

INTO THE DRAGON'S MAW

An Adventure with a Twist!



A D&D 5E Adventure for 4th - 6th level characters

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Chapter I: Introduction

Using This Book

Into the Dragon's Maw is a five to six hour *Dungeons and Dragons Forgotten Realms* adventure for a party of characters of 4th to 6th level. Recommendations on how to adjust encounters have been included.

The adventure is set in a cavern complex in Cloak Wood and in the city of Baldur's Gate and can be used with the Tyranny of Dragons campaign. However, you can easily replace the setting and insert this adventure in any campaign. You only need a starting city or town and a nearby woodlands area. The adventure also makes use of the Harpers, a secret good aligned faction. If you are not familiar with the Harpers and do not want to use them, you may substitute any good aligned faction (ex. Lords's Alliance, Order of the Gauntlet, etc.)

It is important to note that Into the Dragon's Maw is not your conventional D&D adventure. Normally, player characters are provided all the information they need about their objectives at the beginning of the adventure. In Dragon's Maw, however, they are not provided this luxury. When the adventure begins, the player characters find themselves immediately in an encounter. After the encounter, they temporarily lose their memory of the events of the past 24 hours. This includes their meeting with their patron who provides them the mission details. As the adventure progresses, fragments of information gradually return, in the form of flashbacks

or recollections. As they piece the information together, the mystery unfolds, culminating in a shocking twist at the end of the adventure.

While this adventure is relatively easy to pick up and insert in the middle of your campaign, ensure that you completely read it first in order to familiarize yourself to the recollections and general plot. It is crucial that you keep your players in the dark and only let them learn of the backstory through the recollection narrative in order to maximize the effect of the twist and climactic ending.

One last bit of advice. This adventure is better suited for players who you are very familiar with and have already built a sense of trust. If you will be running this with new players, you will need to encourage them to continue and manage their emotions when they finish one of the final encounters, as it might leave a bitter taste (a necessary setup to the twist).

Background

The adventure makes use of the Tyranny of Dragons campaign where the player characters seek to stop the machinations of an insidious group known as the Cult of the Dragon. The latter seeks to summon Tiamat from the Nine Hells and bring her physically to Faerun, and thus ending the world. To make this possible, the Cult began hoarding resources through constant raids and pillaging. To keep them one step ahead from their enemies, they employed spies in every major city and town.

And one such spy is Xande Silverthorn, who is also currently



under the employ of the Harpers as a scout. From time to time she has funneled critical information to the Cult. Each time the Harpers would try to capture a Cultist or raid a secret hideout in Baldur's Gate, they would be too late. They have also already lost a handful of Harper agents who were able to infiltrate the Cult.

But Xande's actions have not gone unnoticed. An inner circle of Harpers suspect a double agent in their ranks, and have identified Xande as the most likely suspect because they could not read her thoughts or determine if she lies. Unbeknownst to them, Xande owns a *ring of mind shielding*. Instead of capturing and interrogating her however, they see an opportunity. They hatch an elaborate plan that could entice higher ranking Cultists from their hiding to a location where the Harpers can capture them. They plan to feed Xande false information and hope the Cultists take the bait.

The plan would have worked, if Xande were just a normal Cult spy. In reality, Xande Silverthorn is also *Shimmerime*, a young White Dragon. But unlike other white dragons that are mostly feral in nature, Shimmerime is slightly more intelligent and social. This is because of her Silver Dragon lineage. Her mother was a half-white, half-silver dragon. This lineage has also enabled her to take the form of a human, elf, or half-elf, and is partly the reason she finds herself embroiled and interested in their affairs. However, Shimmerime is still very much a White Dragon. She is cunning, greedy, ambitious, and has been known for her short temper and rash behavior. While she does work for the Cult of the Dragon, she is actually playing both sides. She has carefully picked which information to pass to the Cult, and what to keep for himself. In instances where she learned of a Cult hideout that has recently made a raid, she would attack the Cult herself and steal their plundered loot, leaving no trace behind. The information she has just acquired is the type of information she plans to keep to herself.

Synopsis

The adventure begins with the player characters stumbling into an encounter with a bulette in the Cloak Wood. During the battle, they are infected by fungal spores that cause temporary memory loss. They discover that they are unable to remember all the events that transpired from the previous night. The adventure then kicks off as a mystery wherein the player characters try to figure out the purpose of their mission.

Portions of their memory return gradually, and they learn that they met with their patron, a man named Zaragos, at the Helm and Cloak. They also learn that they are being guided by Xande Silverthorn, a half-elven scout hired by Zaragos, to a place known as the Dragon's Maw, a cavern complex once used by the Cult of the Dragon.

As they explore Dragon's Maw, they encounter various inhabitants, including a tribe of goblinoids. During the course of their exploration, they slowly learn that their mission is to find Oliman, a rogue apprentice wizard, and retrieve what he stole – a piece of the artifact called the Tiamat's Claw. Oliman is searching for the second piece of the artifact which he believes is located somewhere within Dragon's Maw. This leads both parties to a hidden crypt filled with dragon bones. The player characters also remember that they were given a mysterious potion each that they must drink before they enter the crypt. They soon do battle with Oliman, who now wields the artifact Tiamat's Claw. To their horror, the player characters discover that they are unable to use their spells and abilities, and are soundly defeated.

But things are not what they appear to be. Their memory returns fully and they finally learn the full details of their meeting with Zaragos. They discover that they are working for Harper agents and the mission to recover Tiamat's Claw was just an elaborate ruse to lure and expose Xande, who is a Harper double agent, and possibly other members of the Cult of the Dragon.

The battle with Oliman was just a theatrical display. Oliman, a Harper agent, used illusory spells. The mysterious potions the player characters drank turned out to be potions of disguise self, which they used to look battered and burnt. This draws out Xande, who has been watching the whole battle while invisible. She then realizes she was tricked, and finds herself surrounded by hidden Harper agents, including Zaragos and Oliman, and the now fully revived and unharmed player characters.

Xande then shows her true form: a Large White Dragon named Shimmerime. A final climactic battle then ensues between her and the player characters.

Chapter 2: Cloak Wood

Prologue

Stepping into this gloomy forest known as the Cloak Wood has seemingly robbed you of your sense of sight. You are overwhelmed by the shades of dark green and mahogany brown that saturate the surroundings, blinding you from seeing its minute details. Yet it has heightened your other senses - the smell of loam in the moist earth and decomposing leaves is thick in the air. Even the rustling foliage and the soft crunch of fallen twigs underneath your boots are deafening. You feel no wind, yet the air is numbingly cold.

Xande, a female half-elven scout, has been guiding your party since you left the city of Baldur's Gate this morning. The trail you have been following has been made uneven by knotted roots and sometimes branches at intervals, making it difficult to keep your bearings.

"We should be nearing a clearing soon," Xande announces. A few minutes later, you step into a small glade that is roughly sixty feet in diameter.

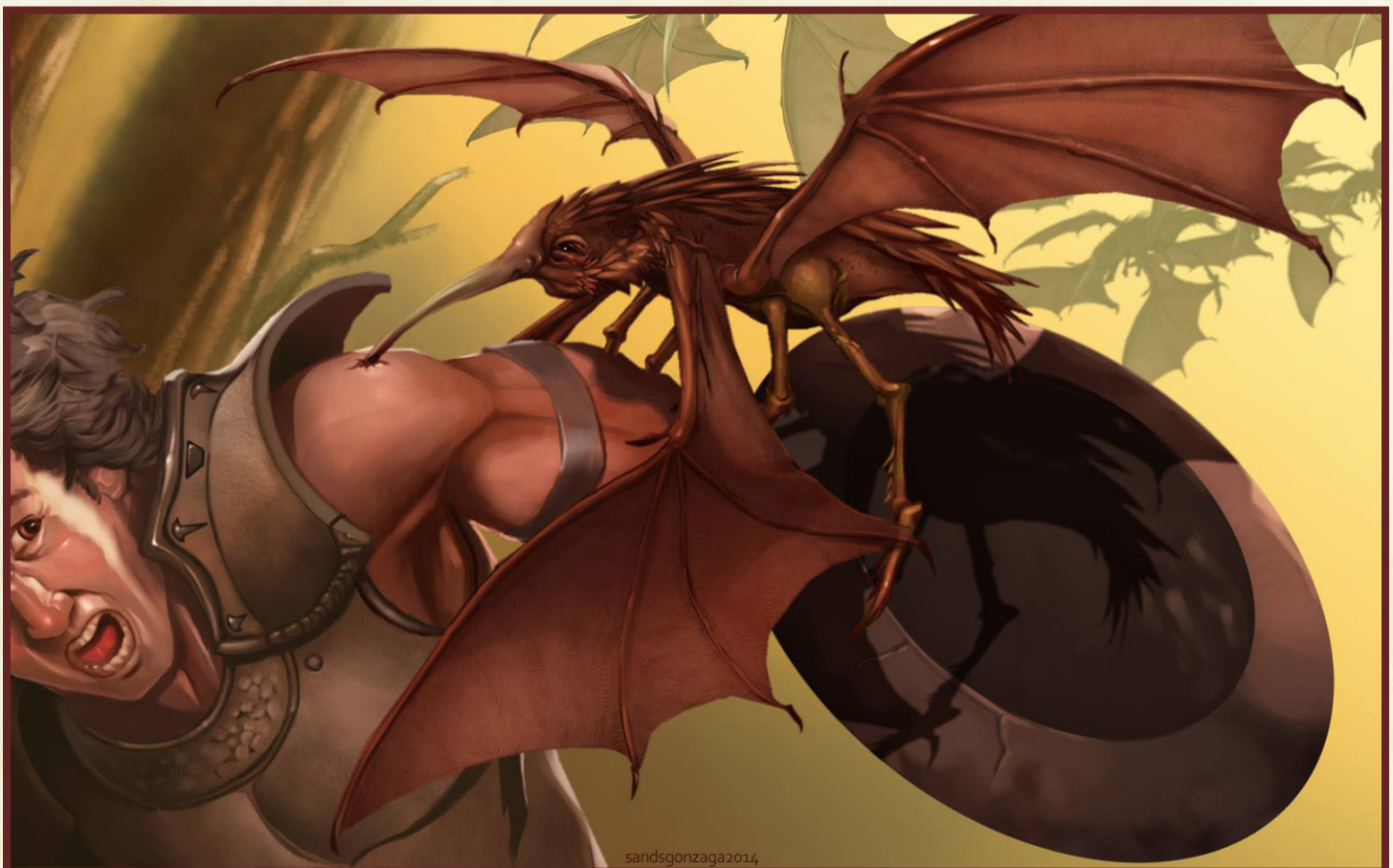
You notice a distinct coppery smell in the air as well as strange buzzing sounds from nearby. Near the center of the clearing is a huge elk lying prone. It appears to be entangled in a hunter's snare, and is struggling to get out of it. You also note the strange, lengthy furrows on the ground around it, as if some massive plow randomly went through them. But what catches your attention are the thousands of strange tiny brown puffballs floating in the breeze.

Identifying details

- A successful DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) check will identify the smell as that of blood.
- A successful DC 10 Intelligence (Nature) check will identify the puffballs as fungal spores.
- A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana or Nature) check will recognize the puffballs as spores of a mutated Psilocybe fungus that may cause dizziness, nausea, flu, and temporary memory loss.

Encounter

- 5 stirges (mm 284)
- 1 bulette (mm 34)



A tribe of goblins who call themselves the Dragon Eaters regularly set traps and pits here to ward off intruders and capture animals. Their recent trap ensnared a large elk. It didn't kill the elk but the vibrations caused by the creature's violent trashing caught the attention of a hungry bulette.

The bulette is currently devouring the elk's carcass from underneath, causing it to stir as if still alive.

Attracted to the scent of blood, 5 stirges later arrived and started attacking the elk's carcass from above.

The stirges attack the player characters as soon as they notice them. The bulette will sense the arrival of the player characters once they are within 30 feet of the elk and will immediately burrow towards them, revealing a large fin cutting across the earth. It will then attempt to use its great leap attack, bursting from the ground in one spectacular motion.

Xande will hide behind the tree line and shoot using her short bow, dealing an average of 2 points of damage per round.

Adjusting the Encounter

If the total player character level is 16 or below, replace the bulette with an ankheg.

Aftermath

After defeating the creatures, you settle down to recover your breath and bind your wounds. However, something starts to dawn on you as you look at each other. Somehow, you are all unable to recall what your purpose is in being here.

"From the looks on your faces, I think you're already under the effects of the fungal spores," someone exclaims in a muffled voice. You turn to see a half-elf whom you vaguely remember as Xande, a scarf tightly covering her nose and mouth, stepping out from the woods.

"Don't worry, the spores are harmless. However, your memory of the past day might be foggy. It will gradually return though as your body fights off the spores in your system. But you don't have the luxury of time to wait for that to happen. We still have half a day's travel ahead of us. We are pressed for time and must move as soon as possible."

DM Notes

The memory loss is caused by the fungal spores that were released into the air when the bulette burrowed through the area. The memory loss is temporary and will result in the player characters not being able to remember the events of the previous 24 hours. For the adventure's purposes, no amount of rest will help the player characters regain their memory. Only through progressing into the story do they gradually recover bits of their memory.

Investigating the area

A successful DC 10 Intelligence (Investigate) or DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) check will find evidence of repeated use of crude booby traps in the area.

They will also automatically find a set of small humanoid foot prints (made by the goblins) that lead down a narrow

trail heading south. This trail eventually leads to a cave complex.

A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigate) or DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check will determine that the footprints, as well as the snares, were made by goblins.

Xande Silverthorn

If asked about where they are headed and what their goal is, Xande will answer *"Dragon's Maw. Look for someone who stole something."*

If pressed for more details about Dragon's Maw, Xande will claim that she doesn't know much about the cave except what Zaragos has already told them. At this point, Xande will become impatient, reminds the player characters that they are wasting time and that they should continue their journey to Dragon's Maw. At this point, you can proceed to read the first recollection, The Meet (see below).

PSILOCYBE SPORES

Psilocybe spores are seasonally released by Psilocybe fungi. These fungi can be found anywhere, but are most common in temperate forests and underground areas. Any player character exposed to the spores for more than 10 minutes must make a DC 8 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned for an hour. Anyone exposed for over a minute to the spores suffer temporary memory loss of the previous 24 hours. There is no saving throw. The lost memory gradually returns over a span of 24-48 hours.

Recollection #1: The Meet

As you continue your journey, you begin recalling bits and pieces of your memory of the previous night...

The smoke twisted and coiled like a serpentine dragon, forming curls in the gloom, illuminated only by the torches hanging from the stone and mortar walls of the Helm and Cloak, a popular inn in Baldur's Gate.

The cloaked figure, sitting comfortably in a cushioned oak chair, puffed once more from his smoking pipe, and soon the air is filled with the heavy scent of his weed. *"Thank you for accepting my invitation,"* the old man said in a raspy, accented voice.

"I am Zaragos, and I am the proprietor of the Sorcerous Sundries." Sensing that some of you are unfamiliar with the name, he adds with a hint of annoyance, *"It is a magical curio shop. You should visit it sometime."*

He then turns to his left. *"Sitting beside me is Xande Silverthorn, a scout who knows the forests around Baldur's Gate like the back of her hand."*

"Good evening to you all," Xande greets warmly, her voice soft and melodic. As she nods to you, you notice her pointed ears that were partially covered by her luminous white hair, revealing her half-elven lineage.

After greeting Xande back, Zaragos continues. *"Let me get*

right to the point. Your party was recommended to me. I need a group of capable mercenaries to go to Dragon's Maw, a cavern complex deep within The Cloak Wood, and stop someone who might be an agent of the Cult of the Dragon, from unleashing a powerful evil artifact!"
That is as far as you can recall for now.



Chapter 3: Dragon's Maw

For most of the morning you have been following the half-elf Xande up a narrow trail that twists through The Cloak Wood until it finally opened into a small glen. A rocky path about eighty feet long leads up to sheer cliff wall. A dozen or more raised skull-mounted spears flank the path at random intervals. The skulls appear to be those of the small, reptilian humanoid type. The path ends at a 10-foot wide cave mouth that has been crudely carved into the shape of a dragon's skull.

"This is as far as I'll go," Xande announces. "I'll wait and hide here at the edge of the forest until tomorrow evening. Best of luck, adventurers!"

Xande will remain in the woods but as soon as the player characters are out of sight, she turns invisible and follows them into Dragon's Maw. She will not do anything else but observe them from afar, always making sure she does not get caught. For the purposes of this adventure, she will not be seen or heard even except until the last encounter.

Skulls on Spears

A DC 10 Intelligence (Investigate or Arcana) or Wisdom check (Survival) will correctly identify the skulls as that of a kobold's.

Investigating the Area

A DC 13 Intelligence (Investigate) or Wisdom check (Survival) of the glen will find a day old set of foot prints left by a war party – no more than a dozen small humanoids and one or two large ones. They lead to the cave. They also find blood drops, which they will identify as a fresh kill – possibly that of a large animal.

The tracks were made by a band of goblins and an ogre returning from a successful hunting trip. The ogre was carrying a bloody moose carcass.

General Features

Dragon's Maw is a natural limestone cavern complex that is adorned with stalactites, stalagmites, and flowstones (see map at [page 16](#)).

Ceilings. Cavern ceilings in most rooms and open areas are 15 feet high and dotted with stalactites. Ceilings in passageways and tunnels are 10 feet high.

Surfaces. The walls and floors inside rooms are generally more flat and less ridged than the others. Moss, algae and fungi grow on the walls and floors of passages and wide cavern spaces.

Light. Unless the notes tell otherwise, all the areas are in total darkness.

Sound. Dragon's Maw is filled with faint sounds made by dripping water, scampering vermin, and mysterious cold drafts of cavern air.

History

A successful DC 15 Intelligence (History) check will recall lore about Dragon's Maw (see info below).

DRAGON'S MAW

For over thirty years, Dragon's Maw served as a secret hideout for the Cult of the Dragon. That was until five years ago when the Cult that occupied it split into two factions – one that followed the old path of raising and worshipping undead dragons, and one that followed a new path – summoning Tiamat and her legion into Faerun. After a brief power struggle, those who stubbornly followed the old path were either killed or imprisoned and left to starve to death. The rest merged with the new group. The following year, it was rumored that Harper agents attacked Dragon's Maw and defeated the Cultists. After the Harpers left, a surviving band of kobolds that previously served the cultists claimed the cavern complex as theirs. Three years later, a tribe of goblinoids raided the place, slaughtered all the kobolds, and took over Dragon's Maw. Afterwards, they named themselves the Tribe of the Dragon Eaters.



1. Entrance

Encounter

3 goblins (mm 165)

There is a secret room located behind the skull's eye sockets. This 'watch roost' can be accessed via rope through a hole in the entrance cavern's ceiling.

Three goblins currently occupy it and guard the entrance. They have advantage to their perception checks made against player characters that make their approach. Spotting the hidden goblins will require a DC 20 Perception check. Each goblin carries 10sp.

Tactics

If the goblins are successful in spotting the player characters, one of them drops a rope, climbs down it, and alerts the other goblinoids in area 2. The two goblins that remained will then pull back the rope, hide, and wait. Later, after the player characters have reached area 2, they drop down and sneak up behind them.

If the goblins are spotted, they do not engage. Instead, they immediately climb down from the watch roost and flee to area 2 to alert the others of the intruders.

The cave's entrance is only ten feet wide but quickly opens into a 20-foot diameter cavern. The ceiling is 15 feet high and is dotted with stalactites. Bas-relief carvings on the walls depict what looks like winged beasts, but having been vandalized with tar it is hard to tell.

In the southwest corner sits a small wooden box filled with assorted objects, including a shiny-looking dragon figurine. A 10-foot wide tunnel continues east.

Trap

The box contains assorted objects - all mundane junk. The dragon is a crude brass-coated stone carving worth 5sp. This is used by the goblins as bait for the pit trap.

A tarp, camouflaged to look like part of the cavern floor covers a 5-foot diameter, 15-foot deep pit. A player character with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Investigate) check will spot it immediately.

Anyone who walks over it will tumble into the pit's bottom, which is riddled with spears and wooden spikes, and will take 2d10 piercing damage. A player character that triggers the trap may make a DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) or Strength (Athletics) check. Success means the player character has managed to leap to safety or grab hold of the pit's edge. However, the noise from triggering the trap will alert the goblins in area 1 and area 2, if they haven't been already.

Watch Room

A DC 20 Intelligence (Investigate) check of the room will find a recess in the ceiling, 15 feet above, hidden by a camouflaged tarp. This leads to the secret guard room where the goblins are hiding.

Player characters may scale the wall and ceiling overhangs with a DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check to reach the recess.

Any character who reaches the recess will immediately be attacked by the 2 goblins (and will most likely have advantage).

The guard room itself is only 10 feet in diameter and 5 feet high. While inside this cramped area, any medium sized or larger player character will suffer disadvantage to their attack rolls while the goblins will have advantage on their attacks rolls on them.

2. Guard Room

The passage opens into a forty-foot wide square-shaped cavern dimly lit by two torches, each hanging from opposite walls. A single poorly-crafted wooden round table sits at the center of the cavern. Rough-hewn dice carved from bone lie among a dozen or more coins on top of the table. Lying against a corner wall are at least a dozen spears and javelins. You see two other exits from this area. The east one opens to a ledge overlooking a great chasm while the one to the north is a tunnel that stretches thirty feet before ending at a makeshift wooden barricade. The disgusting scent of sweat and goblin hide hangs in the air.

Encounter

- **4 goblins (mm 165)**
- **2 hobgoblins (mm 185)**

Currently occupying the room are 4 goblins and 2 hobgoblins. If they have been alerted, they take defensive positions around the room and prepare an ambush. The goblins from area 1 sneak up behind the party the following round.

If they have not been alerted, they will be busy playing their game of dice around the table and accusing each other of cheating. They will be distracted (disadvantage on their per-

ception checks) when the player characters arrive.

Adjusting the Encounter

If the total player character level is 16 or below, reduce the number of goblins and hobgoblins by 1.

If the total player character level is 21 or higher, increase the number of goblins and hobgoblins by 2.

Treasure

Each goblin has 10sp while the hobgoblins carry 30sp each. There is a total of 28sp and 2gp in a scattered pile on top of the table.

Interrogating the Goblinoids

A successful Charisma (Intimidate or Persuasion) check, based on the DCs provided below, will allow the player characters to learn about the following from the goblinoids:

- [DC 10] They defeated the tribe of kobolds that used to live in the cavern 2 years ago
- [DC 10] They are called the Dragon Eaters tribe
- [DC 10] Their leader is a scary bugbear named Komar Darkmarrow
- [DC 15] The booty they have collected is located in Komar's room and in their great cavern (area 15)
- [DC 15] A big claw monster lurks in the passages behind the barricade

Recollection #2

Before the characters leave area 2, proceed to reading Recollection entry #2: The Quest

Recollection #2: The Quest

As you leave the room, you begin to remember the next portion of your meeting with Zaragos at the Helm and Cloak.

"A month ago, an adventuring party like yours stumbled upon a tomb loaded with treasure. One of the things they found was a broken top piece of a staff that looked like a monster's claw," Zaragos discloses.

"They had no idea what it was; thinking only that it was some antique jewelry because of its design and quality. They thought that it could probably still fetch a good price. But I recognized it. It was part of an artifact called Tiamat's Claw, a potent staff once wielded by Anabraxis the Black Talon, once the most powerful member of the Cult of the Dragon. And so I bought it from them without revealing to them its true nature," Zaragos smiled, proud of himself.

"While I kept this information to myself, I was, unfortunately, foolish enough to write about it in my journal. To my dismay, Oliman, my apprentice and budding wizard, read my journal and discovered the truth about the staff piece. One day while I was out, he stole the piece and ran away. After divining the item's general location and direction, he was already well beyond the city limits and was headed south. But I knew where Oliman was headed. In my notes, I wrote about Dragon's Maw, an old cavern complex located in The Cloak Wood that was once used by the Cult of the Dragon. I

wrote that if the rumors are true, the other half of Tiamat's Claw could possibly be found there.

I have hired Xande here to guide you through the Cloak Wood and to the Dragon's Maw.

Something else you should know, as I have once been an adventurer myself and have ventured into the Dragon's Maw. The kobolds that live there operate a draw bridge deep within the cavern complex. If this is raised, you will not be able to progress. However, I remember in my notes of a secret passage somewhere in a room full of statues. Just something to keep in mind in case you get stuck.

Oh, and here is my offer: 500 gold pieces for retrieving the stolen staff piece."

You may allow the player characters to haggle with Zaragos. The DC of the Charisma (Persuasion) check will depend on how much the player characters raise their price:

- 600gp-700gp DC 15
- 700gp-800gp DC 20

3. The Chasm

You are standing on a ledge that overlooks a wide chasm that is forty feet long and roughly thirty feet wide. The jagged, stalactite-choked ceiling is nearly thirty feet high. The nearby walls all appear to be smeared with oil and grease. Across the gap you see a raised, extending wooden drawbridge. It is flanked by two lit iron braziers shaped like dragons. At the bottom of the raised bridge are four arrow slits. Behind each stands a hobgoblin armed with a cocked crossbow.

Encounter

6 Hobgoblins (mm 185)

There are currently 6 hobgoblins manning the drawbridge. Each can fire a crossbow bolt every round and will do so while any player character is out in the open. The hobgoblins are treated as if having full cover and will have advantage to their saving throws. Any hobgoblin that is charmed will be quickly subdued by their companions.

More goblinoids from area 15 will arrive in 2 rounds to support them if combat breaks out here. Unless absolutely sure that the player characters are no longer in the vicinity of Dragon's Maw, the goblinoids will keep the drawbridge up.

Treasure

Each hobgoblin carries 30sp each.

DM Notes

Climbing the grease-coated walls will require a DC 25 Strength (Athletics) check. Worse, they can be lit by the hobgoblins when they start using flaming bolts. Those caught in the fire are treated as if doused by Alchemist's Fire.

The chasm is sixty feet deep, causing 6d6 bludgeoning damage to any player character who falls into it.

While it is not impossible to cross the gap (fly, climbing, etc.), it should be very obvious to the player characters that it is a terrible idea. They will leave themselves exposed to constant crossbow fire and risk themselves falling into the chasm.

4. Barricade

Wooden crates, planks, tree logs, and large rocks have been haphazardly stacked on top of each other here to form a makeshift barricade.

Investigating the Area

For each successful DC 10 Intelligence (Investigate) check of the barricade, a player character will learn that:

- The barricade was built, possibly by the goblins, not too long ago
- It was designed to block the other side. It does not appear to have been disturbed for a long time
- It can be dismantled carefully in 3d10 minutes to create enough space for a medium-sized person to pass through. However, the barricade appears unstable, and could collapse if disturbed or dismantled improperly

Hazard

If dismantled without care, the top portion of the barricade collapses violently. Each character within 5 feet will take 1d10 bludgeoning damage from the falling debris. A successful DC 10 Dexterity saving throw halves the damage. Dismantling the barricade without causing it to collapse will require a successful DC 12 Intelligence or DC 12 Dexterity check.

5. Haunted Room

Bas-relief carvings of various dragons on the walls of this room have been savagely defaced. The battered remains of an oak table and a chair lie at the center of the floor. Kneeling in the far corner is a strange cloaked figure, his back toward you. He appears to be chanting a mantra.

Strange Figure

A successful DC 10 Intelligence (Religion) check will identify the figure as a restless spirit chanting names of dragons.

Haunt

The restless spirit is that of a cultist who died here many years ago. If left alone, it is harmless. If the player characters interact with it, or attack it, it turns to face them, reveals its hollow cowl, and screams "*Infidels!*" The spirit immediately disappears and a thundering wave of force explodes in the area, causing the broken pieces of wood to fly in all directions like shrapnel.

Each player character inside the room when this happens will take 2d8 bludgeoning damage. A successful DC 10 Dexterity saving throw halves the damage.

A bless, dispel evil, remove curse, or similar spell dispels the haunt and earns the party 200 XP.

6. Collapsed Wall

You arrive at an area where a section of the passage's west wall has collapsed, leaving a 5-foot high tunnel heading west. Dirt and various refuse litter the area. You notice a rank smell coming from the tunnel. The main passage continues north.

Six months ago an ankheg burrowed into this area, attracted by the vibrations caused by the goblinoids activity. Before it could establish a lair, it fell prey to a stalking giant scorpion that caught its scent.

Since then, the giant scorpion has made the area its hunting ground. It has so far killed and dragged three goblins into its burrow. Fearing the scorpion, the goblins decided to just block it off from the main cavern by building a makeshift barricade.

The creature is currently lurking in area 7. If the player characters decide to ignore the burrow and head to area 8, the giant scorpion will pick up their vibrations and sneak up behind them.

Investigating the Area

For each successful DC 10 Intelligence (Investigate) or DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) check of the collapsed wall, a player character will learn that:

- The collapse was caused by something that burrowed into the passage. There are strange dotted wagon-wheel like tracks heading in and out of the burrow
- The rank smell seems to come from traces of an oily substance that coats certain surfaces of the area. The smell is stronger within the burrowed area (this oily substance is secreted by the giant scorpion)

7. Burrow

Upon entering this low tunnel you are assaulted by the acrid smell that permeates the area. The moist earth is littered with bones and strange shell-like objects. The crackling sound caused by your boots stepping over them, and the occasional dripping of water, softly echo throughout the area.

Encounter

1 giant scorpion (mm 337)

A giant scorpion makes this area its lair, occupying the farthest corner from the entrance. If it detects the player characters, it attacks as soon as any enters the burrow, preventing them from flanking it.

Any medium-sized or larger player character within the burrow will have combat penalties due to the low ceiling. They will suffer disadvantage to their attack rolls while the giant scorpion will gain advantage on its attacks rolls against the player characters.

Adjusting the Encounter

If the total player character level is 16 or below, the giant scorpion will not be in the burrow when they enter and search it. As soon as the player characters leave the burrow, they will encounter it in the passage outside, seeming to arrive from area 8.

If the total player character level is 21 or higher, add 1 additional giant scorpion to the encounter.

Investigating the Area

For each successful DC 10 Intelligence (Investigate) or DC 10

Wisdom (Survival) check of the burrow, a player character will discover that:

- There is a broken head of a dragon statue lying near the entrance. Examination reveals it has a square knob in its neck
- There are gnawed bones of goblin and giant rats, as well as broken shells and carapaces of large vermin littering the general area
- A particular group of large carapaces and legs lying in a corner belong to an ankheg that must have burrowed through this area
- There is a human skeleton lying in a corner holding a **+1 rapier** and carrying a straw pouch containing **95gp** and a **garnet gem** (worth 100gp). This was a member of an adventuring party that was ambushed by the goblins. He fled here and fell prey to the scorpion.

8. Statuary

Faded mosaic tiles depicting undead dragons still plaster sections of the wall of this musty area, but most have fallen and lie smashed on the floor. Three 4-foot high alcoves containing a stone statue of a dragon lie in each main wall. All three statues have been vandalized and defaced, and the one in the middle is missing its head. You see no other exits.

The northern alcove is a secret door.

Investigating the Area

For each successful DC 10 Intelligence (Investigate) check of the area, a player character will discover that:

- The broken statue has a square-shaped hole within its neck
- There is a faint outline around the middle alcove that is not present in the other two

Secret Door

If the broken dragon head is properly inserted into the headless statue's neck and its head rotated a full 90 degrees, the player characters will hear a loud click followed by a grating sound. Soon after, the whole alcove slowly pivots inward, revealing a secret passage.

9. Secret Passage

Judging from the layer of dust on its surfaces and the thickness of the cobwebs that choke it, it is obvious this passage has not been used for ages. The air is stale and smells faintly of rot.

There is a lever in the wall nearby.

Operating the lever controls the opening and closing of the secret door.

10. Library

Bookshelves line the walls of this room. Most of it are empty save for a handful of tattered tomes and shredded parchments that are now too deteriorated to read. The place looks otherwise empty.

The player characters will not find anything here. However, just when they are about to leave, read the following:

Just as the last of you was about to step out, you hear a click followed by a low creaking sound, like an old door swiveling open from behind you. You turn around just in time to glimpse a robed figure entering one of the bookshelves that has swung open, revealing a secret compartment.

Restless Spirit

The robed figure is another restless spirit of a cultist that perished here. When the player characters investigate the panel, they discover the skeletal remains of a human dressed in a dark purple robe. Beside the remains are a used lamp, a rusted dagger, and a tome. The lamp is empty but can still be used if refilled with oil. The dagger is worthless. The tome is rather a mundane book about preparing the dead for mummification. However, at the back cover is a message written in blood. It reads:

My name is Lucaín. I am the last of those who follow the one true path of the Cult. My former brethren have turned against us, now following the path of Tiamat. The last of my brothers have been entombed alive in the shrine. I fear they will find me and deliver a fate worse than my brothers. If you are reading this, know that I curse the heretics of the cult. I will die by my own will. Soon I shall join my brothers.

11. Forgotten Shrine

You reach an intersection where a short 10-foot long passage branches off from the main corridor. A stone door lies at the end of the short passage. It is barred and locked from the outside.

Two heavy stone bars hold the door in place. The bars themselves are locked by heavy chains and two massive iron locks, both of which have now rusted with age.

A successful DC 13 Dexterity (Thieves' Tools) by a player will open the lock and a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check will break the chains.

A horrible rotting stench assaults your nostrils after pulling the stone door open. Curtains of cobwebs part ways to reveal a large, 15-foot high dark chamber dominated by four stone pillars carved in the shapes of upright dragons. Shadowy alcoves also smothered by thick cobwebs line the walls. Littering the floor are broken pews and shattered marble. What catches your attention though is a ten-foot tall rearing skeletal dragon at the far end of the room.

This was once the worship area of the cultists who followed the old path. The giant skeletal dragon is just an ordinary dragon's skeleton stitched together by plaster, rope, and metal screws. However, there are other true horrors lurking within the shadows of the chamber.

Encounter

- 4 ghouls (mm 148)
- 2 ghosts (mm 148)



The cultists who stubbornly refused to join the new faction were imprisoned in this room and left to die. Starving to death, they cannibalized on their weaker companions. This act, and their reverence of undeath, has cursed and transformed four of them into ghouls and two into ghouls. Unable to escape, they have lain dormant in this chamber for the past five years. Smelling living blood for the first time, they go into a frenzy and attack the player characters as soon as they reach the center of the room.

Adjusting the Encounter

If the total player character level is 16 or below, reduce the number of ghouls and ghouls by 1 each.

If the total player character level is 21 or higher, increase the number of ghouls by 2 and the ghouls by 1.

Treasure

One of the ghouls wears a gold necklace with a pendant shaped like a dragon skull (worth 300gp)

A successful DC 13 Intelligence (Investigate) check will detect a secret panel on the wall behind the statue of the skeletal dragon. Behind the panel is a compartment that contains a **wand of magic missiles** (7 charges). Also in the compartment is a tattered diary that details the following:

- *Two warring factions within the Cult of the Dragon – one that followed the old path of worshipping undead dragons and one that followed the new path of bringing about the return of Tiamat to the world*

- *The author and his companions were the last ones who stubbornly stayed loyal to the old path and were imprisoned here and left to die*
- *Starving to death, his companions had no choice but to turn on one another and eat the flesh of the dead*
- *The last entry is about the author describing the taste of flesh, about how he misjudged it and realized it was delightful and sweet*

12. Pit of the Cube

A recent earthquake has weakened this 10x10 section of this passage. A successful passive perception check or an Investigation check of DC 15 or higher will spot the unusually large cracks on the floor.

Hazard

If two or more player characters walk over the weakened section, it will cause the ground to crumble and break, revealing a 30-foot deep enclosed 20-foot diameter pit. All within the affected area will fall and take 10 (3d6) bludgeoning damage. Player characters may use their reaction and attempt to grab the edge of the floor or the hand of another character. They must succeed in a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) skill check.

Encounter

gelatinous cube (mm 242)

Lurking in the pit is a gelatinous cube. It immediately attacks any player character that falls into the pit. If no character fell but the floor still collapsed, the creature slowly climbs out of the pit to stalk the player characters. If you want this encounter to be more challenging, have the player character fall exactly into the gelatinous cube (and thus get themselves automatically *engulfed*).

Adjusting the Encounter

If the total player character level is 21 or higher, replace the Gelatinous Cube with a Black Pudding.

13. Dormitory

Bas-relief carvings and paintings of various evil dragons decorate the walls of this room. Several cots, in different stages of disrepair, hug its walls. All of a sudden, the room's temperature drops and your breath becomes visible. Without warning, several ghostly figures in tattered robes rise from the cots and hover mid air. They all draw ethereal weapons. You brace for combat, but instead they attack each other. As you stand there astonished, you soon begin to feel hate build up within you. For some reason, you feel your companions have just betrayed you and you are convinced that they must die for it!

Hazard

The player characters are being compelled by the restless spirits that haunt this room to attack the nearest ally with a melee or ranged weapon. They must immediately make a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw. Success means they are unaffected. Those who fail are compelled to move up to their speed to their nearest ally and make a single melee weapon attack.

Affected characters can continue to make saving throws at the end of each of their turns to end the effect. The compulsion lasts for a minute and reactivates once every 24 hours.

A bless, dispel evil, remove curse, or similar spell ends all effects and earns the party 700 XP.

14. Latrine

The passage ends with a cobweb-filled alcove. Hanging from the side wall is a lever similar to the one you saw earlier.

The alcove is a secret door which the goblins are unaware of. Operating the lever will cause the secret door to slowly pivot outward, revealing a small room.

The stench in this room is nearly overpowering. Buzzing flies swarm the air and maggots freely crawl over the slimy floor that is littered with filth and refuse. Water streams from an underground source along a gutter carved from the floor. A stone trough beside the gutter is filled with scummy water and floating feces.

This room was the cultist's cistern. When the kobolds took over, they used it as a latrine. The goblins have continued the practice.

Nauseating Effect

Each player character must make a DC 8 Constitution save or become poisoned while they remain in the room. They may make another save at the end of each of their turns. Once they save, they are no longer affected.

Encounter

2 goblins (mm 165)

One turn after the player characters entered this room, two mildly intoxicated goblins from area 13 enter and use the room. They have disadvantage to their perception checks but should be able to spot the characters by the end of their turn. If they are not handled quietly, or allowed to act, they alert the rest of their allies in area 13. Each goblin carries 10sp.

15. Communal Chamber

Two bonfires illuminate the squalor and wretchedness of this huge cavern. Hand and footholds that have been crudely carved into the rock lead up to elevated alcoves. Primitive tanning racks, roasting spits, water barrels, crude wooden tables, and dirty animal hide beddings furnish the area. Skinned humanoid corpses and beast carcasses hang from rusty hooks protruding from the walls. The whole place reeks of a putrid mixture of goblin body odor, carrion, garbage, and smoke.

This area used to serve as the main common area for the cultists. It is now the living quarters of the goblinoid tribe of the Dragon Eaters.

Encounter

- 12 goblins (mm 165)
- 4 hobgoblins (mm 185)
- 1 ogre (mm 237)



The ogre and half of the goblins and hobgoblins are currently sleeping while the rest are eating, gambling, or arguing with each other. They suffer disadvantage to their perception checks.

The ones sleeping can be found in the alcoves or ledges. Those who are awake are gathered around the two bonfires.

When combat breaks out, the goblinoids scream and sound an alarm to rouse their sleeping companions. They awake and join combat after one round. One will also attempt to run to area 3 and alert the hobgoblins there (who arrive after three rounds).

If the player characters are particularly crafty and devious, it is possible that they can slay the sleeping goblinoids without attracting the attention of those who are awake.

Adjusting the Encounter

If the total player character level is 16 or below, reduce the number of goblins and hobgoblins by 2 each.

If the total player character level is 21 or higher, add 1 ogre and increase the number of hobgoblins by 2.

The Chief

The tribe's chief, a bugbear named Komar Darkmarrow, and his pet dire wolf, are occupying area 16. When combat breaks out, they arrive and join the fray after three rounds. Komar carries a **key** that opens the wooden chest in his room.

Treasure

Each goblin has 10sp while the hobgoblins carry 30sp each. The ogre has a straw sack hanging from his belt that holds 90 gp and 80sp.

Interrogating the Goblinoids

A successful Charisma (Intimidate or Persuasion) check on interrogating the goblinoids will allow the player characters to learn about the following:

- [DC 10] The cave of the many headed dragon is haunted and scary
- [DC 15] DC The booty they have collected is located in Komar's room
- [DC 20] The treasure chest of Komar is booby-trapped and only Komar knows how to disarm it

16. Chief's Room

Poorly cured bear hides cover the walls and a handful of barrels, crates, and sacks hug the corners of this pungent-smelling room. A half-eaten ribcage of some large beast lies on top of a wooden round table. Two filthy fur beddings and a wooden chest lie beside the far wall.

Encounter

- **Komar Darkmarrow, bugbear chief (mm 33)**
- **1 dire wolf (mm 321)**

Currently occupying the room is a vicious bugbear chief named Komar Darkmarrow and his pet dire wolf. When combat breaks out in area 15, Komar and his dire wolf investigate and arrive there after 3 rounds. Once he senses that the odds against him, Komar retreats and will try to escape. He will vow revenge and one day set up an ambush. Komar carries a **key** that opens the wooden chest in his room.

Adjusting the Encounter

If the total player character level is 16 or below, replace the dire wolf with a **worg**.

If the total player character level is 21 or higher, have Komar drink a **potion of speed** before combat.

Trap

The wooden chest is locked and trapped. If the chest is disturbed or even opened with its proper key before setting a secret mechanism, it extends a poison needle 5 inches straight from its lock. Anyone within range takes 2 (1d4) piercing damage and must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 16 (3d10) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

A successful DC 20 Investigate check spots the mechanism and the trap, and a successful DC 15 Dexterity (Thieves' Tools) will disarm it.

Treasure

Komar wears an ivory necklace worth 400gp.

The chest contains two small sacks that each hold 200gp and a fine ivory jewelry case (100gp value) that contains four pieces of assorted silver jewelry worth 50gp each. Also in the chest is a small leather satchel that contains **two potions** – **greater healing** and **heroism**. Propped against the wall in a corner is a nonmagical bow and a quiver containing 16 arrows. Eight of the arrows are **+1 arrows**.

The barrels contain wine and water while the crates and sacks contain assorted fruits, spices, and a month's supply of rations. These were the best parts of the goods plundered from various merchant wagons and Komar has kept them for himself.

Recollection #3

After all the goblinoids, including Komar Darkmarrow, have been defeated, read the third Recollection entry, The Potions.

Recollection #3: The Potions

It appears that the rush of adrenaline from combat helps you recall your lost memory. You remember the next part of your conversation with Zaragos.

"The place that you need to look for while you explore Dragon's Maw is a cavernous crypt full of bones. Not human bones, but dragon bones. The staff section of Tiamat's Claw is said to be a dragon's femur and was hidden in this place. It would be impossible to find. But if the top piece of the artifact is within 30 feet, the two pieces will glow.

But the location of this bone crypt is well hidden. There should be a clue somewhere of its secret entrance."

He then turns to Xande. *"All you have to do is lead them to the entrance of the cave. Which reminds me, here's the gold for the supplies,"* Zaragos tosses a small leather pouch to Xande. *"Make sure to bring all the food and supplies necessary."*

Xande gives him a puzzled look, *"you don't need me anymore?"*

"No, we're good. Get some rest. I want you back here by dawn tomorrow."

Xande nods and soon leaves the vicinity of the Helm and Cloak.

Zaragos then pulls out a leather satchel from under his seat and places it on top of the table.

"I have something for each of you," Zaragos exclaims. He then opens the satchel and pulls out several stoppered vials. *"These are magical potions that you must drink just before you enter the bone crypt. This is important. Let me repeat that so you do not forget. Each of you must drink this before you proceed into the crypt. I know you have questions, allow me to explain."*

That is all you can recall for now.

The player characters may make a DC 10 Insight check to determine that Zaragos can be trusted.

17. Storage Area

Several wooden crates, boxes, and sacks lie stacked along the alcoves of this large intersection. There are passages heading out to different directions. The area looks otherwise empty.

The various containers in this room all contain random mundane and perishable goods.

18. Shrine to Tiamat

Two rows of relief-carved limestone columns march the length of this long room. The carvings depict entwining evil dragons. Broken mosaic tiles and pews litter the floor. At the far end of the room sits a stone altar. Just beyond it lies a large horrid shape of a multi-headed dragon.

Dragon Statue

A successful DC 10 Religion (Investigate) check will identify the dragon statue as that of Tiamat.

Investigate the Area

For each successful DC 10 Intelligence (Investigate) check, a player character will learn:

- The room has been vandalized but the statue has mostly been left untouched
- A faint outline of a door lies on the wall directly behind the statue
- The altar has a secret mechanism. When operated, the secret door swivels open to reveal a staircase.

19. Secret Cavern

The staircase leads you down 20 feet into a wide uneven passage that is choked with thick cobwebs. It appears to slope at a downward angle and after a minute of walking it eventually leads you to a huge cavern with a 25-foot high stalactite-filled ceiling. Several alcoves and ledges along the walls contain piles of large bones. Carved on the central area of the cavern's floor is the image of a flame with eyes burning above what looks like a dragon's claw. On a ledge on the far wall sits a single black stone altar. Behind it stands a cloaked figure, carefully studying a strange looking staff that it topped with a multi-colored claw.

"I will assume you were sent here by Zaragos to find me and recover the artifact I stole from him," Oliman suddenly exclaims without raising his head. "I regret that your efforts have been for naught. I have already connected the two parts, and now I wield in my hand the power that is Tiamat's Claw. Allow me to demonstrate."

You begin to feel an overwhelming sense of dread coming from the rogue apprentice as he starts waving the staff around him.

It is also at this time that you begin to remember something...

Encounter

Oliman, mage (mm 347)

This will be a special "faux" encounter where the player characters must absolutely lose. If they do not, the adventure will not work as intended. Before you start the encounter, keep a note of each player's current hit points.

For this faux encounter only, the following penalties will be applied to the player characters:

- Disadvantage to all saving throw rolls
- All spells, abilities, and magical items do not work. Such actions fizzle or result nothing happening. However, their spells, abilities, or charges are not expended or wasted.

Additionally, Oliman enjoys the following benefits:

- Advantage to all rolls
- All spells cast have a DC of 16
- Cannot die or be incapacitated (always saves)

Tiamat's Claw Properties (for the purposes of this faux encounter only):

- Unlimited Charges
- Functions as a Staff of Striking
- Use 1 charge to cast any of the following spells at DC 16: *fireball*, *lightning bolt*, and *cone of cold*.



DM Notes

While you are fully aware that this is a "mock" fight, the player characters should believe this is real. No matter how inexplicable or unfair the situation appears to the player characters, you must ensure that you act like everything is normal and that combat is being played out fairly. While Oliman cannot truly die or be incapacitated in this encounter, you must not divulge this to the player characters. Make it appear that he is making his saves normally and he is somehow able to heal himself. The outcome of this encounter must be that all the player characters are defeated – unconscious or "dead." Although this will leave a bitter taste to the players, it will all make sense to them after the final recollection entry, The Reveal.

Aftermath

After the last of you fall, the rogue wizard Oliman, bloodied and barely clinging to life, staggers backward before slumping against a wall.

"I sorely underestimated these fools. That was very close. If not for the power of Tiamat's Claw, they would have easily defeated me. Ahhh... the pain these sons of bitches caused me, can barely breathe..." he curses under his breath before collapsing unconscious on the floor.

Moments later, a familiar figure materializes from out of the shadows. Xande scans the area, sighs at your corpses, and then heads toward the unconscious mage before scooping up the staff.

"That worked out easier than I thought," Xande muttered out loud, somewhat amazed at her incredible luck.

The elf scout smiles and shakes her head while running her fingers over the surface of the staff.

As she carefully studies it, her look of amazement gradually turns into bewilderment.

"As you may have noticed by now, Tiamat's Claw is not real, Xande. It does not exist," someone with a familiar raspy voice exclaims from across the cavern.

Xande quickly turns around, her face reddening in anger and shock upon seeing Zaragos standing from a ledge on the far wall. It is also then that he notices your figures getting up from the ground, apparently unharmed.

Recollection #4

Proceed to the last Recollection entry, The Reveal.

Recollection #4: The Reveal

"You are wondering what the potions are for. Before I explain what they are, I have something first to reveal to you," Zaragos pauses for a moment to make sure nobody else is within earshot of your conversation. He then waves, as if signaling someone from a distance. A cloaked figure emerges from the shadows nearby and makes her way toward you, the grace and balance in her form clearly evident. She has a comely moon elf maiden's freckled face and her head is topped with silky blonde hair.

"Hail to you, adventurers. I am Remalla Haventree. I have heard tales of your heroism. I am hoping they are all true. Have you explained everything yet?" Lady Remalla asks Zaragos.

"Not all," Zaragos responds. "Only everything about the mission as Xande expects."

Lady Remalla nods then addresses your group. "I can sense your confusion. Your mission is as what Zaragos has explained. You will be accompanied by Xande and make your way to Dragon's Maw, look for the secret bone crypt, and find and defeat Oliman. What Zaragos hasn't revealed to you yet is that this is all for show. An elaborate ruse if you will. I represent a group that keeps a close watch on the balance of power in Faerun and enforcing justice in discreet ways."

The player characters may make a DC 10 Insight check to determine if Remalla Haventree is speaking the truth. If they ask about the identity of their group, they need to make a successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check before Remalla reveals that they are Harper agents.

"We have been tracking the movement and activities of the Cult of the Dragon for the past several months. However, we have been so far unsuccessful in pinpointing their hideouts and campsites. They always appear to be one step ahead of us every time we learn of a location. It was only recently that we suspected that we had a double agent in our ranks. And if it hasn't dawned on you yet, we suspect that double agent to be Xande Silverthorn. Xande has been working for us for several years now, serving mostly as a scout and guide. All of the failed missions against the Cult had one denominator, Xande. Somehow, she has managed to warn the Cult without getting caught.

But instead of confronting her, a situation where she will just deny everything, we saw an opportunity. If Xande

takes the bait, she will inform the cult about Tiamat's Claw. She is probably doing so at this very moment. If they bite, that gives us an opportunity to expose her and capture them."

"Which is why we will need to provide a very convincing show," Zaragos adds. "This means you really need to explore the cavern complex, which is now the lair of a tribe of nasty goblins. It shouldn't pose a problem for you. But dealing with them and going through the motions of exploring Dragon's Maw help make this show more convincing in case Xande, or any other cultist, is spying or following you.

The vials I gave you contain potions of Disguise Self. As I informed you earlier, you will need to drink these before entering the bone crypt. However, only activate the spell during your mock battle with Oliman, who by the way, is also one of our agents.

During combat he will be unleashing upon spells of tremendous power. Do not worry, you will not be harmed, as Oliman is an illusionist. However, I am counting on you to play this out and act convincingly. The potions you drank will help to make yourselves appear appropriately hurt. Do not waste your spells and abilities though. Save it for the true battle later. After a few rounds, all of you must, one after another, fall and play dead. Afterwards, we wait for them to take the bait. Do not worry, other agents, as will I, will be watching and hiding in the alcoves of the cave and will provide ranged support when needed. Once they see that we outnumber them, they should surrender."

Fully recalling now what happened yesterday, you return to the bone cavern, successfully catching Xande in the act.

Shimmerime the White Dragon

"All of that... the theatrics you put up, it was just a trick to lure me out in the open?" asked Xande, incredulous.

"Well, not exactly. We expected some of your Cultists friends to accompany you. Where are they by the way? Waiting outside?" Zaragos asked.

"The Cult of the Dragon? You think I work for them? Yes, I feed them information from time to time if it will suit my needs. No, they are but a means to an end," Xande explains, somehow getting more and more comfortable despite the situation she is in. "No, I am alone in this. You caught me red-handed. And I congratulate you for being shrewd."

"I am curious, Xande," Oliman exclaims, now standing on the side. "You don't at all seem concerned that we have you trapped. We have you surrounded and trapped."

"I think not. It is not I who is trapped here," Xande smiles before looking at the ground and continues, "Rather; you have trapped yourselves here with me."

It is then that you begin to notice that something very wrong is happening. The air in the cavern suddenly becomes bone-chillingly cold. Frost starts to build and creep on the ground around Xande, who in turn begins to transform into the terrifying shape of a large white dragon!

"By Mystra! Spread out, adventurers!" Zaragos yells in warning!

Encounter

Shimmerime, young white dragon (mm 101)

Harper Agents

- Zaragos, bard (volo's guide to monsters 211)
- Oliman, mage (mm 347)
- 5 scouts (mm 349)

Adjusting the Encounter

If the total player character level is 16 or below, increase the number of scouts by 3 and have Xande target the scouts with the first use of her breath weapon.

If the total player character level is 21 or higher, reduce the number of scouts by 2. Feel free to increase the hit points of Shimmerime by 50% to 100% to make the encounter more challenging.

DM Notes

- Zaragos will focus on healing and supporting the party with healing word spells and bardic inspiration while Oliman and the scouts attack Xande
- Oliman will deal an average of 3 damage per round with fire bolt cantrips
- Each scout will deal an average of 2 damage per round with their arrows
- If reduced to 30 hit points or below, Shimmerime will try to

escape through area 18. If cornered, her feral instincts kick in and she fights to the death.

Treasure

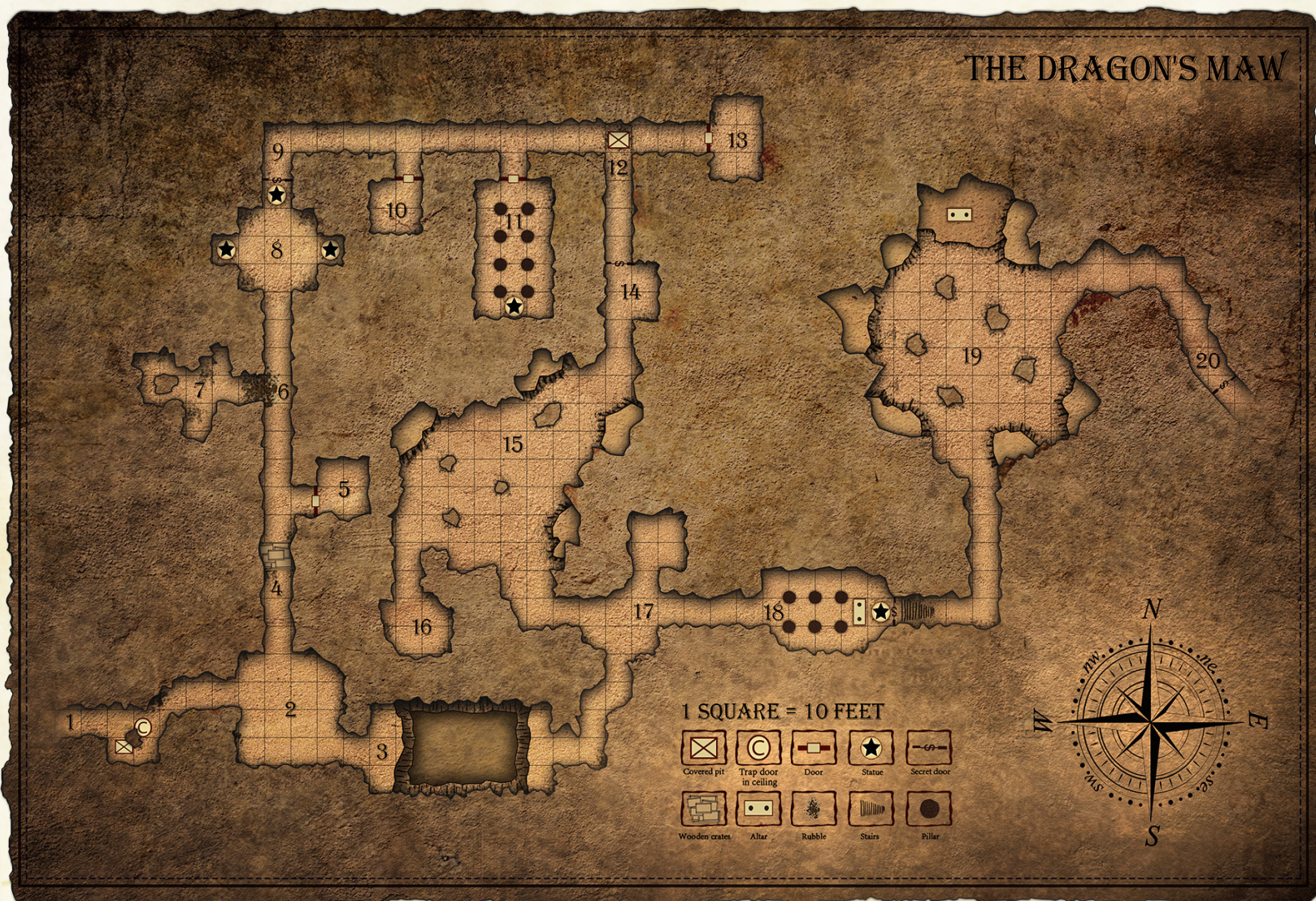
Shimmerime wears a *ring of mind shielding*.

20. Hidden Entrance

This secret passage is hidden by permanent illusory walls at two junctions: one in area 19 and the other an exit to the surface. This passage is what the Harper agents used to enter area 19.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

The defeat of Shimmerime marks the end of the adventure. Zaragos and Oliman thank the player characters for their help and pay them for their services. If you are using the Hoard of the Dragon Queen or Rise of Tiamat adventure, the harper NPC agents introduced in this adventure can help the player characters segue to the next adventure. If not, you can use the Harper NPCs to offer the player characters future missions against the many threats that plague the Sword Coast. To name a few: the Cult of the Dragon, the Zhentarim, the Red Wizards of Thay, the Dark Dagger, the Runderen, and the Church of Bane.



CHARACTER OPTIONS TALENTS

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Introduction

What are Talents?

Talents are extraordinary aspects of a character's abilities, background, personality, physique, proficiencies, and features.

They are similar to, but not always as powerful as, standard Feats. They offer a means for you to improve your current existing abilities, slightly or temporarily shift game mechanics into your favor, provide you with a new capability, or build your character's background and personality for a richer roleplaying experience.

Acquiring Talents

Each character begins with one talent at 1st level. At 3rd level and every three levels thereafter (6th, 9th, 12th, 15th, and 18th), they gain another talent. Talents are gained according to character level, regardless of individual class levels.

You can only acquire a specific talent once. However, certain talents can be retaken more than once as detailed in their description.

You may also choose not to acquire a talent when you reach a level where you are eligible to do so. You can save this acquisition for later on (perhaps when you have met the prerequisites).

If you do not wish to use the variant rules of acquiring talents, you can instead just acquire them as Half Feats. Each time you are eligible to take a new Feat, you can opt to select two Talents instead.

Prerequisites

Some talents have prerequisites. Your character must have the indicated ability score, class level, faction, feature, feat, race, skill, or other quality designated in order to select or use that talent.

You cannot use or gain the benefit of a talent if you lose the prerequisite.

Types of Talents

Some talents are general, meaning that no special rules govern them as a group.

Others are racial, which means that those talents are only available to members of that race. Faction talents are talents which only members

of their faction are allowed to have. Finally, there are class talents. These comprise the majority of the talents, and most have specific class level requirements.

Game Balance

The introduction of talents may result in some game imbalance issues in favor of the players.

To address this, you can use some or all of the following options:

- Reduce the starting total ability scores of players by 2-4 and/or set a maximum starting ability score of 14 after racial bonuses.
- Assign talents to NPCs or even humanoid monsters. As a standard, monsters can have one talent for every four hit dice they have, rounded up. Class talents can also be applied to monsters who have classes or class-like features.
- Increase the average level of the party by 1 for every 3 levels when calculating CR.

The Talents

Talent Descriptions

Below is the format for talent descriptions:

Talent Name

Description of what the talent does or represents in plain language.

Prerequisite: *A minimum ability score, another talent or talents, member of a race or faction, or a class level that a character must have in order to acquire this talent. This entry is absent if a talent has no prerequisite. A talent may have more than one prerequisite.*

Benefit: What the talent enables the character ("you" in the talent description) to do. If a character has the same talent more than once, its benefits do not stack unless indicated otherwise in the description.

Table of Talents

General Talents

Ability

Agile
Astute
Brilliant Mind
Built
Commanding Presence
Cunning
Great Fortitude
Indomitable
Iron Will
Lightning Reflexes
Vigorous
Winsome

Background

Ascetic Missionary
Brilliant Academic
Crafty Dealer
Cunning Spy
Daring Explorer
Dashing Scoundrel
Gallant Hero
Grizzled Veteran
Rugged Outdoorsman
Shady Operator
Shrewd Investigator

Combat

Cleave
Great Cleave
Improved Dodge
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Ability

Agile

You are more nimble and quick to react than normal.

Benefit: You can reroll a Dexterity ability check or Dexterity saving throw. You must use the result of the second roll, even if it is lower.

Once you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you finish a long rest.

Astute

You are smarter than normal.

Benefit: You can reroll an Intelligence ability check

or Intelligence saving throw. You must use the result of the second roll, even if it is lower.

Once you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you finish a long rest.

Brilliant Mind

You are extraordinarily smarter than normal.

Prerequisite: *Intelligence 10 or higher.*

Benefit: You have a +1 bonus to Intelligence saving throws.

Built

You are stronger than normal.

Benefit: You can reroll a Strength ability check or Strength saving throw. You must use the result of the second roll, even if it is lower.

Once you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you finish a long rest.





Commanding Presence

You have a greater personality than normal.

Prerequisite: Charisma 10 or higher.

Benefit: You have a +1 bonus to Charisma saving throws.

Cunning

You are more shrewd and headstrong than normal.

Benefit: You can reroll a Wisdom ability check or Wisdom saving throw. You must use the result of

the second roll, even if it is lower.

Once you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you finish a long rest.

Great Fortitude

You are extraordinarily healthier than normal.

Prerequisite: Constitution 10 or higher.

Benefit: You have a +1 bonus to Constitution saving throws.

Indomitable

You are extraordinarily stronger than normal.

Prerequisite: Strength 10 or higher.

Benefit: You have a +1 bonus to Strength saving throws.

Iron Will

You are extraordinarily more strong-willed than normal.

Prerequisite: Wisdom 10 or higher.

Benefit: You have a +1 bonus to Wisdom saving throws.

Lightning Reflexes

You are extraordinarily quicker than normal.

Prerequisite: Dexterity 10 or higher.

Benefit: You have a +1 bonus to Dexterity saving

throws.

Vigorous

You are healthier than normal.

Benefit: You can reroll a Constitution ability check or Constitution saving throw. You must use the result of the second roll, even if it is lower.

Once you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you finish a long rest.

Winsome

You have a stronger personality than normal.

Benefit: You can reroll a Charisma ability check or Charisma saving throw. You must use the result of the second roll, even if it is lower.

Once you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you finish a long rest.

Background

Ascetic Missionary

You live a devout and disciplined life, abstaining from worldly pleasures in order to pursue spiritual goals, help the weak, or achieve supreme martial prowess.

Benefit: You have 3 Ascetic Missionary points. Whenever you make an ability check that involves the skill Insight, History, Medicine, Perception, or Religion, you can spend one Ascetic Missionary point to roll a d12 and add it to the result. You can choose to spend one of your Ascetic Missionary points after you roll the die, but before the outcome is determined.

You regain your expended Ascetic Missionary points when you finish a long rest.

Brilliant Academic

You are a young prodigy, a well-travelled professor, or an accomplished historian. Knowledge is your tool to gain the attention of everyone around you when you explain your points.



DM OPTIONS MONSTER TALENTS

PREVIEW

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Playtesters

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About the Cover

I wanted the cover for this book to be special, and at the same time, wanted to pay tribute to the classic D&D books. This was about monsters so I looked at the classic Monster Manual covers. Nothing jumped at me until I saw the classic Players Handbook cover by David Trampier. I thought, what if the devil statue was actually a golem? So I commissioned Sandy Gonzaga as usual and asked him, if that statue is a golem and it is about to come alive to deal with the interlopers, what would it look like 5 seconds later? The result is what you see.



About this Book (v1.01)

DM Options: Monster Talents is the third book about the Talents concept. The first two books (Character Options: Talents and Character Options: Talents II) have been successful and made a huge impact to a lot of players' gaming experience. However, it did have balance issues that a DM had to address. And this book will finally help the DM do that. This time, the talents are not for the players. This time, it's the DM who gets to have the fun choosing and playing around with feat-like options for monsters.

This book covers the creatures from the Monster Manual book, providing several talents to choose from for each critter, depending on their CR. The higher the creature's CR, the more talents they can have and the bigger their selection. As a result, you'll have plenty of options to make the tired and typical encounters your players have gone accustomed to dealing with suddenly fresh and exciting. With talents like the Stirge's insidious *Anesthetic Bite*, the Beholder's obnoxious *Redirect Central Eye*, the Balor's destructive *Meteor Strike*, the Tarrasque's terrifying *Disintegration Breath*, and the truly horrifying rage-quit inducing *Potent Antennae* of the Rust Monster to arm your monsters with, you'll have a delightful time tormenting and shocking your players.

If you didn't purchase the Character Options: Talents books, don't fret. This book can still provide you with ideas on how to create or customize your monsters. With over 140 pages of talents, you'll find a lot you can use here! Enjoy!

Acknowledgement

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Introduction

What are Monster Talents?

Monster Talents are extraordinary aspects of a creature's abilities, background, personality, physique, proficiencies, and features. They offer a means for you to improve a creature's current existing abilities or provide it with new capabilities.

With the introduction of Monster Talents, your players will seldom face the same monster again.

Types of Talents

Unlike the talents presented in the Character Options: Talents books, there are only four types of talents here, each categorized on how they are supposed to be used. They are Traits, Actions, Reactions, and Legendary Actions.

Traits. The most common talent type. They are often characterized as a passive talent, such as improvements to existing abilities, added resistances, or new ongoing effects like auras. Others are features like innate spellcasting abilities, options that require it to take a bonus action, or even grant a monster Legendary Actions!

Action. A talent that provides the creature with the use of an action, such as a breath attack or spell like ability. Some actions can be used each turn while others have charges or limits per day.

Reaction. A talent that provides the creature with the use of a reaction.

Legendary Action. A talent that provides the creature with the use of a legendary action. Legendary actions will always come with a cost.

The Monster Talents

Talent Descriptions

Below is the format for talent descriptions:

Monster Name

The name of the monster followed by its CR and the number of talents it can have. A list of talents available to that monster will be shown below it.

Type: The talent type (Trait, Action, Reaction, or Legendary Action).

Talent Cost: The count value of the talent. If this entry is absent, it means the talent counts as 1 talent. Otherwise, some talents have a cost of 2 or 3. This means they count as 2 or 3 talents if you take it. For example, the aboleth can have 4 talents. If it acquires the talent *Innate Spellcaster (Psionics)*, which costs 2 talents, this means the aboleth can only have 2 more talents. If it acquires *Slime Sphere*, which also costs 2, then it would end up with only those 2 talents.

Prerequisite: This could be a monster type, a certain feature or ability, another talent or talents. This entry is absent if a talent has no prerequisite.

How many Talents does it have?

The number of talents a creature has is equal to **one third the creature's CR plus one**, rounded down. Consult the table below for exact details:

CREATURE'S NUMBER OF TALENTS BY CR

CR	Talents	CR	Talents
Up to 1	1	16	6
2	1	17	6
3	2	18	7
4	2	19	7
5	2	20	7
6	3	21	8
7	3	22	8
8	3	23	8
9	4	24	9
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Chapter I. Monster Manual Creatures

This chapter covers every creature listed in the Monster Manual. Under each creature's name is the number of talents it has followed by a list of available talents the creature can have.

Aarakocra

The aarakocra (CR ¼) can have 1 talent.

Flyby

Type: Trait.

The aarakocra doesn't provoke an opportunity attack when it flies out of an enemy's reach.

Improved Dive Attack

Type: Trait.

If the aarakocra is flying and dives at least 30 feet straight toward a target and then hits it with a melee weapon attack, the target takes an extra 3 (1d6) damage and must succeed on a DC 10 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Multiattack

Type: Trait.

The aarakocra makes two attacks: one with its javelin and one with its talon.

Aboleth

The aboleth (CR 10) can have 4 talents.

Extra Legendary Action

Type: Trait.

The aboleth can take 1 additional legendary action before the start of its next turn. The aboleth can retake this talent up to two additional times. The additional legendary action stacks.

Improved Enslave

Type: Trait.

The aboleth can target up to two creatures it can see within 30 feet with its Enslave feature.

Improved Multiattack

Type: Trait.

When the aboleth uses Multiattack, it makes four

attacks: three with its tentacles and one with its tail.

Innate Spellcaster (Psionics)

Type: Action.

Talent Cost: 2 (Counts as 2 Talents).

The aboleth's innate spellcasting ability is Intelligence (DC 16). It can innately cast the following spells requiring no material components:
3/day (each): *hypnotic pattern*, *phantasmal force*
2/day (each): *hallucinatory terrain*, *major image*
1/day: *project image*

Slime Orb

Type: Legendary Action.

Slime Orb. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +9 to hit, range 120ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (4d6) acid damage and the target must make a DC 14 Strength saving throw or be restrained until the end of the aboleth's next turn.

Slime Sphere

Type: Legendary Action (Costs 2 Actions).

Slime Sphere. The aboleth conjures a ball of acidic slime that explodes at a point it can see within 120 feet of it. Each creature in a 20-foot-radius sphere centered on that point must make a DC 14 Strength saving throw. On a failed save, the target takes 14 (4d6) acid damage and is restrained, or half as much damage and isn't restrained on a successful one. A restrained creature takes 10 (3d6) acid damage at the start of each of the Aboleth's turns.

A restrained creature can use an action to perform a DC 14 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Tail Bash

Type: Trait.

If the aboleth's tail attack roll against a target succeeds by 5 or more, the target must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or be stunned until the end of the aboleth's next turn.



A detailed illustration of a dragon's head, facing forward. The dragon has a grey, scaly texture on its face and head. Its eyes are large, glowing with a bright red light, and have a slit-like pupil. The mouth is wide open, revealing a dark interior and a row of sharp, white, pointed teeth. The background is dark and smoky, with some faint, lighter grey shapes that could be other dragons or just smoke. The overall tone is dark and menacing.

**THANKS FOR PURCHASING
THIS BOOK! IF YOU
ENJOYED IT, PLEASE
PROVIDE A REVIEW!**