

DALE1-2

BLADES FOR DAGGERDALE

A DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® *LIVING
FORGOTTEN REALMS* ADVENTURE

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Regular attacks by creatures of the wild turn life in Daggerdale into a nightmare. So when mercenaries offer protection for a fee, does it matter that these were the old enemies of the past? A *Living Forgotten Realms* adventure set in the Dalelands for characters levels 4 - 7.

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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This adventure retires from RPGA-sanctioned play on December 31 2011.

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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 4 - 7. 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

Groups of Zhent mercenaries wander the Realms, always looking for employment and ways to make a quick profit.

One group, under the leadership of Commander Sirius Rulak, has struck a profitable deal with the leaders of the Empire of Netheril. On the edge of the eastern border they were hired to hunt down large numbers of groll bands pillaging the countryside. The Netherese didn't care what the Zhents did with the gnolls, as long as the problem was taken care of.

Instead of killing the gnolls, Commander Rulak drove the war bands east, out of the country into neighboring Daggerdale. The gnolls immediately started to attack settlements and caravans in Daggerdale, which was exactly the Zhents' intention. Now they can again offer their services to hunt down gnolls for towns like Dagger Falls for a steep price.

There is an article about the "Zhent Headless Horseman" of Daggerdale on the Wizards of the Coast website which provides some background on this myth. It's not necessary to read the article to run this adventure:

<http://www.wizards.com/default.asp?x=dnd/drrl/20080326>

PLAYER'S INTRODUCTION

The PCs are on the road to Dagger Falls in Daggerdale. Their reason for the trip is up to the PCs, but due to large amount of monsters haunting the dale, there is always a job for adventurers.

"The Nightmarish Dale", travelers call it: Daggerdale in the north of the Dalelands. It's the last dale before you either travel west into the treacherous Empire of Netheril, north into the cold Moonsea area or east right into the gloomy depths of the Cormanthor forest.

Rumors of lycanthropes and monstrous humanoids wandering the countryside are heard in every tavern on the trade road.

The countryside of Daggerdale is all rolling, wooded hills and small, labyrinthine valleys, broken by rocky crags and stone mesas here and there. You also see changeland in the countryside: unusual warped tree formations, needle-sharp stone pinnacles and curly structures in the grassy landscape as if the hills were covered with wavy green carpets.

It's still early in the morning, and your voyage on the Tethyamar trail leading to Dagger Falls, the biggest settlement in this dale, has been uneventful - until you hear the desperate screams and yells of women and men from where the road curves around the next hill.

DM'S INTRODUCTION

Encounter 1: Caravan under attack: The PCs stumble upon a merchant trade caravan on its way to Dagger Falls. It's being attacked by gnolls.

Encounter 2: After the ambush: The caravan leaders are thankful for the PCs' assistance. The PCs meet Swift Elyan, a halfling down on her luck. She tells the PCs of her former adventuring group, called "Byar's Seven". The PCs hear rumors of the "Zhent Headless Horseman of Daggerdale".

Encounter 3: Arriving in Dagger Falls: The caravan and the PCs arrive in Dagger Falls. The residents cheer a group of Zhent mercenaries, who have killed several marauding groll bands. Dagger Falls' Constable Morn approaches the PCs asking to support him in a town meeting with the mayor.

Encounter 4: Dagger Falls Town Meeting: A skill challenge where the PCs can help Constable Morn convince the mayor not to hire the Zhents as a protection force. This starts a skill challenge but the mayor pauses it to consider his options. Morn then sends the PCs to find a groll hideout in order to stop more attacks.

Encounter 5: The Drowning Dwarf: Leaving town, the PCs come across the dwarf Dorring, who is in danger of drowning in the waterfalls. If they rescue him, he provides them with information on where to find the gnolls.

Encounter 6: The Groll Cave: The PCs find a cave where the gnolls lair. After fighting the gnolls, the PCs find evidence proving the Zhents' involvement in the recent groll attacks.

Encounter 7: "You are with or against us!": The PCs are confronted by a group of Zhents, right after they leave the groll cave. Swift Elyan appears and scares away most of the Zhents by disguising herself as the "Zhent Headless Horseman". The PCs either battle the remaining Zhent or are bribed by them.

Encounter 8 - Back in Town: Back in town the PCs can continue their meeting with the mayor and maybe present evidence of the Zhents' involvement in the groll attacks. This ends the skill challenge started in Encounter 4.

If the players want to bring a RPGA quest card into play suggest discussing it among the group first. The players should decide on the course of action if a situation comes up which could complete one of the quest tasks, which involves keeping a Zhent alive after combat. Avoid spoiling the fun for one or more players.

ENCOUNTER 1: CARAVAN UNDER ATTACK

ENCOUNTER LEVEL 3 / 6 (700 / 1175 XP)

SETUP

This encounter includes the following creatures:

- 1 Gnoll Huntmaster (GH)
- 1 Gnoll Marauder (GM)
- 2 (3 at high level) Hyena (H)

As the adventurers enter the area, read:

Just as you come around a hill you see where the screams originate: A trader's caravan is under attack by gnolls and barking and yipping four-legged creatures! The traveler's camp nearby is strewn with the corpses of gnolls and men. The merchants and members of the caravan are cramped together on two wagons, trying to stop the attackers from climbing the transports. A halfling, also standing on the wagons, fights back the creatures ferociously.

The merchants' guards lie dead throughout the caravan's small camp. The caravan's horses whinny in panic and both carts on which the merchants have taken refuge get out of control.

If a PC has scouted ahead alone, he notices that the attackers will soon kill all the merchants if no one interferes. If the scout is spotted, the gnolls immediately focus their attacks on him as they try to remove what they consider the most dangerous foes first. In this case the rest of the PCs can join the fight one round later.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

This area has a few important features.

Carts: It's not possible to climb onto the wagons as it's crowded with scared caravan members. A PC can use a move action to hide under them and gain cover, but is considered prone. The cover is lost if the cart moves out of the PCs square.

Horses: At the end of every combat turn, the horse moves one square in a random direction, taking their wagon with it. If a creature is in the way the cart attacks with +7 vs. Reflex. On a hit the target is pushed 1 square, knocked prone and takes 2d8 + 4 damage. On a miss the target is pushed 1 square.

It's also possible to scare a horse in a direction on purpose, which is done by handling the animals with a DC 12 Nature check.

Tree trunks, tents: Blocking terrain. Provide cover.

Graves, stones: Difficult terrain. It costs 2 squares of movement to enter these squares.

Small bushes: Very difficult terrain. It costs 4 squares of movement to enter small bushes. The bushes also provide cover.

Fireplace: It costs 2 squares of movement to enter a fireplace. A creature might get burned if the fire hits it with a +4 attack vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 4 fire damage.

TACTICS

Once the PCs arrive, the gnolls focus on them. The gnoll marauder waits until at least two hyenas have engaged an enemy, then he approaches to gain the extra damage benefit from his *pack attack* ability.

The gnoll huntmaster tries to stay in the back and always behind cover.

The horses keep frantically moving around as long as enemies are adjacent to them.

All enemies fight to the death. If knocked unconscious and interrogated later they don't have anything useful to say other than that they were hunting "tasty humans".

SCALING THE ENCOUNTER

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

Four PCs: Remove 1 gnoll huntmaster.

Six PCs: Add 1 gnoll huntmaster.

ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

Once the PCs defeat the gnolls, they can talk to the caravan members. Proceed to the next encounter once the players are ready.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

The characters receive 140 / 235 experience points each for defeating the gnolls.

TREASURE

Nyssa Seebenstern, the caravan leader, is very grateful for the PCs help. She offers the following items from her arcane wares to their saviors: a *scroll of hand of fate* and a *ritual book of knock*.

ENCOUNTER 1: CARAVAN UNDER ATTACK STATISTICS (LOW LEVEL)

Gnoll Huntmaster	Level 5 Artillery
Medium natural humanoid	XP 200
Initiative +6 Senses Perception +11; low-light vision	
HP 50; Bloodied 25	
AC 19; Fortitude 16, Reflex 17, Will 14	
Speed 7	
m Handaxe (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
+9 vs. AC; 1d6 + 3 damage, or 1d6 + 5 damage while bloodied; see also <i>pack attack</i> .	
R Longbow (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
Ranged 20/40; +10 vs. AC; 1d10 + 4 damage, or 1d10 + 6 damage while bloodied; see also <i>pack attack</i> .	
Pack Attack	
The gnoll huntmaster deals an extra 5 damage on melee and ranged attacks against an enemy that has two or more of the huntmaster's allies adjacent to it.	
Alignment Chaotic evil Languages Abyssal, Common	
Skills Intimidate +7, Stealth +11	
Str 16 (+5)	Dex 19 (+6) Wis 14 (+4)
Con 14 (+4)	Int 8 (+1) Cha 7 (+0)
Equipment leather armor, handaxe, longbow, quiver of 30 arrows	

Gnoll Marauder	Level 6 Brute
Medium natural humanoid	XP 250
Initiative +5 Senses Perception +7; low-light vision	
HP 84; Bloodied 42	
AC 18; Fortitude 18, Reflex 15, Will 15	
Speed 7	
m Spear (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
+10 vs. AC; 1d8 + 6 damage, or 1d8 + 8 damage while bloodied; see also <i>quick bite</i> and <i>pack attack</i> .	
M Quick Bite (free, when the gnoll marauder hits a bloodied enemy with a melee attack; at-will)	
The gnoll marauder makes a bite attack against the same target: +7 vs. AC; 1d6 + 2 damage, or 1d6 + 4 damage while bloodied.	
Pack Attack	
The gnoll marauder deals an extra 5 damage on melee attacks against an enemy that has two or more of the marauder's allies adjacent to it.	
Alignment Chaotic evil Languages Abyssal, Common	
Skills Intimidate +8, Stealth +10	
Str 20 (+8)	Dex 14 (+5) Wis 14 (+5)
Con 14 (+5)	Int 9 (+2) Cha 7 (+1)
Equipment leather armor, light shield, spear	

Hyena	Level 2 Skirmisher
Medium natural beast	XP 125
Initiative +5 Senses Perception +7; low-light vision	
HP 37; Bloodied 18	
AC 16; Fortitude 14, Reflex 13, Will 12	
Speed 8	
m Bite (standard; at-will)	
+7 vs. AC; 1d6 + 3 damage; see also <i>pack attack</i> .	
Pack Attack	
A hyena deals an extra 1d6 damage against an enemy adjacent to two or more of the hyena's allies.	
Harrier	
If a hyena is adjacent to an enemy, all other creatures have combat advantage against that enemy when making melee attacks.	
Alignment Unaligned Languages -	
Str 16 (+4)	Dex 15 (+3) Wis 12 (+2)
Con 13 (+2)	Int 2 (-3) Cha 5 (-2)

ENCOUNTER 1: CARAVAN UNDER ATTACK STATISTICS (HIGH LEVEL)

Gnoll Huntmaster (level 7)	Level 7 Artillery
Medium natural humanoid	XP 300
Initiative +7 Senses Perception +12; low-light vision	
HP 62; Bloodied 31	
AC 21; Fortitude 18, Reflex 19, Will 16	
Speed 7	
m Handaxe (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
+11 vs. AC; 1d6 + 4 damage, or 1d6 + 6 damage while bloodied; see also <i>pack attack</i> .	
R Longbow (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
Ranged 20/40; +12 vs. AC; 1d10 + 5 damage, or 1d10 + 7 damage while bloodied; see also <i>pack attack</i> .	
Pack Attack	
The gnoll huntmaster deals an extra 5 damage on melee and ranged attacks against an enemy that has two or more of the huntmaster's allies adjacent to it.	
Alignment Chaotic evil Languages Abyssal, Common	
Skills Intimidate +8, Stealth +12	
Str 16 (+6)	Dex 19 (+7) Wis 14 (+5)
Con 14 (+5)	Int 8 (+2) Cha 7 (+1)
Equipment leather armor, handaxe, longbow, quiver of 30 arrows	

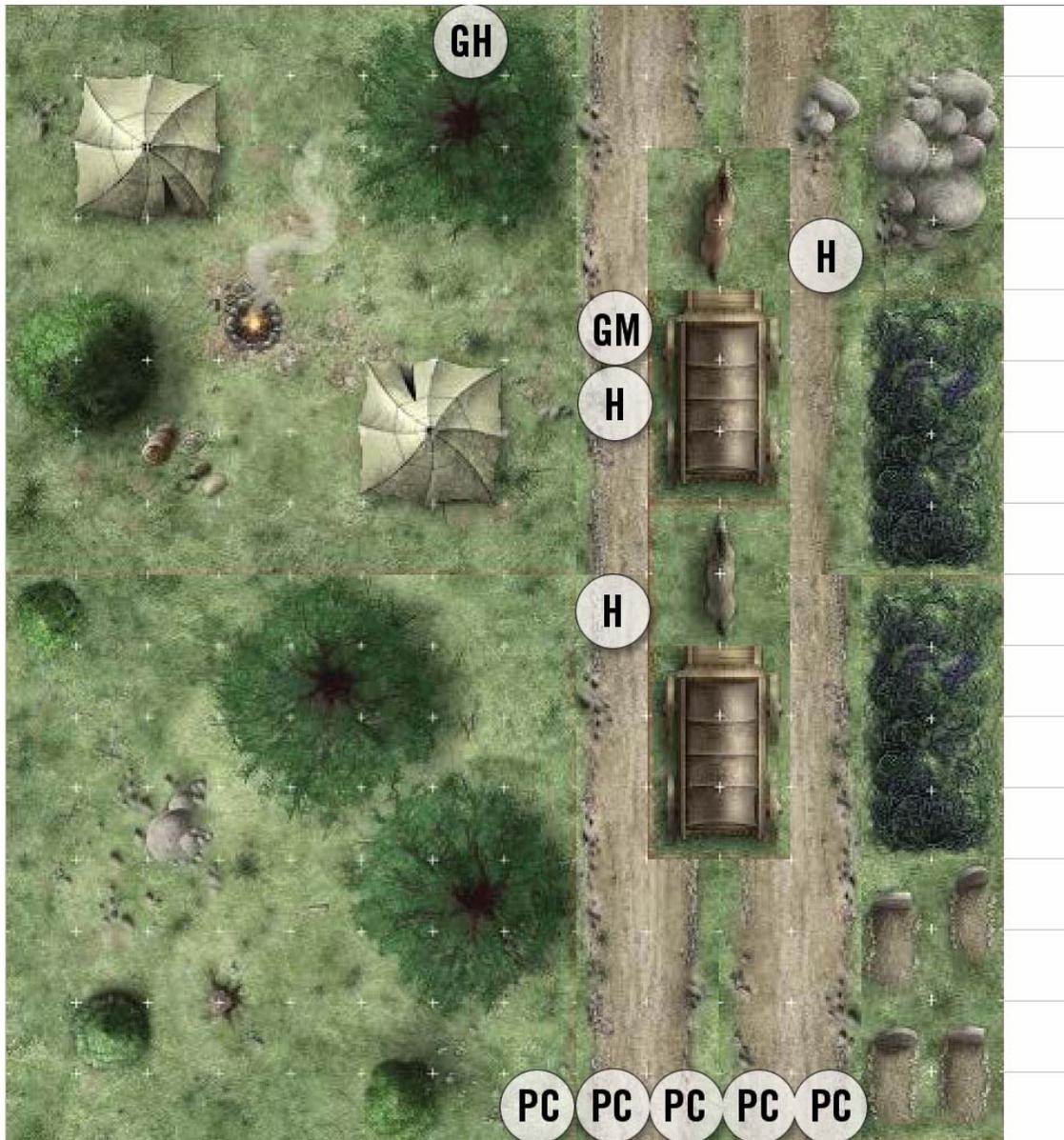
Gnoll Marauder (level 8)	Level 8 Brute
Medium natural humanoid	XP 350
Initiative +6 Senses Perception +8; low-light vision	
HP 104; Bloodied 52	
AC 20; Fortitude 20, Reflex 17, Will 17	
Speed 7	
m Spear (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
+12 vs. AC; 1d8 + 7 damage, or 1d8 + 9 damage while bloodied; see also <i>quick bite</i> and <i>pack attack</i> .	
M Quick Bite (free, when the gnoll marauder hits a bloodied enemy with a melee attack; at-will)	
The gnoll marauder makes a bite attack against the same target: +9 vs. AC; 1d6 + 3 damage, or 1d6 + 5 damage while bloodied.	
Pack Attack	
The gnoll marauder deals an extra 5 damage on melee attacks against an enemy that has two or more of the marauder's allies adjacent to it.	
Alignment Chaotic evil Languages Abyssal, Common	
Skills Intimidate +9, Stealth +11	
Str 20 (+9)	Dex 14 (+6) Wis 14 (+6)
Con 14 (+6)	Int 9 (+3) Cha 7 (+2)
Equipment leather armor, light shield, spear	

Hyena (level 4)	Level 4 Skirmisher
Medium natural beast	XP 175
Initiative +6 Senses Perception +8; low-light vision	
HP 53; Bloodied 26	
AC 18; Fortitude 16, Reflex 15, Will 14	
Speed 8	
m Bite (standard; at-will)	
+9 vs. AC; 1d6 + 4 damage; see also <i>pack attack</i> .	
Pack Attack	
A hyena deals an extra 1d6 + 1 damage against an enemy adjacent to two or more of the hyena's allies.	
Harrier	
If a hyena is adjacent to an enemy, all other creatures have combat advantage against that enemy when making melee attacks.	
Alignment Unaligned Languages -	
Str 16 (+5)	Dex 15 (+4) Wis 12 (+3)
Con 13 (+3)	Int 2 (-2) Cha 5 (-1)

ENCOUNTER 1: CARAVAN UNDER ATTACK MAP

Ruins of the Wild tiles:

Camp / Field	8x8	x1	Stream Bend / Horse	2x2	x1
Road / Crevasse	8x2	x2	Horse / Road Bend	2x2	x1
Stream / Road	8x2	x1	Covered Wagon / Field w/Log	4x2	x2
Ruined Tower / Field w/Trees	8x8	x1	Field / Rock Outcropping	4x2	x1
Graves / Briar	4x2	x2	Field / Road	8x2	x1
Ruined Wagon / Briar	4x2	x1			



ENCOUNTER 2: AFTER THE AMBUSH

SETUP

Important NPCs:

Nyssa Seebenstern, female human leader of the caravan

Swift Elyan, female halfling adventurer

Once the fight is over, the PCs have a chance to talk to the caravan members and gather information about the attack, the dale and other events.

The scared people jump off the wagons and start to cheer and congratulate you.

A slender human woman in her early thirties steps forward. "You have saved our lives! My name is Nyssa Seebenstern. I run this caravan. I thank you in the name of all survivors of this cruel attack. Daggerdale has always been a dangerous place to travel through. Tales, like those of the Zhent Headless Horseman or pillaging lycanthropes, scare a lot of sellswords. We were only able to hire three guardsmen, but this doesn't seem to be enough nowadays. Now, let's look after those brave guards who perished in the attack."

Nyssa has been traveling the Dalelands for several years now. She pretty much knows every town in the Dales and has friends and contacts everywhere. Her family originates from Thesk.

She has bright blue eyes and long black hair. She's very slender and in her early thirties. Being constantly on the road has given her a deep tan, and many wrinkles can be seen on her face when she laughs. She is full of enthusiasm and idealism.

She orders the rest of her people to pack the remaining items in the camp so they can leave quickly. She knows the Dales and Dagger Falls quite well and can tell the PCs everything they might want to know.

Among the members of the caravan is a halfling, Swift Elyan, who happens to only travel on this part of the route with Seebenstern and her men. While everyone else starts packing she approaches the PCs to chat.

"Ah, adventurers like me! 'Tis always good to see folks like us. Sorry I couldn't help you guys in the fight. I was busy staying alive on the wagon trying not to get eaten by gnolls! And the merchants needed protection."

"If Byar's Seven still existed, we'd have beaten the gnolls before they'd even figured we were here. But..." and the halfling sighs deeply "... that group is no more."

Elyan is a halfling from the Vast who is an expert in traps and locks. She met the caravan on the Tethyamar trail and decided to accompany them, but wasn't hired to protect it. It had guards already.

She has black hair with the first streaks of grey in it. Her only weapons are daggers, which she carries in a leather belt slung around her left shoulder and upper torso. She usually wears her black cloak with a golden clasp. Scars on her neck in the form of wild animal scratches are a reminder of her adventuring life.

Elyan hopes to earn some quick money at Dagger Falls, since she lost a lot in the last expedition, which was a total failure. She is depressed because, two weeks ago, she had a falling-out with her partner, Dorrington Brightaxe ('over a woman, too!'). She hopes to find Dorrington and reconcile.

The DM should make sure the PCs hear at least the stories about the Zhent Headless Horseman and Byar's Seven:

The legend of the Zhent Headless Horseman (Elyan disguises herself as this mythical figure in Encounter 7): Terrified dalefolk describe seeing the Zhent Headless Horseman galloping through the middle of a misty night or when the clouds hide the sun and turn the day into a dark realm. The Horseman rides at full speed on his black steed leaving mad laughter in his wake. Those who oppose him are always found dead the next day... without their heads!

Byar's Seven (the PCs might encounter a dwarf from this adventuring band in Encounter 5, and Swift Elyan gives them a quest to find traces of the rest of her friends at the end of this adventure): Byar's Seven consisted of:

- **Byar**, a well-known adventurer. Current whereabouts unknown.
- **Dorrington Brightaxe**, an honorable fighter, and Elyan's best friend (Dorrington can be met in this adventure in Encounter 5). Current whereabouts unknown to Elyan.
- **Lubeq**, a nobleman warrior, who fell to shadows. Missing.
- **Sureen Tevernesta**, a cleric of Malar. Current whereabouts unknown. Was heavily wounded and left with Byar.
- **Mikon Nazhan**, a wizard with a fascination for fire. Now dead.

- **Ainell**, Mikon's apprentice (a girl who seemed smarter than her mentor). Dragged off by unspeakable horrors. Missing ever since.
- **Swift Elyan**, the halfling.

Elyan doesn't go into details about the doings of the Byar's Seven. Other than listing names, the last thing she knows about them was that their final quest went terribly wrong in Semberholme (the area around lake Sember in the Dalelands). She and Dorrington split up from Byar and Sureen 'after an argument'.

In the end, she asks the PCs to see if they can find her friend Dorrington and if they do to meet her in the "Fixed Dagger" tavern to tell her where Dorrington is. This starts a minor quest.

If the PCs seem to be interested in more stories of the Dalelands and try to gather more information pass these rumors if you have time:

- Sharrans, followers of the goddess of darkness Shar, have been spotted in the ruins of Zhentil Keep.
- Zhent mercenaries can be met in Daggerdale regularly. They offer their services to rich merchants with fat gold purses. If you run out of gold or if you can't pay them they turn their backs on you in the middle of the wilderness.
- There's a resurgence of monsters in the vicinity of Mistedale. Some say these are creatures from the Shadowfell.
- A bard recently claimed explorers have discovered a Netheril flyship that crashed down in the sea.
- The fey are restless in Shadowdale. More and more fey seem to have spellscars. Even Elminster, a wizard and sage living there, has a spellscar on his arm. He hides it when it starts to warp into strange forms.

ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

Once the PCs have no further questions the caravan continues its voyage to Dagger Falls, which should only be a few more miles northwards.

If the PCs offer their help as new guards Nyssa Seebenstein gladly hires them for 50 / 75 gp, which she pays once arriving safely in Dagger Falls. If the PCs don't offer their help themselves Nyssa tries to hire them as she lost her guards.

ENCOUNTER 3: ARRIVING IN DAGGER FALLS

SETUP

Important NPCs:

Constable Kendar Morn, male human leader of the Dagger Falls city guards.

The PCs arrive at Dagger Falls without further incident. They can spot the town from afar:

It's midday when you finally see the town of Dagger Falls in the north. Large farms can be seen from afar, built in a large circle around the town. Surrounded by a sturdy stone wall, the town has guards patrolling its battlements. The only building that can be seen from outside the walls is a high ancient tower. Blue light flickers occasionally in open windows and vents.

You can hear the constant thunder of a huge waterfall. As you cross the Dagger Bridge to enter Dagger Falls you see the waterfall by the same name to the left. The Tesh crushes down 100 feet to its bottom here.

The PCs may know more about Dagger Falls with a History check (or alternately Streetwise when asking around):

DC 15: Dagger Falls is a town of around 2,000 citizens in the heart of Daggerdale. The town has its name from the waterfalls of the same name next to it. The town of Dagger Falls remains a supply center for all intelligent inhabitants and wanderers through the Dale and probably survived being overrun and pillaged for years for this reason.

DC 20: Dagger Falls' mayor is the human Ren Ferkins. The head of the guards is Constable Kendar Morn. Dagger Falls' remote location in a country full of dangers made the residents a surly, suspicious folk which learned to take care of trouble themselves instead of waiting for help.

DC 25: The "constable" tower in the middle of the town is very local bit of changing land. Once in a while, rumbles can be heard, and blue fire occasionally dances along the walls (PCs may witness this if they explore the town). The well-guarded tower is locked and barred so no one can enter and endanger oneself.

SCENE 1 – THE TOWN OF DAGGER FALLS

Dagger Falls has the charm of a little backcountry town, but with impressive fortifications. Thick stone walls, watch towers and reinforced battlements guard the collection of old stone buildings topped by steep slate roofs. You smell a mix of animal dung, hot tar and hot spicy stews as you walk the narrow streets.

"Hail to our heroes!", "The gnoll killers have arrived!" can be heard in the streets from commoners everywhere. People cheer and applaud and seem to be frantically happy.

As you progress a little bit further into town, you quickly realize that these excited shouts aren't intended for you. Instead, soldiers bearing the coat of arms of the Zhentarim wander the streets raising their arms, smiling and waving to the locals and receiving all the attention.

Even though the PCs saved the caravan from the gnolls, it's the Zhents who get the most cheers from the locals. The PCs might get a pat on their shoulder and thanks as well, if merchants hear that the PCs have saved a caravan. But the Zhents claim to have stopped a big horde of gnolls on their way to Dagger Falls.

As proof of their success the Zhents have piled around twenty gnoll heads in the marketplace. Two Zhent mercenaries guard the mound and don't let anyone make a close inspection of it. The mound has actually been heightened with some sacks filled with sand to make the heap look bigger. A DC 26 Perception check or automatic on a thorough search of the pile when the guards are distracted reveals this. The twenty gnoll heads are real, though.

The PCs can look around the town and shop. The residents of Dagger Falls are happy to talk with travelers and to hear news from the outside world. The Zhent mercenaries decline to chat with the PCs as ordered.

Asking around for Dorrington Brightaxe

With a DC 12 Streetwise check the PCs find out that Dorrington Brightaxe works for the Constable as a scout. The dwarf is currently not in town as he has been sent on a mission. The PCs can also learn this from Constable Morn.

SCENE 2 – THE CONSTABLE'S REQUEST

While wandering through the streets of Dagger Falls you spot Nyssa Seebestern again. She is talking to the captain of the guard and then points at you. The face of

the man brightens up and he enthusiastically approaches you with his hand outstretched to greet you.

“I am happy to meet you, folks! Name is Constable Kendar Morn. It’s about time someone else apart from those slimy Zhents showed those critters what it means to interfere with us. Those Zhents can’t be trusted a bit! And their ‘protection fee’ demands are outrageous...”

Kendar Morn is six-and-half-feet tall with curly brown hair, and a broad chin. He’s a good-natured peace-loving man, who is popular among his men through his cool-headed and appreciative way of leading.

The Morn family has been living in Daggerdale for generations. The Morns have always occupied influential positions around Dagger Falls. Morn is quite happy with his job as town constable, which equals a “captain of the watch” in other cities. He shares no love for folks from Darkhold, Mulmaster or old Zhentil Keep.

The constable congratulates the PCs for saving the caravan and thanks them for their assistance in guarding it on the trail to Dagger Falls. The PCs are just the people he’s been looking for. He tells them about the upcoming town council meeting between Mayor Ren Ferkins and the Zhent mercenary leader:

- Kendar Morn pleads with the PCs to assist him in that council and to speak for his cause as he doesn’t consider himself “good with words”.
- Mayor Ferkins wants to decide if the town needs to hire the Zhent mercenaries as regular monster hunters in the lands outside the walls of Dagger Falls.
- The PCs have just proven to be as able at hunting down gnolls as the Zhent, so they are welcome to attend the meeting.
- If the PCs insist on getting paid or rewarded for this task, Morn hints that he has indeed something in mind for them, if they assist him (see Encounter 4).

Morn’s biased opinion is that the mayor should not hire the Zhents for, in his eyes, several good reasons:

- Zhents can’t be trusted.
- The Zhents demand too much gold for services adventurers could occasionally do if the need arises.
- No monster horde has yet attacked the town directly. The dalefolk have been able to fight off minor attacks by themselves for generations.

The PCs might want to determine their own opinion about the Zhents first. They may know, or learn more, about the Zhents with the appropriate skill checks. The PCs either know these pieces of information, or can gather information among the locals. Ask what kind of skills the players want to use and use this as guidelines:

ARCANA

DC 7: Zhents run schools of arcana in Darkhold, where residents can learn the art to become wizards-for-hire later.

DC 12: Most wizards leaving the schools of arcana run by Zhents focus on destructive magic.

DC 17: A PC notices a Zhent mage practicing his arcane arts and adding some dreaded arcane words of shadow conjuration to it just as the mages do in Netheril. If questioned, the Zhent mage excuses this as something he “picked up somewhere recently”.

HISTORY

DC 7: The Zhentarim trains its members in the art of war. They band together as soldiers-for-hire, roaming the countryside.

DC 12: Even though Zhentil Keep is no more, the Zhents are still very active. They have their power base in Darkhold.

DC 17: Zhentil Keep forces once occupied Daggerdale over a hundred years ago for over 30 years, suppressing the residents with an iron fist before the dalefolk could free the Dale again.

INSIGHT

DC 7: The present Zhent soldiers always stiffen up whenever the PCs get any closer. They either don’t trust adventurers or have something to hide.

DC 12: The Zhents try to achieve a good standing with a lot of influential “opinion leaders” like merchants in Dagger Falls. This seems to have a higher priority for them than patrolling the countryside.

DC 17: The Zhent soldiers look uneasy whenever conversations come up why the Zhentish presence is coincidently at the same time when gnoll activities have increased drastically.

PERCEPTION

DC 7: A PC can overhear a short prayer to Cyric, god of strife, from one of the Zhents. The soldier denies this if questioned.

DC 12: A PC spots a Zhent making notes of the battlements of the city walls of Dagger Falls. If questioned the soldier refers to Sergeant Villmore’s orders to “find weaknesses in the defense of the town we may have to protect soon”.

DC 17: A PC overhears a conversation where two Zhent soldiers talk about how Sergeant Villmore just finished another “reconnaissance report about potential targets in the Dales” to be sent to “the headquarter” (also see RPGA card “Zhentarim Infiltration” below).

RELIGION

DC 7: Zhentil Keep has a long history of admiring evil gods, like Cyric or Bane. The power base of Bane has moved to the dark metropolis of Mulmaster, where a lot of Zhents are present as well.

DC 12: Most Zhents followed Cyric, god of murder, Tempus, the god of battle, or Bane, god of tyranny. The church of Bane was always most revered among Zhents and Zhentarim, but with the destruction of Zhentil Keep the faith of Cyric has become the dominant religion.

DC 17: Even the Bane's exarch, Fzoul Chembryl, has a lot of followers among the former residents of Zhentil Keep. He influenced Zhentil Keep immensely while being a mortal and is still praised for his former deeds. The Zhents today still praise Bane and his Exarchs over all other gods.

STREETWISE

DC 7: Commander Sirius Rulak leads the unit of Zhent mercenaries currently in town. They seem to be able hunters of the beasts dwelling outside the city walls. They might have saved the lives of citizens to come and made this Dale a safer place. They come from Darkhold, west of Cormyr.

DC 12: In recent years Daggerdale has been increasingly troubled by humanoids from the Desertsouth Mountains. But the amount of gnoll attacks has quadrupled in the last months. At the same time, the Zhent mercenaries showed up and claimed to be the Dales best protection against these attacks.

DC 17: It's rumored that Sergeant Villmore, a commanding Zhent of Rulak's unit, has been bragging about the success of the unit in Netheril and that Netheril gold will always be welcome in the future. As the Empire of Netheril is a threat to the Dalelands this is alarming.

Sergeant Villmore is currently not in town in case the PCs try to chase him down.

RPGA CARD "ZHENTARIM INFILTRATION"

Some players might have the RPGA reward card "Zhentarim Infiltration". To fulfill task 3 of the quest card they might want to engage a Zhent in a fight. It's not a good idea to do this while in Dagger Falls as the Zhent regulars met here are not "agents".

There is an opportunity in Encounter 7 for this.

ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

Once the PCs agree to attend the town council meeting, run Encounter 4.

If the PCs do not want to participate, Constable Kendar Morn sends them on the quest to find the gnoll hideout after the meeting nonetheless, as described in the next Encounter. In this case the PCs have another chance to talk to the mayor in Encounter 8. He also does this if the PCs support the idea of having Dagger Falls hire the Zhents.

If the PCs reject his offer the PCs might stumble upon the drowning dwarf outside of the city walls. In this case proceed with Encounter 5.

TREASURE

If the PCs protected Nyssa Seebenstern's caravan until it reached Dagger Falls she now gladly pays each PC the promised amount of 50 / 75 gp.

ENCOUNTER 4: THE TOWN MEETING

**SKILL CHALLENGE LEVEL 4 / 6,
COMPLEXITY 3 (105 / 150 XP)**

SETUP

Number of Successes: 8

Number of Failures: 3

Primary Skills: Bluff, Diplomacy, History, Religion, Streetwise

Important NPCs:

Ren Ferkins, Mayor of Dagger Falls (Diplomacy +6, Insight +6)

Constable Kendar Morn, leader of Dagger Falls town guards (Insight +1, Diplomacy +1, Perception +6).

Commander Sirius Rulak, Commander of the Zhent mercenary unit in Dagger Falls (Bluff +9, Diplomacy +14, Streetwise +9, other skills +5)

The PCs gather in a room of the town hall with Mayor Ren Ferkins and the leader of the Zhent mercenaries, Commander Sirius Rulak. Kendar Morn is also present but wants the PCs to do the talking for him.

You have been invited to the town hall of Dagger Falls. Wall hangings show marvelous impressions of the waterfall nearby with an abundance of game grazing on its shore. All attendants sit down at a big oval-shaped conference table made from an ironbark tree.

Mayor Ren Ferkins, an aging man with white facial hair, introduces himself and a man clad in full plate armor bearing the symbol of the Zhentarim (a black mace on a golden disc shedding green rays held by a wyvern) as Commander Sirius Rulak. The Zhent soldier is a clean shaved man with a military-short cut to his blond hair. He is around forty years old. His handshake is strong, his smile broad but one gets the impression that his courtesy is like that of a wolf in sheep's clothing.

More members of the town council also gather in this hall and a lot of citizens press their faces to the hall's windows to peek inside.

After the formal introductions, the mayor announces, "We have gathered here to decide if the town of Dagger Falls will hire Commander Sirius Rulak's unit to protect us. He's offered to patrol the countryside and hunt down all marauding critters."

"That's correct," - the commander interrupts him - "I can promise that my men will take care of the gnoll attacks in a few weeks or months so that you and your children can sleep safely. Of course we can only hold on to this promise if your payments will come in a timely fashion."

No one goes into detail how much gold the Zhent asked for their services, but the price seems to be quite steep. The PCs can now bring forward their case in the name of Constable Morn if they want to.

SKILL CHALLENGE

Feel free to award the PCs two success on high rolls, good arguments and good role-playing anytime. You can also give a +2 bonus on consecutive skill checks if it seems logical to you and if it fits the points brought up.

This skill challenge pauses once the PCs either accumulate 6 successes or 2 failures. This skill challenge continues in Encounter 8 once the PCs are back in town. Write down the current success and failures before proceeding to the next encounter.

Here are some examples of arguments:

Bluff (DC 22 / 23): PCs could claim that more gnolls are on their way to Dagger Falls. Mayor Ren Ferkins is afraid that more gnolls will show up soon and might even attack the town directly. Any false assertion like this results in a failure as the mayor is even more convinced about the need of a Zhent protection army.

If the PCs make up facts about the Zhents and score a success, the commander becomes enraged. The PCs receive a +2 bonus on their next skill check.

Diplomacy (DC 17 / 18): The PCs can speak for themselves and vouch for their competence as adventurers. This way the mayor might get convinced that hiring adventurers when the need arises might be cheaper in the long run.

The PCs can also expose the Zhents' activities in Dagger Falls as described in Encounter 3 (revealed via successful Arcana, Insight or Perception checks). They could for instance bring to attention the rouse with the gnoll heads piled up high to make it look bigger. This decreases the Zhents' integrity, which results in a +2 bonus on the next skill check.

History (DC 17 / 18): The mayor is very patriotic. If he is reminded about the Zhents' evil deeds of the past, he'd rather look for other solutions than hiring Zhents. Zhentil Keep once occupied Daggerdale for thirty years before the dalefolk could free the Dale again.

Intimidate: Threatening the mayor to harm someone or something in Dagger Falls if he doesn't follow the PCs' demands yields an automatic failure.

Religion (DC 17 / 18): Reminding the attendees what evil gods the people from Zhentil Keep prayed to (Bane, Fzoul Chembryl and Cyric) frightens the mayor and the council and can also be successful.

Commander Rulak does under no circumstance share the information of who his patron deity is with the audience.

Streetwise (DC 17 / 18): Word on the street is that Zhent mercenaries can't be trusted and have zero loyalty. Reports from other merchants say that the Zhent mercenary loyalty only goes as far as the gold lasts. They could walk away in the heat of the battle if Dagger Falls showed any sign of not being able to pay them any further. This is a bad base for collaboration. If a PC brings it up (either realizing it here or by using information gained in the previous encounter), it does not grant a success, but gives a +2 on the next skill check. This only works once.

ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

This skill challenge pauses once the PCs either accumulate 6 successes or 3 failures. This skill challenge continues in Encounter 8 once the PCs are back in town.

Once the successes or failures have been achieved, read, or paraphrase, the following:

Constable Morn, who has been quite silent in the meeting, suddenly jumps up from his chair and yells at the commander, "You are claiming that it takes weeks, maybe months to stop the monster threat. This is ridiculous! I tell you, more can be achieved in a much shorter time. These adventurers here..." Morn points at you, "... are better able to do such a task than the whole unit of soldiers you have with you, Commander!"

The Zhent commander starts to laugh at such a thought, declaring the adventurers to be nothing more than a few "homeless runaways". The whole council erupts into a loud angry discussion.

Mayor Ren Ferkins brings the meeting to a halt at this point. He declares that the council meets again the next day at noon and the final decision will be made then.

When everybody starts leaving the meeting hall, Constable Morn takes the PCs to the side to speak privately with them. He is certain the PCs are capable folks, trustworthier and better suited for dealing with the gnolls than the Zhentarim soldiers. He wants the

PCs to proof he is correct towards mayor Ferkins by helping him hunt down gnolls.

If the PCs agree he advises them to head to Eagles Eyrie, a lookout point across the river Tesh. There's a trail right next to the waterfall, south of the Tesh River, which leads to the lookout. The PCs need to be back here by noon tomorrow to show the mayor that the town does not need the Zhents. Offers a suit of magic armor from his family as a reward.

Once the PCs leave Dagger Falls to head to Eagles' Eyrie go to Encounter 5. If they decline the quest, they might still stumble upon the dwarf in Encounter 5, if they decide to head out to the waterfall themselves.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

Note that the skill challenge is not over yet. The PCs don't receive any XP prior to Encounter 8 for it and this encounter does not count towards a milestone for the day. This challenge ends in Encounter 8.

ENCOUNTER 5: THE DROWNING DWARF

SETUP

Important NPCs:

Dorring Brightaxe - male dwarf scout (Endurance +10, Athletics +3)

The PCs hear the dwarf Dorring shouting for help. He has been attacked by gnolls and stumbled into the water. The torrent pulled him out to the middle of the river where he clings to a wet boulder.

You can spot Eagles' Eyrie in the southwest, across the Tesh, already. This hilltop consists of granite rock. From there you will have a great view over the lands around you.

An old narrow path runs up the hill that forms the ledge where the Tesh turns into the great "Dagger Falls". The sight is breathtaking. Amidst the foam and spray, you spot rainbows that form a contrast to the still dark grey sky. The air is humid and refreshing, and the roaring sound of the water is deafening.

At the top of the waterfall you find the path leading up to the Eagles' Eyrie. The sound of the water is quieter up here and you suddenly overhear a male scream from the water. "Help me! Help me please! I will drown!"

If the PCs check who is yelling for help they see the dead body of three gnolls on the riverbank next to where a male dwarf clings to a wet boulder in the middle of the river. The wild waters around him threaten to soon drag him away. He's about forty feet away from either shore. The same distance separates him from the edge of the waterfall that will take him down 100 feet! He begs the PCs for help.

Dorring Brightaxe used to be a member of Byar's Seven adventuring group until they separated. He returned to his home in Dagger Falls. His clan has roots in Daggerdale and he considers retiring completely from adventuring life. For now, he earns a little extra income by working as a scout for Constable Morn in Dagger Falls.

He shaves his head bald. His beard is red as fire and he wears it in a clean braid ending in an iron ring. His favorite weapons are bows, aside from his family heirloom, a Brightaxe clan battleaxe.

Helping Dorring is not a skill challenge. This could be solved with a simple casting of Tenser's Floating Disk and otherwise shouldn't require more than two or three

skill checks. It's up to the PCs how to solve this problem. The river is 70 feet wide here. Dorring is 35 feet away from the shore. Several wet boulders in the river make this area hard to navigate by boat. The waterfalls nearby threaten to pull everything into its depths 100 feet down.

Here are some suggestions how to run this encounter:

Casting Tenser's Floating Disk: Conjuring a Tenser's Floating Disc is the safest and easiest way to carry Dorring to the shore. The magical disk is unaffected by the river.

Swimming to Dorring: Swimming to Dorring through the stormy water requires a DC 10 and then a DC 15 Athletics skill check. Swimming back to shore with Dorring in tow requires a DC 20 and then a DC 17 skill check.

Rowing a barge to Dorring: All cargo destined to go down the River Tesh has to be unloaded from barges above the deadly falls and reloaded onto other craft below.

It takes some time for the PCs to arrive with a barge which they can rent for 5 gp including a 50 gold deposit if the owner realizes that the PC wants to row to the edge of the waterfall with it. In the meantime, Dorring has to make a DC 12 and then a DC 17 Endurance check to see if his fingers slip and the current takes him away.

The Tesh is quite strong so close to the waterfall. The PCs have to make two hard Athletics checks to steer the boat safely to Dorring and then two more to get it back to the shore.

Throwing a rope to Dorring: Dorring needs to catch the rope and hang on to it. If the PCs forget to yell to him that he needs to tie the rope around him Dorring has to make two DC 12 Athletics checks to hold the rope, before he can be pulled safely ashore. If he fails one, he'll be flushed away.

If the PCs have Dorring make a tight knot around his waist or chest, they drag him ashore without any further checks if everyone helps with the pulling as this works eventually. If only one PC pulls the DM can decide if he has to make Strength ability checks.

Holding onto a boulder to prevent getting pulled away: If Dorring or one of the PCs gets pulled away by the water they might be able to get a hold of another boulder in the water. Make one saving throw. If it succeeds the character can hold onto another slippery boulder. No further saving throws are possible after this one. Next station is the big water slide!

Falling down the waterfall: If Dorring or one of the PCs get pulled away by the water they disappear in the spray and spume and fall down the waterfall.

If Dorrington gets carried away he disappears without trace. It's not possible to meet him again in this adventure. It remains unclear if he survives.

PCs drop to 0 hit points, but fall unconscious (as if knocked unconscious, see page 295 of the PHB) instead of dying. The rest of the party finds this unlucky unconscious PC stranded ashore somewhere close to the bottom of the waterfall, with all his equipment.

ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

Once Dorrington is safe on dry land Dorrington thanks the PCs enthusiastically and also rewards them (see "Treasure" below).

If asked about the Byar's Seven adventuring band he admits to be one of the former members. If he hears that Swift Elyan is in Dagger Falls to meet him, he is even happier.

He tells the PCs that he was looking for more traces of the gnolls as ordered by Constable Morn. He found a cave in the Desertsouth Mountains foothills west of Dagger Falls. Fresh tracks led him there. It seems a larger band of gnolls was already very close to Dagger Falls and have probably scouted the defenses for weaknesses.

Dorrington willingly passes the information on where to find this cave to the PCs. He tells them to head west until they reach the foothills. There they shall look for strangely formed rock pinnacles standing in a narrow valley. The locals refer to it as "changeland" as the Spellplague warped the landscape at this spot. But it's absolutely safe to travel there. It has no ongoing magical effects for passers-by.

Right behind the pinnacles Dorrington spotted cave entrances but didn't dare to approach any further without backup.

Dorrington departs afterwards for Dagger Falls to report what he's found. If the PCs follow his directions run Encounter 6.

If the PCs continue to Eagles' Eyrie and were not able to save the dwarf, they eventually find the old tracks of a gnoll band, which lead them to the same caves in the Desertsouth Mountains.

Nothing else of interest can be found at Eagles' Eyrie except some cave entrances that have long been sealed shut.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

The characters receive 30 / 55 experience points for completing the minor quest to find a member of Byar's Seven.

TREASURE

There is no treasure, though saving Dorrington earns the PCs Elyan's gratitude.

ENCOUNTER 6: THE GNOLL CAVE

ENCOUNTER LEVEL 4 / 6 (950 / 1400 XP)

SETUP

This encounter includes the following creatures:

8 Gnoll Minions (GM)

1 Gnoll Huntmaster (GH)

1 Gnoll Demonic Scourge (GDS)

The PCs arrive at the cave where a group of gnolls hides. The gnoll are just about to eat a Zhent soldier they captured. If the PCs rescue the Zhent, he is able to tell them about Commander Rulak's plans.

No matter what time the PCs arrive at the cave the sky darkens and it starts to rain. This creates the mud pools for Encounter 7 and sets the mood for the environment.

As the adventurers enter the area, read:

It only took you a few hours to arrive at the Desertsmouth Mountain foothills. The sky has darkened to a nightmarish black and the first rolls of thunder can be heard. Cold rain begins to fall, soaking you as the wind picks up.

In front of you, several rock pinnacles rise 40 to 60 feet into the black sky, ending in a needle-sharp tip. Their bases are only around 20 feet wide, so it's easy to move around them.

A sudden bolt of lightning in the stormy sky highlights your surroundings and, for a split second, you make out a cave entrance, yawning in the side of the canyon valley.

If the PCs are looking for tracks anywhere close to the cave they can discern the following information (they need to hurry before the rain gets heavier or the DCs will increase by 10):

- **DC 20 Perception:** Doglike paw prints can be seen. A group of 10 or more creatures enters and leaves this cave regularly.
- **DC 27 Perception:** Not long ago there were also one or two humans here. Tracks of human military boots can be found which lead inside and out of the cave.

If the PCs hesitate to enter the cave, the screams of a man can be heard out of the cave.

As the adventurers enter the area, read:

The damp cave is around 50 feet in diameter and equally as high. In the middle of the cave a ledge forms another level. The place reeks of fresh blood, wet dog and entrails. The only way up to the ledge is a steep ramp carved into the rock. A brownish fluid, possibly blood, flows down the ramp and the sides of the ledge.

On the wall are dozens of crude paintings of a beastlike creature tearing humans apart. It's also painted with the same reddish-brown fluid.

A DC 16 Religion check determines the beastlike creature as Malar, the evil exarch of beasts.

The gnolls fiercely attack once they notice the first PC.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

This area has a few important features.

Illumination: All areas are in dim light unless a light source is present.

Blood rock ledge: The ledge in the western part of the cave is 40 feet high. Falling down causes 4d10 damage.

To climb up the uneven and unnaturally slippery cave wall to the ledge requires a DC 20 Athletics check.

Ranged fighters have cover from attacks originating from below (-2 to ranged attack rolls), while their enemies at the bottom of the cave have no cover unless they fall back in the tunnel.

The whole ledge is also covered in blood, as this is the feeding place for the gnolls. This counts as "blood rock": A creature standing in a square of blood rock can score a critical hit on a natural die roll of 19 or 20.

Steep, slippery ramp: The only way to walk up to the ledge is via a very steep and slippery ramp. Gnoll drool and bloody remains of victims flows down the ramp which makes it hard to walk up. It costs 3 squares of movement to enter one square on the ramp if walking upwards. Walking across it, or down, only costs 1 square of movement.

If a creature jumps onto, runs or makes attacks on the ramp it has to make a DC 17 Acrobatics check after his action. If it fails it falls prone. If it fails by 5 or more, it slides all the way down to the bottom if there's enough room (it slides along the arrows as depicted on the DM map) taking 1d6 + 4 damage, and falls prone.

Hole: The hole in the northern part of the cave is filled with bones - the former meals of the gnolls. It's 30 feet deep causing 3d10 damage if someone falls down. The gnoll treasure can be found here (see "Treasure" below). To climb up or down the uneven wall requires a DC 15 Athletics check.

Rubble and water puddle: Difficult terrain. It costs 2 squares of movement to enter.

The Zhent mercenary: In the southwest corner of the ledge lies a badly wounded Zhent soldier (ZS). He is still alive, but hardly in a condition to act. The gnolls have already started to nibble on him. He is the gnolls' next meal if the PCs do not interfere.

TACTICS

The gnoll demonic scourge wades into battle as soon as he is aware of PCs. The gnoll minions at the bottom try to swarm the PCs so the gnoll demonic scourge can benefit from his *pack attack* ability.

The gnoll huntmaster and gnoll minions use their bows to shoot at every PC daring to enter their cave. They focus all their attacks on any enemy who start climbing the ramp. They move to the upper edge of the ramp once PCs start to climb it in order to rain arrows onto them. They try to stand as close to the ramp as possible so the PCs are forced to fight while standing on the ramp and therefore risking sliding down. They also try to bull rush PCs down the ramp or the edge of the ledge.

SCALING THE ENCOUNTER

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

Four PCs: Remove 4 gnoll minions.

Six PCs: Add 1 gnoll huntmaster.

ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

After the fight the PCs have a chance to talk to the Zhent survivor.

The nameless Zhent soldier is in bad shape. Treat him as a minion (see encounter 7). His survival gives an automatic success in the skill challenge of Encounter 4 and 8.

The fact that the gnolls were just about to eat him alive has snapped his mind. He can't remember what happened when the gnolls caught him and can't even remember his own name.

What he can remember, though, is his last mission. He was part of Commander Rulak's unit. They were hired by the Empire of Netheril to hunt down gnolls. Commander Rulak didn't want to kill the gnolls, but simply drive them east out of Netheril and directly into Daggerdale. There he promised his men they would profit from the dalefolk again as the mercenaries could now demand gold to hunt the gnolls a second time.

The Zhent soldier is in no condition to fight. He is barely able to walk, but is strong enough to stumble by

himself to the next town. He doesn't care if the PCs accompany him or not. All he wants to do is leave this cave as fast as possible.

After questioning the Zhent, the PCs might either want to head back to Dagger Falls right away or camp for the night. Encourage the PCs to camp outside, as the cave is very smelly.

Run Encounter 7 once the PCs leave the cave (no matter how much time the PCs spend in the cave).

If the PCs knock some gnolls unconscious to question them they hear a similar story to the one the Zhent is able to tell. The gnolls claim they have been driven out of their usual hunting grounds west of the mountains. The gnoll band calls itself the "Followers of the Beasts of Butchery". The band in the gnoll cave was only a part of a bigger tribe, which is hunting elsewhere in the Dales.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

The characters receive 190 / 280 experience points each for defeating the gnolls.

TREASURE

In the hole among the bones of the gnoll's victims the PCs find various gems and coin, worth 50 / 75 gp as well as a set of *gauntlets of ogre power*.

ENCOUNTER 6: THE GNOLL CAVE STATISTICS (LOW LEVEL)

Gnoll Huntmaster		Level 5 Artillery	
Medium natural humanoid		XP 200	
Initiative +6	Senses Perception +11; low-light vision		
HP 50; Bloodied 25			
AC 19; Fortitude 16, Reflex 17, Will 14			
Speed 7			
m Handaxe (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon			
+9 vs. AC; 1d6 + 3 damage, or 1d6 + 5 damage while bloodied; see also <i>pack attack</i> .			
R Longbow (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon			
Ranged 20/40; +10 vs. AC; 1d10 + 4 damage, or 1d10 + 6 damage while bloodied; see also <i>pack attack</i> .			
Pack Attack			
The gnoll huntmaster deals an extra 5 damage on melee and ranged attacks against an enemy that has two or more of the huntmaster's allies adjacent to it.			
Alignment Chaotic evil		Languages Abyssal, Common	
Skills Intimidate +7, Stealth +11			
Str 16 (+5)	Dex 19 (+6)	Wis 14 (+4)	
Con 14 (+4)	Int 8 (+1)	Cha 7 (+0)	
Equipment leather armor, handaxe, longbow, quiver of 30 arrows			

Gnoll Minion		Level 5 Minion	
Medium natural humanoid		XP 50	
Initiative +6	Senses Perception +11; low-light vision		
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.			
AC 19; Fortitude 16, Reflex 17, Will 14			
Speed 7			
m Handaxe (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon			
+9 vs. AC; 4 damage; see also <i>pack attack</i> .			
R Longbow (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon			
Ranged 20/40; +10 vs. AC; 5 damage; see also <i>pack attack</i> .			
Pack Attack			
The gnoll minion deals an extra 5 damage on melee and ranged attacks against an enemy that has two or more of the gnoll minion's allies adjacent to it.			
Alignment Chaotic evil		Languages Abyssal, Common	
Skills Intimidate +7, Stealth +11			
Str 16 (+5)	Dex 19 (+6)	Wis 14 (+4)	
Con 14 (+4)	Int 8 (+1)	Cha 7 (+0)	
Equipment leather armor, handaxe, longbow, quiver of 30 arrows			

Gnoll Demonic Scourge		Level 8 Brute (Leader)	
Medium natural humanoid		XP 350	
Initiative +6	Senses Perception +7; low-light vision		
Leader of the Pack aura 5; allies in the aura gain a +1 bonus to attack rolls. While this creature is bloodied, the bonus increases to +2.			
HP 106; Bloodied 53			
AC 20; Fortitude 21, Reflex 18, Will 18			
Speed 5			
m Heavy Flail (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon			
+13 vs. AC; 2d6 + 5 damage, or 2d6 + 7 while bloodied; against a bloodied enemy, this attack also knocks the target prone; see also <i>pack attack</i> .			
Bloodthirst			
If the gnoll demonic scourge bloodies an enemy with a melee attack, an ally adjacent to the enemy can make a melee attack against that enemy as an immediate reaction.			
Overwhelming Attack (free; encounter)			
The gnoll demonic scourge applies its <i>bloodthirst</i> power to two allies instead of one.			
Pack Attack			
The gnoll demonic scourge deals an extra 5 damage on melee attacks against an enemy that has two or more of the gnoll demonic scourge's allies adjacent to it.			
Alignment Chaotic evil		Languages Abyssal, Common	
Skills Insight +10, Intimidate +13, Religion +10			
Str 20 (+9)	Dex 14 (+6)	Wis 12 (+5)	
Con 16 (+7)	Int 13 (+5)	Cha 15 (+6)	
Equipment hide armor, heavy flail			

ENCOUNTER 6: THE GNOLL CAVE STATISTICS (HIGH LEVEL)

Gnoll Huntmaster (Level 7)	Level 7 Artillery
Medium natural humanoid	XP 300
Initiative +7 Senses Perception +12; low-light vision	
HP 62; Bloodied 31	
AC 21; Fortitude 18, Reflex 19, Will 16	
Speed 7	
m Handaxe (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
+11 vs. AC; 1d6 + 4 damage, or 1d6 + 6 damage while bloodied; see also <i>pack attack</i> .	
R Longbow (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
Ranged 20/40; +12 vs. AC; 1d10 + 5 damage, or 1d10 + 7 damage while bloodied; see also <i>pack attack</i> .	
Pack Attack	
The gnoll huntmaster deals an extra 5 damage on melee and ranged attacks against an enemy that has two or more of the huntmaster's allies adjacent to it.	
Alignment Chaotic evil	Languages Abyssal, Common
Skills Intimidate +8, Stealth +12	
Str 16 (+6)	Dex 19 (+7)
Con 14 (+5)	Int 8 (+2)
	Cha 7 (+1)
Equipment leather armor, handaxe, longbow, quiver of 30 arrows	

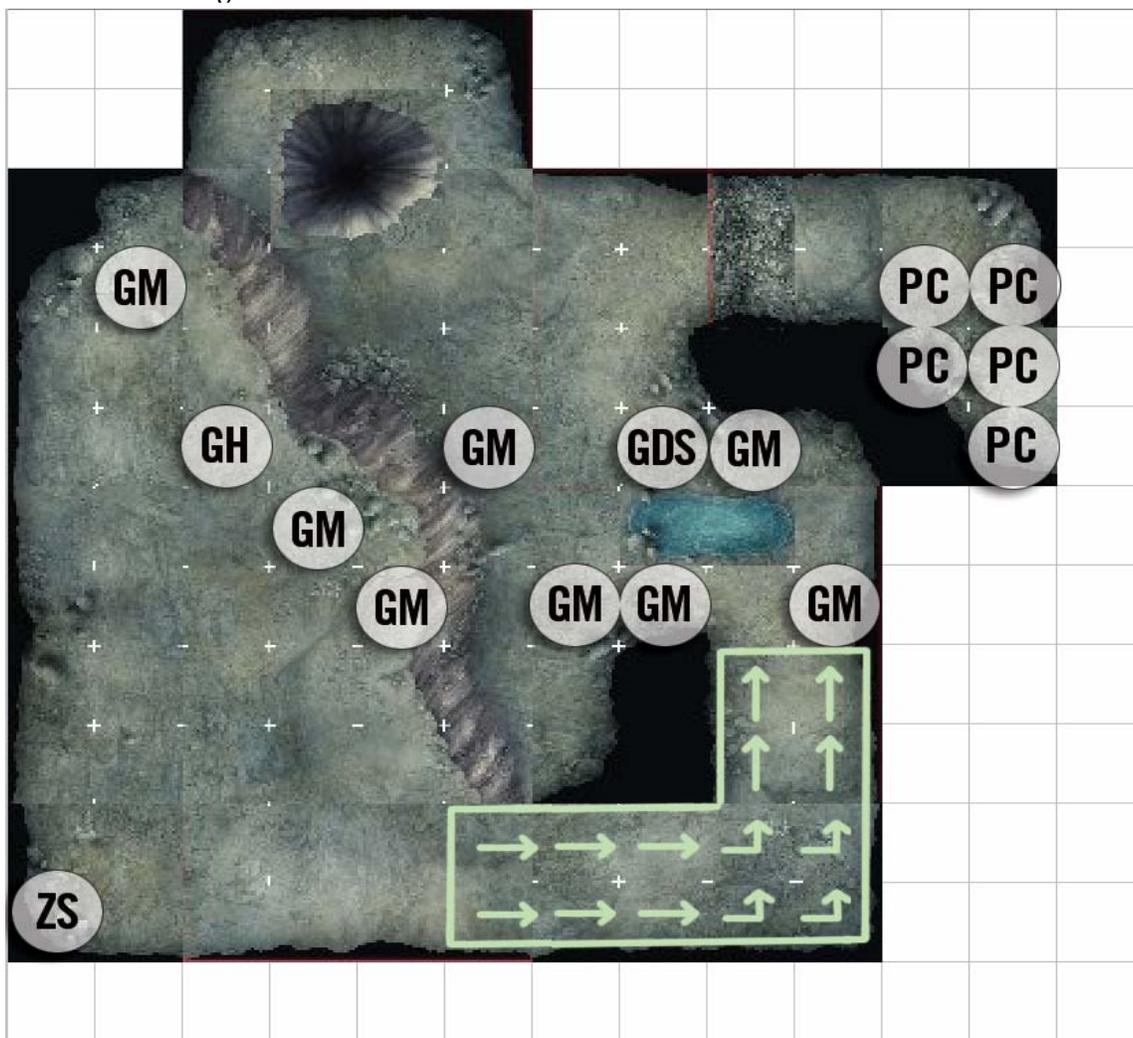
Gnoll Minion (Level 7)	Level 7 Minion
Medium natural humanoid	XP 75
Initiative +7 Senses Perception +12; low-light vision	
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	
AC 21; Fortitude 18, Reflex 19, Will 16	
Speed 7	
m Handaxe (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
+11 vs. AC; 5 damage; see also <i>pack attack</i> .	
R Longbow (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
Ranged 20/40; +12 vs. AC; 6 damage; see also <i>pack attack</i> .	
Pack Attack	
The gnoll minion deals an extra 5 damage on melee and ranged attacks against an enemy that has two or more of the gnoll minion's allies adjacent to it.	
Alignment Chaotic evil	Languages Abyssal, Common
Skills Intimidate +8, Stealth +12	
Str 16 (+6)	Dex 19 (+7)
Con 14 (+5)	Int 8 (+2)
	Cha 7 (+1)
Equipment leather armor, handaxe, longbow, quiver of 30 arrows	

Gnoll Demonic Scourge (Lvl 10)	Level 10 Brute (Leader)
Medium natural humanoid	XP 500
Initiative +7 Senses Perception +8; low-light vision	
Leader of the Pack aura 5; allies in the aura gain a +1 bonus to attack rolls. While this creature is bloodied, the bonus increases to +2.	
HP 126; Bloodied 63	
AC 22; Fortitude 23, Reflex 20, Will 20	
Speed 5	
m Heavy Flail (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
+15 vs. AC; 2d6 + 6 damage, or 2d6 + 8 while bloodied; against a bloodied enemy, this attack also knocks the target prone; see also <i>pack attack</i> .	
Bloodthirst	
If the gnoll demonic scourge bloodies an enemy with a melee attack, an ally adjacent to the enemy can make a melee attack against that enemy as an immediate reaction.	
Overwhelming Attack (free; encounter)	
The gnoll demonic scourge applies its <i>bloodthirst</i> power to two allies instead of one.	
Pack Attack	
The gnoll demonic scourge deals an extra 5 damage on melee attacks against an enemy that has two or more of the gnoll demonic scourge's allies adjacent to it.	
Alignment Chaotic evil	Languages Abyssal, Common
Skills Insight +11, Intimidate +14, Religion +11	
Str 20 (+10)	Dex 14 (+7)
Con 16 (+8)	Int 13 (+6)
	Cha 15 (+7)
Equipment hide armor, heavy flail	

ENCOUNTER 6: THE GNOLL CAVE MAP

Lost Caverns of the Underdark tiles:

Cave Offshoot / Tunnel End	4x4 X2
Tunnel End / L-Tunnel	4x2 X1
Floor / Tunnel w/Gravel	2x1 X1
Tunnel End / Pit	2x2 X1
Cave Wall / T-Tunnel	4x2 X1
Floor w/Ridge / Tunnel w/Lava Gorge	4x8 X1
Cave Corner / Lava Pit	4x2 X1
Cave Wall / Tunnel	4x2 X1
Cave Corner / Pool	2x1 X1
Cave Corner / Tunnel	2x2 X3
Cave Corner / Gorge	4x2 X1



ENCOUNTER 7: “YOU ARE WITH OR AGAINST US!”

ENCOUNTER LEVEL 4 / 6 (875 / 1200 XP)

SETUP

This encounter includes the following creatures:

3 Zhent Soldiers (ZS)

1 Zhent War Mage (ZM)

1 Zhent Warlord (Sergeant Villmore) (ZW)

(Diplomacy +2 / +3, Insight +1 / +2)

Once the PCs leave the cave they run into a Zhent patrol. Commander Rulak has ordered Sergeant Villmore to look for the PCs and to ‘take care of them, one way or the other’.

As the adventurers enter the area, read:

The rain outside has turned into a light drizzle but the sky is still full of black rolling clouds that hide the sun completely.

As you make your way back through the canyon of pinnacles you see a group of Zhent soldiers with drawn weapons ahead of you. A man in the center, bearing the insignia of a higher rank, yells, “Greetings, my friends. Sergeant Villmore ordered here by Commander Rulak, at your service. I see that you have stumbled upon things, which are not your business. Now we have to decide how to deal with this matter...”

The Zhents are ready to kill the PCs so they do not further interfere with the mercenaries’ business in Dagger Falls. If the PCs show signs of cooperation and attempt to barter their way out, the Zhent are willing to buy the PCs’ silence.

The mercenaries offer to meet the PCs at the border and give them a magic weapon for free. For this the PCs have to stay away from the next town council meeting and are not allowed to talk about their findings in the cave, especially not about the things the nameless Zhent has most likely told them. See the “Treasure part” of Encounter 8 for more details.

The sergeant does not care if the nameless Zhent is in the PCs midst. He can’t be blackmailed for the Zhent’s life. The sergeant even orders to have the man killed if the opportunity presents itself.

Unless the PCs barter with the Zhents, right before anyone else acts, Swift Elyan rides in full speed towards

the soldiers disguised as the Zhent Headless Horseman. This way she scares away five Zhents leaving four Zhents and the sergeant behind, as listed on the map. Neither Swift Elyan nor the Zhents running away are part of the fight or the XP calculation. If the PCs attack the rider assume Elyan can take a few hits.

If she is ready to make her appearance, read:

Suddenly another lightning bolt cracks over the sky accompanied by a loud roll of thunder. Then another roar can be heard: A black horse breaks out of the bushes and gallops straight towards the Zhents. As the rider comes into view you all realize that this human has no head! Where his head should be you only see a bloody stump. Wearing a midnight black cloak and armor he charges at the Zhents with a bloody longsword accompanied by maniacal laughter.

“The Headless Horseman!” a soldier screams out in panic pointing at the black rider, his eyes widened in terror. “RUUUUUN!”

Half of the soldiers start screaming, and dart off in different directions away from the rider who chases after them.

“Stand your ground, you chickens!” Sergeant Villmore growls, and a few of his men keep their position, even though you can see their shock in their eyes, “We will deal with this ghost right after we deal with these!” the Sergeant commands. Then he orders his men to attack you.

Proceed with the combat as normal after this. The rider quickly disappears after his rushed attack.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

This area has a few important features (the tiles used for the map are underground terrain but the actual area here is above ground).

Illumination: All areas are in normal light unless the PCs depart the cave at another time of the day. Once the “Zhent Headless Horseman” disappears the sky brightens up again.

Pinnacle bases: Blocking terrain, which provides cover. Each pinnacle is 50 feet high. See also “Lightning”.

It’s possible to climb up the pinnacles with a DC 15 Athletics check but as they narrow down until reaching a sharp tip it’s not possible to stand on top of them.

Lightning: lightning bolts plague the landscape and periodically hit the top of the pinnacles. Rain and debris continuously fall down from the pinnacles in erratic patterns. These can be avoided by moving carefully (as if the area directly around the pinnacle is difficult terrain).

A creature that runs, is pushed, pulled or slid, or goes prone into the area does not move carefully and takes 1d10 + 4 damage from the falling debris.

Mud pools: While these squares do not count as difficult terrain, if a creature starts his turn in a mud pool square and wants to leave it, it must make an Athletics or Acrobatics check DC 17 as a move action. If the check fails the creature is slowed until the end of his turn due to the mud on its feet. If it fails by 5 or more it is immobilized until the end of its turn.

TACTICS

Sergeant Villmore uses his *white raven onslaught* power as soon as possible in melee. He focuses on one PC who might profit the most from moving around the battlefield like a rogue or a fighter and tries to slide him into a mud pool as often as possible. He chooses an ally as a target of his power who will engage this PC. He can use his *leaf on the wind* power to switch a badly hurt soldier with a healthier one. Sergeant Villmore does not surrender. As long as he is conscious, his men don't surrender if a PCs tries to uses Intimidate to accomplish this.

The Zhent soldiers use their *press the advantage* ability to also push enemies into the mud pools. If the enemy defenders are in the mud pools they focus on the lightly armored enemies like wizards or warlocks.

The Zhent mage always tries to stay behind a pinnacle using it as cover and avoids going into melee. He focuses on enemies trying to circle around the soldiers.

The nameless Zhent soldier tries to avoid combat. If he is given a weapon, he uses it to defend himself. If an opportunity presents itself, the Zhents take him out, though they do not go out of their way, seeing the PCs as the main threat.

SCALING THE ENCOUNTER

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

Four PCs: Remove 1 Zhent soldier.

Six PCs: Add 1 Zhent mage.

RPGA CARD “ZHENTARIM INFILTRATION”

Some players might have the RPGA reward card “Zhentarim Infiltration”. To fulfill task 3 of the quest card they need to defeat a Zhentarim agent in a fight and spare the agent's life. They then need to tell the agent that they have delivered a coin and to whom it was delivered.

In this case the PCs need to defeat one of the Zhents and knock him unconscious instead of killing him. Read this once the message is delivered, and the Zhent has a chance to take a healing surge again (rest, *healing word* etc.):

The Zhent breathes heavily and then nods conspiratorial. “I didn't know that you...” he begins but stops again. He nods again. “I will pass the message to... you know whom!”

He does not go into detail to whom he delivers the message or what it means to him. What the PCs do with him next is up to them. The task only demands to spare his life.

ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

Once the PCs have dealt with the Zhents, Swift Elyan appears on her horse, revealing her disguise as the Zhent Headless horseman and giggling about the scared faces on the Zhent.

She tells the PCs that she felt she owed them her life. She followed the Zhent patrol after she'd overheard a conversation that these soldiers were sent out to find the PCs.

If the PCs additionally saved her friend Dorrington, she also says how grateful she is for their help. She still wonders what happened to the rest of her former group - Byar and Sureen - and asks the PCs to look around for clues on their future travels. This starts the major **Quest: Byar's Seven**. Award the PCs this story favor at the end of the adventure.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

The characters receive 175 / 240 experience points each for defeating the Zhents. They do not earn XP if they received the bribe.

TREASURE

The PCs find only mundane items among the belongings of the Zhent if they defeat them.

They gain access to magic weapons if they accepted their bribe. See the “Treasure part” of Encounter 8 for more details.

ENCOUNTER 7: “YOU ARE WITH OR AGAINST US!” STATISTICS (LOW LEVEL)

Zhent Soldier (level 3)	Level 3 Soldier
Medium natural humanoid	XP 150
Initiative +3 Senses Perception +1	
HP 47; Bloodied 23	
AC 19; Fortitude 16, Reflex 14, Will 14	
Speed 5	
m Longsword (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
+8 vs. AC; 1d8 + 5 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the Zhent soldier's next turn.	
r Crossbow (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
Ranged 15/30; +8 vs. AC; 1d8 + 1 damage.	
M Sly Cut (standard; at will) ♦ Weapon	
Requires longsword; affects a target marked by the Zhentarim soldier; +10 vs. AC; 1d8 + 5 damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).	
M Tide of Iron (standard; at will) ♦ Weapon	
Requires shield; +9 vs. AC; 1d8 + 3 damage, and the target is pushed 1 square if is Large or smaller. The Zhent soldier can shift 1 square into the space vacated by the target.	
Zhent Phalanx	
While a Zhent soldier is adjacent to an ally, he or she doesn't grant combat advantage to flanking enemies.	
Marked Advantage	
A Zhent soldier deals an extra 1d4 damage on all attacks against a target that is marked by it.	
Alignment Evil Languages Chondathan, Common	
Skills Endurance +7, Intimidate +9, Streetwise +9	
Str 18 (+6) Dex 15 (+4) Wis 11 (+2)	
Con 15 (+4) Int 10 (+2) Cha 15 (+4)	
Equipment scale armor, longsword, crossbow with 20 bolts	

Zhent War Mage (level 4)	Level 4 Artillery
Medium natural humanoid	XP 175
Initiative +5 Senses Perception +5	
HP 44; Bloodied 22	
AC 17; Fortitude 15, Reflex 17, Will 16	
Speed 6	
m Dagger (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
+7 vs. AC; 1d4 damage.	
r Magic Missile (standard; at-will) ♦ Force	
Ranged 20; +9 vs. Reflex; 2d4 + 4 force damage.	
C Zhent Flash (standard; encounter) ♦ Radiant	
Close burst 3; +8 vs. Reflex; 1d8 + 4 radiant damage, and the target is blinded until the end of the war mage's next turn.	
A Fire Blast (standard; at will) ♦ Fire	
Area burst 1 within 10; +8 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 4 fire damage.	
A Black Vapors (standard; daily) ♦ Poison	
Area burst 3 within 20; +8 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 4 poison damage, and the target takes ongoing 5 poison damage and takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls (save ends both).	
Wand of Accuracy (free; encounter) ♦ Implement	
Requires wand; the war mage gains a +3 bonus to one attack roll.	
Alignment Evil Languages Chondathan, Common	
Skills Arcana +11	
Str 10 (+2) Dex 16 (+5) Wis 16 (+5)	
Con 14 (+4) Int 20 (+7) Cha 12 (+3)	
Equipment robes, dagger, wand	

Sergeant Villmore	Level 2 Elite Soldier (leader)
Medium natural humanoid	XP 250
Initiative +5; see also <i>combat leader</i> Senses Perception +6	
HP 70; Bloodied 35	
AC 18; Fortitude 15, Reflex 14, Will 14	
Saving Throws +2	
Action Point 1	
Speed 5	
m Longsword (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
+7 vs. AC; 1d8 + 6 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the Sergeant Villmore's next turn.	
r Crossbow (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
Ranged 15/30; +6 vs. AC; 1d8 + 2 damage.	
M Sly Cut (standard; at will) ♦ Weapon	
Requires longsword; affects a target marked by Sergeant Villmore; +9 vs. AC; 1d8 + 6 damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).	
M Commander's Strike (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
Target: one creature; an ally makes a melee basic attack against the target and deals his basic attack damage + 2.	
M Leaf on the Wind (standard; encounter) ♦ Weapon	
+7 vs. AC; 2d8 + 6 damage, and Sergeant Villmore or an ally adjacent to the target swaps places with the target.	
M White Raven Onslaught (standard; daily) ♦ Weapon	
+7 vs. AC; 3d8 + 6 damage, and slide an adjacent ally 1 square. Until the end of the encounter, whenever Sergeant Villmore or an ally within 10 squares makes a successful attack, the attacker slides an adjacent ally 1 square. Miss: Choose one ally within 10 squares. Until the end of the encounter, the ally slides an adjacent ally 1 square after making a successful attack.	
Combat Leader	
Sergeant Villmore and each of his allies within 10 squares who can see and hear him gain a +2 power bonus to initiative.	
Inspiring Word (minor; 2/encounter) ♦ Healing	
Close burst 5; target: Sergeant Villmore or one ally in burst; the target can spend a healing surge and regain an additional 1d6 hit points.	
Knight's Move (minor; encounter)	
One ally within 10 squares takes a move action as a free action.	
Alignment Evil Languages Chondathan, Common	
Skills Athletics +11, Intimidate +9, Streetwise +9	
Str 18 (+6) Dex 15 (+4) Wis 11 (+2)	
Con 15 (+4) Int 10 (+2) Cha 15 (+4)	
Equipment chainmail, longsword, crossbow with 20 bolts	

ENCOUNTER 7: “YOU ARE WITH OR AGAINST US!” STATISTICS (HIGH LEVEL)

Zhent Soldier	Level 5 Soldier
Medium natural humanoid	XP 200
Initiative +4	Senses Perception +2
HP 63; Bloodied 31	
AC 21; Fortitude 18, Reflex 16, Will 16	
Speed 5	
m Longsword (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
+10 vs. AC; 1d8 + 6 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the Zhent soldier's next turn.	
r Crossbow (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
Ranged 15/30; +9 vs. AC; 1d8 + 2 damage.	
M Sly Cut (standard; at will) ♦ Weapon	
Requires longsword; affects a target marked by the Zhentarim soldier; +12 vs. AC; 1d8 + 6 damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).	
M Tide of Iron (standard; at will) ♦ Weapon	
Requires shield; +11 vs. AC; 1d8 + 4 damage, and the target is pushed 1 square if is Large or smaller. The Zhent soldier can shift 1 square into the space vacated by the target.	
Zhent Phalanx	
While a Zhent soldier is adjacent to an ally, he or she doesn't grant combat advantage to flanking enemies.	
Marked Advantage	
A Zhent soldier deals an extra 1d4 damage on all attacks against a target that is marked by it.	
Alignment Evil	Languages Chondathan, Common
Skills Endurance +7, Intimidate +9, Streetwise +9	
Str 18 (+6)	Dex 15 (+4) Wis 11 (+2)
Con 15 (+4)	Int 10 (+2) Cha 15 (+4)
Equipment scale armor, longsword, crossbow with 20 bolts	

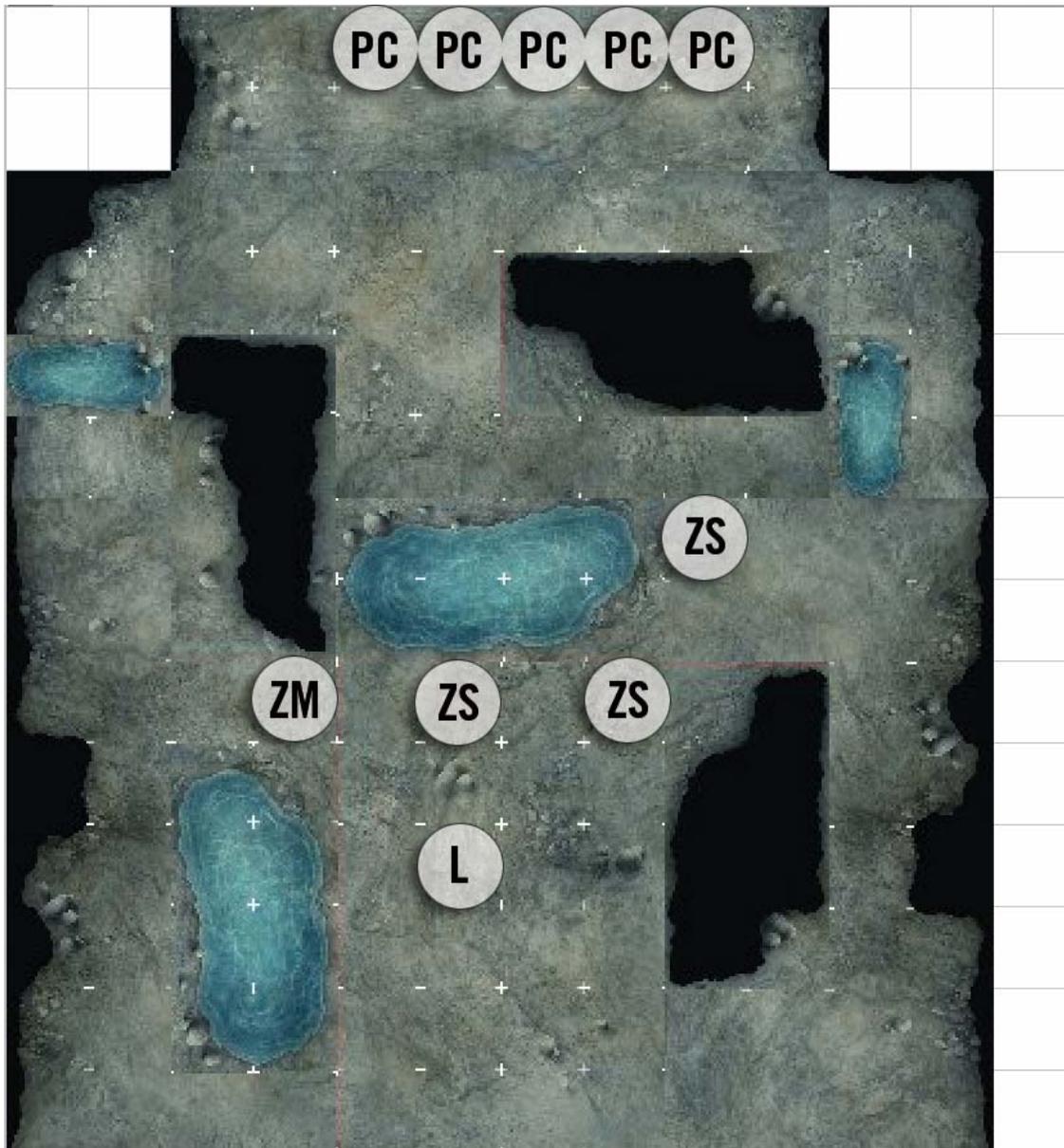
Zhent War Mage	Level 6 Artillery
Medium natural humanoid	XP 250
Initiative +6	Senses Perception +6
HP 56; Bloodied 28	
AC 19; Fortitude 17, Reflex 19, Will 18	
Speed 6	
m Dagger (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
+9 vs. AC; 1d4 damage.	
r Magic Missile (standard; at-will) ♦ Force	
Ranged 20; +11 vs. Reflex; 2d4 + 5 force damage.	
C Zhent Flash (standard; encounter) ♦ Radiant	
Close burst 3; +10 vs. Reflex; 1d8 + 5 radiant damage, and the target is blinded until the end of the war mage's next turn.	
A Fire Blast (standard; at will) ♦ Fire	
Area burst 1 within 10; +10 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 5 fire damage.	
A Black Vapors (standard; daily) ♦ Poison	
Area burst 3 within 20; +10 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 5 poison damage, and the target takes ongoing 5 poison damage and takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls (save ends both).	
Wand of Accuracy (free; encounter) ♦ Implement	
Requires wand; the war mage gains a +3 bonus to one attack roll.	
Alignment Evil	Languages Chondathan, Common
Skills Arcana +12	
Str 10 (+3)	Dex 16 (+6) Wis 16 (+6)
Con 14 (+5)	Int 20 (+8) Cha 12 (+4)
Equipment robes, dagger, wand	

Sergeant Villmore (level 4)	Level 4 Elite Soldier (leader)
Medium natural humanoid	XP 350
Initiative +6; see also <i>combat leader</i>	Senses Perception +7
HP 102; Bloodied 51	
AC 20; Fortitude 17, Reflex 16, Will 16	
Saving Throws +2	
Action Point 1	
Speed 5	
m Longsword (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
+9 vs. AC; 1d8 + 6 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the Sergeant Villmore's next turn.	
r Crossbow (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
Ranged 15/30; +8 vs. AC; 1d8 + 2 damage.	
M Sly Cut (standard; at will) ♦ Weapon	
Requires longsword; affects a target marked by Sergeant Villmore; +11 vs. AC; 1d8 + 6 damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).	
M Commander's Strike (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
Target: one creature; an ally makes a melee basic attack against the target and deals his basic attack damage + 2.	
M Leaf on the Wind (standard; encounter) ♦ Weapon	
+9 vs. AC; 2d8 + 6 damage, and Sergeant Villmore or an ally adjacent to the target swaps places with the target.	
M White Raven Onslaught (standard; daily) ♦ Weapon	
+9 vs. AC; 3d8 + 6 damage, and slide an adjacent ally 1 square. Until the end of the encounter, whenever Sergeant Villmore or an ally within 10 squares makes a successful attack, the attacker slides an adjacent ally 1 square. Miss: Choose one ally within 10 squares. Until the end of the encounter, the ally slides an adjacent ally 1 square after making a successful attack.	
Combat Leader	
Sergeant Villmore and each of his allies within 10 squares who can see and hear him gain a +2 power bonus to initiative.	
Inspiring Word (minor; 2/encounter) ♦ Healing	
Close burst 5; target: Sergeant Villmore or one ally in burst; the target can spend a healing surge and regain an additional 1d6 hit points.	
Knight's Move (minor; encounter)	
One ally within 10 squares takes a move action as a free action.	
Alignment Evil	Languages Chondathan, Common
Skills Athletics +11, Intimidate +9, Streetwise +9	
Str 18 (+6)	Dex 15 (+4) Wis 11 (+2)
Con 15 (+4)	Int 10 (+2) Cha 15 (+4)
Equipment chainmail, longsword, crossbow with 20 bolts	

ENCOUNTER 7: "YOU ARE WITH OR AGAINST US!" MAP

LOST CAVERNS OF THE UNDERDARK TILES:

Floor / Tunnel	4x8 x1	Cave Corner / Lava Pit	4x2 x1
Floor / Cave Pillar	4x2 x1	Cave Wall / Tunnel Bend	4x8 x2
Floor / Cave Pillar	4x2 x2	Cave Corner / Pool	2x1 x2
Floor / Tunnel w/Stream	4x8 x1	Cave Corner / Gorge	4x2 x1
Floor / Pool	4x2 x3	Wide Tunnel / Tunnel Intersections	8x2 x1



ENCOUNTER 8: BACK IN TOWN

SKILL CHALLENGE LEVEL 4 / 6,
COMPLEXITY 3 (525 / 750 XP)
(CONTINUATION OF ENCOUNTER 4)

SETUP

Number of Successes: 8

Number of Failures: 3

Primary Skills: Diplomacy, History, Streetwise, Nature, Bluff, Insight

Important NPCs:

Ren Ferkins, Mayor of Dagger Falls (Diplomacy +6, Insight +6)

Constable Kendar Morn, leader of Dagger Falls town guards (Insight +1, Diplomacy +1, Perception +6).

Commander Sirius Rulak, Commander of the Zhent mercenary unit in Dagger Falls (Bluff +9, Diplomacy +14, Streetwise +9, other skills +5)

Back in town the PCs can attend the next town council meeting. Constable Morn is of course ecstatic to hear the news of the cave.

If the PCs do not tell Morn anything about the Zhent activities in Netheril, he is still pleased that the PCs were able to take down a whole gnoll pack in one night. They still get invited to the town council to keep helping convincing the mayor.

The council gets together once again. Before the meeting starts you can see Constable Morn whispering with the mayor.

Commander Sirius Rulak is not as courteous as he was when you first met. He gives you a stern glare and then focus on the mayor: "I hope you came to your senses, Mayor Ferkins. My unit is the best you can hire in the Dales!"

The mayor turns his attention to you. "I heard there is something you might want to share with us?"

Reporting their discoveries to the mayor yields an additional success. If the PCs also bring along the rescued Zhent soldier, it yields another extra success and negates a failure received earlier.

SKILL CHALLENGE

Continue the skill challenge as described in Encounter 4.

Blades for Daggerdale

ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

Success: The mayor decides not to hire the Zhents. Improvise his reasoning based on the arguments the PCs have brought forward. The town of Dagger Falls thanks the PCs for their deeds. They have opened their eyes and they receive the favor "Gnoll Hunter of Dagger Falls". Read "Conclusion A - Zhents NOT hired".

Failure: The PCs could not convince the mayor. Dagger Falls hires the Zhent mercenaries as a protection force. Constable Morn is very disappointed, but obeys the order of the mayor and grudgingly welcomes the commander into Dagger Falls. Read "Conclusion B - Zhents ARE hired".

EXPERIENCE POINTS

The characters receive 105 / 150 experience points for successfully completing the skill challenge.

TREASURE

If the PCs defeated all the gnolls in the cave Constable Morn sticks to his word and gives them a magical armor: *fireburst armor* +2 / *deathcut armor* +2.

If the PCs accepted the bribe from the Zhents in Encounter 7 a messenger meets with them at the border of Daggerdale, presenting them with this weapon: *duelist's weapon* +2 / *berserker weapon* +2.

CONCLUSION A - ZHENTS NOT HIRED

If the PCs helped Constable Morn to convince the mayor not to hire the Zhents, read:

After the council has voted about the matter in secrecy, Major Ren Ferkins finally announces, "I thank you for your time, Commander Rulak, but Dagger Falls doesn't need the likes of you and your kind. Please leave and don't come back."

The whole council erupts in sudden applause and standing ovations after this clear message.

"This is not the last time you will see me, people!" the Zhent soldier threatens, then he storms out of the council hall. He glares back, one more time, as if he wants to memorize your faces and is gone.

"I thank you for your advice, adventurers." The Major says, as he turns to you. "We might have made a grave mistake hiring these Zhents. You will always be welcome in Dagger Falls!"

The PCs receive the favor **Gnoll Hunter of Dagger Falls**.

CONCLUSION B - ZHENTS ARE HIRED

If the PCs weren't successful, or had no interest in helping Constable Morn, read:

After the council has voted in secrecy about the matter Major Ren Ferkins finally announces, "I thank you for your time, dear adventurers. But Dagger Falls doesn't need your services any longer. The council has decided to hire Commander Rulak's unit for our protection."

The council nods in approval as everyone gets up. Only Constable Morn wears a sour face. Before everyone leaves the meeting hall, Commander Rulak turns to you with a broad smile.

"It was nothing personal. Just business. And you have possibly helped us achieve this..."

He offers his hand to you, grinning...

Each PC who shakes hands with the Commander receives the favor **Friend among Zhents**. Those PCs who reject this gesture do not receive this favor.

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.

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: Caravan under Attack

140 / 235 XP

Encounter 6: The Gnoll Cave

190 / 280 XP

Encounter 7: "You are with or against us!"

175 / 240 XP

Encounter 8: Back in Town

105 / 150 XP

Minor Quest: Uniting two of Byar's Seven

30 / 55 XP

Total Possible Experience

640 / 960 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

100 / 150 gp

(Encounter 3: 50 / 75 gp, Encounter 6: 50 / 75 gp)

EACH PC SELECTS ONE OF THE FOLLOWING

Bundle A: *fireburst armor +2* (level 8) (low-level version only)

Found in Encounter 8

Bundle B: *duelist's weapon +2* (level 8) (low-level version only)

Found in Encounter 8

Bundle C: *gauntlets of ogre power* (level 5)

Found in Encounter 6

Bundle D: *deathcut armor +2* (level 10) (high-level version only)

Found in Encounter 8

Bundle E: *berserker weapon +2* (level 10) (high-level version only)

Found in Encounter 8

Bundle F: scroll with Hand of Fate

Found in Encounter 1

Bundle G: ritual book with Knock

Found in Encounter 1

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 healing* plus 75 / 200

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 125 / 250 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

DALE04 Gnoll Hunter of Dagger Falls

The town of Dagger Falls is very pleased with your activities. Constable Kendar Morn declares you an official "Gnoll Hunter of Daggerdale". A plaque with your name is then hung in the town hall, reminding every citizen of your deeds.

DALE05 Friend among Zhents

Your actions were considered beneficial for a unit of Zhent mercenaries from Darkhold. Zhents and Zhentarim agents you meet in the future might spare your life as you assisted them in their plans (subject to DM adjudication).

This doesn't make you immune to further attacks nor does it grant automatic successes on skill challenges.

DALE06 Quest: The Byar's Seven

Swift Elyan is happy that you found her friend Dorrington. They originally belonged to an adventuring group, which Elyan refers to as Byar's Seven. They consisted of:

- **Byar**, a well-known male adventurer. Current whereabouts unknown.
- **Dorrington Brightaxe**, a honorable male dwarven fighter, and Elyan's best friend.
- **Lubeq**, a nobleman warrior, who fell to shadows. Missing.
- **Sureen Tevernesta**, a female half-elf cleric of Malar. Current whereabouts unknown. Was heavily wounded and left with Byar.
- **Mikon Nazhan**, a male human wizard with a fascination for fire. Now dead.

- **Ainell**, Mikon's apprentice (a female human who seemed smarter than her mentor). Dragged off by unspeakable horrors. Missing ever since.

- **Swift Elyan**, female halfling.

Besides Elyan and Dorrington, only Byar and Sureen survived their last adventure. Elyan asked you to find out and confirm what happened to them. This starts the major quest "The Byar's Seven."

ADVENTURE QUESTIONS

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

1. Did the players save the dwarf Dorrington in the river Tesh?

- a. Yes. No one was carried away.
- b. Yes, but one of the PCs was carried away into the waterfall.
- c. No. He was carried away into the waterfall and wasn't seen again.
- d. No. And one or more PCs were carried away into the waterfall as well.
- e. No. The PCs didn't try to help him.

2. How did the players handle the Zhents outside the cave?

- a. They killed all Zhents except for one.
- b. They killed all Zhents.
- c. They knocked out most or all the Zhents.
- d. The Zhents bribed the PCs to walk away peacefully.
- e. The PCs ran away or were defeated by the Zhents.

3. Did the players convince the mayor of Dagger Falls not to hire the Zhents?

- a. Yes. The PCs revealed the whole story behind it to the public.
- b. Yes, but they didn't tell him about the Zhents true plans.
- c. No. The PCs didn't care.
- d. No. The PCs tried but failed.
- e. No. The PCs accepted the offer from the Zhents and didn't participate in the second meeting.