

# FIND THE LOST EXPEDITION



A missing expedition, devious drow, and underground monsters.  
Sharpen your blades. Nock your arrows. Ready your spells.  
Can you find and bring back Winterhold's missing scholars alive?

SECRETS OF THE DROW ~ ADVENTURE TWO





# FIND THE LOST EXPEDITION



An archaeology expedition has gone missing in the old mines, deep underneath Winterhold. The group was searching for a legendary artefact, but they have not returned.

Explore the old mines below Winterhold, find the lost expedition, and bring them home. But beware of vicious underground monsters and the drow – for the legendary artefact is of interest to others than the archaeologists in Winterhold.

*Sharpen your blades. Nock your arrows. Ready your spells.  
Can you find the lost explorers and bring them back to Winterhold alive?*



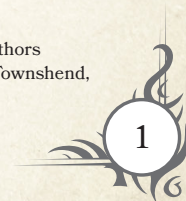
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# EASTERN FARRAWAY

BASED ON THE ORIGINAL MAPS FROM AURORA GNAMTRIX'S  
TRAVEL CHRONICLES: EXPLORING EASTERN FARRAWAY REGION





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# OVERVIEW

## ABOUT THIS ADVENTURE

*Find the Lost Expedition* is an adventure for the world's greatest roleplaying game (5e). It is designed for a group of three to five 5th-level characters, and can be played as a one-shot episode or as part of the *Secrets of the Drow* trilogy. This adventure can be used in any campaign that features a region with mountains or underground terrain.

## FEATURED CONTENT

- Open adventure with multiple quest paths.
- Unique magic item: Izabel's dirk.
- Legend & Lore: The Threat from Below.
- Detailed NPCs with background descriptions.
- Original full-colour maps and illustrations.

## SYNOPSIS

The characters start their adventure in the town of Winterhold, a trading town and former mining community high in the mountains. They have been invited to the Halls of Lore by Edna Hellmund, head of an academic department and a member of the Five, a group of influential individuals who govern Winterhold.

Edna asks the characters to find an underground expedition sent by the Halls of Lore to search for a legendary artefact. The expedition is late, and she fears that something has happened to its members.

When the characters set out to search for the lost expedition, their first encounter in the old mines is with a sprite. After hours of travelling, the characters discover the remaining members of the expedition, who are hiding in a cave.

The surviving members explain that the expedition was attacked recently, and that a group of dark elves made off with their leader, Ian von Boulderstock, as well as a legendary artefact. To make things worse, one of the surviving academics is poisoned and needs medical attention urgently.

As the characters chase after the drow, they encounter a cavern in which the drow discard dead slaves. In there they find imprisoned in a cage a living dark elf called Jezzara Tezen'aar, who has turned against her kin.

The tunnel then forks into two. Unless the characters succeed in reading the tracks, they do not know which group of dark elves that took Ian and which group that has the artefact.

- One tunnel has rails and takes the characters on a perilous chase in old mining carts.
- The other tunnel is slippery, which may result in the characters sliding wildly to its end.

Depending on which tunnel the characters take, they find either Ian von Boulderstock, the leader of the expedition, or the stolen artefact. At the DM's discretion, the characters can search both tunnels.

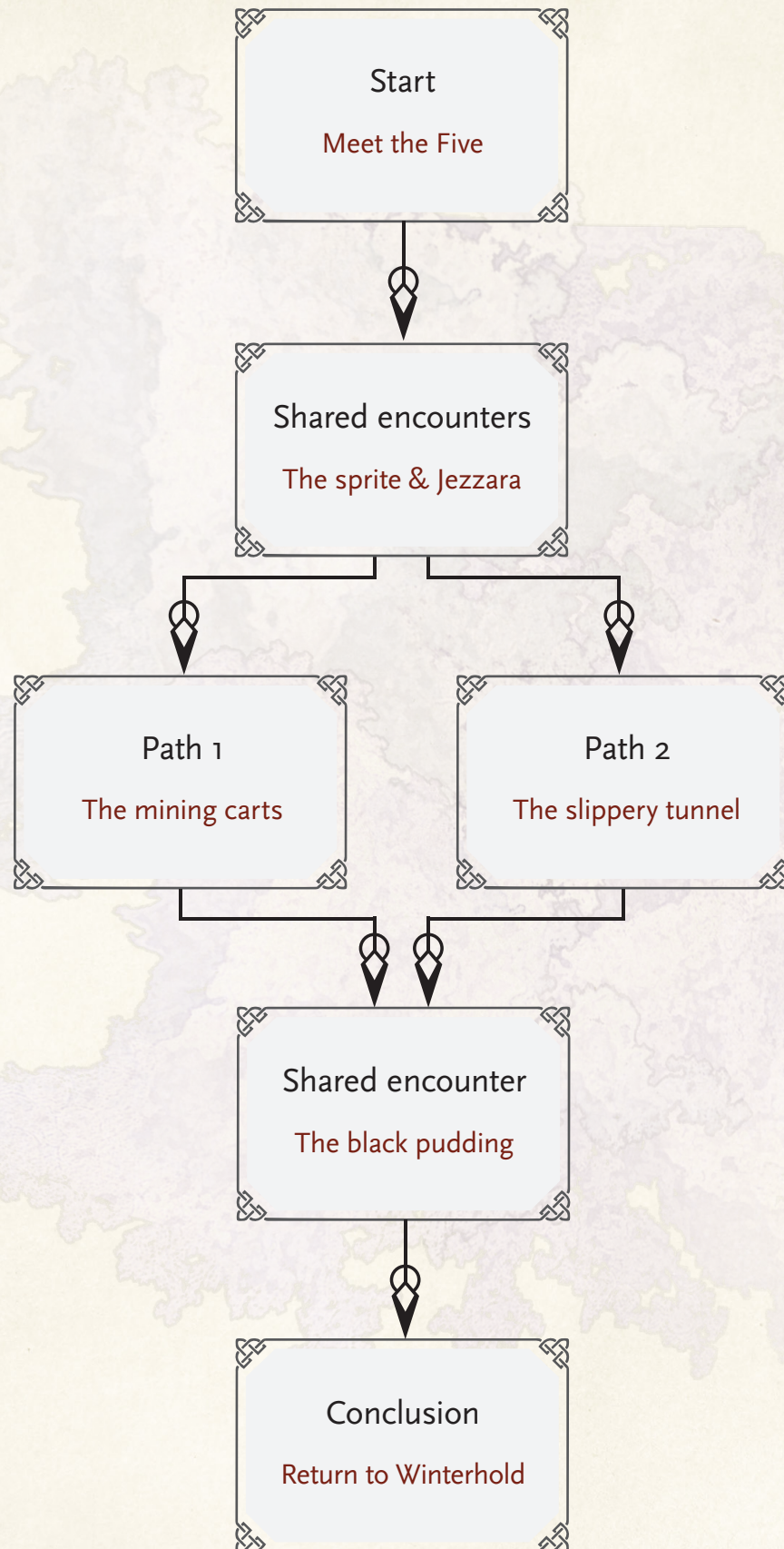
After the characters have returned to the remaining members of the expedition, they have to protect them on their return journey. However, on the way back to Winterhold, they are attacked by a black pudding.

Once the characters return to Winterhold, they are rewarded by Edna. If they rescued Ian von Boulderstock, Winterhold's guards will later bring back the artefact, and vice versa (unless the DM decides to let the players solve both quest paths).





# ADVENTURE FLOWCHART





# CHAPTER 1: THE PARTY GATHERS

**T**he characters are currently in Winterhold, a town located high in the mountains just northwest of a huge wilderness known as Buckwild. The characters have been invited here by Edna Hellmund, head of the department and member of the Five, a group of influential citizens and effectively Winterhold's leaders. Edna has told the characters little more than that she needs help with a dangerous and extremely urgent mission.

## ABOUT WINTERHOLD

Built partially inside a huge cave in a large mountain, Winterhold was originally a mining settlement and later a military outpost. Today, it is a busy and prosperous trading town. Its location makes it an ideal stop for trading caravans for most of the year, except during winter when heavy snowfall often makes the mountains hard to cross.

The majority of buildings in Winterhold are dwarven in design: Low in ceiling, thoroughly robust, and made almost exclusively of stone. Here and there are banners and flags that feature the city's coat of arms: Two crossed pickaxes on a snowflake. Centuries ago, the outskirts of Winterhold was protected by a wall, but the town has since expanded and spilt onto the slopes that lead down to vast hillside forests.

Most times of the day, the main streets of Winterhold are filled with merchants plying their goods, traders looking for interesting deals, and artisans offering their craft or services. The sound of lively bartering, hammers ringing on anvils, and horses' hooves on cobblestones echo between the walls of the cave that shelter the town. See the appendix for more information about Winterhold.

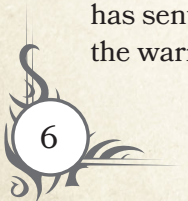
## A MOST URGENT MEETING

The adventure begins when the characters gather at the Department of Archaeology, Mining, and History in the Halls of Lore, Winterhold's academy. It is just after midday, and a light, freezing rain falls gently over Winterhold. The chilly autumn weather has sent many citizens and visitors scurrying for the warmth of taverns and inns.

At the Halls of Lore, the characters are shown to a small but comfortable meeting room deep in the academy's maze of narrow corridors, studies, tiny private chambers, and numerous storage rooms. A fire burns bright behind the glass-and-iron lattice of a fireplace screen in Dwarvish design. The hearth is squeezed in between cabinets and bookshelves laden with tomes and bell jars that contain various curious objects. Maps and scrolls cover most of a large oval table in the middle of the room. The air smells heavily of dust and old books.

Edna greets the adventurers when they arrive. She is an elderly female dwarf with long white hair, who wears a well-tailored light robe in fine cotton decorated with discreet patterns. She is joined by Bjorn Amberclan, a middle-aged dwarf with a cheerful face and copper-coloured hair around a balding patch. Bjorn is an experienced archaeologist who is tasked with translating a long-lost journal that is believed to contain information critical to Winterhold's defences.

The other members of the Five are seated around the table: Osil Twoaxe, captain of the Guard; Kethra Dyer, Master of Trade; Tharl Merryheart, diplomat and Negotiator of Foreign Affairs; and Ulfrik Jormund, head of Magic and Sorcery. See the appendix for more information about Bjorn Amberclan and the members of the Five.





## THE QUEST

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“Welcome, all of you, and thank you for attending this meeting,” Edna says in a clear voice and looks at all the characters. “I will get straight to the point. Two weeks ago, our department launched an archaeology expedition, and they have not returned in time. We fear they are in trouble. The expedition aimed to explore some unmapped tunnels far below Winterhold. Its purpose was to search for the legendary orb called the Pledge. The orb is said to have tremendous powers, although we know little else.”

“I told you it might be dangerous business going after that artefact,” Ulfrik mutters.

Edna quiets him with a stern glance before she continues. “The expedition is not risk-free since it will take the explorers into uncharted depths and close to the drow territory. However, we decided that the risk was worth it.”

“We chose Ian von Boulderstock to lead the expedition,” Ulfrik says, “as he is one of our most skilled archaeologists, and we sent a group of armed guards to protect the expedition. Ian has led numerous expeditions before, and his experience made him a good choice.”

Bjorn coughs in his fist. “Sorry,” he says. “Must have caught a cold.”

“However,” Tharl says with a frown, “the expedition has not returned. Running a day or two late would be expected, seeing as they planned to investigate tunnels we have never fully studied. But as the days have gone past, our concern has increased.”

“Tharl is right,” Edna says gravely. “It has now been a full week since we expected them back. Ian von Boulderstock is never late. In short, we are worried that something has happened to Ian and his team of archaeologists.”





The other members of the Five murmur and share concerned glances. Kethra looks especially drawn and gazes forlornly at the maps on the table.

Osil, the captain of the guard, steps forward and clears his throat. He is stocky and stern looking, with thick dark hair and a vicious scar across his face. If the characters have played *Troubles in Winterhold*, Osil begins by thanking them for their help in the previous adventure before he continues.

“Under normal circumstances,” Osil says, “I would have sent some of my guards to find the lost expedition, but the dark elves raid our villages relentlessly, and I need all of my men here. It is as if the drow know exactly where we are not patrolling. They must be spying on us day and night. To make things worse, the kidnappings have increased. More and more people have disappeared. We do not know if the dark elves are simply gathering slaves, or if they have a darker plan.”

“I have heard that children and elderly people have been taken too. Is that correct?” Tharl asks.

“I am afraid so. Over three dozen children have been kidnapped so far, and many parents keep their children indoors at all times,” Osil says.

Edna turns to Kethra. “Are you keeping Edwin at home?” she asks kindly. “Is that why we have not seen him in class here at the academy? I thought you said he was ill?”

“I just want to keep him safe.” Kethra looks distant as she gazes at the maps on the table.

“I understand.” Edna makes a pained face in sympathy with Kethra.

Osil turns to the characters. “With the increased kidnappings, I cannot spare a single guard to search for an expedition of wayward academics,” he says and his shoulders sink.

“The expedition could be merely delayed, but we fear something has happened to them,” Edna continues. “As Osil cannot send any of his guards to look for them, I wonder if you could search for the lost expedition? I can offer you 300 gp if you bring them back.”

## THE MOLE

The reason for Kethra’s exhausted appearance, and her son Edwin’s absence from classes at the Halls of Lore, is very different from the explanation she offers. In truth, her seven-year-old son and only child has been kidnapped by drow raiders.

The dark elves now threaten to cut the boy’s throat unless Kethra supplies them with information about the whereabouts and schedules of Winterhold’s guards. Kethra has agreed to the demands, but she is tormented by guilt and fear for her son’s life.

If the characters accept the quest, they are given a map of the route that the underground expedition intended to travel. Edna asks the characters to set out as soon as possible. If the characters need to buy equipment or supplies, several shops in town cater to such needs. See the appendix for more information about items available in Winterhold.





## CHAPTER 2: THE SEARCH BEGINS

**A**t the inner part of the oldest districts in Winterhold is a pair of tall, wide gates, reinforced with a robust portcullis and guarded day as well as night. These gates open to a huge network of old mining tunnels, channels, and ducts that reach deep beneath the mountain.

Hundreds of years ago, this site was the heart of Winterhold's mining trade and was filled with activity around the clock. After the mining industry declined following increased conflicts with the drow and the dwindling of profitable ore, the area fell into disuse. The tunnels are too numerous and run too deep to be collapsed safely, so the Five decided to board them up, fortify the wall around the inner city, and have guards posted here at all times.

After the guards have raised the portcullis, the robust gates slowly grind open to reveal a large cavern. The ground is level but rough and strewn with rubble. Rotten gangplanks and stretches of rusted rail run between mounds of crushed rock and granite signposts covered with faded Dwarvish script. Compact darkness fills the space outside the range of the guards' lanterns. Somehow, the shadows seem to muffle the echoes of the town behind you.

The guards wish the characters good luck before they close the gates and lower the portcullis behind them.

### SETTING OUT

Crossing the debris-strewn area requires care in order not to slip or stumble. As the characters walk towards the far end of the cavern, the sound of the town fades to a faint, drawn-out ambient whisper, while the echoes of the characters' footsteps appear to become louder.

After a few minutes, the characters reach an opening partially covered by layers of planks.

Many of the planks on one side have been wrenched away and piled on the ground to permit passage. The angle of the tunnel leads sharply down behind the opening. According to the map, this is where the expedition started.

### DESCENDING INTO THE DARK

The old mining tunnels beneath Winterhold are roughly 15 feet in diameter. Robust beams in reinforced oak prop up the ceiling every 30 feet. Granite plaques with runes and symbols have been fitted at many crossings and forks (characters who can read Dwarvish can tell that these plaques feature directions for the miners who once worked here).

In some places, simple decorations have been sculpted from the bedrock, perhaps by the miners: Intertwined decorative patterns, reliefs of weapons or tools, and symbols of dwarven deities. All tunnels are completely dark unless otherwise noted.

As the characters proceed past the entrance, the air grows noticeably colder. They come across mining carts, rails, and buckets, all broken and rusted. The tunnel soon branches off in a multitude of other passages, but the map enables the characters to stay on track.

### THE OLD MINES

After three hours, the characters enter the older part of the mines. The beams that support the ceiling are increasingly cracked and deteriorated. There are still signs of past mining, such as old tools and carts, but they are often so withered and fragmented they could be mistaken for crumbling rock.

Water drips from the walls and has pooled into shallow puddles in many places. A character who succeeds on a DC 15 Intelligence check realizes that these tunnels have been completely flooded at some point. Dwarves have advantage on this check.

The characters also find traces of more violent activity. In some places, rusty dwarven crossbow bolts and sinister-looking darts and arrows are embedded in the crumbling support beams. In another corridor, seven skeletons lie scattered on the ground. All skeletons carry near-disintegrated



metal and leather armour and show signs of brutal trauma. Characters who succeed on a DC 10 Wis (Medicine) check can tell that the skeletons belonged to three dwarves and four dark elves.

If the characters search the skeletons and the ground near them, they find three copper coins of an odd design. These coins are very old and will fetch 15 sp each from a collector.

## FINDING THE EXPEDITION

The search for the lost expedition takes the characters into new underground territory that may be dangerous. Roll 1d6 and check the table below to find out what creatures or obstacles they encounter on their way.

1. The party finds a tiny underground stream with perfectly drinkable water.
2. A random member of the group startles a **giant spider**, which does not appreciate the disturbance and immediately attacks the offending character.
3. One random member of the group accidentally steps into a patch of brown mould. See the core rulebooks for more information about this underground hazard.
4. The characters come across a pair of **giant fire beetles**. The characters can try to sneak past the beetles if they choose to, with a successful DC12 Dex (Stealth) check.
5. A large stalactite suddenly falls from the ceiling and crashes down onto the group. All characters must make a DC14 Dexterity saving throw or suffer 4d10 bludgeoning damage. Those who succeed on the saving throw receive half damage. If the characters are spread out, the stalactite lands on the group or character located first in the tunnel.
6. When the party passes a section with deep cracks in the wall, an **ochre jelly** slithers out of a fissure and lunges at a random character.

## WHO FLIES THERE?

Around one hour after the above encounter, the characters enter a long tunnel and spot a tiny, winged creature levitating in mid-air some 15 feet away. The creature resembles a very small elf and glows faintly yellow. It is armed with a sword the size of a teaspoon, and an equally small bow. The creature's tawny, bright red hair matches its minute cloak and boots.

At the very moment the characters see the flying creature (before they have time to roll for Initiative), it speaks to them:

“Aha!” a faint but high-pitched voice says. “You thought you could sneak up on Berry, you dreadful, horrendous, utterly despicable drow? Come here and I will cut you down, you vicious—” The creature frowns. “Hold on a moment. You are not dark elves! Who are you, and what are you doing here?”

The creature is a male **sprite** called Berry Wrinkledove. He is currently lost after taking a wrong turn many days ago in search of a portal that will take him back to the Feywild.

Berry is gallant and proud, but many hours of being stuck among dark elves, whose evil is abhorrent to all sprites, has left him a bit tetchy. However, he is well-meaning and happy to linger for a bit of conversation.

He flew past the research expedition about a week ago but never had the opportunity to talk to its members. He does not know what became of the expedition after that, but he has seen plenty of dark elves in the area.

After roughly ten minutes, Berry bids the characters farewell and flies on. If the characters offer directions back to Winterhold, he is thankful.

## SUCCESS AT LAST

After another three hours of walking (or longer if the characters decide to rest on the way) through the abandoned mines and natural caves, they find the lost expedition.



## CHAPTER 3: SCHOLARS IN A DIRE STRAIT

**T**he characters enter a large, circular and high-ceilinged cave. The cold, humid air is mingled with the smell of damp stone and a foul scent similar to the odour of a tomb. An opening in the far end leads into another tunnel. In the middle of the cave is a clear area surrounded with stalagmites that rise from the ground like sharp, slick thorns twice the characters' height. Water drips down from long stalactites in the ceiling.

Two dead dwarves in chain mail lie on the ground in the middle of the clearing, their bodies peppered with black arrows. If the characters move closer, they see the bodies of three more dwarves on the ground. All of them have suffered gruesome wounds. Blood is smeared on several of the stalagmites and runs along the ground from the bodies like strands in a black spiderweb.

As the characters take in the scene, they hear someone call out:

“Who are you?” rasps a hoarse voice from behind a makeshift wall of crates in a small cave. “Are you friends or foes? We are armed and will shoot unless you identify yourself!”

The person who talks is Stenur, a scholar and one of the members of the expedition. He and three other surviving archaeologists are hiding in a tiny cave behind an improvised protective wall created from wooden boxes, barrels, and ruined sacks, riddled with dozens of slim black arrows.

The rest of the group consists of:

- Aldin, a shivering male halfling who has a grey robe and dark curly hair. He has a big bruise on the side of his head.
- Sylvis, a tall, stone-faced female human dressed in a formerly elegant green robe stained with blood.
- An unconscious dwarf called Regar, who has a short untidy grey beard and a blood-soaked makeshift bandage along his arm





and shoulder, lies on a makeshift pallet. His skin is marble-white, and he seems to be more dead than alive.

After the characters assure Stenur there are no dark elves nearby, he calms down a little. His freckled face and fair hair are streaked with dried blood, and his hands tremble badly.

“It started so well,” Stenur says and wraps his arms around himself. “We arrived to the site in the ancient caved-in tunnel indicated on Ian’s old map and began working. We excavated the area for several days and found the legendary orb, the Pledge, a magical artefact made of dark glass that we have been searching for. Cheering and toasting our success, we imagined a triumphant return to the Halls of Lore. We packed up and left, but on the way back, everything went wrong.”

### SUDDEN, SILENT DEATH

Stenur explains that when the expedition entered this cave, a hail of poisoned arrows flew out of the darkness and immediately killed two of the dwarves. On the heels of the arrows came over a dozen drow, armed with swords that were dripping with poison.

The remaining guards put up a valiant fight, which bought the rest of the members of the expedition enough time to hole up in a small cave. However, the guards were no match for the vicious dark elves, who cut them down without comment or mercy and advanced on the cave where the rest of the academics were hiding.

Fortunately, Stenur and the other researchers carried heavy crossbows and were able to force the drow into cover. But the dark elves had the archaeologists pinned: The small cave has no other exits. This stalemate lasted for three days; then the drow received reinforcements in the form of two exceptionally dangerous individuals.



“One of them was a mage,” Sylvis says, her voice hushed but hard. “His voice had us spellbound, and his words warped and twisted our minds.”

“The other dark elf was so skilled with her blade she was a horror to behold,” Aldin the halfling adds quietly and shudders. “Like a dancer, she dodged and evaded every bolt we fired at her. The drow burst into our shelter and they took Ian and the artefact. There was nothing we could do to stop them.”

“Please, you have to save Ian and bring back the artefact if you can,” Stenur begs the characters. “Ian might be a little pompous, but he is Regar’s brother, and no one deserves getting tortured to death by dark elves. We will be able to hold this position while you hunt the drow. I do not know how long Regar will last, so please hurry back and help us get to Winterhold.”

### A LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

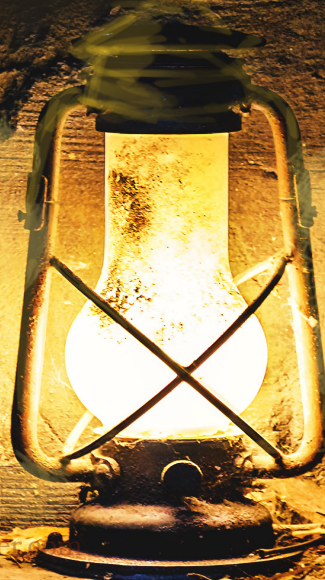
The situation is grim, but not all is lost: Sylvis studies Undercommon at the Halls of Lore and was able to grasp some of what the drow said.

According to what Sylvis heard, the dark elves said they would continue through the tunnel until it split in two. The mage would then lead some of the dark elves down the tunnel on the right, while the expert warrior would bring the remaining party through the tunnel on the left. One of the groups would take Ian, and the other would bring the artefact. Unfortunately, Sylvis does not know which of the groups took Ian and which took the orb.

Sylvis also overheard the dark elves talk about the whereabouts of the Winterhold guards, as if they knew everything about Osil’s schedule. What is more, the dark elves mentioned something about prisoners who will be sacrificed soon, but Sylvis did not catch the rest of the sentence.

### TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE

Stenur says that the unconscious academic Regar might be the dark elves’ next victim: The dwarf took a wound to his arm, and the drow’s lethal poison spreads through his body. Stenur has some skill in medicine and believes Regar is unlikely to survive for longer than a day. (Stenur is correct: Regar will perish in 12 hours unless he is treated in Winterhold or the poison is neutralized by other means.)





## CHAPTER 4: THE EVIL DARK ELVES DO

**T**he tunnel on the far side of the cave leads into a long, steep corridor that opens to a vast, almost circular cave about 80 feet across. Its high ceiling is covered with long, narrow stalactites.

Over a dozen table-sized metal cages, all of which look intact, have been arranged in a row along the curved wall. Three large metal trapdoors are fitted into the ground near the cages. On the opposite side of the cave are two openings to other tunnels: One on the left, and one on the right. Most of the ground is covered with great mounds of what looks like trash, rubble, and discarded clothes.

As soon as you enter this cave, the faint smell of rot and decay you noticed earlier grows into a vile stench. When you take a second look at the heaps of refuse on the ground, the reason for the foul reek is obvious: What at a glance looked like debris and litter are hundreds upon hundreds of skeletons and bodies in various stages of decomposition.

The corpses are strewn haphazardly around the space. Almost all belong to dwarves, humans, halflings, elves, and other humanoids, but there are also a few dead giant lizards among the bodies. Likewise, most cages contain dead humanoids, some rotted to near nothingness while others seem recently deceased.

However, one cage appears to hold a single dark elf, who lies curled up on the ground.

This area is one of many spaces that the nearby drow use for dumping half-eaten slaves who have perished from brutal treatment and hard toil. Every week, the dark elves bring the remains of slaves that their lizards and spiders haven't finished eating, and the corpses are flung unceremoniously onto the present cadavers.

The iron trapdoors in front of the cages are openings that lead down to oubliettes, cramped prison cells that can be accessed only from above.

From time to time, disobedient slaves and dark elves found guilty of serious crimes are taken here and imprisoned in the cages along with the dead as punishment. This practice has been very effective for the drow to maintain order in their ranks.

The piles of skeletons and dead bodies hide nothing of value; whatever valuable possessions they may have owned have already been confiscated by the dark elves.

The doors to the oubliettes can be opened easily from the outside by a simple latch. Inside each oubliette are more skeletons scattered amidst ankle-deep water. Likewise, the iron cages contain only corpses and nothing of value – except for the cage that holds a single dark elf.

If the characters approach this cage, the elf shudders and shifts on the rags on which she lies, but she remains asleep or unconscious. The drow is clad in black leather armour but has no weapon by her side. Her snow-white hair is caked with dirt, her skin is bruised, and a long nasty cut runs along her forehead.

### AN ENEMY OF THE ENEMY

The imprisoned dark elf is Jezzara Tezen'aar, an experienced warrior who once took part in regular raids against poorly protected caravans in the area around Buckbridge. During one ill-fated night-time raid, she was badly wounded and could not keep up with the rest of the raiders. In the usual merciless way of dark elves, the other drow left her behind.

Jezzara was found unconscious by a human hunter from Buckbridge, but he could not bring himself to slay the female dark elf. Instead, the hunter took her in, tended to her wounds, and nurtured her back to health. As Jezzara slowly regained her strength, the two fell in love despite their differences.

Knowing that she would never be accepted by the people in Buckbridge, Jezzara eventually returned to the underground realm of the drow, only to realize that she was pregnant. She hid her pregnancy for as long as possible while she considered her options. In all likelihood, the drow would kill both her and her child as soon



as they realised that the father was not a dark elf. Therefore, she gave birth to the child in secrecy and left her infant daughter in the woods near the cabin where her lover lived before she returned once more to the darkness.

Unbeknownst to Jezzara, the father of her child had already passed away. The child was instead discovered by Finel Autumnleaf, who was the best friend of Jezzara's lover. Finel vaguely guessed the origin of the baby, but since he and his wife could not have children, they adopted her. They named the baby Jillian and raised her as their own beloved daughter.

Jezzara's life took a turn for the worse a few days ago when she found out about an important and unusually sadistic ritual that is being prepared for the next dark moon. Refusing to take part in this cruelty, the dark elves threw her into one of the cages in the grotesque cave.

If the characters walk closer to the cage, read the following section out loud:

The dark elf opens her eyes wearily. After a moment, her eyes widen and her expression changes to surprise. She looks between you all and shows her hands to demonstrate that they are empty.

"Please hear me out before you decide my fate," she says cautiously in strongly accented Common. "My name is Jezzara. I know there is great hatred between you and my people, and you have no reason to trust me, but I mean you no harm. I am locked in this cage because I have disowned my kin."

Jezzara pauses before she continues, "The war they wage on the surface is not only for the sake of survival. They are planning to carry out a gruesome ritual with massive sacrifices to please the Spider Queen. I refuse to be part of it."

### HAVE WE MET BEFORE?

Characters who have played any of the adventures in the *Hunter's Full Moon* trilogy or the adventure *Troubles in Winterhold* will find Jezzara vaguely familiar. The character with the highest passive perception will realize that there is a clear resemblance between Jezzara and Jillian Autumnleaf, a young dusky half-elven woman from Buckbridge whom the characters have met or seen previously.

For the characters who have played the *Hunter's Full Moon* trilogy, the characters may also remember that Jillian's biological mother is a dark elf.

If the characters mention the resemblance and tell Jezzara that Jillian is alive and doing well, Jezzara is overjoyed as she has had no knowledge of what became of her daughter.

She gives the characters a ring in the shape of fine braided silver bands and tells them the ring belonged to Jillian's biological father. Jezzara asks the characters to give the ring to Jillian if they should meet her again.

If she learns that Jillian is alive and she manages to escape the cage, Jezzara will one day leave the underground world and try to meet her daughter in Buckwild.



## RETURNING FAVOURS

Jezzara asks the characters to set her free. She is willing to share any information that might help the characters even before they try to open the cage. She knows that the ritual will take place at the next black moon, which occurs in less than a week. She can also tell the characters that the location is a venue known as the Gloomheart, a heavily guarded site reserved for especially important rituals.

Additionally, she has overheard that the drow High Priestess Shade Drez'Lyn seeks a powerful artefact that she plans to use for a secret goal. The high priestess has increased the kidnappings to use the people for the upcoming ritual and as slaves to dig for the artefact, but she has also had some of her scouts spy on the archaeologist expedition.

## JEZZARA'S PRISON

The cage is locked with a solid but simple padlock that has 50 HP and Resistance to piercing and slashing damage. To pick the lock, a character must succeed on a DC 12 Dex (Thieves' tools) check.

If the characters let Jezzara out of the cage, she gives them her dirk, which has been handed down through her family for generations, by way of thanks. She managed to keep the dirk hidden in her sleeve after she was taken prisoner and her other weapons were confiscated.

"Take this weapon as a token of my thankfulness," Jezzara says quietly. "It has served me well for many years. I hope its blade will taste the flesh of those who I once called my people. You need all the help you can get, because you face a formidable enemy. The leader of the drow in my former hometown is the High Priestess Shade Drez'Lyn. Her bloodlust and cunning have already made her a living legend, and she takes great pleasure in torturing her opponents in new, innovative ways."

The dirk is a magical weapon called Izabel's Dirk and belonged to Jezzara's great-grandmother. See chapter 9 for more information about this item.

## JEZZARA TEZEN'AAR

Jezzara is a female drow **assassin** (CN). She is independent and strong-willed, with dark skin and spiky, short-cropped white hair. Her many years of taking part in raids on surface settlements have made her an expert fighter. Currently imprisoned by her own people, she longs to carve out a life for herself underground and in solitude, far from the malicious society she once was part of.

**Trait:** When I put my mind to a task, nothing can stop me.

**Ideal: Independence.** I am my own master and no longer bound to the vile rules of my kin. (Chaotic)

**Bond:** I would walk over countless bodies to protect my daughter.

**Flaw:** The evil teachings of the drow are difficult to shake off and sometimes colour my thoughts. When I fight, I struggle to show any mercy towards my enemies.

## THE TUNNEL (NOT) TAKEN

As described above, there are two tunnels that lead out of the cavern, and Sylvis heard that the party of dark elves would split up. The characters now need to decide which tunnel to take. Because tracking is exceedingly difficult in the wet, rocky tunnels, the characters must succeed on a DC 25 Wis (Survival) check to figure out which way Ian was taken.

## OPTIONAL: SEARCHING BOTH TUNNELS

At the discretion of the DM, the characters can return later to search the passage that they do not choose to enter first. However, the DM may wish to remind the characters about the archaeologist Regar, who is poisoned and in urgent need of medical help in Winterhold (unless the characters have managed to cure him).



# CHAPTER 5: THE LEFT TUNNEL

**T**his long winding tunnel was the main route for transporting ore. It features an old railway once used for moving loaded mining carts between the surface and the deepest parts of the mine. Most such carts in other parts of the mine are falling apart with age, but these particular carts are used regularly by the drow to transport prisoners and stolen goods to different levels of the underground.

## A CARTFUL OF CALAMITY

The tunnel has tall, smooth walls, but the ground is full of marks and gouges, as if it has seen especially heavy use. After a few minutes, the tunnel ends abruptly in a wide and sharply sloping corridor. Halfway down the corridor is the beginning of a narrow railway track that continues into an opening in the far wall. A large empty mining cart is parked at the start of the rail. The cart looks surprisingly intact.

Just when the characters enter the tunnel, they see another cart filled with dark-clad drow roll down the railway and into the tunnel ahead. With a quick rattle, the dark elves are gone, leaving behind only the echoes of a mocking laugh. A loud trundling sounds from the tunnel beyond as their cart picks up speed.

The drow travel at 60 feet per round. While it is possible to run after them, characters who succeed on a DC 8 Intelligence check correctly suspect that the dark elves' cart travels faster than normal running speed. However, the characters can use the remaining cart to chase after the drow.

## THE NEED FOR SPEED

The carts are normally moved uphill using manual labour and are fitted with brakes. However, if the characters climb into the cart and release the brake, the cart quickly gains speed and shoots off into the dark tunnel.

Seconds later, the characters whizz down a winding, pitch-black tunnel. The wind rips through the characters' hair, tugs at their clothes, and makes their eyes water. All unprotected flames are quickly extinguished.

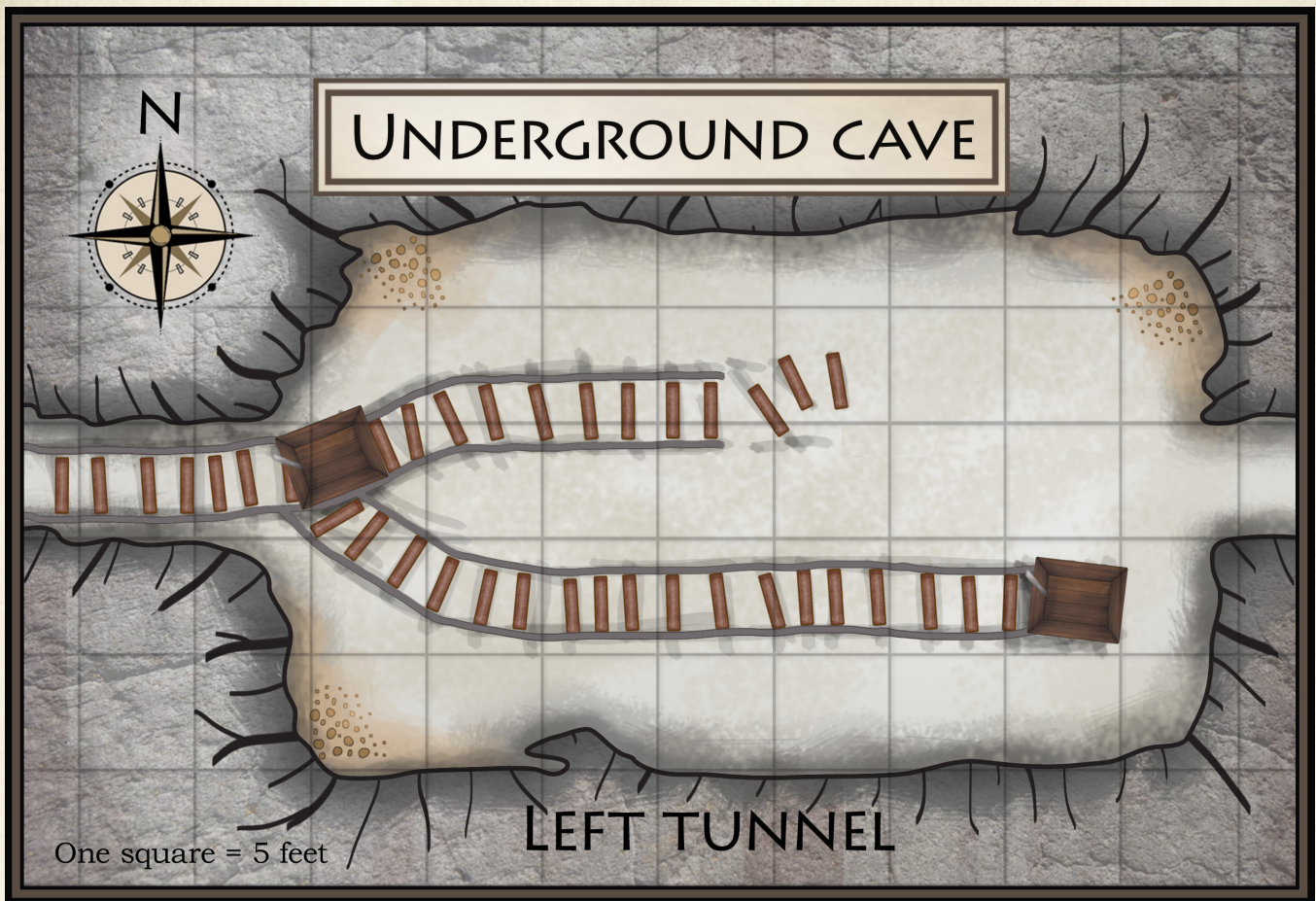
If the characters set off after the dark elves immediately, the cart with the drow can be glimpsed from time to time farther down the track.

The brake enables those in the cart to slow down in curves to prevent being derailed. At forks in the railway, the characters can lean to one side to force the cart one way or the other. However, doing so requires good timing, great reflexes, and very steady nerves.

Have one of the characters make a DC 12 Dexterity check, then consult the list below to see what happens. If the characters are helping one another steer the cart and time their actions, the character has advantage on the check.

- On a natural 20, the cart takes the curves on two wheels, picks up speed, and momentarily closes the distance to the dark elves to 30 feet. There is enough time for the characters who are not handling the brake to make one ranged attack against the drow if they wish. See below for details on these drow.
- On a result of 17 or more, the cart gains slightly on the drow. This gives characters advantage on initiative rolls made at the end of the ride.
- On a success, the cart stays on the track.
- On a failure, the cart remains on the rail but slows down. This results in the characters having disadvantage on initiative rolls made at the end of the ride.
- On a natural 1, a miscalculated move in a curve causes the cart to slam into a wall. All characters in the cart take 3d6 bludgeoning damage.





The cave where the mining carts finally stop

### RAIDERS DEAD AHEAD

After 1d4 minutes, the cart enters a long level cavern and comes to a sharp, grinding halt. The cart that held the drow is stationary just in front of the characters' cart, but the dark elves and their prisoner are located 40 feet from the cart. In the wall beyond the dark elves is a large door. As soon as the characters arrive in their cart, the dark elves spin to face their opponents and ready their hand crossbows.

Their group consists of four regular **drow**, and one dark elf who is the group's leader and has the statistics of a **veteran**. They fight ruthlessly, intelligently, and make the best possible use of shadows and cover. The leader prioritises to target obvious spellcasters. All fight to the death.

### TREASURE

The leader has on her person a green gem worth 300 gp, a Potion of Healing, a vial of Drow Poison, and a black leather pouch that contains an orb made from dark glass. This orb is The Pledge, the artefact that was stolen from the archaeology expedition and which the drow High Priestess Shade Drez'Lyn searches for.

The leader also carries a letter written in Undercommon. If any of the characters can read Undercommon, or if they bring the letter back to Sylvis, they learn that its contents describe an upcoming unholy ritual of huge importance to the dark elves.

According to the letter, the ritual will take place at the next black moon, and over one hundred prisoners will be sacrificed. The letter contains further information, but the writing is ornate and cryptic – perhaps an expert at the Halls of Lore will be able to glean more.



# CHAPTER 6: THE RIGHT TUNNEL

**T**his tunnel was created by a huge burrowing monstrosity many centuries ago, which is the cause of its relatively circular shape and unusually smooth walls. Large quantities of water leak into the tunnel in many places from a nearby underground stream. This has resulted in a perfect foundation for several kinds of underground plants and mushrooms that make the surfaces slimy and slippery.

## SLIPPING, SKIDDING, SLIDING

Large patches of strange fungi and algae cover much of the walls in this tunnel. Water trickles from the ceiling and collects in small puddles or seep down into narrow cracks. While the stench of corpses fades, it is replaced by a foul, musky smell that saturates the cool air, as if the characters were breathing through a wet, dirty rug.

After a while, the tunnel tilts sharply downwards, which makes staying on one's feet a major challenge. All characters who attempt to continue forward must make a DC 15 Dexterity check or slip.

Consult the list below for possible outcomes of the check.

- On a natural roll of 20, the character keeps their balance. As a reaction, they can also offer another character within 5 feet a hand, which removes the need for the other character to make a dexterity check, or negates a failed check.
- On a result of 19 or more, the character keeps their balance. As a reaction, they can also attempt to keep a fellow character within 5 feet from falling. This gives the selected character advantage on the check.
- On a success, the character (just about) stays on their feet.
- On a failure, the character slips, falls over, and slides down the tunnel all the way to the ledge at its end (see below). The character also takes 1d4 bludgeoning damage from a rough bump in the tunnel.

- On a natural roll of 1, the character slips and slides down the tunnel at breakneck speed to the ledge at its end (see below). The character also takes 2d6 bludgeoning damage from bouncing off the rock walls during the undignified descent.

## OUT OF THE ASHES, INTO THE VOID

At the end of the tunnel is an opening into an enormous fissure. On the other side is an opening into another tunnel. It is too far down to make out the ground below. Likewise, the ceiling is lost in shadows high above.

A wide, simple hanging bridge links the two tunnels, but the bridge has seen better times: Its ropes are frayed, the deck is broken in many places, and the remaining planks are coated with fungus. Huge veils of mist float through the air and swirl around the bridge.

The drow and their prisoner stand halfway across the unstable bridge. It seems the members of the group are arguing; one of them, a dark elf in an elegant robe in deep purple and black, is shouting. Even characters who do not speak Undercommon understand that he is cursing.

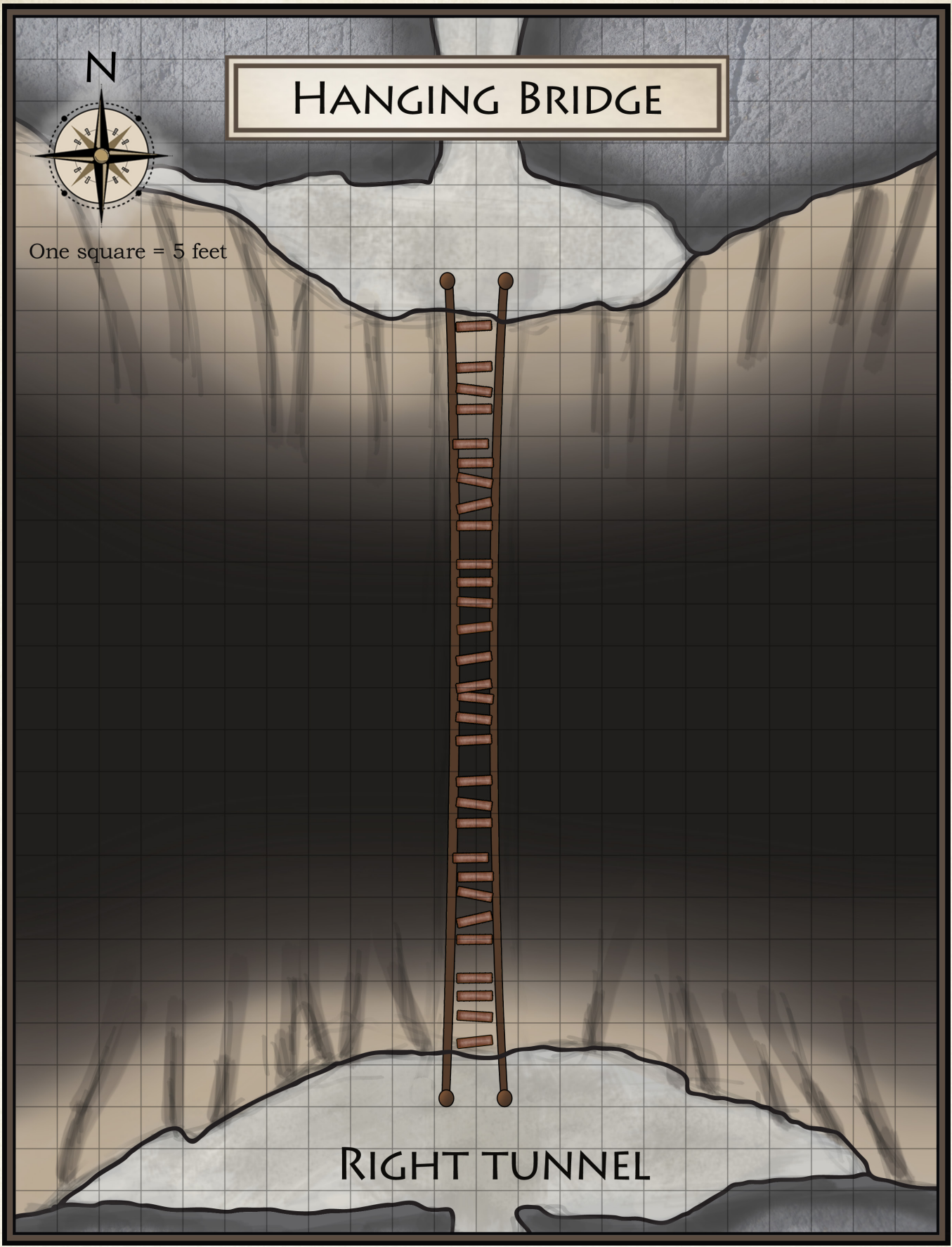
The dark elves are having serious problems with Ian von Boulderstock, who does his best to slow his captors down as he suspects that a quick (or not-so-quick) death awaits him when his abductors reach their destination. Even though the dark elves use all sorts of horrific threats and try to beat him into compliance, Ian takes every opportunity to stumble or fall over.

If the drow spot the characters, they immediately open fire with spells and hand crossbows.

## BATTLE ON A BRIDGE

The group of dark elves is made up of two **drow** and one **drow enchanter**. The dark elves fight ruthlessly and intelligently and make the best possible use of their magical abilities. The drow enchanter prioritizes enemies who look dangerous in hand-to-hand combat, but prefers to stand behind the other drow to avoid direct combat. All dark elves fight to the death.





# HANGING BRIDGE



One square = 5 feet



## RIGHT TUNNEL

The hanging bridge where the characters catch up with the draw





Melee combat on the 5-foot-wide bridge is difficult. Its deck is exceptionally slippery and counts as Difficult terrain. It is also easy to accidentally step into a gap between two decks, or a deck may simply give way. If the characters consider destroying the bridge to send the drow plummeting into the abyss, they realise it is highly likely that Ian will perish too.

At the start of every round, all who are present on the bridge, including the drow, must make a DC 14 Dexterity check. On a success, the characters can move and take actions as normal (although the bridge is still Difficult terrain). Those who fail must roll 1d10 and consult this table:

**1-3:** The character's foot is stuck between two planks. This leaves the character Restrained for one round.

**4-6:** The character slips and falls down on all fours onto the deck. As a result, the character is Prone.

**7-9:** The bridge wobbles hard and forces the character to hold on for dear life, which leaves them Incapacitated for one round.

**10:** The deck beneath the character cracks in half. The character must immediately make a DC 10 Dexterity or Strength check. On a success, the character manages to grab a rope but must spend the remainder of the round pulling themselves back up. However, on a fail, the character plummets down 300 feet to the bottom of the chasm and takes 20d6 bludgeoning damage.

### VICTORY

If the characters defeat the dark elves, Ian von Boulderstock curses profusely as he slowly gets off the bridge. Once he is on stable ground, he thanks the characters wholeheartedly. If Ian has met the characters in a previous adventure, he nods in recognition and says he is surprised but pleased to see them here.

Upon learning that the other drow got away with the legendary orb, Ian grows so livid he is on the verge of a nervous breakdown. After a few minutes, he regains his composure and instructs the characters to show him the way to the expedition as quickly as possible.

### TREASURE

The drow enchanter has in his pockets 3 green gems worth 100 gp each, a Potion of Healing, and a packet of Dust of Disappearance.

The mage also carries a letter written in Undercommon. If any of the characters can read Undercommon, or if they bring the letter back to Sylvis, they learn that its contents describe an upcoming unholy ritual of huge importance to the dark elves. According to the letter, the ritual will take place at the next black moon, and over 100 prisoners will be sacrificed. The letter contains further information, but the writing is ornate and cryptic – perhaps an expert at the Halls of Lore will be able to glean more.



# CHAPTER 7: HOMEBOUND

**T**he characters make their way back to the other survivors of the expedition without problems. However, Regar, the archaeologist who was poisoned when the dark elves attacked the expedition, is faring worse: His skin is pallid and sweat pours down his face. If Regar is given the Potion of Healing that was carried by the drow, his condition improves, but he remains unconscious for 1d6 hours.

“We must get to Winterhold as soon as possible,” Ian von Boulderstock insists. “And we must find a way to stop the horrible ritual that the dark elves are preparing. Can you escort me and the rest of the expedition back to the town? The drow are masters of ambush, and we have already lost many lives.”

## A TERROR IN THE TUNNEL

Soon after the characters and the surviving archaeologists begin their journey back to Winterhold, they arrive at a long, wide tunnel that they travelled through earlier. This time, however, thirty feet of the previously empty tunnel is filled with foul-smelling, extremely sticky webs. Characters who succeed on a DC 12 Wis (Perception) check see inside the webs the silhouette of a large, dark bulbous shape.

Characters who try to pass through the webs must succeed on a DC 12 Strength check every 10 feet or become Restrained. A creature that is Restrained in this way takes 1d4 slashing damage and 1d4 acid damage at the start of each turn as the webs' sharp, acidic strands begin to contract. The creature can escape on a successful DC 14 Strength check. A 5-foot cube of web that is exposed to fire burns away in 1 round and deals 3d4 fire damage to creatures that start their turn in the fire.

The shape inside the webs is a **strangleweb spider**. See chapter 10 for more information about this new monster.

If the strangleweb spider notices the characters, it waits for an ideal moment to burst out of the webbing and attack them with its web spray. It immediately becomes aware of any creature that interferes with its webs.

Ian and the rest of the archaeologists will not participate in active fighting; instead, they will stand around the unconscious Regar and protect him from harm. The strangleweb spider decides to deal with the archaeologists last, and therefore does not attack them unless everyone else in the party is dead, unconscious, or has fled.

If the characters defeat the strangleweb spider, they make their way back to Winterhold without any further problems.



## CHAPTER 8: BACK IN WINTERHOLD

**W**hen the characters come back to Winterhold after escorting the surviving archaeologists, they are greeted by the guards who clearly are surprised to see the group alive.

The guards immediately let them through the gates and urge the adventurers to find Osil and Edna at the Halls of Lore. If the guards learn about their comrades who died defending the expedition, their faces turn sombre and their eyes grow hard. One of the guards mutters a vow of revenge under her breath.

Upon arriving at the Halls of Lore, the characters are met by all of the members of the Five except for Kethra, who is not present at this time. Bjorn, with a stack of papers in his arms and a quill tucked behind his ear, is also present.

Osil is outraged when Sylvis tells him that it seems the dark elves know everything about the guards' schedules. Both Tharl and Ulfrik appear to be taken aback by this news and exchange startled looks, while Edna asks if Sylvis is sure about what she has heard. Fuming and cursing, Osil swears that he will find out how the dark elves get hold of this information.

### WRETCHED WRITING

If the characters inform Edna about the letter they found on the dark elves, Edna fetches an expert on Undercommon from a nearby study to have the letter translated together with Sylvis. A few minutes later, Edna addresses the others in the room.

“The drow high priestess’s evil knows no limits,” Edna says slowly. “It appears they plan to sacrifice over a hundred prisoners in a ritual to honour their vile goddess. The ritual will take place in an underground venue called the Gloomheart.”

“That name is mentioned in the journal we are translating,” Bjorn says and looks up. “When we are finished with the full translation, we might be able to tell where to find it.”

“If so, we could have a chance to stop the ritual.” Edna nods in thought. “We must double our efforts with translating the text!”

After this, Osil turns to the characters.

“We have much to plan and many to grieve,” Osil says. “Once again, Winterhold’s guards have died at the hands of the dark elves. We have paid a dear price.”

“But if it were not for you, we would have lost much more,” Edna says. “You have brought back both our dear colleagues and vital information. It is my pleasure to reward you for your bravery.”

Edna hands each character a wooden box that contains 50 platinum coins. The large octagonal coins are stamped with Winterhold’s coat of arms.





## LOST AND FOUND

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Later the same day, the characters are informed that when the guards were sent to retrieve the slain members of the lost expedition, they found one of the following:

- **The Pledge.** If the characters saved Ian von Boulderstock, the guards discovered the stolen artefact among the belongings of a number of dark elves who had been torn apart by some unidentified monstrosity.
- **Ian von Boulderstock.** If the characters found the orb, the guards return with a very alive and extremely irritated Ian von Boulderstock. The researcher managed to slip away from his captors and found his way back to where the expedition was attacked, but not without plenty of scrapes, bruises, and cuts.

**Optional:** If the DM allowed the characters to explore both tunnels and return to Winterhold with both Ian and the orb, the guards return with the bodies of their fallen comrades and the unfortunate scholars who did not survive.

### AFTERMATH

The characters receive a group award of 12,000 experience points. Alternatively, this point serves as a milestone, and the characters gain one level.

~ THE END ~

The adventures continue in  
*The Spider Queen's Ritual*, part 3 of the  
*Secrets of the Drow* trilogy.





## CHAPTER 9: NEW MAGIC ITEMS

### IZABEL'S DIRK +2

*Magical weapon (dagger), rare*

You gain a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon. Its blade is magically blackened and reflects little light, which provides an additional +1 bonus to hit on surprise attacks. In addition, the dagger is perfectly soundless: It makes no sound if thrown or dropped.

This slim, elegant dirk is one of a pair that was commissioned by the Drow master assassin Izabel Nebexxar. The pommel is shaped like the body of a spider, and the black leather sheath is inlaid with adamantine.





# CHAPTER 10: NEW MONSTERS

## DROW ENCHANTER

The drow enchanter is a dark elf who is able to enthrall and beguile their opponents even in the heat of ongoing combat. They can turn a fight around in a flash by mesmerising their opponents or making them fight amongst themselves.

Most drow enchanters know a variety of offensive spells, but they always attempt to sway the hearts of their enemies first unless they are cornered. They often wear lavish outfits, take great care of their physical appearance, and have a very sophisticated language.

In difference to regular wizards, all drow enchanters have trained at the Glamour Manor, a secretive school for wizards and bards in the drow city of Undrak Laur. Several of the mages who have studied here have gone on to become wealthy advisors or high-ranking politicians, which has made the Glamour Manor a goal for many drow who are interested in arcane arts. However, only a select few are admitted to the school every decade. What happens to those who fail the test is not known.

It is said that locked away in the heart of this school is a thick tome, bound in burgundy leather and authored over three thousand years ago by a demon, which details the most profound workings of the soul. The current headmistress, Yasrena Adagon, denies this vigorously and claims that this is nothing but a rumour, if a tantalizing one.

Whichever the case, the governesses who run the school and patrol its vaults are known for being uncannily vigilant. It is also generally agreed that it is pure folly to try to investigate this rumour. This view is reinforced by some tales, usually shared in hushed voices over glasses of wine in drow restaurants, which describe how young dark elves who have broken into the Glamour Manor on a dare have been seen emerging from the school with blank faces and immediately throwing themselves to their deaths into deep chasms.





## DROW ENCHANTER

*Medium humanoid (elf), neutral evil*

**Armor Class** 12 (no armor)

**Hit Points** 34 (8d8)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	15 (+2)	10 (0)	17 (+3)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)

**Saving throws** Int +5, Cha +6

**Skills** Arcana +5, Insight +5, Persuasion +8, Intimidation +6, Stealth +3

**Senses** darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 12

**Languages** Elvish, Common, Undercommon

**Challenge** 6 (2,300 XP)

**Fey Ancestry.** The drow enchanter cannot be put to sleep by magical means.

**Shielded heart.** The drow enchanter cannot be charmed and has advantage on Charisma saving throws.

**Sunlight Sensitivity.** While in sunlight, the drow enchanter has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

**Innate Spellcasting.** The drow enchanter's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 15). The drow enchanter can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *dancing lights, charm person*

1/day each: *darkness, faerie fire, levitate* (self only)

**Spellcasting.** The drow enchanter is a 9th-level spellcaster. Their spellcasting ability is Charisma (save DC 15, +6 to hit with spell attacks). The Drow Enchanter has the following cleric spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *message, shocking grasp, vicious mockery*

1st level (4 slots): *command, bane, hideous laughter, sleep, unseen servant*

2nd level (3 slots): *calm emotions, compulsion, confusion, dominate person*

3rd level (3 slots): *dispel magic, fear*

4th level (2 slots): *compulsion, phantasmal killer*

5th level (1 slot): *dominate person*

## ACTIONS

**Dagger.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 1d4 + 2 slashing damage.

**Wilful words.** The drow enchanter targets up to three humanoids they can see within 20 feet of them. If the targets can hear and understand the drow enchanter, they must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or be magically charmed. A charmed creature views the drow enchanter as a close friend who must be protected at all costs. Every time the drow enchanter or any of its allies harm the target, it can repeat the saving throw. The effect lasts 7 weeks or until the drow enchanter dies, or ends the effect as a bonus action. Even if a target's saving throw is successful, the target is not immune to this effect. The drow enchanter can have a total of seven humanoids charmed at a time.



## STRANGLEWEB SPIDER

The strangleweb spider is a rare type of giant spider bred only in the Blasphemous Burrows, where a group of dark elves tirelessly work on producing a lethal kind of arachnoid to aid the drow in protecting their underground domains. The techniques and rituals used in the breeding of strangleweb spiders are closely guarded, but it is suspected that several unholy enchantments are employed.

The body of a strangleweb spider is unusually bulky and strong, which helps it climb great heights, and its eyes glitter with unsettling

intelligence. They are slower than many other types of spiders, but their cunning and lethal ranged attacks more than make up for their lack of speed.

Strangleweb spiders are particularly prized for their webs, which make them deadly in combat and help making tunnels difficult to cross. Also, strangleweb spiders are far cleverer than a typical beast and are capable of cunning tactics as well as basic speech. As a result, those who are in charge of the defences of drow settlements can instruct strangleweb spiders to secure specific tunnels with great precision.





## STRANGLEWEB SPIDER

*Large monstrosity, lawful evil*

**Armor Class** 13 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 126 (11d12 + 55)

**Speed** 20 ft., climb 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
23 (+6)	11 (0)	21 (+5)	12 (+1)	9 (-1)	4 (-3)

**Saving throws** Dex +5, Con +3, Wis +4

**Skills** Perception +5, Stealth +7

**Senses** Blindsight 10 ft., Darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 10

**Languages** Undercommon

**Challenge** 5 (1,800 XP)

**Spider Climb:** The Strangleweb spider can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

**Woeful Webs:** The webs spun by Strangleweb spiders are sticky, corrosive, smothering, and long-lasting. Any creature that tries to pass through an area filled with the webs must succeed on a DC 12 Strength check every 10 feet or become Restrained. A creature that are Restrained in this way takes 1d4 slashing damage and 1d4 acid damage at the start of each turn. The creature can escape on a successful DC 14 Strength check.

The webs are flammable: A 5-foot cube of web exposed to fire burns away in 1 round and deals 3d4 fire damage to creatures that start their turn in the fire. The webs last seven weeks after they are spun.

## ACTIONS

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 2d8 + 6 piercing damage plus 2d10 poison damage. The target must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking the poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. If the poison damage reduces the target to 0 hit points, the target is stable but poisoned for 1 hour, even after regaining hit points, and is paralyzed while poisoned in this way.

**Web spray:** The Strangleweb spider ejects a mass of webbing in a 20-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, the creature is Restrained.

At the beginning of each new turn, all creatures Restrained by the webbing take 2d4 slashing damage and 2d4 acid damage as the strands in the webbing slowly contract and cut through everything that is trapped in them. A creature Restrained by the Strangleweb spider's webbing can use its action to make a DC 14 Strength check to escape.

The webbing is highly flammable. A 5-foot cube of webbing that is exposed to fire burns away in 1 round, dealing 3d4 fire damage to creatures that start their turn in the fire.



# CHAPTER 11: LEGEND & LORE

## THE THREAT FROM BELOW

The drow who raid Winterhold dwell in an underground town known as Myl Argoth in a huge subterranean cavern. Established over a thousand years ago, the city encompasses seven Houses, each with its own priests, assassins, spies, and soldiers. Each house is governed by a matron mother who constantly looks for windows of opportunity to increase their influence.

### BACKGROUND

Originally, the town was a small settlement that consisted only of members from House Duskryn, which was banished from the general drow society because of its zealous members. While most drow Houses focus on complex politics and internal conflicts, House Duskryn put the Spider Queen before everything else.

Profoundly religious and eager to find new ways to profess their devotion, the members of House Duskryn took every opportunity to prove their faith, which made them unreliable allies as well as unpredictable enemies. This demeanour did not sit well with the other Houses, which eventually joined forces and drove House Duskryn into exile.

### LEADER

At the point when House Duskryn was forced to flee their palaces and seek a new home, the House was led by Drisue Zaulyl. Shrewd, patient, and more devout than any other matron mother, Drisue's faith in the Spider Queen never wavered: She was certain that the spider queen had a grandiose plan for her and her followers. With great care, Drisue sought out a remote, secluded and easily defended location underground, where the drow in her charge could settle and flourish.

The relocation served Drisue and her people well. Far from the prying eyes of other drow, Drisue could discard old religious rites and practises in favour of new, more extreme ceremonies, all personally designed by her. These ceremonies included several rituals that were studiously gruesome and often included many living sacrifices.

## A TIME OF GROWTH

Over the centuries, the settlement grew into a full-fledged and large town, and House Duskryn split into three individual houses. The most prominent of the three Houses was House Druu'zel, which took great pride in its amazingly capable assassins. While the three Houses were fierce rivals and vied for power in the typical fashion of dark elves, they were unified by a great reverence for the Spider Queen. This enabled a (for the drow) high level of co-operation between the Houses.

## TURN OF THE TIDE

Because of the many highly trained warriors, spies, and mages among its forces, the drow expanded quickly. Neighbouring underground areas occupied by duergar clans and various monsters were rapidly annexed. The future of Myl Argoth looked promising. However, this changed when the enterprising dwarves of Winterhold broke into the tunnels.

Many skirmishes followed, but neither side was able to gain the upper hand in the drawn-out conflict. But after years of bitter warring underground, the drow, to their great surprise, were approached by a different group of surface-dwelling dwarves called the Ironshield Clan, which had tried and failed to conquer Winterhold.

Queen Freja, the leader of the Ironshield Clan, was interested in joining forces with the drow to vanquish Winterhold once and for all. Eager to capture the underground tunnels and the valuable ore found there, the drow accepted Queen Freja's offer, but the alliance was short-lived. There was little trust between the two parties from the outset, and a misunderstanding soon escalated to a full-blown conflict between the drow and the Ironshield Clan.

The dark elves, who believed the dwarves were seeking to betray them, collapsed the Ironshield Clan's stronghold and almost wiped out the clan. But the dwarven Queen had prepared counter-measures in secret, and retaliated by flooding most of Myl Argoth.





### BACK INTO THE SHADOWS

Decimated and beaten, the drow were forced to retreat and focus on rebuilding their homes and temples in Myl Argoth. House Druu'zel was held as responsible for the humiliating defeat, and lost its position as the dominant House.

Over time, however, the drow have mustered their strength and began to raid Winterhold and nearby villages. And this time, the days of Winterhold may be numbered – because Shade Drez'Lyn, the current high priestess in Myl Argoth, is preparing a ritual that will enable the dark elves to crush everyone in their path.



# APPENDIX

## NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS: THE FIVE

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### EDNA HELLMUND

Edna is an elderly female dwarven **noble** (LG). She has long snowy hair, blue eyes, and usually dresses in simple but high-quality robes in dark, muted colours. She is an experienced scholar and heads up the Department of Archaeology, Mining and History at the Halls of Lore. In addition, she is presently part of the Five, the leaders of Winterhold. Her family has been resident in Winterhold for many generations, and she knows all the influential members of the town. Edna's small modest house is one of the oldest in Winterhold and located near the Halls of Lore.

**Trait:** Patience is a virtue and the key to great insights. But when patience is not enough, one must act with firmness.

**Ideal:** Everyone has their place in the world. Mine is at the heart of knowledge.

**Bond:** Winterhold's walls may look unbreakable, but the town has been on the brink of disaster before. It needs me to keep its people safe.

**Flaw:** **Lofty.** I disrespect those who refuse to see that one book is worth a hundred swords.

### OSIL TWOAXE

Osil Twoaxe is a middle-aged male dwarf **veteran** (LG). His braided hair and beard are inky black and secured by small wooden clasps. More often than not, his expression is a deep scowl, and his temper runs hot, but he is also generous and laughs easily. He wears battered scale mail, a hefty mace, and a corn blue woollen cloak. As the captain of Winterhold's guards, he is often found near or on the walls, alternatively in the barracks.

**Trait:** The world is too blunt for subtlety and charades. Better to be direct and earnest.

**Ideal:** I spend most of my time moving among the citizens of Winterhold. That way, I am the first to know of all that happens.

**Bond:** The guards of Winterhold are my family. I know their every name and face, and I hold myself responsible for their fate.

**Flaw:** **Impatient.** I cannot stand waiting. Especially when there is nothing else I can do.

### KETHRA DYER

Kethra is a human female **noble** (N) and head of the Dyer family, counted among Winterhold's wealthiest merchants. Kethra is pale, has large green eyes, and keeps her hair in a long tidy braid. She wears well-tailored shirts and waistcoats in distinct colours that match her fine trousers and shoes.

Kethra is usually calm and composed. A lifetime as a merchant has taught her to hide her feelings. Since she is responsible for the wealth of both Winterhold and her family's estate, she values forbearance and loathes haste. However, at present, Kethra's son is held hostage by the dark elves who launch raids against Winterhold. Because of this, she covertly supplies the drow with details about the guard patrols around town.

**Trait:** Many fools rush into situations and come out poor, wretched, or not at all. I take my time to understand all circumstances and conditions. Only then do I act.

**Ideal:** My family's sound actions in the past have made our name, reputation, and hometown prosper. I will continue and strengthen the legacy of the Dyers.

**Bond:** Money and status are important, but they are nothing compared to family. I value my only son more than anything else in life.

**Flaw:** **Fickle.** I sometimes lose myself in lengthy calculations and flare up if I am interrupted.

### THARL MERRYHEART

Tharl is a male gnome **noble** (NG) who has taken up the role as diplomat and Negotiator of Foreign Affairs in Winterhold. He is short for a gnome, with an aristocratic arched nose of which he is quite proud, and he keeps his wavy red hair neatly combed. He usually wears blue heavily decorated jackets, trousers in contrasting colours, and high leather boots of excellent quality.



His role includes dealing with diplomatic issues and security questions with other nearby towns and communities. Given Winterhold's isolated location in the mountains, this means he travels quite a bit and rarely stays for a lengthy time in Winterhold.

**Trait:** There is always a solution to a problem, no matter how tangled or sensitive the issue may be. One needs only patience and a positive outlook to find it.

**Ideal:** I have studied for years to reach this position. My journey has made me see the value of immersing oneself in knowledge.

**Bond:** My connections in Winterhold and other towns are like close friends, and I care for them greatly.

**Flaw: Assumptious.** It happens that I misjudge other people's lack of optimism for dullness or even stupidity.

### ULFRIK JORMUND

Ulfrik is a middle-aged male dwarf and an experienced **mage** (LN). He is tall for a dwarf and sports a neatly trimmed black beard. When out and about, he dresses in long flowing robes, often embroidered with scrollwork and patterns.

Usually squinting at everyone around him, Ulfrik is often (correctly) taken for a nearsighted scholar who has spent most of his life buried in dusty tomes. As the head of Magic and Sorcery in a time when his hometown is under frequent attack, he is deeply concerned with the town's faltering defences.

**Trait:** I endeavour tirelessly to make those who wield tools and weapons see the elegance of magic.

**Ideal:** When in trouble, one should look to libraries, not to violence.

**Bond:** My collection of books is worth more to me than any other material item.

**Flaw: Biased.** I tend to rely on a spell or two as the perfect response to any challenge, and forget about other means to an end.

### BJORN AMBERCLAN

Bjorn Amberclan is a middle-aged male mountain dwarf **commoner** (LG). He is short for a dwarf and has copper-coloured hair around a bald patch. Specialized in archaeology, he is currently in Buckbridge to research the long-gone Ironshield Clan, especially their ancient language.

**Trait:** Fieldwork is all good and well, but the best kind of research is the type that can be done surrounded by books in a comfy inn.

**Ideal:** I am deeply passionate about archaeology and my special research area is ancient runes.

**Bond:** I search for information about the Ironshield Clan that can help protect my hometown of Winterhold.

**Flaw: Relaxed.** I am comfortable to a fault and try hard to avoid both dangers and unnecessary adventures (I loathe outdoor camping).

### THE HISTORY OF WINTERHOLD

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Winterhold is a town of about 3,000 people situated partially inside a gargantuan cave in a mountain. A quarter of the town is located below ground, and another quarter is found inside the mountain behind the old wall, which runs along the mouth of the cave. The remaining half sits outside the mountain and the wall.

#### A TUMULTUOUS PAST

The town traces its origin back almost 1,200 years, when a group of dwarven miners discovered promising veins of ore, especially silver and rare adamantine, deep in the cave and decided to mine the depths of the mountain. There was plenty of ore to be found, but it was also difficult to mine, so when the dwarves realized they would spend considerable time in the area, they drew up plans for how to expand their settlement and turn it into a permanent home. Winterhold was born.

Within a couple of decades, Winterhold was a small but proper mining town that saw frequent visits by traders journeying through the area. The town grew in size and added a permanent palisade as protection against dangerous beasts and raiding orcs.



## THE IRONSHIELD CLAN

Around two centuries later, another dwarven society known as the Ironshield Clan arrived in the region. The clan's queen, Freya Swiftsteel, was an excellent tactician. Under her command, the Ironshield Clan conquered more and more land and expanded their kingdom towards the mountains in which Winterhold is located.

In response, Winterhold bolstered its defences with allies and constructed a stout stone wall, effectively becoming a military outpost. But Winterhold faced more threats: The dark elves who lived under Winterhold did not appreciate how Winterhold's mines intruded on their territory, and made life for the mining dwarves dangerous.

This marked the start of a drawn-out conflict between Winterhold, the drow, and the Ironshield Clan. The future of Winterhold looked particularly grim at one point when the Ironshield Clan and the drow entered a pact designed to crush Winterhold. However, due to a series of misunderstandings and unfortunate events, the dark elves undermined and destroyed the Ironshield Clan's stronghold.

In retaliation, Queen Freja triggered a trap she had prepared in secret and flooded the drow's tunnels, forcing the dark elves to retreat. In a flash, both forces were heavily decimated. Over the following months, the drow pulled back into the shadows while the Ironshield Clan was annihilated in a string of ill-fated battles. At last, Winterhold could breathe out.

A long period of peace ensued, which allowed Winterhold to recover and thrive. Today, Winterhold is a lively trading town, perfectly situated between cities such as Northwind Gate to the north, and villages and hunting outposts in the south, such as Buckbridge. The ore has been depleted, but the town prospers from trading, as merchants from south and north meet here to trade ore and hides for cloth and grain.

Recently, however, the drow have advanced on the town, kidnapping people and stealing livestock as well as equipment.

## GOVERNANCE AND EVERYDAY LIFE

There is no king, queen, or mayor in Winterhold; instead, the town is governed by a group known as the Five. This circle of leaders, usually scholars and military commanders, currently consists of three dwarves, one human, and one gnome. Every ten years, the members of the Five change according to an election in which the most influential merchants, families, and guilds take part.

The population of Winterhold is made up of all kinds of races. However, the town was founded by dwarves, and therefore the architecture is largely dwarven above as well as below ground, and most decorations are in typical dwarven styles. The oldest parts of the town are still owned by various dwarven clans, although some of these areas belong to successful merchants and wealthy families.

## A PURR-PLEXING LOCATION

One remarkable place in Winterhold is Octavia's Tower, an old stone tower that once belonged to the renowned mage Octavia Dragonborn. After she left Winterhold, her old tower has been taken over by generations of very small, but highly intelligent cats.

These feline residents are the result of one of Octavia's mysterious and often debatable experiments. They are approximately half the size of a normal cat. Over time, the cats have established a small empire of sorts in the tower and its immediate surroundings.

Notably, there is not a single rat or mouse to be found in Winterhold, and dogs have long since learnt never to challenge a cat or they might disappear under mysterious circumstances or meet with freak accidents. As the cats possess rare knowledge, it happens that scholars and others visit the tower in hope to glean an insight or two from the cats in exchange for tasty treats, answers, and sometimes specific favours.

Anyone who would like to visit the cats should bring scrolls or potions that enable them to communicate with animals (while clever and organized, the cats cannot speak). Not everyone is allowed inside the tower, but those who gain an audience with the cats are advised to keep their wits about them: The cats are quite clever, and many scholars suspect that the cats might have a secret agenda of their own.



## ALL AN ADVENTURER CAN CARRY

In the traders' quarters, one finds tailors, smithies, bowyers, fletchers, and shops that offer maps and general adventuring gear. There are also armourers, weapon smithies, second-hand book shops, clothiers, bakers, grocery vendors, and chandlers. The town market, located near the bank and the vault, is open on Fridays. There is also an auction hall that opens its doors every afternoon. Those interested in exchanging gems for coin (or vice versa) can make use of the services of Winterhold's bank, where one also can stow away valuable belongings in a vault for a fee of 5 sp per week.

## MEALS AND MORE

As the weather in the mountains is often bitter and unforgiving, many who pass through Winterhold arrive hungry and cold, and therefore there is a wealth of places where one can find hot meals and good lodgings.

The town boasts over thirty inns and taverns, ranging from large establishments with dozens of rooms to simple hole-in-the-wall places with only a few seats.

Three popular establishments are:

- **Wyvern & Hammer**, which serves large portions of rustic food and hearty beverages. This tavern is managed by a retired dragonborn warrior and is particularly popular with blacksmiths, miners, and others who do physically demanding work.
- **The Silver Horn**, a cosy inn with a reputation for its imported wine. Most evenings, its small stage is occupied by a musician or one of the local amateur theatre troupes. This venue is often visited by travelling bards, for example, the much-loved performer Lily Lightfoot, familiar to characters who played any of the adventures in the *Hunter's Full Moon* trilogy.
- **Trader's Arms**, a large and usually busy tavern located near the gates. On most days, merchants fill the inn's single and famously long table here as they negotiate deals or try to expand their contact networks.

## FOR THE FAITHFUL

Locals and visitors who wish to pay homage to their deities of choice can do so at three churches in town. These churches are dedicated to the deity of craft; the deity of guardians and protection; and the deity of trade and wealth.

There are also shrines for the worship of many other good and neutral deities. Many of these shrines are found in places fitting for the deity's domain. For example, the shrine dedicated to the god of writing is located in a discreet corner in the Halls of Lore, while the shrine erected in honour of the goddess of the moon is situated on a rooftop with a clear view of the night sky.

The town's cemetery, known as the Granite Glades, is a series of large halls in which deceased are interred in alcoves. These catacombs can be visited by descending a set of stairs near one of the churches.

## ROOMS FOR RUMINATION

The Halls of Lore and its library, situated in a quiet part of town, is a grand terraced townhouse that has been converted into a meeting place for academics. It was founded over 300 years ago, has around fifty members specialized in different subjects, and attracts scholars from far and away. Found here are a library, a lecture hall, a few meeting rooms, and the private chambers of senior academics. In its basement is a vault where especially valuable or fragile items are kept safe from clumsy apprentice scribes.

There is also a small museum of sorts on the first floor, where curiosities and rare (but not too rare) objects are exhibited to the public for a small entrance fee. The Halls of Lore is dedicated to knowledge, research and academic studies rather than magic, yet wizards sometimes pass through here in search of information about legends and rare items.



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