

TROUBLES IN WINTERHOLD



Plotting dark elves, sudden nightly raids, and missing villagers.
Sharpen your blades. Nock your arrows. Ready your spells.
Are you the heroes Winterhold has been waiting for?

SECRETS OF THE DROW ~ ADVENTURE ONE



TROUBLES IN WINTERHOLD



The isolated town of Winterhold needs your help. Dark elves raid nearby villages, stealing away both people and goods. The town's guards are chanceless – and the attacks get worse every night.

Search the forests and hillsides near Winterhold for signs of drow raiders. Bring back captives and stolen goods. Beware other threats that may lurk in the mountains.

*Sharpen your blades. Nock your arrows. Ready your spells.
Are you the heroes Winterhold have been waiting for?*



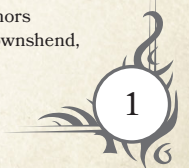
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EASTERN FARRAWAY

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



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OVERVIEW

ABOUT THIS ADVENTURE

Troubles in Winterhold is an adventure for the world's greatest roleplaying game (5e). It is designed for a group of three to five 4th-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 catacombs.

FEATURED CONTENT

- Open adventure with three different quests.
- New unique monster (Fellstalker).
- Legend & Lore: The History of Winterhold.
- Detailed NPCs with background descriptions.
- Original full-colour maps and illustrations.

SYNOPSIS

The characters have escorted Bjorn Amberclan, an archaeologist and scholar, to the town of Winterhold, located high in the mountains. In Winterhold, the characters meet a group known as the Five, the leaders of the town.

Osil Twoaxe, captain of the guard and member of the Five, asks for their help with the dark elves, who have been raiding the outskirts of Winterhold.

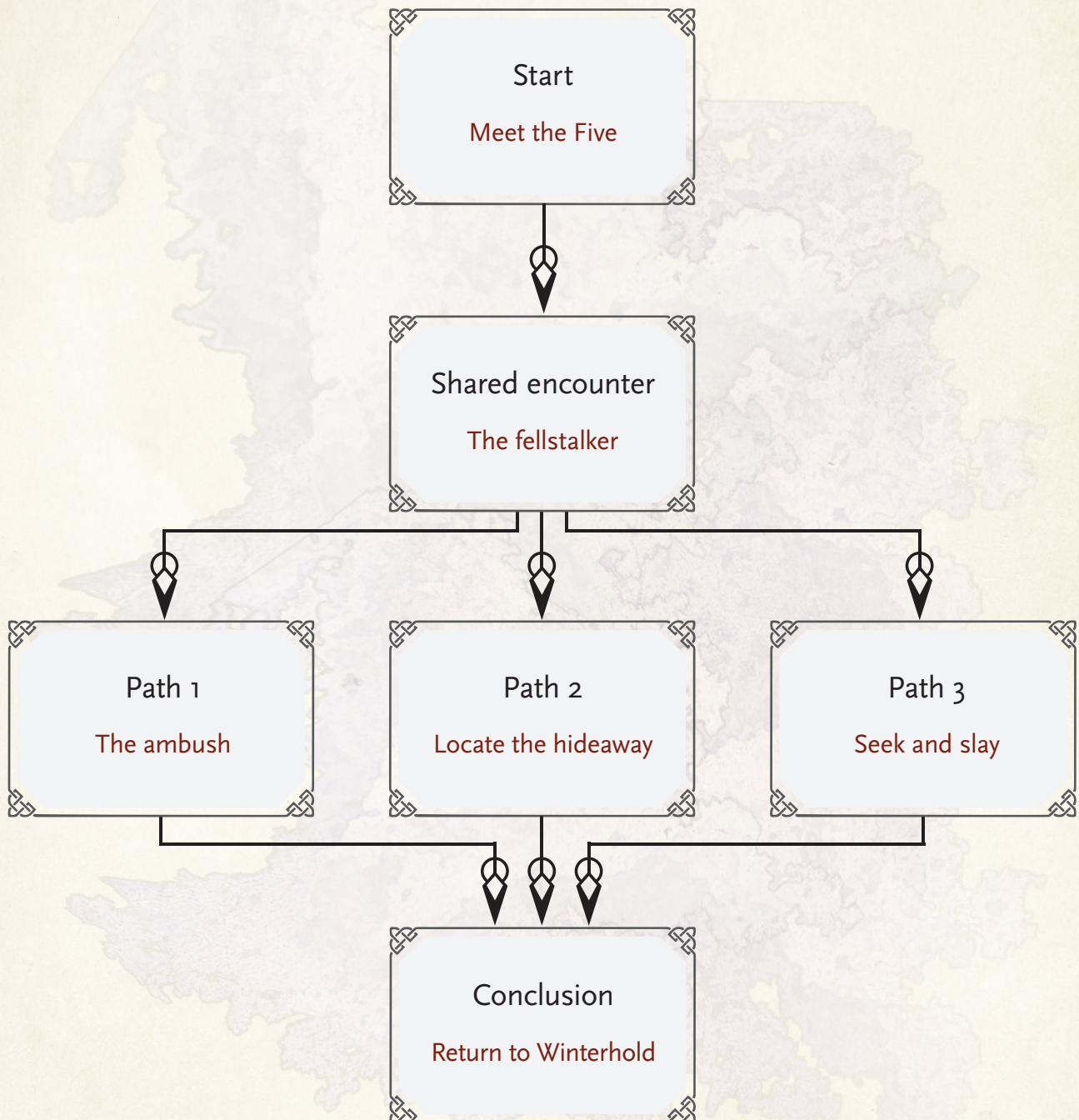
Osil offers the characters three different quests to choose from:

- Ambush a band of dark elves on its way back from a raid on Winterhold.
- Track the drow raiders to a cave in which they store prisoners and stolen goods.
- Slay a drider that terrorises a nearby hamlet.

When the characters have chosen a quest and left Winterhold, they are attacked by a fellstalker (a new type of monster introduced in this adventure) while travelling to the location of their quest. Once the characters have completed their quest and returned to Winterhold, they are rewarded by Osil.



ADVENTURE FLOWCHART





BEFORE THE ADVENTURE BEGINS

HOOKS

This adventure starts when the characters arrive to Winterhold after escorting Bjorn Amberclan to safety.

Bjorn Amberclan is a middle-aged dwarf with a cheerful face and copper-coloured hair around a bald patch. He is travelling from Buckbridge to deliver an ancient dwarven journal that has recently been discovered in the legendary tomb of queen Freja Swiftsteel. Bjorn hopes that the contents of the journal – and its detailed maps – can be of great importance in the ongoing conflict with the drow in Winterhold.

In addition, the following hooks can be used to motivate the characters to travel to Winterhold.

BARBARIANS, FIGHTERS

You met an old veteran friend at an inn who knows Osil, the captain of the guard in Winterhold. Your friend said Winterhold often pays brave adventurers to help protect the town.

BARDS, ROGUES

A rumour is being passed around. According to the rumour, the town of Winterhold is in trouble, and there is an opportunity to make plenty of coin there.

CLERICS, PALADINS, MONKS

Last night you had a dream so intense and vivid it felt real. What you remember most is a booming voice that spoke of a town called Winterhold, and how you are needed there.

DRUIDS, RANGERS

Lately, nature has been full of strange signs. You have wondered if this is connected to how gnolls, bugbears, and other beasts are fleeing the mountains. Perhaps travelling to Winterhold will answer some of your questions?

SORCERERS, WARLOCKS, WIZARDS

A rider arrives at the inn where you are staying in the middle of the night with an anonymous message addressed to you. The hasty scribbled note urges you to travel to Winterhold, but offers no further explanation.

CHAPTER 1: ARRIVING TO WINTERHOLD

The journey to Winterhold has taken a couple of weeks. The weather has become increasingly colder: Every morning, a coating of frost covers grass, fern, and rocks, while thin sheets of ice have formed on puddles of water. Thankfully, winter has yet to arrive, so there is no snowfall.

Every now and then the characters have met other travellers, such as traders escorted by armed guards, and hunters crossing the wilds in search of game. These have shared tales of how multitudes of gnolls, kobolds, orcs, ogres, giants and other monsters are sighted regularly and in surprising numbers. Most believe these creatures have been forced south from the mountains in the north. No one seems to know why, although many more or less believable explanations abound.

When the characters arrive at Winterhold, the following section can be read out loud:

Frozen and weary, you emerge from a dense pine forest. Farther ahead, the road continues across a small frost-covered field and ends at the gates of a large town built partially inside an enormous cave in a towering mountain. Even at this distance, you hear the occasional ring of hammers and the neighing of horses. Lights from candles and lanterns flicker from hundreds of windows among houses made of granite stone. At last, you have reached your destination. Winterhold is near.





AT THE GATES

The gates of Winterhold are set in the middle of a long, curving stone wall. Two low, square guard towers flank the gate. Dozens upon dozens of arrow slits dot the wall and the towers. Guards in chainmail armour and layers of fur walk along the top of the wall. Just above the gate hangs a banner in bright blue and white that features the city's coat of arms: Two crossed pickaxes on a snowflake.

When the characters appear before the gates, they are queried by the polite but stern guards as to what their business in town is.

Once Bjorn has explained to the guards who he is and that he has important business with the council, the gates open immediately.

INSIDE THE CITY

Past the gates, the characters are asked to follow a guard who will take them to a meeting with the Five. She guides the characters through several narrow streets, all of which are hewn straight out of the bedrock and lined with tiny terraced houses and small shops. The mixed smells of burning coal from the smithies, horse manure, and various types of food drift through the cool air.

After a while, the cobbled street leads into the part of town located inside the massive cave, and the echoes of voices and the metal clang of tools in use grow stronger. The characters pass

travelling merchants, local tradesmen, and other residents, most of whom glance at the party and continue on their way. The guard explains over her shoulder that the town is popular with traders and that people here are used to new faces. Still, the eyes of the guards who patrol the street are hard, and there is a tenseness to the general mood. Clearly, something is amiss.

AT THE HALLS OF LORE

The adventurers soon arrive at a narrow three-storey building crowned with a cluster of chimneys and small towers. On each floor are tall, narrow windows, most of which are filled with the warm glow of oil lamps.

A pair of wide stone steps lead up to a pair of large oaken double doors. Next to the doors is a large marble plaque that reads *Halls of Lore*. Underneath the plaque is a smaller sign that reads *No mud or snow on the floors and Open flames strictly forbidden*, after which someone has scribbled *Yes, that includes fire-based spells!*

An old, squinting gnome who staffs the reception admits the characters and takes them through a plain door labelled *Department of Archaeology, Mining and History*. Past this door is a long corridor lined with old, slender doors, large oil paintings, and precariously arranged bookshelves.

CHAPTER 2: THE COUNCIL MEETING

The receptionist shows the characters to a small meeting room furnished with sturdy, time-worn chairs arranged around a large table overflowing with scrolls, documents, and large books.

Osil Twoaxe and five other people sit close together at the table and pore over several maps that are spread out on the wooden table. Osil is a dark-haired, frowning middle-aged male dwarf with a faded scar across one eyebrow. He wears scale mail and a corn blue cloak embroidered with the Winterhold symbol. A large battle-axe rests against the table close to his seat.

When Osil sees Bjorn and the characters, he rises to greet them. Osil introduces the other members of the Five in the room, the council that effectively governs Winterhold.

- **Edna Hellmund**, scholar and head of the Department of Archaeology, Mining and History, is an elderly female dwarf with long white hair. She is dressed in a fine, dark grey robe with long sleeves. She is composed, well-spoken, and a good listener.
- **Tharl Merryheart**, diplomat and Negotiator of Foreign Affairs, is a short, red-haired male gnome with a gently arched nose. He wears a dark blue jacket decorated with a silver pin in the shape of a feather quill, burgundy trousers, and high leather boots.
- **Kethra Dyer**, Master of Trade, is a serene, willowy female human in her late thirties with honey-brown hair in a long braid, and large green eyes. She wears a tailored shirt under an emerald green waistcoat that matches her trousers and court shoes. Kethra is the head of the Dyer family, which includes the town's richest merchants.
- **Ulfrik Jormund**, head of Magic and Sorcery, is a middle-aged male dwarf, with squinting eyes and a neat-trimmed black beard with silver clips. He is unusually tall for a dwarf and wears a long wine-red robe embroidered with scrollwork and spiralling patterns in silver along the hem and sleeves.

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 town's barracks.

Trait: The world is too hard and 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 usually the first to know of all that happens.

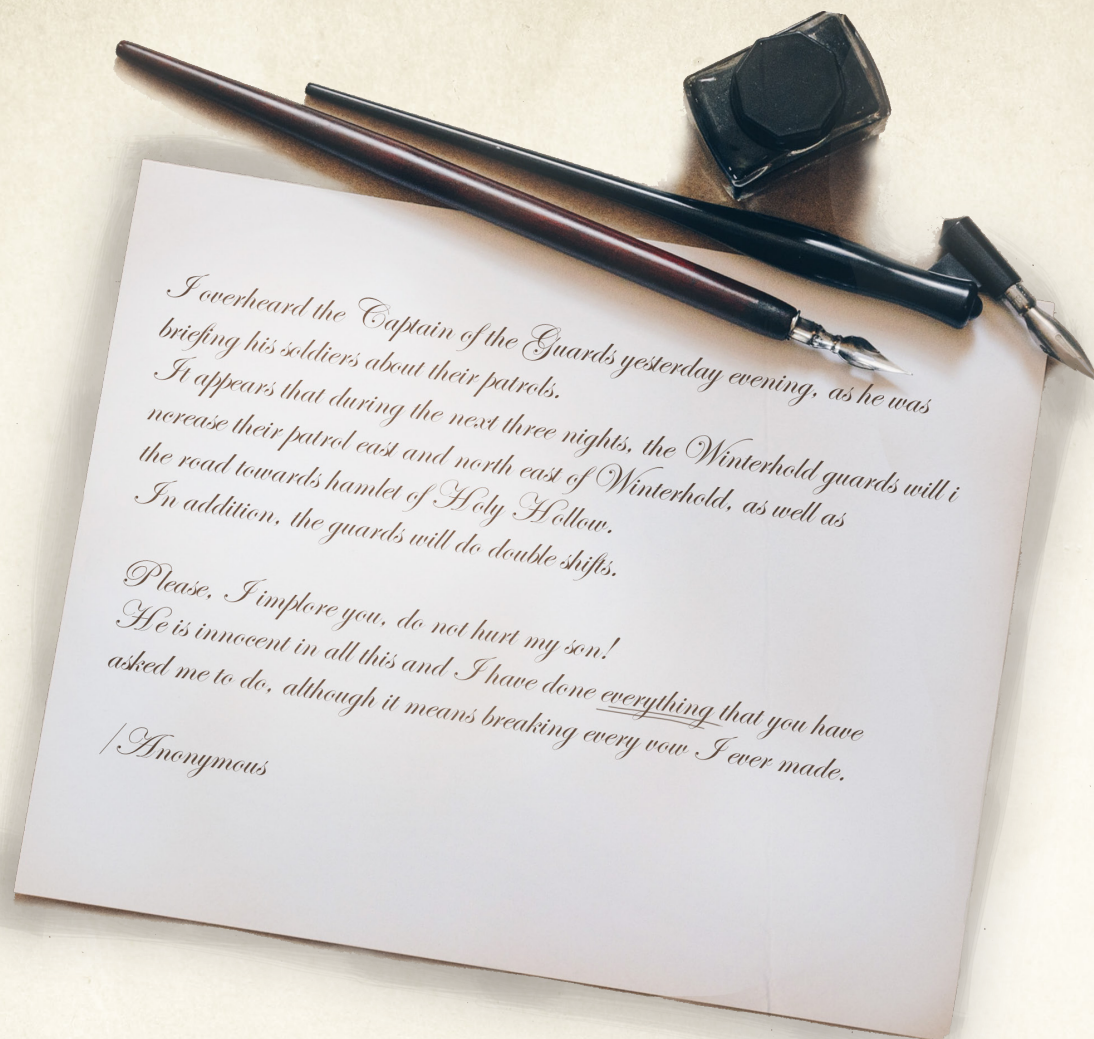
Bond: The guards of Winterhold are my family. I know their every name and face, and I hold myself responsible for their fate.

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

URGENT PROBLEMS

Although the council seem pleased to see Bjorn again, there is still a grim air in the room, and Osil explains to the characters that Winterhold is in dire need of help. Over the last couple of weeks, dark elves have carried out repeated raids almost every night.

Being masters of poison and stealth, the attacks are sudden, deadly, and merciless. The assaults have left some guards dead and many more injured. Both people and property have disappeared, too.



I overheard the Captain of the Guards yesterday evening, as he was briefing his soldiers about their patrols. It appears that during the next three nights, the Winterhold guards will increase their patrol east and north east of Winterhold, as well as the road towards hamlet of Holy Hollow. In addition, the guards will do double shifts.

Please, I implore you, do not hurt my son! He is innocent in all this and I have done everything that you have asked me to do, although it means breaking every vow I ever made.

/Anonymous

"My guards are stretched thin," Osil says, "and our enemies are becoming bolder. The drow seem to know where we are the most vulnerable. It is as if they are aware of all of our plans."

"If so, I wonder where they get the information from." Ulfrik frowns and crosses his arms. "Perhaps some of your guardsmen have been looking at your papers and discussed your plans indiscreetly?"

"Are you questioning my men?" Osil's face turns dark.

"Calm down," Kethra says. "Everyone knows that the dark elves are excellent spies."

"They certainly seem to have eyes everywhere," Osil says grimly and turns to the characters. "As you can tell, we are in a tight spot. I have been informed that you are skilled adventurers, and I'm wondering if you could help us fight the dark elves?"

THE MOLE

The captain is right: there is a mole in the town – more specifically, among the Five!

For several weeks, Kethra has informed the drow of the whereabouts of the guards by leaving notes and maps in secret places outside the town walls. Her actions have let the drow launch ever more effective and destructive raids.

The reason behind this ongoing betrayal is that the drow have taken Kethra's seven-year-old son and only child hostage, and threaten to slit the boy's throat unless Kethra acts as an informant. Torn between loyalty and fear for her son's life, Kethra has agreed to comply.

CHAPTER 3: QUESTS AND HOPES



Osil offers to reward the characters with 100 gp each if they agree to assist him and protect Winterhold. He has three different quests for the characters to choose from:

QUEST 1: THE AMBUSH

The drow have recently raided the outskirts of the town. Osil's guards and a few local rangers have tracked the drow, but they have not been able to find the entrance that the dark elves use to return to their home. However, the guards are quite sure they have identified a road that the dark elves use on their way back.

There will likely be a new raid tonight, so Osil asks the characters to ambush the drow and free any prisoners the dark elves have taken. See chapter 5 for more information about this quest.

QUEST 2: LOCATE THE HIDEAWAY

Osil believes that if the drow could be tracked, their footprints will lead to a hideout where they keep stolen food and property overnight until these can be moved on to the dark elves' home under the cover of darkness. However, Osil does not have men to spare, and besides, most of them are town guards and not experienced rangers. Therefore, they have been unable to track the drow and find the hideaway.

Osil says that if the characters can locate the hideout, he would like them to bring back as much stolen food and property as they can. Alternatively, if the characters rout the drow, Osil can send people from town to return what the drow have stolen. Osil warns the characters that the hideout might be guarded. It is also unlikely that the drow will leave the hideout during the daytime. See chapter 6 for more information about this quest.

QUEST 3: SEEK AND SLAY

A drider that makes its home beneath a ruined church near Winterhold has repeatedly attacked the hamlet of Holy Hollow, located a five-hour walk from town. The Winterhold guards have already tried to slay the creatures, but failed. Osil does not have more guards to spare to take care of

the problem, especially now when the dark elves' raids are getting more and more frequent.

If the characters can slay the drider, they would help the villages in the hamlet tremendously. However, Osil stresses that this is a very dangerous foe. Two nights ago, a group of six guards were sent to the church in an attempt to kill the drider, but they were overpowered just outside the graveyard. One guard was killed and several others were wounded in the fight.

In addition, one of the new recruits, a young man named Rowan Lindal, who was recently engaged, was knocked down by the drider. No one knows if he managed to flee or if he was killed by the drider. Rowan's comrades were forced to escape and had to leave him behind, and both the guards and his fiancée, Jocelynn, are worried about his life. See chapter 7 for more information about this quest.

A LIGHT IN THE DARK

Edna adds that Winterhold might have a better chance to defend itself soon. The journal Bjorn has brought back from Buckbridge once belonged to Queen Freja, an ancient dwarven queen. Freja was the last ruler of the long-gone Ironshield Clan and controlled large areas near these mountains. At one point, she sought to conquer Winterhold but could not find a way to take the city by force.

This led Freja to enter an agreement with the dark elves, but the drow turned on the queen and brought her clan to ruin. However, as a precaution, Freja mapped much of the drow's underground territory in her journal. Edna and the other scholars must now translate the old text as fast as possible.

Bjorn carefully places the battered journal on the table. "I have started to study the journal on my way here," he says. "I think that once we have translated the entire text, we will have an overview of all the tunnels underneath Winterhold."

Kethra turns to Edna and Bjorn. "Do you really think this old journal will help with our defences?" she asks. "What if we are misled?"

"It is worth trying," Osil murmurs. "We need every advantage we can get. My guards cannot search every nook and cranny for dark elves, and their raids are increasing."

"I agree," Edna says. "The drow most certainly have a plan. Their new leader is a High Priestess called Shade Drez'Lyn. We know very little about her, other than that she is cunning, ambitious, and cruel. The dark elves who have died fighting our guards often die whispering her name. I would not be surprised if the kidnappings are part of some terrible scheme of hers."

Edna mentions that the translations may take some time, as several other academics are on an underground archaeology expedition led by scholar and researcher Ian von Boulderstock. The expedition should have returned yesterday, and as Ian dislikes being late, it is surprising that he is still gone. However, those present at the academy will help Bjorn translate the journal until Ian comes back.

Observant characters notice that Bjorn looks slightly disdainful at the mention of Ian. This is because Ian once collaborated closely with Bjorn, but an irreparable rift made them resolute rivals.



CHAPTER 4: DEPARTURE FROM WINTERHOLD

The characters can find most types of general supplies in the town's many shops, at the Friday market, or in the auction hall that opens every afternoon at three o'clock.

A few specific shops that are popular with adventurers include:

- **Galina's Arms and Armour**, where customers can purchase every type of simple and martial weapon, as well as light, medium, and heavy armour.
- **Objects of Use**, a small but well-stocked store that offers a wide range of spell components for all kinds of magicians.
- **Khron's Concoctions**, the town's premier alchemy shop, where adventurers and others can buy healing potions as well as antitoxins.
- **Tink's Travelling Wonderful Bookshop**, managed by Tufrida "Tink" Lamrick. From her remodelled shepherd's hut, Tink sells and buys books as well as scrolls, regular and magical, for prices listed in the rulebooks up to 500 gp. For items worth more than 500 gp (e.g., rare and very rare books and scrolls), Tink can ask around for suitable buyers or specific collectors, which takes 1d4 weeks.

All shops sell their goods at the prices listed in the rulebooks or as determined by the DM.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

Whenever the characters are travelling to or from their destination of choice, roll 1d6 and check the result below.

1. **Bad weather.** The sky darkens and a short hailstorm follows.
2. **The birds.** A person in the group spots a large bird nest on a cliff. This is in fact one of two **hippogriffs** who guard their nest. The nest contains three very large eggs.

3. **An empty house.** The characters walk past a small stone house with a thatched roof. Inside, the furniture has been broken, and there are signs of fighting. The house is abandoned. A successful DC 10 Int (Investigation) check reveals 3 sp coins hidden in a partly broken clay pot in the kitchen.
4. **The trader.** The characters meet a halfling merchant (**commoner**) with a pony and a trap who is lost. She wonders if you know the way to Winterhold. If the characters tell her the way, she rewards them with a glass jar filled with gingerbread biscuits.
5. **Roadside shrine.** The characters walk past a weathered stone shrine dedicated to a deity of earth and mountains. A small candle has been lit on the shrine, but it has burned down. Anyone who touches the shrine receives a +1 bonus on a random ability check for the next hour.
6. **Bark at the moon (night only).** A pack of 1d8 + 2 **wolves** howl to each other in the distance.

THE FIRST ENCOUNTER

Regardless of which quest the characters choose, they are attacked roughly halfway between Winterhold and their destination.

There is a slow shift in the shadows close to where you are walking. A split second later, a dusky feline creature races out of the gloom and charges at your party. Utterly sound-less, it bears down on your group while flashing impossibly long teeth and claws.

The creature is a **fellstalker**. See chapter 10 for more information about these monsters.

CHAPTER 5: THE AMBUSH

After the raids that the drow carry out at the outskirts of Winterhold and its nearby villages and hamlets, they transport their unfortunate prisoners and stolen property along narrow, half-forgotten mountain paths during the deepest night. The guards of Winterhold have realised that several of these paths converge at one specific location before they split again.

A BRIDGE MARKS THE SPOT

The location is a short stretch of rarely used road, located around four hours from town, that runs across an ancient stone bridge over a rapid stream.

The area offers several places ideal for hiding near the road, such as a dense copse of birch trees and a group of low hills covered with heath. It is also possible to hide underneath the bridge itself. Each of these three spots provides the characters with half cover and a +2 bonus on Stealth checks.

A character who examines the streamside under the bridge and succeeds on a DC 10 Wis (Perception) check finds a small, shabby and faintly foul-smelling leather sack half-hidden underneath a small mound of rocks. This sack contains 127 cp, 18 sp, 3 gp, five pink gems (worth 1 gp each), a pair of large golden earrings

(worth 5 gp each), and a handful of shiny but worthless stones. The sack was hidden here by a troll that lived under the bridge a long time ago, although there is nothing that stops the characters from expecting the troll to return at any moment.

ENTER NIGHT

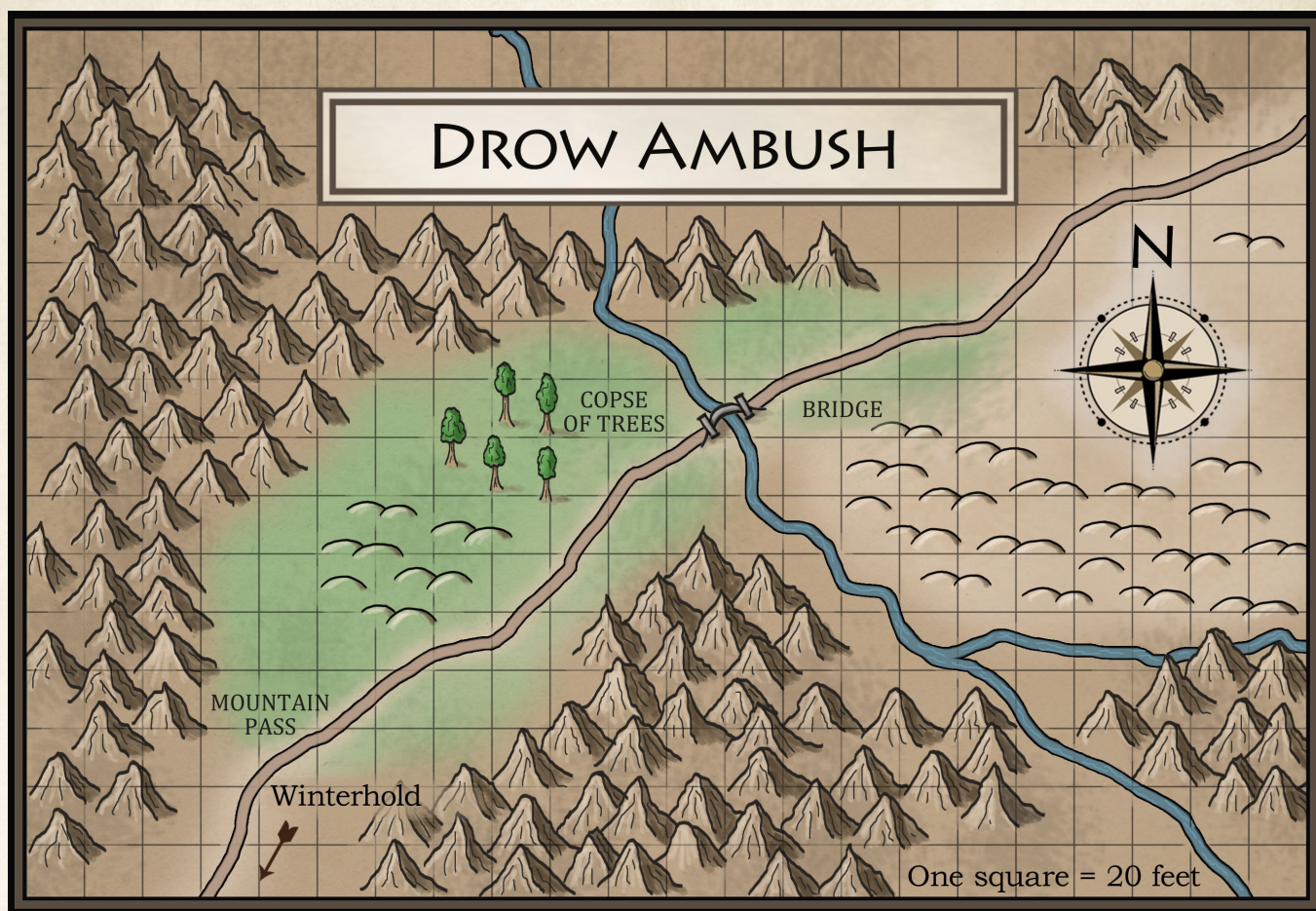
After nightfall, the area is lightly obscured and lit only by the weak gleam of a waning moon, sometimes hidden by clouds drifting across the starry sky. Leaves and dry grass rustle in a light western wind. The characters can see their breath in the frigid air. Occasionally, an owl hoots in the distance.

THE ENEMY NEARS

The drow arrive 1 hour + 1d100 minutes after midnight. The band of dark elves moves in two separate groups.

The first group consists of two **drow**, who act as scouts and move 100 feet ahead of the second group. The second group is made up of two **drow** and one drow leader, who has the statistics of a **veteran** but uses a greatsword +1. They travel together with prisoners: three shackled, bleeding, and quietly sobbing peasant **commoners**. All dark elves wear black clothes and cloaks and are armed with short swords and hand crossbows.





The location of the ambush

The drow are actively scouting for signs of trouble. For this reason, they use active skill checks rather than Passive perception as they keep an eye on their surroundings.

Once the fight begins, the leader orders the other drow to attack, and then primarily targets characters who look like spellcasters or use ranged attacks. The drow fight intelligently, use ranged attacks whenever possible, and make the best possible use of cover and shadows. They fight to the death and do not hesitate to use their prisoners for protection.

ACTS OF DESPERATION

The last drow standing will grab one of the prisoners, use them for cover, and threaten to kill the hostage unless the characters turn around and walk away. In return, the drow promises to let the prisoner live. This drow will have 3/4 cover and uses a poisoned dagger. The hostage has 3 HP and will not fight.

“Turn back slowly, or I will kill her,” the dark elf hisses in common and presses a dagger against the peasant’s exposed neck.

The peasant’s eyes are wide with fear. “Go away!” she pleads to the characters. “I don’t want to die. I have four children to take care of. Please, just leave!”

TREASURE

The leader of the drow carries a small silk pouch that contains 3 gp, 14 sp, 9 cp, and two small red gems (worth 100 gp each). She also carries a greatsword +1, with a crossguard in curved white bone, a broad double-edged blade, and a handle wound with coarse red leather.

If the DM allows the characters to undertake more than one of the quests in this adventure, this sword is found only once.

CHAPTER 6: LOCATE THE HIDEAWAY

The reason for the nightly raids carried out by the drow is manifold. The primary motive is to capture slaves, who are put to work in the dark elves' cities. Some of the unfortunate ones face an even worse fate and are sacrificed in grisly rituals in the honour the Spider Queen, the drow's main deity. In addition, the dark elves also steal food and general goods, as their caves are not ideal for farming, and the drow find it far easier to pillage and rob rather than work in smithies and mills.

Since the drow cannot transport all their plunder directly to their homes during a single night, they use several smaller and secluded caves for temporary storage. The drow stay in these caves while the sun is out and leave again after nightfall. They focus on bringing back prisoners first, and come back later for food, goods, and other loot.

SEARCHING HIGH AND HIGHER

The location where Osil suggests that the characters should search for tracks is a heavily forested area, filled with spruces and pine trees and flanked by cliffs that rise sharply out of the greenery.

The characters will always find the tracks, but the effect of a DC 15 Wis (Survival) check determines how quickly they do so.

- A successful check allows the characters to find the tracks in 3d10 minutes without any incidents.
- A failed check means the characters spend 1d2 hours searching before they find the tracks. During this time, one random character steps on a **poisonous snake**, which shows its disapproval by biting at the character's foot.
- A natural 1 on the check means the characters still find the tracks, but only after 4 hours and after disturbing a gigantic wasps' nest, which forces the characters to fend off two **swarms of wasps**.

After following the tracks for 4d6 minutes, the characters arrive at the foot of a large cliff. The entrance to the cave is naturally difficult to find, and the drow have disguised it further by adding branches and leaves, but the tracks mean the characters know where to look, so they quickly spot where to enter the cave.

INSIDE THE HIDEOUT


Past the narrow opening is a natural, 10-foot-wide tunnel with damp, uneven stone walls. The ceiling varies between 20 and 25 feet and is filled with patches of moss. Twigs, wet leaves, and mud cover the ground. The air smells sharply of wet dirt and food, as if you were standing in a musty larder.

TUNNEL TRAP

The drow have arranged a trap in the tunnel 25 feet from the entrance. A thin, expertly disguised wooden panel, 10 feet long and as wide as the tunnel, has been hidden under the muck on the ground and connected by wires to a large net suspended from the ceiling. A brass bell hangs next to the net.

If anyone steps upon the platform or so much as touches it, the net drops down and the bell rings, which alerts the drow in the nearby guard cave. The guards immediately come out to investigate.

The characters must succeed on a DC 12 Wis (Perception) check to notice the platform or the net. A successful DC 15 Dex (Thieves' tools) check allows a character to sever the wire and retie it without triggering the trap. If this check is attempted without thieves' tools, the check is made with disadvantage. A failed check results in the trap being triggered.



Any character who attempts to jump over the platform must succeed on a DC 12 Str (Athletics) or Dex (Acrobatics) check because of the slippery floor, or land on the platform and trigger the trap.

The net covers an area of 10 by 10 feet. Every creature in this area is trapped under the net and Restrained. Trapped creatures that fail a DC 10 Strength saving throw are also pulled down and left Prone. A trapped creature can use an action to make a DC 10 Strength check to escape or free another creature within its reach.

The net has AC 12 and 24 HP. Anyone who deals 5 slashing damage to the net destroys a 5-foot-square section and frees one creature trapped underneath that part of the net.

GUARD CAVE

Two male and four female **drow** are present in this room. At night, half of them relax on bedrolls while the rest sit around a makeshift table and discuss plans and rumours. During the daytime, only two of the dark elves are awake and wear armour. At the far end of the cave is a locked wooden chest that can be picked with a successful DC 16 Dex (Thieves' tools) check.

Leaning against a wall is also a greatsword +1, with a crossguard in curved white bone, a broad double-edged blade, and a handle wound with coarse red leather. If the DM allows the characters to undertake more than one of the quests in this adventure, this sword is found only once.

STORAGE ROOM

This room contains the following goods and items:


- Five saddlebags with various types of tools.
- Three short swords, three daggers, two maces and one hand axe, wrapped in cloth and secured with leather strings.
- Nine bottles of Scarlet Crest, a fine red wine.
- Two wooden crates with fresh apples.
- Three small barrels filled with salted meat, grain and pork.

DROW HIDEAWAY



STORAGE

MAP LEGEND

 TRAP

One square = 5 feet

DROW
GUARD ROOM

CAVE SYSTEM

ENTRANCE

The dark elves' hideaway

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CHAPTER 7: SEEK AND SLAY

Near the hamlet Holy Hollow, located some five hours east of Winterhold, are the ruins of an ancient church known as the Cedar Hill Sanctum. It was constructed almost a thousand years ago in honour of a god of birth and renewal, but around two hundred years ago, a rampaging chimera slew the priests and destroyed most of the church.

More recently, a drider has made its home in the catacombs under the ruins. The drider was cast out by its own kin after a clash over territory. Later still, the drider lost an arm in a fight with Winterhold guards.

The drider only leaves its lair after dark to search for food. It is a miserable, thoroughly malicious creature that takes no pleasure in its existence and lives only to make others suffer.

A HARROWED HAMLET

Holy Hollow is a cluster of a dozen cottages and outbuildings, surrounded by a low wooden fence. The inhabitants are wary of outsiders and usher their children inside when they see the characters. However, if the characters say they are hunting the drider, the villagers introduce the characters to Faran Woodhaven, the hamlet's elder.

Faran shakes the characters' hands respectfully.

"You are hunting a terrible creature." Faran shudders as he glances at the forest at the edge of the hamlet. "We stay away from the area around the ruins, but the monster comes out to hunt during the night. More than once, it has killed people from our community. Winterhold sent a group of guards to kill the drider, but it was too dangerous for them. They managed to wound it, although I heard that the drider slew one of the guards, and that a young man still is missing."

Faran is quiet for a moment. "I hope you will have better luck with killing the foe."

Faran offers to arrange hot soup and good ale for the characters in the village before they leave, and wishes them good luck on their hunt.

EXAMINING THE RUINS

The roof of the church has long since disintegrated down to a row of withering stone arches that once propped up the ceiling. This has left the church exposed to centuries of hard winds and bitter winters, which have erased much of the interior. Its wooden gates rotted away centuries ago. To one side of the church is a small partially ruined graveyard. Around the church is a sparse forest with wind-beaten trees.

A thick layer of dirt and dead leaves covers most of the cracked floor tiles inside the ruins. The marble altar is broken in half and lies near the wall opposite the entrance. In one corner stands a large rusty candlestick holder. Another corner is occupied by a stone statue that portrays a robed humanoid and is so weather-beaten its features have been almost completely erased.

Near the entrance, a narrow stone staircase leads up to a small platform under a cracked dome at the top of a small tower, where the resident priests used to kneel in prayer as the sun rose. Close to the eastern wall is an opening to a staircase that leads sharply down.

Anyone who searches the area around Cedar Hill Sanctum and succeeds on a DC 18 Int (Investigation) finds part of the remains of one of the fallen priests. Among the remains is a fine chain in gleaming gold with a small medallion that features the symbol of Lathander. The chain is beautifully made and is worth 10 gp.

WHAT CRAWLS IN THE CATACOMBS

The stairs lead down to a cool, hushed corridor with a 30-foot-high ceiling. The corridor ends in a mound of rock and rubble where the ceiling has come down and blocks further passage. It is eerily quiet except for the sound of dripping water and the whistling of the wind. A thick stench of rot and decay fills the space, as if the shadows hid decomposing, maggoty carcasses.

On each side of the corridor are three doorways, all framed with faded decorations carved into the stone. Each doorway opens to a tomb in which a plain but well-made stone sarcophagus rests in the middle of the floor. In some of the walls are alcoves that hold skeletal remains and fragments of textiles.

A MANY-LEGGED MENACE

The **dridr** makes its lair in one of the tombs (see the map). During the day, it is likely to be asleep while hanging upside down from the ceiling in a corner, so checks made to sneak up on the creature are made with advantage.

As the drider is disabled, it cannot fight with any type of bow, but it has six daggers that it uses for ranged attacks. Its preferred strategy is to climb the ceiling (or, if attacked outdoors, a tree or any higher ground) and assault its opponents with throwing knives. Unless the drider is surprised, it casts *Darkness* and attacks the following turn. The drider fights to its death.

If the characters manage to slay the drider, its final words (in Undercommon) are:

“Darkness at last,” the drider hisses. “Thank you for releasing me from this torment you call life.” It lets out a final sigh and grows still.

The drider’s lair contains the badly mauled, half-eaten body of a young man in a Winterhold guard uniform, as well as a mound of human and animal bones, and spoiled food. On his left ring finger, the dead guard has a plain silver band (worth 2 sp), which is engraved with *Rowan and Daisy for all eternity*.

Underneath the grisly mound are 171 gp, 342 sp, and 188 cp. Found here is also a greatsword +1, with a crossguard in curved white bone, a broad double-edged blade, and a handle wound with coarse red leather. If the DM allows the characters to undertake more than one of the quests in this adventure, this sword is found only once.

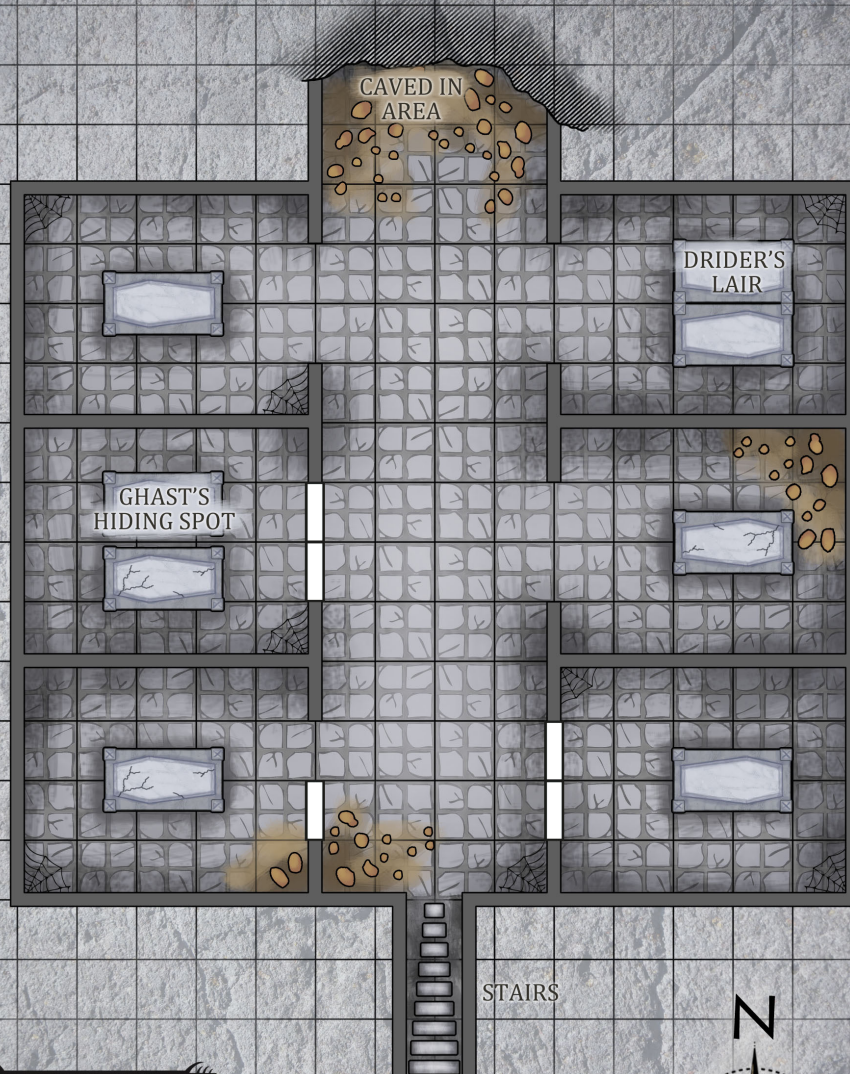
ANOTHER UNEXPECTED GUEST

If the characters decide to search the rest of the catacombs, they come face-to-face with a **ghast** in one of the tombs:

At the far end of the tomb, a tall, ungainly humanoid creature whips around and stares at you with milky-white eyes. Its long snake-like tongue flicks over rows of yellowish fangs as the creature hisses, “Warm flesh and tender muscle. Such a nice and wonderful gift. Now scream, my pretties, while I eat you alive!”

The ghast has been hiding here for weeks and feeds off the scraps left behind by the drider when the drider leaves its lair during the night. It attacks the nearest character immediately.

CEDAR HILL SANCTUM



MAP LEGEND

— DOOR

One square = 5 feet

UNDERGROUND TOMBS

The tombs beneath Cedar Hill Sanctum

CHAPTER 8: BACK TO WINTERHOLD

When the characters return after completing one of the quests, the guards at the gates ask the characters to go and see Osil at the Halls of Lore. (At the DM's discretion, the characters may solve more than one quest, in which case the following events and dialogues take place later.)

When the characters enter the meeting room at the Halls of Lore, Osil is joined by Bjorn and the other members of the Five. They all commend the characters on their achievement and ask several questions, except for Kethra, who looks worn and soon excuses herself from the meeting.

"You have done Winterhold and me a huge favour," Osil says. "I cannot thank you enough for this!"

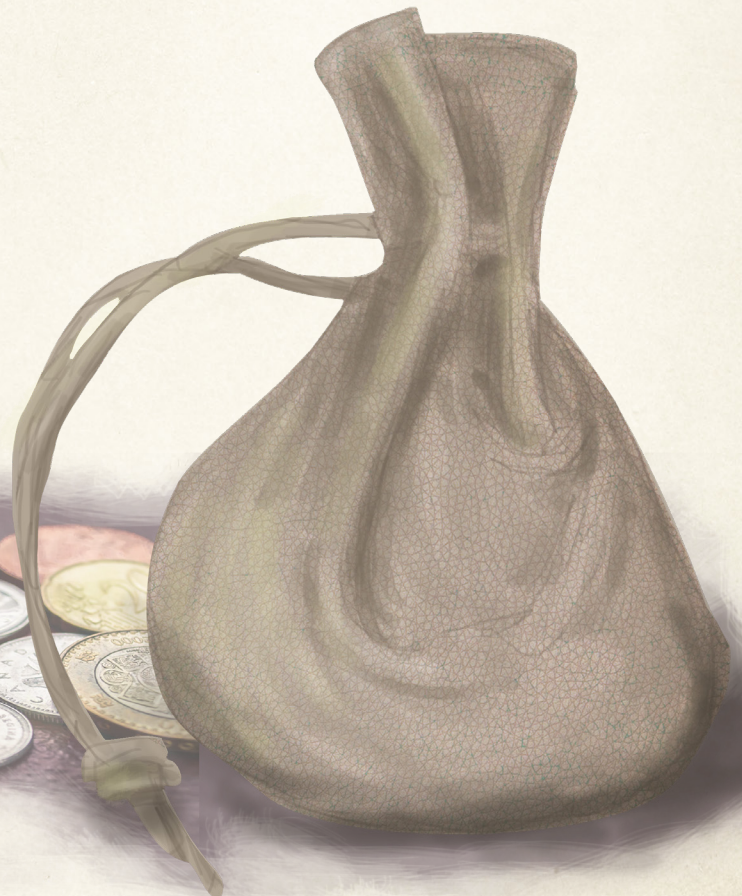
"Indeed. You have done the entire town a great service," Edna adds and nods in agreement with Osil. "Your actions have saved lives and raised our spirits. Please accept this as a reward for your bravery."

Osil hands each character a leather pouch that contains 10 platinum coins. Edna also gives the characters a broad, heavy eight-sided ring in polished bronze. One of its facets is engraved with the symbol of Winterhold. She explains that this ring is a Ring of the Explorer, which were once used by scouts who searched the underground realms for dangers so that Winterhold's miners could work in peace. See chapter 9 for more information about this item.

"Let me know if you are interested in other tasks in the future," Osil says, his face growing serious. "We face many other challenges, some of which must be solved with blade and spell. The nights grow longer, the tunnels beneath Winterhold more unquiet, and the drow more ruthless. And we still do not know why they are ramping up the kidnappings."

"If you choose to stay around," Edna says, "there is much you could do to protect our town. We need skilled adventurers like you to help us fight the drow."

Bjorn mentions that he has made good progress with the translation of the journal and hopefully will be finished soon. He suggests that he and the characters shall meet up at the Silver Horn, one of the towns better inns, and Edna gives Bjorn some coin to spend on a celebratory meal.



A FEAST FOR HEROES

The Silver Horn is a small but high-ceilinged inn located near the Halls of Lore. On most evenings, patrons fill its fifty-odd seats arranged around round polished tables in dark oak. Red and green candles in a huge circular bronze chandelier suspended from the ceiling illuminate every corner of the main room. Three large fireplaces keep the chill weather out, and plush carpets mute the clamour of lively evenings to a pleasant murmur.

The characters are served large helpings of roast hog, marinated parsnips, strong cheese, and bread hot from the oven. Several pitchers with dark ale and bright, flavourful wine are also brought to their table. On the stage, a gnome with a red-and-black chequered cloak strikes up a tune on her lute.

FAMILIAR FACES

During dinner, Bjorn walks over to a tall elf with flaxen hair who sits at a corner table together with a young half-elf with somewhat dusky skin. Both of them wear leather armour and rugged cloaks in grey wool trimmed with frost wolf fur. Two longbows rest against the wall near their table.

“Finel and Jillian!” Bjorn says. “Imagine meeting you here in Winterhold! Come and sit at our table. We are celebrating a great victory!”

For characters who have played any of the adventures in the *Hunter's Full Moon* trilogy, they recognise the pair as Finel Autumnleaf and his adopted daughter, Jillian, two hunters who reside in Buckbridge. Finel and Jillian are happy to talk and share a rumour or two, and they are particularly keen to learn about threats on the road between Winterhold and Buckbridge.

The characters also recognize the bard as Lily Lightfoot, who often passes through Buckbridge.

AFTERMATH

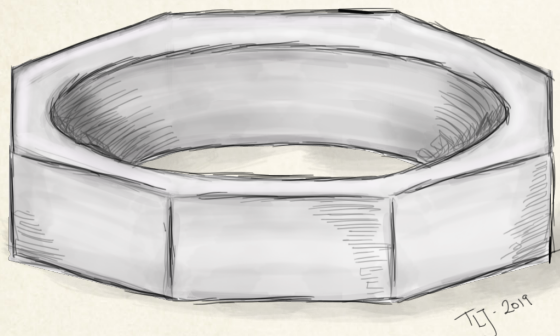
The characters receive a group award of 6,000 experience points. Alternatively, at the DM's discretion, this point serves as a milestone and the characters gain one level.

THE END

The adventures continue in
Find the Lost Expedition, part 2 of the
Secrets of the Drow trilogy.



CHAPTER 9: NEW MAGIC ITEMS



RING OF THE EXPLORER

Ring, rare (requires attunement)

This magical item provides you with a +1 bonus to AC and saving throws. You also gain Darkvision (60 feet). This includes magical darkness.

In addition, the ring grants you the following abilities and bonuses:

- You have advantage on Wis (Perception) and Int (Investigation) checks made to detect the presence of secret doors.
- You have advantage on saving throws made to avoid or resist traps.
- You have resistance to damage dealt by traps.
- You can search for traps while traveling at a normal pace.

CHAPTER 10: NEW MONSTERS

FELLSTALKER



The fellstalker is a feline predator native to the plane of shadow. Its thick, protective fur is black as the deepest shade, and its eyes gleam faintly white. Preferring to pounce on its prey from hiding places or high ground, the fellstalker often makes its home in dense forests or rocky, craggy terrain.

The creature is feared by those who live or travel through the plane of shadow for its cunning, stealth, and savage attacks. While smaller than other dangerous catlike creatures such as tigers, the fellstalker's wit and sneakiness make it a lethal opponent, and many an unwary adventurer has met their end between its unnervingly long fangs.

FELLSTALKER

Medium monstrosity, neutral evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 93 (11d10 + 33)

Speed 45 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	8 (-1)

Senses Darkvision 60 ft.

Challenge 4 (1100 XP)

Out of nowhere. If the fellstalker stalks its target for one minute or longer, it has +5 on its initiative check.

Gentle treader. The fellstalker has advantage on Stealth checks unless it is in direct sunlight.

Flurry of claws. If the fellstalker leaps down onto a target and hits it on the same turn with a claw attack, the target takes an extra 2d6 slashing damage.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The fellstalker makes two claw attacks.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 2d6 + 6 slashing damage.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 4d6 piercing damage.

Shadow leap. As a bonus action, if the fellstalker is in shadow, it can magically teleport up to 50 feet to another shadow. This ability can be used once per day.

CHAPTER 11: LEGEND & LORE

THE HISTORY OF WINTERHOLD

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.

APPENDIX

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS: THE FIVE

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).



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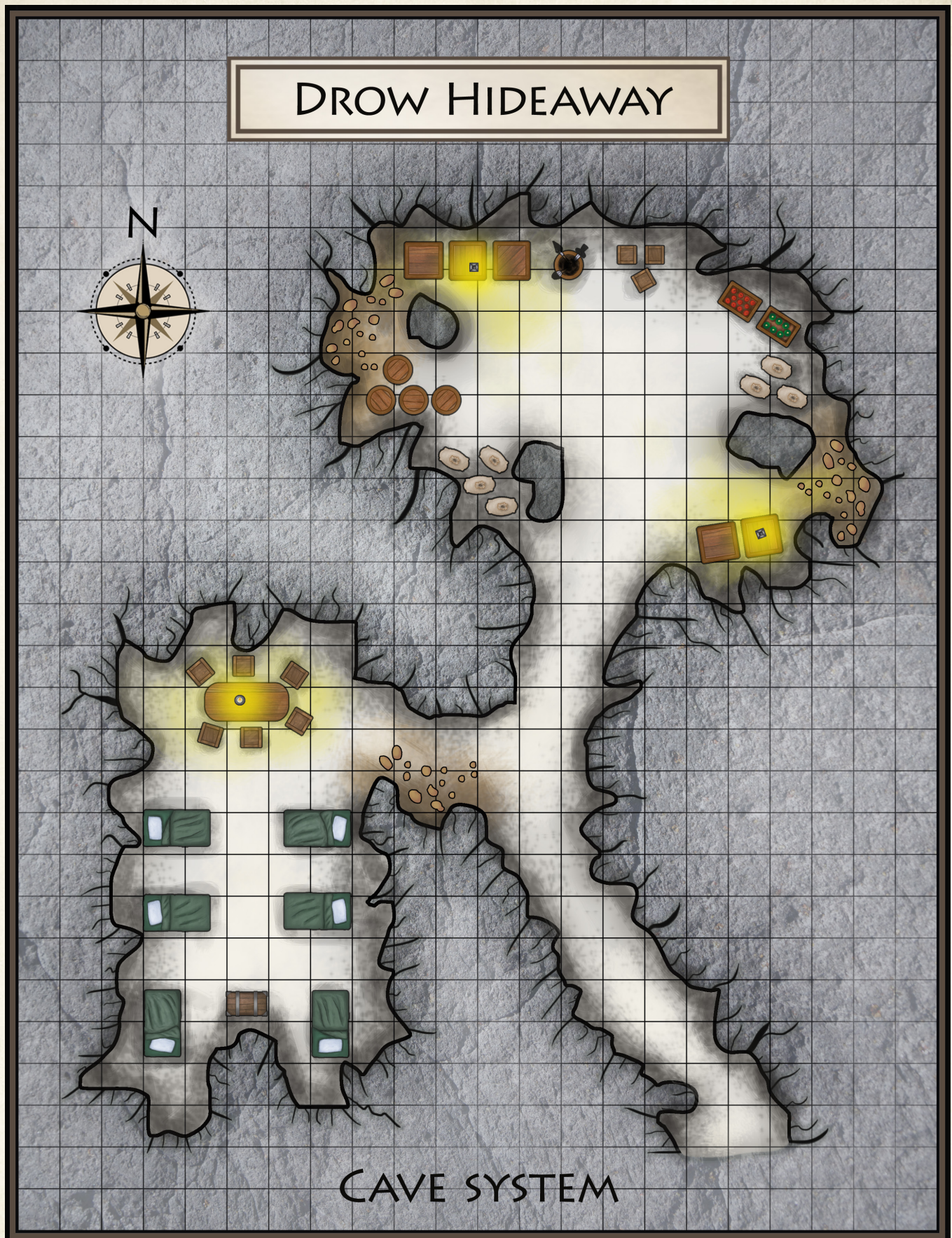
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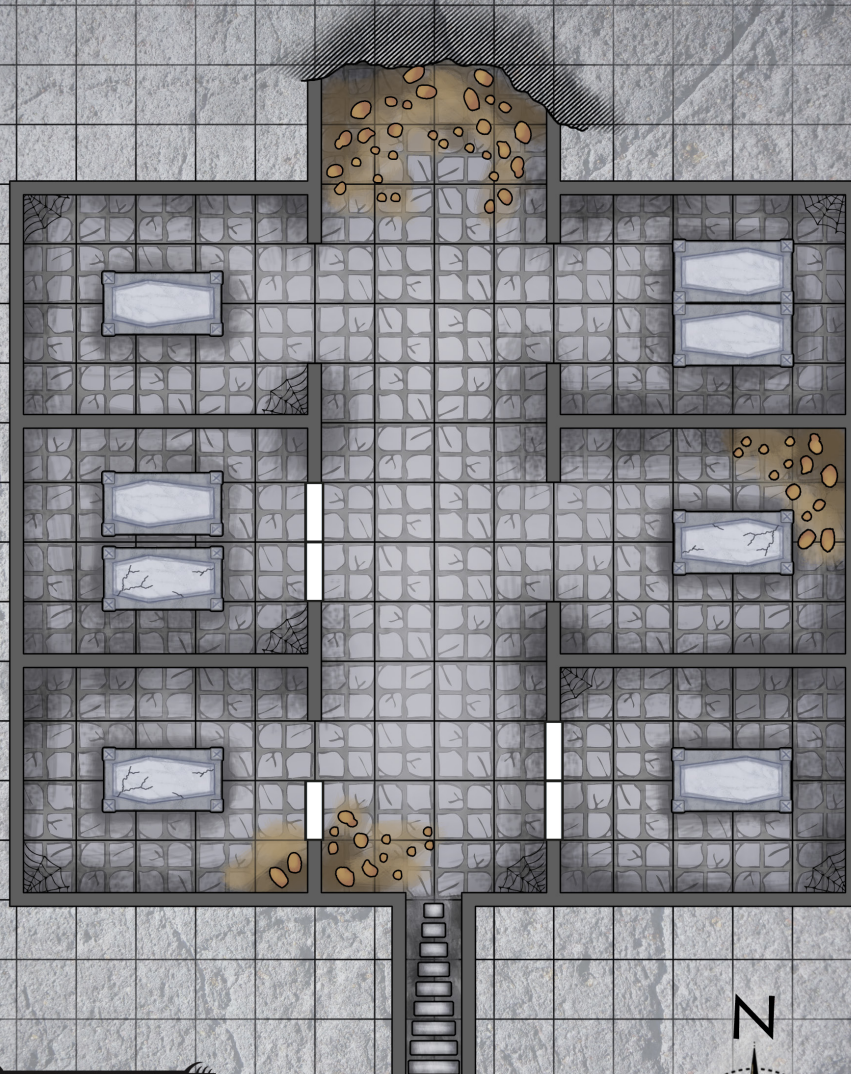
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The drow raiders' hideaway: Player-friendly map

CEDAR HILL SANCTUM



MAP LEGEND

— DOOR

One square = 5 feet



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The tombs beneath Cedar Hill Sanctum: Player-friendly map

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