	
AC 24; <b>Fortitude</b> 21, <b>Reflex</b> 22, <b>Will</b> 23	
<b>Immune</b> disease, poison; <b>Resist</b> 10 necrotic; <b>Vulnerable</b> 5 radiant	
<b>Speed</b> 6	
m <b>Bone Staff</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Necrotic, Weapon</b>	
+13 vs. AC; 1d8 + 2 damage plus 1d6 necrotic damage.	
R <b>Skull of Bonechilling Fear</b> (minor 1/round; at-will) ♦ <b>Cold, Fear</b>	
Ranged 10; +15 vs. Will; 1d6+3 cold damage, and target is pushed 5 squares	
R <b>Skull of Death's Command</b> (minor 1/round; at-will) ♦ <b>Necrotic</b>	
Ranged 10; the skull lord restores a destroyed minion within range. The restored undead minion's level must be no higher than skull lord's level +2. The restored minion stands in the space where it fell (or in any adjacent space, if that space is occupied) as a free action, has full normal hit points, and can take actions (as normal) on its next turn.	
R <b>Skull of Withering Flame</b> (minor 1/round; at-will) ♦ <b>Fire, Necrotic</b>	
Ranged 10; +15 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 +3 fire and necrotic damage.	
<b>Triple Skulls Healing</b>	
When a skull lord is reduced to 0 hit points, one of its skulls (determined randomly from the three listed above) is destroyed, and it loses the ability to use that power. If the creature has any skulls remaining, it instantly heals to full hit points (40 hit points). When all three skulls are destroyed, the skull lord is destroyed as well.	
<b>Alignment</b> Evil	<b>Languages</b> Common
<b>Skills</b> Bluff +15, Insight +12, Intimidate +15	
<b>Str</b> 14 (+7)	<b>Dex</b> 16 (+8) <b>Wis</b> 15 (+7)
<b>Con</b> 17 (+8)	<b>Int</b> 16 (+8) <b>Cha</b> 21(+10)
<b>Equipment</b> staff, 3 iron crowns	

## ENCOUNTER 5: CLAWED AT THE GORGE! STATISTICS (HIGH LEVEL)

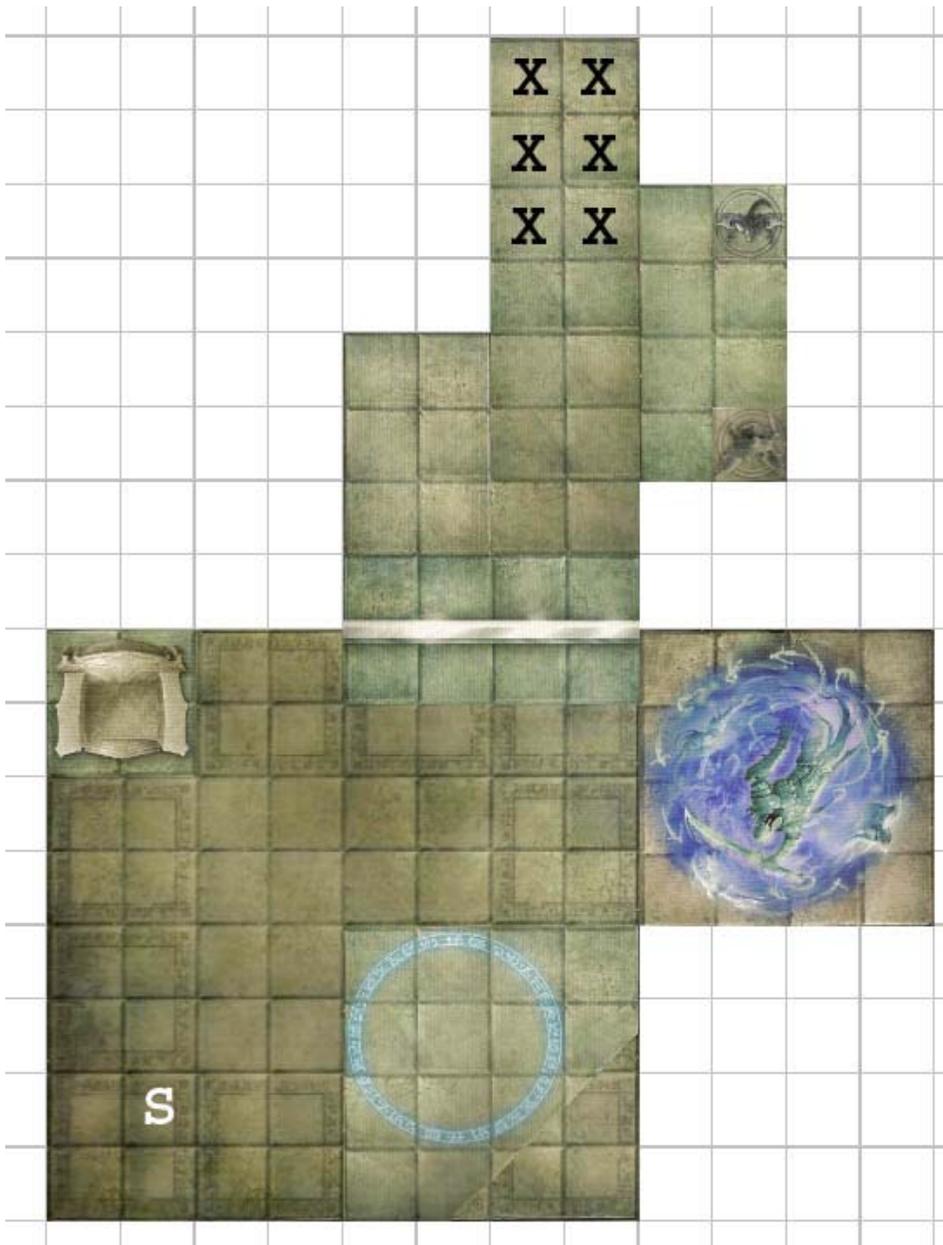
Vampire Spawn Bloodhunter		Level 10 Minion
Medium natural humanoid (undead)		XP 125
<b>Initiative</b> +8	<b>Senses</b> Perception +6; darkvision	
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.		
AC 25; <b>Fortitude</b> 22, <b>Reflex</b> 23, <b>Will</b> 22		
Immune disease, poison; <b>Resist</b> 10 necrotic		
Speed 7, climb 4 (spider climb)		
m <b>Claws</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Necrotic</b>		
+16 vs. AC; 6 necrotic damage (8 necrotic damage against a bloodied target).		
<b>Destroyed by Sunlight</b>		
A vampire spawn that begins its turn in direct sunlight can take only a single move action on its turn. If it ends the turn in direct sunlight, it burns to ash and is destroyed.		
<b>Alignment</b> Evil	<b>Languages</b> Common	
<b>Str</b> 14 (+6)	<b>Dex</b> 16 (+7)	<b>Wis</b> 12 (+7)
<b>Con</b> 14 (+6)	<b>Int</b> 10 (+4)	<b>Cha</b> 14 (+8)

Skull Lord		Level 10 Artillery (Leader)
Medium natural humanoid (undead)		XP 500
<b>Initiative</b> +8	<b>Senses</b> Perception +7; darkvision	
<b>Master of the Grave (Healing)</b> aura 2; undead allies in the aura gain regeneration 5 and a +2 bonus to savings throws. This aura ends when the <i>skull of death's command</i> is destroyed.		
HP 40; <b>Bloodied</b> 20; see also <i>triple skulls</i>		
AC 24; <b>Fortitude</b> 21, <b>Reflex</b> 22, <b>Will</b> 23		
Immune disease, poison; <b>Resist</b> 10 necrotic; <b>Vulnerable</b> 5 radiant		
Speed 6		
m <b>Bone Staff</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Necrotic, Weapon</b>		
+13 vs. AC; 1d8 + 2 damage plus 1d6 necrotic damage.		
R <b>Skull of Bonechilling Fear</b> (minor 1/round; at-will) ♦ <b>Cold, Fear</b>		
Ranged 10; +15 vs. Will; 1d6+3 cold damage, and target is pushed 5 squares		
R <b>Skull of Death's Command</b> (minor 1/round; at-will) ♦ <b>Necrotic</b>		
Ranged 10; the skull lord restores a destroyed minion within range. The restored undead minion's level must be no higher than skull lord's level +2. The restored minion stands in the space where it fell (or in any adjacent space, if that space is occupied) as a free action, has full normal hit points, and can take actions (as normal) on its next turn.		
R <b>Skull of Withering Flame</b> (minor 1/round; at-will) ♦ <b>Fire, Necrotic</b>		
Ranged 10; +15 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 +3 fire and necrotic damage.		
<b>Triple Skulls Healing</b>		
When a skull lord is reduced to 0 hit points, one of its skulls (determined randomly from the three listed above) is destroyed, and it loses the ability to use that power. If the creature has any skulls remaining, it instantly heals to full hit points (40 hit points). When all three skulls are destroyed, the skull lord is destroyed as well.		
<b>Alignment</b> Evil		<b>Languages</b> Common
<b>Skills</b> Bluff +15, Insight +12, Intimidate +15		
<b>Str</b> 14 (+7)	<b>Dex</b> 16 (+8)	<b>Wis</b> 15 (+7)
<b>Con</b> 17 (+8)	<b>Int</b> 16 (+8)	<b>Cha</b> 21(+10)
<b>Equipment</b> staff, 3 iron crowns		

# ENCOUNTER 5: CLAWED AT THE GORGE! MAP

## FANE OF THE FORGOTTEN GODS

Floor / Outdoor Temple	8x8	x1
Wall / Mists	4x2	x1
Floor w/Runes / Spiral Staircase	4x4d	x1
Statue / Red Cistern	1x1	x1
Blue Cistern / Statue	1x1	x1
Depressed Pool / Whirlpool	4x4	x1
Carpeted Floor / Floor w/Divider	2x4	x1
Stone Throne / Floor	2x2	x1
Portcullis / Floor	4x2	x1



## ENCOUNTER 6: SPIRIT JOURNEY

### SKILL CHALLENGE LEVEL 7/9, COMPLEXITY 1 (300/400 XP)

#### SETUP

**Number of Successes:** Special

**Number of Failures:** Special

**Primary Skills:** None, but see below.

*You appear in a dank, wet cave and see an elderly human man cradling a small child in his arms. When the old man see you, he says, ‘Thanks be to the Witches—you made it! I feared our captors would slay you. The stars are aligned and the spirits are with us so we need to act fast. I must transfer some of my power to the boy. If I fail, those who abhor evil lose a vital resource to hold off the advances of that cursed lich king and his nation of undead. I had hoped to be in my home to the north to do this, but this cave will have to do. Will you help?’*

The Old One, who is called Veruud of the Urling, explains that he too holds the same sort of radiant power that this young child’s mother possessed. When a son was born instead of a daughter to Sibbya, a cycle was broken that must be reestablished. He is not going to harm the boy, but he could not perform the ritual near the mother. He does not reveal the reason why, saying that only those who possess the radiant power can understand.

If the PCs refuse to help, Veruud of the Urling tells them that soon enemies more numerous and powerful than anything the PCs can imagine will come for him and the boy. This ritual is their only escape. When the PCs agree to help, the Old One produces a candle from a hidden pouch. After lighting the candle, he asks the PCs to sit around them both in a circle. He says he is going to send them to the spirit world to assist in the transfer.

#### SKILL CHALLENGE

The PCs engage in a skill challenge to assist the Old One in transferring his radiant power to the boy. The players might ask questions about their environment; the cave is empty except for a pile of hay for sleeping and a bucket in the corner for waste. There is no apparent exit to the cave. (Szass Tam’s lieutenants use magic to come and go from the cave.) The Old One has managed to clean up a

section of the floor for the ritual and placed the boy into a deep sleep for the ceremony.

The following factors affect the skill challenge:

- If any of the PCs have the **Story Award CORE05 Gratitude of Bhral** from *Core1-2 Radiant Vessel of Thesk*, they gain a +2 bonus to one of their skill checks during the encounter. The GM should feel free to roleplay wild orc spirits cheering the PCs with that story award.
- If the PCs decided to take an extended rest of 6-8 hours any time after the start of Encounter 1, raise the DC of each skill check by +5. (If they took 2 extended rests, this encounter never happens because the Old One and the boy have already been taken to Thay for experiments.
- Success is based on the number of players at the table:

Table of 4 or 5 players: 2 PCs must succeed at the skill check for each scene for a success.

Table of 6 players: 3 PCs must succeed at the skill check for each scene for a success.

#### SCENE 1: MENTAL AGILITY

*From a hidden pouch in his sleeve, the Old One produces an engraved candle, lights it and motions for you to sit around him in a circle. He begins to chant. You feel a sense of peace wash over you. Suddenly, you are able to see the room but don’t remember opening your eyes. You can clearly see the Old One, the boy and even your own body!*

*With a flash you find yourself on a grey plane surrounded by figures made of light. Some of them look as familiar to you as your colleagues while hundreds of others represent every race, monster and energy of Faerûn. The plane stretches forth endlessly in all directions A light shaped like a male human in simple robes approaches you and speaks.*

*“Hello again, travelers. I rejoice that you made it. I am Brother Starkeel, your guide through spirit world for a short time. I have communed with the Old One and he bids me to take you under my wing, so to speak. We need to get you to the spirit world location that mirrors your location in the living world. If you require assistance, you may call upon your own personal spirit guide to help you one time. Are you ready?”*

**Acrobatics/Insight (DC 17/19):** Through nimble manipulation of your spirit form, either physically or mentally, you can maneuver through the vastness of the void and move your spirit in the direction of the ritual.

**Spirit Guide's Help:** If the spirit guide is called up, the PC must, in one minute or less, vertically stack a d4, d6, d8, d10, and 20. PCs are only given ONE chance to stack their dice. Should the table be jostled, another player knock over the PCs dice, or anything else interrupts the dice stacking, the players do NOT get a second attempt. Success at this task gives the PC a +4 to the check.

**Success:** If the required number of players at the table make their skill checks (see above), then they are able to move easily through the spirit world to the spot of the ritual.

**Failure:** If the required number of players at the table do not make their skill checks (see above), they are able to move the party through the spirit world to the spot of the ritual only after much struggle. Each PC uses one healing surge.

## SCENE 2: FORCE OF PERSONALITY

*Floating through the void, Brother Starkeel drones on about every conceivable topic. He discusses the necessity of good versus evil, the role of gods and mortals and even mundane topics like provisions and hygiene. In short, he likes to hear his own voice.*

*As he starts on the topic of dentistry, you notice a huge figure standing in front of you. With massive arms crossed and a look of determination, this spirit seems to block your passage. As you approach, you hear his booming voice shout, "Only those who entertain me with words shall pass!"*

*You guide speaks. "This creature was banished to the spirit world by his god long ago. He guards the passage from one part of the spirit world to another, forcing those who want to pass to entertain him. While physically unable to conduct combat in the spirit world, it would require much effort to push past him. The ritual spot is on the other side of the toll bridge."*

**Diplomacy/Bluff/History (DC 16/18):** Through tales of your personal exploits, slightly exaggerated stories, or knowledge of others' deeds, you try to make this behemoth move to the side so you can continue on your quest.

**Spirit Guide's Help:** If a PC calls in this/her spirit guide, that player must tell a story, a joke, a previous adventure narrative or anything else the DM wishes to hear to receive a +2 bonus to the challenge. Time is important, so each PC is only given ONE chance to entertain the judge.

**Success:** If the required number of players at the table make their skill checks (see above), then they are

able to move the party over the toll bridge to the spot of the ritual.

**Failure:** If the required number of players at the table do not make their skill checks (see above), they are able to move the party past the guardian to the spot of the ritual after each PC uses a healing surge in a struggle with the guardian.

## SCENE 3: A BALANCE OF SHARING

*The PCs arrive at the ritual site in the spirit world and see the Old One, the boy and their bodies lying in a circle. The Old One looks up towards you and says, "Will you sacrifice part of yourselves to aid this cause? Be warned, you must equally share this burden, and the forces of chaos may not agree to this sharing!"*

**Heal/Endurance (DC 15/17):** You can offer one of your healing surges to another PC. The goal is to end up with at least two healing surges per PC remaining.

**Spirit Guide's Help:** Each PC at the table is given the chance to roll off against the forces of chaos. Have each PC roll a d20 versus the DM (the DM rolls against each PC individually). If the PC beats the judge, then they receive a +2 bonus to the check.

**Success:** If all the PCs present have two healing surges to donate to the ritual, read the text below.

*Power flows through your limbs again as you return from the spirit world. Before you regain your senses, a tear is felt at your very core as part of your essence is given to help complete the ritual. With a gasp of breath you open your eyes to see the Old One looking frail and haggard next to the sleeping child. With a smile and a nod of his head, you realize that your sacrifice has allowed the transfer of radiant power to occur. A feeling of gratitude effuses the room. But the feeling of a job well done is short-lived.*

*Cold air creeps into the room and fog flows in from nowhere. A hollow voice extends from the fog. "Well done, adventurers. Well done. While I would have liked to conduct my own rituals on these two, but I learned enough, and you have beaten me to the spoils. No matter. I have time on my side. All of you will one day end up in my army, alive or undead, to serve me. Remember well this minor triumph, for I shall never forget it."*

**Failure:** If each PC does not have two healing surges left to give to the Old One to complete the ritual, he is unable to complete it:

*With a gasp of breath you return to your body. Slowly you recover your senses and open your eyes to see the Old One looking frail and haggard next to the sleeping child. With a shake of his head and look of defeat on his face, the Old One indicates that your sacrifice was not enough to help with the transfer of radiant power. An otherworldly feeling of sadness effuses the room. But the feeling of failure is short-lived.*

*Cold air creeps into the room and fog flows in from nowhere. A hollow voice extends from the fog. “Poor, foolish adventurers! When will you realize that I will always prevail and no actions on your part can change the outcome? All of you will one day end up in my army, alive or dead, to serve me. With your feeble attempts to affect the exchange of power, I no longer have need of these two pathetic humans or you. Do with them as you wish.”*

## ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

Regardless of the outcome, the fogs fill the chamber completely and then dissipate. The PCs find themselves back in the Gorge of Gauros, at the boulder that led down into the first chamber. Bhral is waiting there, as is any PC (alive or dead) who got left in any of the chambers.

Bhral insists that the boy be returned to his mother, and the Old One acquiesces, regardless of whether his ritual was successful or not. He does warn Bhral and the PCs that the boy—and others like him who have been given the special gift of radiance—are capable of helping stand against Thay, and they need to be protected until such a time as their powers are needed most.

## EXPERIENCE POINTS

The characters receive 60/80 experience points for successfully completing the skill challenge.

## TREASURE

If the PCs succeed in rescuing the Old One and the child from the clutches of the forces of Szass Tam, Veruud of the Urling arranges to offer the PCs a reward, which can include one of the treasure bundles (or the extra gold).

## CONCLUSION

If the PCs rescued the Old One and Sibbya’s boy, they can escort both of them back to Thesk. If the PCs did not make it to the final encounter (or did not make it before taking 2 extended rests), both are taken to Thay for

experimentation. The PCs can return to Thesk empty handed and convey the bad news to Sibbya.

Give the Story Award **CORE11 Radiance Spreads** to the PCs if they successfully aided the ritual and the Old One’s radiant power was transferred to the boy.

If the PCs made it to the final encounter, they receive Story Award **CORE12 Szass Tam Knows Who You Are!** regardless of whether or not they succeeded in assisting the ritual.

If the PCs did not make it to the final encounter they get no story award.

## REWARDS SUMMARY

At the conclusion of the adventure, the PCs earn experience points, treasure, and possibly story awards. All totals listed here are per PC. A number before the slash is the low-level value; after the slash is the high-level value.

## IMPORTANT DM INFORMATION

It is critical that you enter the PC rewards accurately on the tracking form, and ensure that the information is reported and entered online in a timely manner. While players will be able to track their character's information on paper, the online information serves as an important backup and verification of play. Ask the players for their RPGA numbers and character numbers (usually a single digit) when you begin to fill out the tracking form.

## EXPERIENCE POINTS

Give PCs a full award for each encounter they successfully completed, and a half award if they were unsuccessful. Give no award if the characters did not play the encounter at all.

### Encounter 1: Moonshine!

60/80 XP

### Encounter 3: Crashing the Party

330/460 XP

### Encounter 4: Burning Hatred

380/540 XP

### Encounter 5: Clawed at the Gorge!

290/440 XP

### Encounter 6: Spirit Journey

60/80 XP

**Total Possible Experience 1120/1600 XP**

## TREASURE

Each PC receives treasure in the form of gold pieces as well as one share from a treasure bundle. The treasure bundle may give the PC more gold, a magic item, or some other item of value. Each player makes one selection for their character; players may choose the same treasure bundle. Mark the one-letter bundle ID on the tracking form next to any character that selects a bundle; note that it is possible (and likely) that some characters will not select a bundle for each session of play.

If characters buy or sell magic items or other gear during the adventure (or pay for services) add or subtract that amount from the total gold the PC receives at the end of the adventure. If a player selects an option that gives their character more gold, add that to the gold all characters receive, and ensure you enter the total amount of gold gained (minus any expenditures) online. You can have a negative number and enter that negative online. PCs receive 20% of a magic item's purchase price for any item they sell.

If a player selects a magic weapon or suit of armor for their PC that is not specific on the type of item listed, they must select the exact item at the time they choose that bundle. For example, if a *duelist's weapon +1* is listed as a choice in a bundle, a player selects the form of the weapon amongst the choices possible for that magic item (light blades). If the player selects the item as a *+1 duelist's dagger*, the player writes that information down on the PC's adventure log and the item is forever after that specific weapon.

An asterisk next to a magic item means that it is an item that appears in the **New Rules** section.

### Gold Per PC

150/200 gp

(Encounter 2: 150/200)

### EACH PC SELECTS ONE OF THE FOLLOWING

**Bundle A:** *gem of colloquy* (level 12)

(Adventurer's Vault) Found in Encounter 6

**Bundle B:** *ritual candle*

Found in Encounter 6

**Bundle C:** *longshot gloves* (level 11)

(Adventurer's Vault) Found in Encounter 6

**Bundle D:** *+3 magic wand*

Found in Encounter 6

**Bundle E:** *rogue's belt*

(Adventurer's Vault) Found in Encounter 6

**Bundle F:** *cord of divine favor* (high-level only)

(Adventurer's Vault) Found in Encounter 6

**Bundle G:** *ritual scroll of Commune with Nature*

Found in Encounter 6

**Potion Plus Gold:** If a player doesn't want to select one of the bundles listed above for their character, they can choose to add a *potion of clarity* (level 10) plus 150/300

gp to their total gold per PC. The player should write the potion gained on their adventure log.

**More Gold:** If a player doesn't want to select one of the bundles listed above for their character, they can choose to add 350/500 gp to their total gold per PC.

## STORY AWARDS

Award these if the PC completes the condition for the award in the adventure. Pass out certificates to the players for their story awards. If a PC earns three awards, they may only have 2 of them and must pick which two they want before ending the session. Make sure to mark the story award codes next to each character that earned them on the tracking form.

### CORE11 Radiance Spreads

You have successfully helped the Old One transfer his radiant power to the boy Radiant Vessel of Thesk. You have completed the second step in the Major Quest known as “Radiance Against Thay.”

### CORE12 Szass Tam Knows Who You Are!

By reaching the final encounter of this adventure, you have now attracted the attention of one of the most

dangerous beings in existence. You might want to look over your shoulder occasionally—just in case.

## ADVENTURE QUESTIONS

Mark the answers to the following adventure questions on the tracking form.

### 1. Did you successfully assist the Old One transfer his radiant power to the boy?

- a. Yes, the party was able to succeed on the skill challenge and assisted in the ritual.
- b. No, the party did not make it to the final encounter and did not partake of the ritual.
- c. No, the party made it to the final encounter and failed the skill challenge.

### 2. What was the fate of the child Radiant Vessel?

- a. He was rescued, imbued with the Old One's radiant powers, and returned to his mother Sibbya.
- b. He was rescued, did not obtain the radiant power of the Old One, and returned to his mother Sibbya.
- c. He was not rescued because the PCs failed to reach the final encounter, and he is now captive in Thay.

## NEW RULES

### Cord of Divine Favor

Level 13

*A healer's garment, this cinch lets you tend to yourself as you aid others.*

Lvl 13 17000 gp

**Item Slot:** Waist

**Power (Encounter ♦ Healing):** Free action. Use this power when you use *healing word* on an ally or use another power that grants an ally the use of a healing surge. You can spend a healing surge as well and regain hit points equal to your healing surge value.

**Reference:** *Adventurer's Vault*, page 165.

### Gem of Colloquy

Level 12

*This jewel hovers near your head, sharpening your wit and expanding your knowledge of languages.*

Lvl 12 13000 gp

**Item Slot:** Head

**Property:** Gain a +3 item bonus to Bluff and Diplomacy checks. Understand and speak 2 additional languages, chosen at the time of the gem's creation.

**Reference:** *Adventurer's Vault*, page 141.

### Longshot Gloves

Level 11

*Long range shots are eased by these fingerless gloves.*

Lvl 11 9000 gp

**Item Slot:** Hands

**Power (Encounter):** Minor action. Your ranged attacks ignore the -2 penalty for long range until the end of your turn.

**Reference:** *Adventurer's Vault*, page 136.

### Potion of Clarity

Level 10

*This cool cyan liquid hones your physical and mental acuity at a critical moment.*

Lvl 10 200 gp

**Potion**

**Power (Consumable):** Minor Action. Drink this potion and spend a healing surge. You do not regain hit points as normal. Instead, once during this encounter as a free action, you can reroll a d20 roll you just made, gaining a +2 bonus on the reroll. You must use the result of the reroll.

**Reference:** *Adventurer's Vault*, page 188.

### Rogue's Belt

Level 11

*No one can hold you, no chains can restrain you, and no bars can contain you while you wear this slick belt.*

Lvl 11 9000 gp

**Item Slot:** Waist

**Property:** You can attempt to escape a grab or restraints as a minor action.

**Reference:** *Adventurer's Vault*, page 141.

# HANDOUT 1

(This handout should be provided to those PCs who participated in CORE1-2 *The Radiant Vessel of Thesk*.)

*The dream or vision is always the same, and it is what has driven you to come back to Thesk in search of Sibbya and her son. The minute you drift off you see the boy sitting on a blanket outside his mother's home. The sun shines brightly and the boy has grown well since being born 10 months ago in the cavern where you helped welcome him into this world. Then a shadow falls over him. The next instant he is gone! Standing nearby, a saddened orc, whom you recognize as the mercenary Bhral, points toward the direction of the rising sun.*

*You rush off after a distant figure. It appears to be an old man fleeing toward Rashemen with the boy in his arms. The pursuit takes you to the edge of the Gorge of Gauros, the border between the nations of Thay and Rashemen.*

*The next instant you are in a dark laboratory: the only things you see are an old desk with a single lamp, a large crystal ball on a tripod and a large leather chair. You peer at the high back of the chair and can feel that a malevolent figure sits there. A bony hand, protruding from a tattered red robe, reaches for the globe and whispers, "They are mine now. This Vessel may cause problems in the future. Best to take care of this issue now."*

*You flash back, near the entrance to the Gorge. You see the boy and the old man turning to look at you. Nightmarish creatures wait in the background, ready to snatch them both. You scream, "Beware the Gorge of Gauros!" And then the vision ends.*

## HANDOUT 2

(This handout should be provided to those PCs who did not participate in CORE1-2 *The Radiant Vessel of Thesk*.)

*The dream or vision is always the same, and it is what has driven you to come to Thesk in search of woman whom you somehow know is named Sibbya and her son. The boy possesses some influence over the power of life and is known as the Radiant Vessel.*

*The minute you drift off you see the boy, no more than 10 months old, playing outside his mother's home. The sun shines brightly and the boy seems content. Then a shadow falls over him. The next instant he is gone! A tall orc stands nearby with a sad look upon his face. He silently points in the direction of the rising sun. You somehow know this orc's name is Bhral.*

*You rush off after a distant figure. It appears to be an old man fleeing toward Rashemen with the boy in his arms. The pursuit takes you to the edge of the Gorge of Gauros, the border between the nations of Thay and Rashemen.*

*The next instant you are in a dark laboratory: the only things you see are an old desk with a single lamp, a large crystal ball on a tripod and a large leather chair. You peer at the high back of the chair and can feel that a malevolent figure sits there. A bony hand, protruding from a tattered red robe, reaches for the globe and whispers, "They are mine now. This Vessel may cause problems in the future. Best to take care of this issue now."*

*You flash back, near the entrance to the Gorge. You see the boy and the old man turning to look at you. Nightmarish creatures wait in the background, ready to snatch them both. You scream, "Beware the Gorge of Gauros!" And then the vision ends.*

## HANDOUT 3

(This handout describes the background story of what the PCs learned about Sibbya and her strange powers in *CORE1-2 The Radiant Vessel of Thesk*. It can be provided to players who played that adventure, as well as those who take the time to speak with Sibbya in the Introduction of this adventure.)

The Dermarks were as normal a family as you would expect to find in Thesk. Cobbling shoes had been their family business for as far back as anyone could remember, and Andret Dermark was respected in Phsant as an honest and reliable tradesman, as had been his father before him. He looked forward to passing on the trade to his children.

On an otherwise normal day in 1385 DR, the Year of Blue Fire, Andret's wife Sibbya gave birth to the couple's seventh child, a daughter. At that exact moment, the Spellplague ripped through Phsant. Sibbya died in childbirth, but the daughter was healthy and strong, and was given her mother's name.

From the first, it was apparent that the girl was special. She never caught any of the childhood illnesses most infants must endure and some succumb to. Some who were deemed fatally ill of terrible diseases were healed in her presence. One evening, a wraith from Thay came to the area to wreak havoc ahead of yet another undead incursion. The creature terrorized the residents of the outskirts of Phsant, where Sibbya lived, until it came into her presence, when it exploded in a flash of white light.

For the first 22 years of the girl's life, the villagers treated her with great respect and awe, along with the understandable feeling of fear at her strange powers. Then Sibbya became pregnant, although no one ever knew who the father was, and Sibbya never told.

Like her own mother, Sibbya gave birth to a healthy baby girl, but she too died in childbirth. The baby, named Sibbya and taken in by relatives, showed the same powers exhibited by her mother—and the people adopted her as their guardian and good-luck charm. After protecting the town and occasionally healing the sick as her mother had on several occasions, this Sibbya too became unexpectedly pregnant by an unknown partner, but then died giving birth to a daughter who herself possessed the radiant power.

And so the cycle continued, one generation after another of Sibbya Dermarks being born fatherless, raised by relatives, and accepted as a force of good and light by the families of her neighborhood outside of Phsant. The current Sibbya is different, however. Not long ago she gave birth to a baby boy who was supposed to be the recipient of this radiant gift, although the boy showed no sign of his mother's gift. And Sibbya herself lost the gift as well.

The adventurers who helped her also battled orc mercenaries, where they encountered Bhral. A male orc, Bhral retired as an adventurer to start a new life with his human wife Fontin. Bhral and Fontin, who is a relative of Sibbya, both live near Sibbya in an area south of the city of Phsant.