

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

A Dreams of the Red Wizards Adventure

An invitation to the storm giant court of King Hekaton becomes a continent-spanning mystery that could change the face of Faerûn.

Part One of the *Storm King's Descent* series of adventures.

A Six-Hour Adventure for Tier 3 Characters.

Optimized For: APL 13



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ADVENTURE PRIMER

*The world is full of **obvious** things which nobody by any chance ever observes.*

—Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*

This adventure is designed for **three to seven 11th- to 16th-level characters** and is optimized for **five characters with an average party level (APL) of 13**. Characters outside this level range cannot participate in this adventure.

BACKGROUND

In previous D&D Adventurers League adventures (DRW01 through DRW03), the noble-turned-privateer **ZEHIRA DERYAN** acquired a magic rod dedicated to **CLANGEDDIN SILVERBEARD**, the dwarven god of war and valor. This rod is the **ILTKAZAR SCEPTER**, one of ten **RULING SCEPTERS OF SHANATAR** that can be used to control the **WYRMSKULL THRONE**, an artifact that is the centerpiece of **KING HEKATON'S** throne room in the undersea storm giant citadel of **MAELSTROM**. Zehira is intent on keeping the scepter, and so has received an invitation from Hekaton to travel to Maelstrom so that the scepter can be used to activate the throne.

Recently, agents of the **CULT OF THE DRAGON** secretly stole into Maelstrom, assassinated King Hekaton, and stole the *Wyrmskull Throne* away with the use of powerful magic. The Cult of the Dragon had previously turned the corpse of the ancient blue dragon sorcerer **IYMRITH** into a dracolich, and has since bound the *Wyrmskull Throne* as her phylactery. Still nurturing the rage inspired by her being murdered by adventurers in *Storm King's Thunder*, Iymrith seeks vengeance if those foes ever cross her path again.

The **RED WIZARDS OF THAY** have long sought the *Wyrmskull Throne* for themselves, and have been secretly watching the activities of the Cult of the Dragon. The Red Wizards had hoped to follow the cult assault force to Maelstrom and overcome them after they had dealt with the giants, but their agents arrived in the stronghold just after the cult had spirited the throne away. Never one to let an opportunity pass them by, the Thayans stole the body of King Hekaton instead. Then, using powerful necromantic rituals, they raised him as a death knight slave of **SZASS TAM**, the ancient lich who rules Thay.

With her father once again absent, **PRINCESS SERISSA** is thrust into power, a familiar position after the events that occurred in *Storm King's Thunder*. Serissa still possesses the **KOROLNOR SCEPTER**, with the Cult of the Dragon having failed to claim it when the *Wyrmskull Throne* was stolen. Her possession of the scepter has helped Serissa keep control over the giant court in the immediate aftermath of King Hekaton's disappearance, but her hold on power is tenuous at best. With her mother dead, her sisters defeated for their previous betrayal of her father, and her father missing amid signs of violence, she is desperate for aid.

OVERVIEW

The adventure's story is spread over **three parts** and takes approximately **six hours** to play. The adventure begins with a Call to Action scene.

Call to Action: A Courtly Invitation. The characters begin in Turmish with the privateer Zehira Deryan, who has received an invitation to the court of King Hekaton so that the giants can use the power of the *Iltkazar Scepter*. Zehira doesn't entirely trust the giants, and asks the characters to accompany her.

Part 1: Disappearances and Doubts. Arriving at Maelstrom, the characters find that citadel in chaos. Signs of a battle are seen in the throne room, Hekaton is missing, and the *Wyrmskull Throne* has been stolen. The characters must determine who was behind the attack. This is **Story Objective A**.

Part 2: Hunting for Answers. The Cult of the Dragon has been using a ruin in the Mere of Dead Men to create new rituals related to dracoliches, and to plan their assault on Maelstrom. Though the cult is no longer here in force, a group of cultists led by the arcanaloth Zexmanthass continues their research at the site. The characters must defeat or negotiate with the cultists to learn the location of their main headquarters in Waterdeep. This is **Story Objective B**.

Part 3: X Marks the Spot. The characters follow their leads to Dragonhorn Manor in Waterdeep, a main headquarters for the activities of the Cult of the Dragon. There, they discover that a group of mercenary adventurers are searching for the *Wyrmskull Throne*, on the orders of a mysterious giant death knight whose identity and motives must be discovered. This is **Story Objective C**.

Wrap-Up. As they consider their next moves in the search for King Hekaton, the characters are contacted by the Thayan zulkir of enchantment, Dar'lon Ma. Dar'lon knows of the troubles of the storm giant court, and can share potentially helpful information about the location of Hekaton if the characters agree to work with him.



LEGACY EVENT

At certain points in the adventure, you'll see this glyph along with an entry that describes how the specified legacy event story award is earned or impacted by the story. Legacy events are specific type of story award that have significant impact on future parts of the story. Ignore the entry if it refers to a legacy event that none of the characters have. If it's referring to a story award the characters just earned, it provides information for you and the players.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Any prior connection to the characters and events of the *Storm King's Thunder* adventure can inspire the characters to be caught up in the events of *Foreign Affairs*.

Adventure Hook 1. If the characters played one of the previous adventures (DRW01 through DRW03) they are already acquainted with Zehira Deryan. While in Turmish, they receive a personal request to meet with her about accompanying her on a perilous journey.

Adventure Hook 2. For characters who played through *Storm King's Thunder* or have connections to other characters who did, the opportunity to visit King Hekaton's court might be of particular interest.

Adventure Hook 3. Characters with dwarven ancestry or a background connecting them to dwarven legends have heard rumors that Zehira holds the *Iltkazar Scepter*, an ancient relic dedicated to Clangeddin Silverbeard, the dwarven god of war and valor. Zehira is looking to hire adventurers, and gaining a chance to see the scepter is too precious an opportunity to pass up.

Adventure Hook 4. The characters hear word of a job escorting a privateer on a perilous journey to King Hekaton's court, and know that the more dangerous the quest, the better the reward.



CALL TO ACTION: A COURTLY INVITATION

Estimated Duration: 20 minutes

The adventure begins in the coastal town of Ayakar, located in northern Turmish. The privateer Zehira Deryan, the current owner of the *Iltkazar Scepter*, has been invited to attend the court of King Hekaton. Uneasy about traveling to Maelstrom on her own, she has sought out an adventuring party to accompany her.

SETTING INFORMATION

Ayakar is a bustling trading post on the Sea of Fallen Stars, Faerûn's largest inland body of water. Sitting along a small bay, the town is famous for its large bazaar that juts out over the cliff side above the water.

Terrain. Ayakar is so rocky that it's a wonder a settlement was built atop its jagged terrain. The town is easy enough to traverse, though, thanks to many small bridges and the structure of the bazaar, which allows people to pass through most of the village under cover and on flat ground.

Light. A thick fog hangs over the bay most days, and diffuses the light from the burning orange sun. The sky in daytime is often a pale red hue.

CALL TO ACTION

The Call to Action is to accept the invitation to accompany Zehira to Maelstrom, then travel to that undersea fortress of the storm giants.

MEETING WITH ZEHIRA

Whichever hook you use to bring the characters into the adventure, Zehira arranges to meet with them at a fine teahouse in the bazaar. Read or paraphrase the following to set the scene, making adjustments if the characters already know Zehira:

The scents of salty sea air, fresh-baked bread, and the pungent aroma of tea hang over the noise and bustle of Ayakar's bazaar. Entering the teahouse, it's easy to spot the noble-turned-privateer Zehira, sitting alone at a large table.

Allow the players to introduce their characters or renew their acquaintance of Zehira as they join her.

OBJECTIVES

Zehira has recently received an invitation from King Hekaton to attend his court as a guest, in order that the giants can make use of the magic of the *Iltkazar Scepter* to activate the *Wyrmskull Throne*. For characters who did not play through adventures DRW01 through DRW03, the privateer explains that this legendary relic came into her possession in the lair of a morkoth during a previous adventure. She has held onto it despite the efforts of a malenti spy to steal it while in the underwater city of Myth

Nantar, in addition to several Thayan agents who have attempted to claim the scepter.

Zehira thinks the journey to Maelstrom will be worthwhile, if only to learn more about the scepter and to have the rare opportunity to visit the giant fortress. However, she is leery of trusting the giants, and seeks additional companions to protect her if necessary while in King Hekaton's court. If the characters are acquainted with Zehira, they are familiar with the types of perilous situations she often ends up in.

THE ILTKAZAR SCEPTER

Zehira came into possession of the scepter during her kidnapping after joining the crew of *Umberlee's Resolve* in adventure DRW01 and being trapped in the lair of a morkoth. Initially, the scepter appeared to be a barnacle-covered rod, but after Zehira traveled to Myth Nantar, it was noted that the rod began to behave strangely in the presence of the magic statue known as the Librarian (DRW02). The Librarian was able to reveal to Zehira that the rod was of dwarven origin but had been lost long ago.

While Zehira was at Myth Nantar, several other parties became interested in the rod and attempted to steal it. Thayan diviners detected a strange magical force and sent a necromantic arcane trickster and a band of pirates to retrieve the rod. At the same time, a malenti spy tracking Zehira became set on taking the rod from her too. After escaping from the clutches of those foes, Zehira made it to safety and was able to experiment further with the rod and uncover more of its magical properties.

Only when she received the invitation from Hekaton's court did Zehira learn of the true nature of the *Iltkazar Scepter*, which is one of ten Ruling Scepters of Shanatar forged by the dwarven gods and given to the ruling houses of that ancient dwarven empire. Each of the ruling scepters can be used in conjunction with the *Wyrmskull Throne*, which has been in King Hekaton's possession since his wife bestowed it upon him.

TRAVELING TO MAELSTROM

King Hekaton's invitation asked Zehira to attend on him as quickly as she is able. However, she is willing to allow the characters to decide how they wish to travel to Maelstrom.

FROM HERE TO THERE

Maelstrom lies on the floor of the Trackless Sea west of Faerûn, some three thousand feet beneath the surface and more than nineteen hundred miles from Ayakar. The instructions received by Zehira speak of sailing to the point above where the stronghold is located on the sea floor, between Ruathym, the Whalebones, and the Korinn Archipelago. Normally, a ship passing over Maelstrom is drawn down into a whirlpool and destroyed, but King Hekaton's invitation holds a magic mark that will alert the giants to Zehira's approach, and promises that she and any companions with her will be met and taken down into the depths safely.



If the characters possess suitable magic, you can let them determine the easiest way to get to Maelstrom. Teleportation can be used to expedite the trip, but the attempt might fail for characters unfamiliar with the destination. Characters who played through *Storm King's Thunder* might possess the *conch of teleportation*, which is keyed to Maelstrom and can take them directly there. Alternatively, Zehira can use her contacts to get access to magic allowing her and the characters to easily reach the citadel (see “I Know a Guy” below).

Sea Voyage. Without the use of magic, traveling from Turmish to the Trackless Sea by traditional means involves traveling south to the city of Hlondeth, via ship to Arrabar, then taking the Golden Road south to the port city of Innarleth on the Lake of Steam. Passage on a ship sailing to the Trackless Sea can be obtained there for 500 gp per passenger, owing to the numerous transfers involved and the potential dangers of the route. Zehira can pay for her own passage. In lieu of paying fare, the characters can attempt to barter their way on board as crew for each leg of the voyage. A successful DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check sees the characters hired on. The voyage is not an easy one, however, and each character arrives in Maelstrom with one level of exhaustion.

When the ship arrives at its open-sea destination point, the magical mark of Zehira's letter summons a storm giant sorcerer who arrives by teleportation and greets her and the characters grimly. The sorcerer then teleports Zehira and the characters to the portal chamber in Maelstrom (see “Quick Arrival” below).

I Know A Guy. Zehira is acquainted with a local Turmishan wizard by the name of Khynree, who can cast *teleportation* and has studied Maelstrom enough to reach it without error. The characters can visit Khynree to request that he teleport them there, which he is willing to do for a future favor from the characters and 1,000 gp from the party. Khynree teleports himself back to Ayakar immediately afterward, as he has no appetite for risks.

DEVELOPMENT

The characters' choice of how to travel to Maelstrom is important. Make note of that choice and how it affects the setup of the adventure:

- If they choose to travel by mundane means, the characters lose precious time. Both the agents of the Cult of the Dragon and the Red Wizards gain a head start on their plans.
- If the characters use their own magic to travel, they run the risk of a teleportation failure. If they are successful, they arrive just after Hekaton and the *Wyrmskull Throne* are discovered to be missing.
- If they choose to have Khynree cast a *teleportation* spell for them, the characters arrive just after Hekaton and the *Wyrmskull Throne* are discovered to be missing, but they are indebted to the spellcaster. This can later complicate their dealings with Dar'lon Ma, the Thayan zulkir of enchantment, in the “Wrap-Up” section.
- If the characters possess the *conch of teleportation* from *Storm King's Thunder*, they arrive in Maelstrom just after Hekaton and the *Wyrmskull Throne* are discovered to be missing. However, their possession of the conch can cause some of the members of the giant court to assume that they have arrived with ill intent, complicating the characters' interactions with those giants as you determine.

Zehira is present with the characters for the duration of the adventure. The characters should understand the importance of keeping her alive, and Zehira should act as a helpful, capable member of the party while not stealing the limelight from the characters. Her statistics can be found in the “Key NPC Statistics” section for easy reference, so that one or more players can run her as an NPC.

PART 1: DISAPPEARANCES AND DOUBTS

Estimated Duration: 1 hour 40 minutes

Depending on how the characters decided to travel in the previous section, two different scenarios could be unfolding as they arrive.

LONG JOURNEY

If the characters traveled by mundane means, the journey has taken a few months. The attack and the disappearance of King Hekaton and the *Wyrmskull Throne* happened a month ago, giving Princess Serissa time to establish herself as ruler of Maelstrom.

The storm giant sorcerer who teleports the party down to the citadel can explain what happened, and that the fortress has been closed off since then, with no one allowed to leave or enter. Tensions are running high, with some of the giants suspecting that the attack was a plot by their fellow giants to gain power. None of the giants dare to openly cross Princess Serissa, however, as they fear she might turn the power of the *Korolnor Scepter* against them in her despair.

When they are teleported down to Maelstrom, the characters arrive in the portal chamber, as described below.

STORY OBJECTIVE

Investigating the attack at Maelstrom and determining who was behind the disappearance of King Hekaton and the *Wyrmskull Throne* is **Story Objective A**.

QUICK ARRIVAL

If the characters used teleportation to travel to Maelstrom, they arrive in an alcove whose floor is set with a huge glowing glyph, in the northeast corner of a rough-hewn chamber on the first level of the citadel. This portal chamber is the characters' arrival point even if their intended destination was elsewhere in the stronghold.

It is immediately clear that the court is in chaos. The guards in the portal chamber inform the characters that King Hekaton was discovered missing just a few hours ago, with signs of a battle evident in the throne room. To make matters worse, whoever perpetrated the attack has stolen the legendary *Wyrmskull Throne*. Princess Serissa has assumed the mantle of leadership once more and has sealed off the fortress, allowing no one in the court to leave. Tensions are high and accusations are being thrown about from all parties.

ENTERING MAELSTROM

When Zehira shows her invitation, the characters are quickly taken to the throne room and presented to Princess Serissa. As they leave the portal chamber, the character with the highest passive Wisdom (Perception) score is the first to spot faint traces of muddy footprints leading out of the portal chamber. The giant guards are careful not to step on the tracks, and order the characters to do the same.

Read the following to set the scene of the characters' arrival:

A spiral staircase leads up from the portal chamber into a huge great hall. Seven giants are there, all of them pacing fitfully or sitting alone. Each of them looks over to see you, staring closely. You do not stop, though, as your escort leads you through the room toward a huge set of open doors and a massive throne room beyond.

SETTING: MAELSTROM

Maelstrom lies on the floor of the Trackless Sea, some three thousand feet beneath the surface. The undersea fortress of King Hekaton is carved into a reef. Its four rocky towers covered in barnacles and coral rise upward, and a large sinkhole between them descends into the heart of the fortress.

Dimensions and Terrain. The stronghold has slick, rough-hewn walls. Most of its rooms have 50-foot-high ceilings. The giant-sized doors are 30 feet tall and made of barnacle-covered stone with rusty iron hinges. Their handles are 13 feet above the floor.

Light. All interior spaces are filled with dim light. Air-filled chambers feature shrouded wall sconces with *continual flame* spells cast on them, or oval windows of transparent crystal that allow light from the bioluminescent coral reef to enter. Bioluminescent fish illuminate submerged areas.

SPEEDING UP THIS ENCOUNTER

If you are running this encounter in less than the recommended time, or if you find that time is running short during your session, consider speeding up this section by making the giants more willing to assist the characters. You can remove the ability checks and simply have the characters interact with the giants, who can share what information they know without the need for the characters to win them over. Likewise, multiple exploration and social paths can reveal the clues in this section. To save time, if the characters are successful in learning specific clues in the investigation section, you can direct them away from the giants who reveal the same clues in the social interaction section of the adventure.

THRONE ROOM

Maelstrom's throne room resembles a great amphitheater, with stone bleachers overlooking an oblong chamber with a 50-foot-deep pool of seawater near its center. In the middle of the bleachers is an archway with two doors in it. Facing the pool and the doors are two enormous thrones made of coral and giant seashells, flanking an empty spot in the middle where the *Wyrmskull Throne* should be.

When the characters first see it, the throne room is in a sorry state. Lesser bits of furnishings have been smashed and strewn about, and the floor is dotted by the same muddy tracks seen in the portal chamber. Even if the characters took the long journey option to arrive at Maelstrom, Princess Serissa has ordered that nothing be touched while she tries to keep the giant court under control and to determine who kidnapped her father. (None of the giants or the sea creatures that observed the attack know that King Hekaton is dead, and assume instead that he has been kidnapped.)

AREA INFORMATION

The area has the following features.

Dimensions and Terrain. The throne room is 150 feet long from the entryway to the passageway behind the thrones. The amphitheater area is 150 feet wide, while the lower chamber is 80 feet wide.

CREATURE INFORMATION

The guards escorting the characters from the portal chamber present them to the princess, who is seated in the throne room. In addition to the giants the characters passed in the great hall (who are introduced in that section below), Maelstrom is home to numerous storm giant guards and other creatures.

PRINCESS SERISSA

Chaotic good storm giant

The youngest daughter and chosen successor of King Hekaton, Serissa is cool and calm, even as she understands that others in the giant court covet her position.

What They Want. To maintain peace among the giants, Serissa must find her father and the *Wyrmskull Throne*, and have whoever attacked Maelstrom face justice.

Optimistic Leader. Serissa wants to believe that all folk are innately good at heart. Reluctantly accepting the mantle of ruler once more in her father's stead, she is determined to do everything she can to find King Hekaton and return the *Wyrmskull Throne* to Maelstrom. She fears that her father's disappearance will bring about a new rise in tensions between the giant races, and knows that she must defuse those tensions if she can.

SERISSA'S REQUEST

Princess Serissa is distrustful of the other giants at court, understanding that all have their own agendas—and that some are more than capable of using King Hekaton's disappearance to seize power for themselves. The characters' unexpected arrival thus comes at an ideal moment, allowing an impartial party of experienced adventurers to do what she cannot.

Serissa publicly requests that Zehira and the characters undertake an investigation into what happened when King Hekaton went missing. Once the characters agree to assist, Serissa allows them to search the throne room and to speak to the guards. She also promises that the courtiers currently assembled in the great hall be made available for the characters' questions (see "The Great Hall" below).

SERISSA'S STORY

Serissa shares that the attack took place when King Hekaton was alone in the throne room, not long after the end of a banquet in the great hall. The banquet was in honor of the five giant nobles presently visiting Maelstrom—the cloud giant Count Nimbian, the frost giant Jarl Frella, the stone giant Kralvar, the hill giant Murgan, and the fire giant Lord Mephryr. The banquet was noteworthy for a singing performance by the storm giant Hestia, one of King Hekaton's wards. Afterward, all the giants retired to their guest quarters while King Hekaton went to the throne room alone.

The attack came with no warning. The unknown assailants worked quickly, killing a guard in the portal chamber and two guards at the throne room doors. They then slipped into the throne room and stole away both the king and the *Wyrmskull Throne* before anyone could notice. The signs of the battle were discovered only after the frost giant Jarl Frella investigated, having been disturbed in her quarters by a disturbance.



THRONE ROOM CLUES

As the characters investigate the throne room, they might discover any of the following information.

Dead Guards. Any of the guards the characters speak to tell them that the attackers arrived at Maelstrom in the portal chamber, where they managed to quickly subdue the storm giant on watch and slit his throat before he was able to call for help. They then made their way to the throne room, where they surprised and overcame the two storm giant guards there.

If the characters teleported directly to Maelstrom, they can investigate the bodies of the slain guards themselves. If they made the long journey by ship, the guards presently on duty can describe in graphic detail the wounds their fallen compatriots sustained. Either way, a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check or DC 18 Wisdom (Medicine) check reveals that the attackers were smallfolk, as the first wounds were lower down and designed to knock the guard prone before the killing blows were struck. (The guards were killed by members of the Cult of the Dragon, who were the first force to invade Maelstrom.)

Muddy Footprints. The attackers tracked traces of mud from the portal chamber, up the spiral staircase, through the great hall, and into the throne room. A close inspection of the mud and a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) check allows a character to deduce that the attackers passed through a swamp-like environment before reaching Maelstrom. (These tracks are from the cultists, whose hideout is in the great swamp known as the Mere of Dead Men.)

If the check is 18 or higher, a character also discovers that a second, separate group of tracks follows the same route. However, the second tracks passed through the citadel only after the initial assault, and the only mud they carry was picked up from the first sets of tracks. (This second force was a group of Red Wizards of Thay, who were in pursuit of the cultists but failed to prevent them from taking the *Wyrmskull Throne*. They claimed King Hekaton's body as a consolation prize.)

Residual Magic. The magical glyph in the portal chamber stores a residual record of all those who teleport into Maelstrom. A character can assess that residual magic with a DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check. A success suggests that the attackers arrived in two waves, with a first group arriving all at once and a second group all teleporting individually.

If the check is 18 or higher, the character is also able to sense a residual trace of corrupted magic still lingering in the glyph. With a few minutes' concentration, the character understands this is the echo of the sigil sequence of a teleportation circle used to travel to Maelstrom, and is able to record that sigil sequence. (This is the failing teleportation circle the Cult of the Dragon discovered in the Mere of Dead Men, and which they used to launch their raid on Maelstrom. This sigil sequence is instrumental in getting the characters into part 2 of the adventure.)

Ripped Cloak. Among the broken bits of furniture in the throne room, a piece of a black cloak can be found with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check. Part of an insignia can be seen on the cloak, which a successful DC 15 Intelligence (History) check identifies as belonging to the Cult of the Dragon. A second successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check spots a piece of shattered furniture that

has caught at the clothing or cloak of someone rushing past it. A thin edge of dark-red piping has been torn free and still clings there.

Observant Sea Life. The throne room features several oval crystal windows looking out over the coral reef, which is teeming with sea life. Any character who walks past a window draws in a number of curious fish and other underwater beasts, all of which would have had a clear view of what happened in the throne room. By using *Speak with Animals* or similar magic, a character can speak with these creatures, which can relay that a group of humanoids in black robes came and attacked the king, leaving him motionless on the floor. They then used some sort of powerful magic to make the *Wyrmskull Throne* disappear. Another group in red robes entered the throne room just as the first group vanished. The second group searched the area quickly, then took the king's body away.

GREAT HALL

Used primarily for entertaining guests, Maelstrom's great hall is a majestic space. Barnacle-covered pillars of hewn rock rise to meet the vaulted ceiling, and the light filtering in through a huge crystal window casts beautiful patterns on the walls.

AREA INFORMATION

The area has the following features.

Dimensions. The great hall is roughly circular and 150 feet in diameter. The space is split into two levels, with a 15-foot-high raised ledge hugging the walls to the north and east, and gently sloping ramps leading up to it.

CREATURE INFORMATION

In the aftermath of King Hekaton's disappearance, Princess Serissa has ordered all the giants in the citadel sequestered into this area when they are not in their quarters. She makes it known to the other giants that they are expected to truthfully discuss what they know of the attack with the characters.

Each of the giants in attendance in the great hall has been shaken by King Hekaton's disappearance, and most are distrustful of each other. All the giants aside from Princess Serissa and Hestia (one of Hekaton's wards; see below) are distrustful of smallfolk. It takes effective roleplaying or a successful DC 20 Charisma (Deception or Persuasion) check to convince a giant to share what they know.

Information on each of the giants the characters can question can be found in appendix 3, "The Giant Court."

DEVELOPMENT

The giants in the great hall are in a state of high emotion when the characters speak with them. Most of them view the smaller races as one homogenous, untrustworthy group, which they call the smallfolk. King Hekaton's late wife Queen Neri was a noteworthy exception, as is her daughter, Princess Serissa. Both have always been thought odd for wishing to associate with the smallfolk and treating them as equals. Queen Neri's death at the hands of smallfolk in *Storm King's Thunder* has only amplified most giants' animosity toward humanoids. Meanwhile, the infighting between the different types of giants has escalated.

NPC Relationships. Each of the giants in the great hall has a selfish desire to have something that another giant currently possesses. If the characters can assist any giant with attaining what they desire, that giant automatically shares the information they know. The interactions with the giants are presented in a freeform setup, so that you can adjust those interactions in whatever way feels most logical for the players' approach. Set a DC of 15 for any ability checks that come into play during negotiations, or simply allow the players to roleplay their exchanges, as fits your preferred style. The one exception to this is Kralvar the stone giant, whose distrust of smallfolk makes him particularly reserved. Attempts to interact with him require a successful DC 30 Charisma (Persuasion) check unless the characters have already gained the favor of six other giants.

Goal. The most important information the characters can learn from the giants includes what Kralvar knows about the mud and swamp grass, which can help the characters guess that the attackers came from the Mere of Dead Men, and what Count Nimbrian can tell them about the residual magic in the portal chamber and the sigil sequence that can be discovered there.

Are the Characters Stuck? Some players might struggle with interactions that are heavy on roleplaying. If you see this, consider suggesting that the characters regale some of the giants with tales of bravery or other social commentary, which can take the place of the roleplaying needed to engage the giant.

WHAT THE GIANTS KNOW

This section introduces the giants in the great hall, talking about what each one knows and how the characters might get on their good side. Appendix 3, "The Giant Court," can be given to the players as a handout, and provides a quick precis of Serissa and the other seven giants.

Because many of the giants distrust each other, the information the characters can learn from them includes a number of red herrings and false suggestions. Use these bits of false information to make the roleplaying and investigation fun, but don't be afraid to steer the characters toward the important information if they focus too much on a false lead.

SERISSA

Serissa and her father had numerous discussions about each of their guests prior to their arrival at Maelstrom. Because of that, she has been keeping a watchful eye on all the giants, and has a clear sense of the suspicion growing between them.

The storm giants Hestia and Thellan are wards of King Hekaton—a polite form of hostage meant to keep other noble families in line. Both grew up in Hekaton's court, and feel closer to Serissa than they do to the members of their own family. For her part, Serissa treats the two as siblings more loyal than her sisters ever were.

Interacting with Serissa. Though the characters do not need to get on Serissa's good side as they do with the other giants, their investigation might put them in a position to bolster the beleaguered princess's spirits. The fire giant Lord Mephyr fought beside King Hekaton in battle long ago, and Serissa longs to hear a friendly story about her father. She would be grateful if the characters could convince Lord Mephyr to regale her with some stories.



HESTIA

The storm giant Hestia was singing in the great hall during the banquet. During her performance, she remembers thinking it odd to see Lord Mephyr stepping away and heading down the spiral staircase toward the portal chamber. Hestia cares most about music, her brother Thellan, and Serissa.

Interacting with Hestia. Hestia covets a white seashell comb owned by Jarl Frella. She would be grateful if the characters could convince the frost giant to part with it.

THELLAN

The storm giant Thellan remembers speaking to King Hekaton at the banquet before Hestia's performance, mentioning his own distrust of some of the visiting giants. Hekaton shared with Thellan that the hill giant Murgen had been telling him she believed she should be the ruler of all giants, but Hekaton laughed it off as a joke. Thellan thinks that perhaps the king's disappearance is part of Murgen taking steps to ensure her ascendancy.

Thellan is a warrior who is especially protective of his sister Hestia, and characters who are kind to Hestia have an easier time winning him over.

Interacting with Thellan. Thellan has seen the cloud giant Count Nimbian practicing scrying magic while at the citadel. He is interested in learning the spells the count knows, and would be grateful if the characters could convince Nimbian to share his knowledge.

COUNT NIMBIAN

On the recommendation of Thellan, Count Nimbian has spent much time in Maelstrom's library during his stay, seeking out lore on the history of giant rulers. He fears now that Thellan might have been setting him up for suspicion of being jealous of King Hekaton's position. If questioned about the scrying magic he has been using while at the citadel, Nimbian says truthfully that he has been keeping an eye on family members, but he becomes irritated at the characters poking into his personal affairs.

If the characters win over Count Nimbian and were unsuccessful in making the Intelligence (Arcana) checks to assess the residual magic in the portal chamber or in the sample of swamp grass held by Kralvar, he offers to assist them, and automatically succeeds on those checks. This gives the characters the sigil sequence to the Cult of the Dragon's teleportation circle in the Mere of Dead Men.

Interacting with Count Nimbian. The *Korolnor Scepter* is a legendary magic artifact, and Count Nimbian would be grateful if the characters could convince Princess Serissa to allow him to study it under her supervision.

JARL FRELLA

The frost giant Jarl Frella was the first person to become aware of the attack, saying that she heard a commotion that woke her in her guest chamber. She was the one who found the dead guard in the portal chamber and raised the alarm, but King Hekaton and the *Wyrmskull Throne* were already gone. Along with Hestia, Frella also saw Lord Mephyr leaving the banquet during Hestia's performance, and heading down the spiral staircase toward the portal chamber. Though she doesn't really suspect that the fire giant had anything to do with the attack, she thinks about implicating him just to take him down a notch.

Interacting with Jarl Frella. Frella has long admired the fighting style of the storm giants, and would be grateful if Thellan could be convinced to provide her with some training.

KRALVAR

After the attack, the stone giant Kralvar was the first to notice the faint tracks left by smallfolk, and he quietly claimed a trace of crushed weeds left behind by the muddy footprints. He is initially hostile toward the characters, though, as he remembers how Queen Neri died at the hands of smallfolk and is suspicious that King Hekaton has

suffered the same fate. He wonders openly if this was a plot by the smallfolk to put the Princess Serissa on the throne, as she is known to be sympathetic to their kind.

If the characters can get on Kralvar's good side, he shares the sample of vegetation he found tracked in by the first group of attackers. Any character with proficiency in the Nature skill or who succeeds on a DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) check recognizes the sample as swamp grass, and notices that it carries a faint trace of corrupting magic. With a second successful DC 20 Intelligence (Nature) check or a successful DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana) check, a character determines that the grass came from a large area of swamp broadly imbued with the taint of dark magic. Any character with proficiency in the Arcana or Nature skills who is familiar with the Sword Coast recognizes that the Mere of Dead Men is the most obvious such location.

Interacting with Kralvar. Kralvar is fascinated by jewelry with symbolism, and he has been quietly admiring the necklace that the hill giant Murgen has made from the teeth of her enemies. He would be grateful if Murgen could be convinced to allow him to borrow the necklace to make a sketch of it.

MURGEN

The hill giant Murgen is suspicious of the stone giant Kralvar, who she describes as acting distant and aloof his entire time at court. She notes that Kralvar alone did not seem fazed when the attack was discovered. Murgen was a legendary combatant in her day. If won over, she can share her certainty that the dead guards were killed by smallfolk based on the nature and position of their wounds.

Interacting with Murgen. Murgen has seen Hestia with a beautiful pearl-encrusted hand mirror, and she wants to have it for her own so she can admire her beauty. She would be grateful if the characters could procure the mirror for her.

LORD MEPHYR

The fire giant Lord Mephyr is quick to share that he is deeply distrustful of all the other giants, and Count Nimbian in particular. He says that Nimbian has been acting secretive, and spends all his time hiding in the library.

Lord Mephyr has long admired the stonework and fortifications crafted by the storm giants and the stone giants. When he stepped away from the banquet, it was to walk around Maelstrom assessing the aesthetics of its grand design, a thing he has done frequently since arriving.

Interacting with Lord Mephyr. Despite his antipathy toward Kralvar, Lord Mephyr would be grateful if the characters could convince the stone giant to discuss the possibility of having his folk construct a beautiful fortified wall at Lord Mephyr's citadel.

NEXT MOVES

If the characters have been successful in their investigations and their interactions with the giants, they have obtained the sigil sequence to the teleportation circle used by the first group of attackers, and deduced that those attackers likely came by way of the Mere of Dead Men. If they failed to pick up one or the other piece of information, you can have Princess Serissa's sages and servants fill in the missing information. Either way, with the sigil sequence at hand, the characters are ready to pursue those who stole the *Wyrmskull Throne* in part 2 of the adventure.

PART 2: HUNTING FOR ANSWERS

Estimated Duration: 2 hours

With the teleportation circle sigil sequence gleaned from the residual magic in Maelstrom's Portal chamber, Princess Serissa allows the characters to use the portal chamber to teleport to that location. Though some of the giants are keen to pursue the attackers themselves, Serissa knows that the characters have a better chance of pursuing King Hekaton without drawing attention to themselves, and she quickly puts down any opposition.

Once the characters arrive at the mere, they need to search for signs of the attackers' movements and determine where they came from—and why.

STORY OBJECTIVE

Defeating the cultists at their hideout in the Mere of Dead Men and learning the location of the Cult of the Dragon's main headquarters in Waterdeep is **Story Objective B**.

SPEEDING UP THIS ENCOUNTER

If you are running this encounter in less than the recommended time, or if you find that time is running short during your session, you can speed things up by running only one or two random encounters and avoiding the hidden nest encounters. Likewise, the search of the sunken settlement of Drybed can be narrated to get the characters into the final combat encounters more quickly.

THE MERE OF DEAD MEN

The Mere of Dead Men is a cold saltwater swamp situated along the shore of the Sword Coast, halfway between Waterdeep and Neverwinter. Said to have been created by a lich's curse, the site is named for the countless people who perished there when the sea rolled in to flood the land. All folk of the Sword Coast know the site as a desolate place full of monsters, including a pair of ancient black dragons who claim the mere as their dominion. The only humanoid inhabitants of the swamps are lizardfolk clans and small numbers of equally hardy folk.

AREA INFORMATION

The area has the following features.

Terrain. The mere is a seemingly endless expanse of water and deep mud, overgrown with trees and vines, set with quicksand and other hazards, and difficult terrain in all areas. The water covering large portions of the mere is deep enough to be navigable by flat-bottomed boat, but monsters and hidden obstructions lurking in the dark water make such travel risky. Scattered all through the mere are the flooded or decaying ruins of old castles and settlements, including the ruined tower where the characters arrive and the forgotten village taken over by the Cult of the Dragon.

Light. The area is usually covered in fog, reducing daylight to dim light and making large expanses of the swamp lightly obscured. At night, any moonlight and starlight is lost in the fog, casting all the mere into an eerie darkness.

ARRIVAL

The characters appear within a crumbling stone circle, set at the center of the ruins of an old tower. Any character with proficiency in the Arcana skill can tell that the magic of the teleportation circle is failing, and that this corruption is what allowed the circle's sigil sequence to be read from Maelstrom.

The ruins sit on a low rise above the swamp, which extends in every direction around it. A thorough search of the area shows signs where a number of humanoids recently came out of the swamp and up to the teleportation circle. With a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception or Survival) check, a character notes that no footprints lead back in the same direction. (Though the characters will learn much from investigating the Cult of the Dragon's hideout in the mere, the cultists who attacked Maelstrom teleported themselves and the *Wyrmskull Throne* to another location.)

HAZARDS IN THE MERE

The natural and unnatural hazards present in the mere are a constant threat to explorers. A few examples of potential hazards the characters might encounter are noted below. As time allows, use two or more of these hazards prior to the encounter with Lakar (see "A Friendly Face in the Fog" below).

QUICKSAND

A patch of quicksand usually appears solid, and might even be covered with debris. A typical quicksand pit is 25 feet in diameter. A character walking at a normal pace is able to recognize the danger with a successful DC 18 Wisdom (Survival) check and avoid the pit. On a failed check, the creature is stuck at the edge of the pit, sinking 1d4 + 1 feet into it and becoming restrained. A creature moving faster than normal or mounted has no chance to spot the pit and travels 1d3 × 5 feet into it before becoming stuck. A creature in quicksand must succeed on a DC 18 Strength (Athletics) check to move 5 feet. Failure results in sinking 5 feet and starting to drown (see "Suffocating" in chapter 8 of the *Player's Handbook*).

SINKHOLE

Hidden dry sinkholes are scattered throughout the swamp. A sinkhole can be spotted from a safe distance with a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check. Otherwise, the first creature to step on the thin crust covering the 60-foot-deep sinkhole must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or fall in and take 21 (6d6) bludgeoning damage.



NOXIOUS GASES

A thin layer of what looks like moss covers a 40-foot-square section of the swamp on all surfaces rising above the water (small islands, downed trees, rocks and debris, and so forth). Any creature passing within 5 feet of a moss-covered object causes the moss to release a 5-foot-radius cloud of invisible but highly odorous gas. A creature within the area of the gas or who starts their turn there must make a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw. On a successful save, the creature is immune to the effect of the gas for 24 hours. On a failed save, the creature gains a type of short-term madness that causes them to believe their allies are enemies who are violently attacking them. The madness wears off after 1d10 minutes, or can be negated with a *calm emotions* or *lesser restoration* spell.

Creatures that are immune to poison or that do not breathe suffer no ill effects from the gases.

PETRIFYING PLOT

A statue of a humanoid woman with outstretched arms stands at the center of a 60-foot-square plot of land that is oddly dry. Once any creature moves within 10 feet of the statue, each creature on the dry land must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw or be stunned for 1 minute. A stunned creature still in the area at the end of its turn must repeat this saving throw. On a success, the creature is no longer stunned by this effect. On a failed save, the creature is petrified. The creature can be returned to normal with a *greater restoration* spell or any other effect that removes the petrified condition.

The statue has AC 17, 30 hit points, immunity to poison and psychic damage, and a damage threshold of 5. If the statue is destroyed, all petrified victims return to normal.

ILLUSORY HIGH GROUND

Creatures see this area as a tall hill rising above the fog, and offering a sweeping view of the surrounding swampland. In actuality, this is a permanent illusion effect that disguises a 60-foot-deep dry sinkhole with spiked stakes set into the bottom. The sinkhole has been set up

this way by a clan of bullywugs, who capture wandering creatures here and present them as tribute to the black dragons that roam the mere.

A creature carefully examining the hill from a distance notices its illusory nature with a successful DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check, seeing it as a vague image superimposed on the terrain. Any creature that does not see through the illusion and walks into the area topples into the sinkhole, taking 21 (6d6) bludgeoning damage and 21 (6d6) piercing damage.

HIDDEN NEST

The characters stumble into a hidden nest, disturbing the creatures within. Roll on the table to determine what type of creatures lair in the nest.

d4	Creatures
1	1d4 + 3 hydras
2	1d4 + 8 giant crocodiles
3	1d4 + 5 catoblepases
4	1d4 + 2 rot trolls

ADJUSTING THE SCENE

Consider the following suggestions for adjusting this scene depending on the relative combat strength of the party:

- **Very Weak.** Instead of rolling a d4 for the number of creatures, assume the roll was 1.
- **Weak.** Instead of rolling a d4 for the number of creatures, assume the roll was 2.
- **Strong.** Add one additional creature, or combine this random encounter with one of the environmental effects noted above.
- **Very Strong.** Add two additional creatures, or combine this random encounter with one of the environmental effects noted above.

A FRIENDLY FACE IN THE FOG

At a point of your choosing while the characters are exploring the mere, the character with the highest passive Wisdom (Perception) score spots something ahead. Atop a rickety wooden platform set near two low mounds, a lone human is carefully threading a line onto the fishing pole in his hand.

LAKAR KLOTD

Neutral evil human commoner

Lakar has lived in the Mere of Dead Men his entire life, and he is familiar with the unique dangers found there. An agent of the Cult of the Dragon, he enjoys acting the part of a simple fisher, and is friendly toward strangers to get them close enough for his froghemoth companions to strike.

What They Want. Lakar enjoys watching the froghemoths feed—and the money the Cult of the Dragon provides him for each potential intruder eaten makes it that much sweeter for him.

Opportunist. Always on the hunt for a way to make coin, Lakar will consider any bargain—and will betray anyone if there's profit in it for him.

The fisher is Lakar (a **commoner**), and the two mounds are actually two **froghemoths** in his service. A recently recruited agent of the Cult of the Dragon, Lakar keeps an eye out for suspicious explorers and adventurers who might be seeking the cult's hideout, luring them close and into the waiting maws of his pets.

ADJUSTING THE SCENE

Consider the following suggestions for adjusting this scene depending on the relative combat strength of the party:

- **Very Weak.** Replace one **froghemoth** with a **giant crocodile**.
- **Weak.** Replace one **froghemoth** with two **giant crocodiles**.
- **Strong.** Add two **giant crocodiles**.
- **Very Strong.** Add a **hydra** and one **giant crocodile**.

Playing the Pillars. You can make use of the following suggestions when running this encounter.

Combat. Lakar flees at the first sign of trouble, cackling wildly as he runs. The froghemoths lash out first with their tentacle attacks, attempting to grapple as many characters as possible in order to eat them.

Exploration. The water is 2 feet deep in this section of the mere, which features a number of spots of dry land.

Social. If the characters offer to pay Lakar for information about the Cult of the Dragon, he quickly orders the froghemoths to stand down. See "Developments."

DEVELOPMENTS

If the characters offer Lakar 250 gp or more, he reveals the location of their hideout in the nearby village of Drybed. He is willing to lead the characters there, after which he makes himself scarce. If the characters insult him with a lesser offer, he takes whatever he can get and gives them directions—which lead them into a random encounter of your choice before they reach the village.

If the froghemoths are killed and Lakar is questioned, he can fearfully reveal the route to Drybed. If Lakar is killed during the fight, a search of the area around his fishing platform reveals a well-traveled path cutting across stands of dry land. Following the path brings the characters to Drybed in short order.

Treasure. Lakar has a small pouch tied to his belt, containing coins along with a *potion of water breathing* (see appendix 4, "Character Rewards").

DRYBED

The ruins of the sunken settlement that the Cult of the Dragon have taken over as their hideout are partially submerged in the mere. Most of the buildings that once stood on this site have rotted away or crumbled into ruin. However, a dozen structures remain more or less standing atop the rise of a small island.

AREA INFORMATION

The area has the following features.

Terrain. Even atop the island, most of the buildings are rotting and crumbling away, making their ruins difficult terrain. The handful of structures that are still mostly intact were all long abandoned and rundown before the Cult of the Dragon cleaned them up. The walls of most buildings are weak enough to knock down easily, having AC 15 and 20 hit points.

Trees. Trees can be found across the island. Each is 30 feet high and can be climbed to get a view of the entire settlement, even through the fog.

Pathways. The pathways across the island are made of packed dirt and are slick. Any creature that takes the Dash action along a path must succeed on a DC 18 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check or fall prone.

Light. Dense fog covers most of the settlement, making the area lightly obscured.





CREATURE INFORMATION

A huge undead creature known as the ooze master is positioned in a half-crumbled building on the outskirts of the sunken settlement. This creature and its ooze servants were left here by the Red Wizards of Thay as a nasty surprise for the cult forces here—and for the characters as they explore.

D1. EDGE OF TOWN

Along the edges of the island, a few stone walls are all that remain of what used to be modest homes. In one of those ruins of your choice, the **ooze master** lingers, watching out for intruders. Two **huge gray oozes** lurk nearby, indistinguishable from piles of gray rubble. Two **gelatinous cubes** are scouring other nearby buildings and come forth in response to the sounds of combat.

OOZE MASTER

The ooze master is the result of a failed experiment to bind a Red Wizard with an ooze. An attempt to create the perfect assassin, the creature retains a Red Wizard's intellect and deadly spellcasting ability.

What They Want. The ooze master's singular drive is to destroy all creatures, forcing its victims to attack each other if it can. It then consumes the dead.

Agents of the Red Wizards who followed the forces of the Cult of the Dragon to Maelstrom pursued them back to this location after taking the body of King Hekaton to Thay. (The characters will learn more about this in the "Wrap-Up" section.) Questioning a number of cultists taken unawares on the outskirts of the ruined settlement confirmed that the cult agents who stole the *Wyrmskull Throne* did not return here, so the Red Wizards quickly departed. Before they did, though, they left behind a creature known as the ooze master, which has been tasked with killing any cultists who venture out from the headquarters, and ensuring that the Cult of the Dragon cannot utilize this location as a base of operations again. The ooze master can speak, but it is no longer aware who created it, or of their motivations.

ADJUSTING THE SCENE

Consider the following suggestions for adjusting this scene depending on the relative combat strength of the party:

- **Very Weak.** Remove one **huge gray ooze**.
- **Weak.** Replace one **huge gray ooze** with a **gelatinous cube**.
- **Strong.** Replace both **gelatinous cubes** with one **huge gray ooze**.
- **Very Strong.** Add one **huge gray ooze**.

Playing the Pillars. You can make use of the following suggestions when running this encounter.

Combat. If cornered in or near a building, the ooze master uses its Spider Climb trait to take to high ground, keeping out of reach of melee attacks.

Exploration. The surviving structures of the settlement can offer shelter or cover for the characters.

Social. If the characters try to reason with the ooze master, the creature utters a harsh guttural laugh, then speaks in Primordial: "Fools ... running blindly to your deaths ..."

Treasure. Along with the bones of a few cultists who were killed after questioning by the Red Wizards, one of the gray oozes has absorbed a *dragontooth dagger* (see appendix 4, "Character Rewards," for more information).

D2. DILAPIDATED HOUSES

Farther away from the encroaching swamp, a number of houses stand mostly intact. The cult has been making use of these structures to house high-ranking members and valuable items. Most of what was stored here was taken when the cultists returned to their main headquarters in Waterdeep, but a number of items can be found by characters who search the ruins:

- A small leather satchel with numerous maps of Waterdeep. One of the maps has a residence in the North Ward circled. (This is Dragonhorn Manor, the Cult of the Dragon's main hideout.)
- A crumpled letter found beneath a mattress mentions undertaking research into "the giants' throne," which someone named Severin was particularly interested in.
- Rough sketches show a number of different amulets, and are annotated with references to the amulets collecting immense power. The source of the power is not mentioned. (The notes relate to the research being undertaken by an arcanaloth in service to the Cult of the Dragon. See area T5 below for more information.)
- The remains of several small, recently constructed shrines can be found in the ruins, all devoted to the worship of dragons. Just over half of them are devoted to blue dragons, and feature symbols representing lightning.

WHO IS SEVERIN?

Severin Silrajin was the Red Wyrmspeaker and the main leader of the reformed Cult of the Dragon, who believed that the cult should be worshiping living rather than undead dragons. It was Severin who tried to raise Tiamat's temple from Avernus to Faerûn before being defeated in the Tyranny of Dragons storyline. The characters will come into contact with more of this history of the cult throughout this series of adventures.

THE TOWN HALL

This large building once served as a central gathering place for the folk of the fallen settlement. It has recently been converted into a makeshift research facility by the Cult of the Dragon.

AREA INFORMATION

The area has the following features.

Dimensions and Terrain. This large structure is 150 feet from side to side. It features a central meeting hall that has been converted into a laboratory, surrounded by a hallway that opens up into a number of smaller rooms along the outside of the building.

Light. Most of the building is dark, but the large laboratory is brightly lit by wall sconces with *continual flame* spells cast on them.

CREATURE INFORMATION

The Cult of the Dragon shut down its operations here in advance of its successful raid of Maelstrom. Only three cultists remain behind, all of them afraid to leave after losing compatriots to the ooze master in the outside ruins. Also present is the arcanaloth Zexmanthass, who is working to finish the research he has undertaken here on the cult's behalf.

T1. MAKESHIFT BARRACKS

These rooms are all lined with rickety cots, each of which has a small footlocker nearby. Most of the footlockers are now empty, but a thorough search turns up several well-thumbed books extolling the philosophies of the Cult of the Dragon, as well as three sets of cultist robes.

One of the footlockers also has a sketchbook folded inside a piece of burlap, which contains several drawings of a dracolich standing before what are easily recognized as the ruins of Drybed. The shape of its horns suggests that the dracolich was once a blue dragon, as can be determined by anyone with experience of dragons, who has fought a blue dragon, or who succeeds on a DC 16 Intelligence (Nature) check.

T2. TRAINING ROOMS

These two rooms are hung with weapon racks that now hold only a few rusted spears and a broken crossbow. Empty cabinets and chests are arranged along the walls next to three oversized target dummies made of leather, canvas, and straw. Anyone who inspects the giant-sized dummies can see where they have been repeatedly attacked at specific vulnerable points, making it clear that this is where the attacks against Maelstrom's giant guards were practiced.

One of the walls has a crude map carved into it, which is first recognized by the character with the highest passive Intelligence (Investigation) score as showing the portal chamber, the great hall, and the throne room at Maelstrom.

Creatures. If the characters enter the second training room prior to entering area T5, three cultists (use the **assassin** stat block) are waiting behind the door to ambush them.

ADJUSTING THE SCENE

Consider the following suggestions for adjusting this scene depending on the relative combat strength of the party:

- **Very Weak.** Remove two **assassins**.
- **Weak.** Remove one **assassin**.
- **Strong.** Add two **assassins**.
- **Very Strong.** Add three **assassins**.

Playing the Pillars. You can make use of the following suggestions when running this encounter.

Combat. The cultists have been ordered to keep intruders away from area T5 by any means. The first assassin to drop below 40 hit points attempts to flee to area T5 to warn Zexmanthass.

Exploration. The weapon racks and other furnishings in the room can be used to provide half cover from the cultists' attacks.

Social. If the characters attempt to talk to the cultists, assurances that they are only seeking information combined with a successful DC 25 Charisma (Persuasion) check convince them to stand down. Characters who talk of having destroyed the ooze master (truthfully or otherwise) have advantage on this check. All are recent recruits who started their service to the cult in Drybed. They know that the cultists who were here have gone to Waterdeep, but they don't know the location of the cult headquarters there. They can also report that the Red Wizards of Thay came to Drybed recently, killed a number of cult followers, and left the ooze master and its minion oozes behind. The cultists then offer to fetch Zexmanthass from area T5 so the characters can negotiate with the arcanaloth.

T3. STORAGE AREAS

Stacks of crates line the walls of both these rooms. The lids have been pulled off most of them, and straw once used for packing objects is scattered about.

Any character searching through the crates and succeeding on a DC 17 Intelligence (Investigation) check finds a blue dragon scale.

T4. RECORD HALL

Desks, tables, and cabinets are scattered around this room. Papers are piled up on most of the area's available flat surfaces, but any search reveals them to be little more than mundane cult communications, religious tracts, and journals of mundane history. However, any character who searches the empty cabinets and succeeds on a DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check notices a large folded map stuffed down almost out of view. The map is a detailed overview of the North Ward of Waterdeep, with a large X over a manor near the end of a street. Characters who found the maps in area D2 can see that they show the same location.

Any search of the desk reveals a journal marked with arcane sigils. Written by someone named Zexmanthass, the journal outlines experiments on transferring a soul from a phylactery into a new vessel. Any character with proficiency in the Religion skill or who succeeds on a DC 18 Intelligence (Religion) check understands that this process would allow creatures such as liches or dracoliches to change phylacteries.

T5. ZEXMANTHASS'S LABORATORY

This area has workbenches set along the walls, most of which are covered with notebooks—along with a number of amulets that lie in shattered pieces. The center of the room has a large black mark on the floor, as if an explosion occurred there. Several blue dragon scales are scattered across one workbench, where the characters see an unusual creature at work.

A creature resembling a humanoid jackal stands at the workbench, muttering as they flip through a notebook. “My greatest achievement yet ... yes ... hmmm. What to do now?”

Zexmanthass (an **arcanaloth**) cocks their head and looks quizzically at the characters as soon as they reveal themselves. He has no immediate interest in confrontation, but if the characters attack, he responds in kind, calling the cultists in area T2 unless the characters encountered them earlier.



ZEXMANTHASS

Neutral arcanaloth

Like all yugoloths, Zexmanthass is a mercenary of the highest order. When contacted by the Cult of the Dragon, the arcanaloth agreed to undertake research into powerful magic concerning lichs on the cult's behalf. Zexmanthass takes pride in wearing fine robes set with intricate embroidery and silk linings.

What They Want. Zexmanthass's all-consuming drive in life is to acquire knowledge, and their well-paid assignment with the Cult of the Dragon has provided them with endless research opportunities.

Knowledge Enthusiast. Zexmanthass cares little who they work for, as long as their pursuit of knowledge can continue. They are not concerned with the morality of their employers.

Playing the Pillars. You can make use of the following suggestions when running this encounter.

Combat. Zexmanthass is not particularly interested in fighting, and wants to avoid having his laboratory destroyed. If attacked, the arcanaloth uses *dimension door* as soon as possible to move the combat outdoors.

Exploration. Some of the experiments that Zexmanthass has been working on are still extremely volatile. Any creature handling one of the broken amulets must make a DC 18 Intelligence saving throw, taking 33 (6d10) psychic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Social. Zexmanthass is happy to negotiate with characters who don't threaten them or their work. If reassured that the characters will leave the arcanaloth alone to continue their research, Zexmanthass tells all they know. If the characters appear untrustworthy, a successful DC 18 Charisma (Deception or Persuasion) check might be needed to convince the arcanaloth to talk.

What Zexmanthass Knows. The arcanaloth was set up in Drybed by the Cult of the Dragon, who wanted their research undertaken far from prying eyes. Zexmanthass can confirm that the Cult of the Dragon used this settlement as a hideout while they trained for an assault on what the arcanaloth calls “some giant fortress.” He is unaware of any specific plans concerning King Hekaton, and has not seen the *Wyrmskull Throne* or any giant at the settlement.

In the course of Zexmanthass's experiments, the arcanaloth was able to successfully transfer the soul of a blue dracolich who visited Drybed into a new phylactery. (A few earlier unsuccessful experiments were the origin of the scorch marks in the lab.) After Zexmanthass shared the full knowledge of the ritual with the cult leader in charge of the operation at Drybed, most of the cultists packed up and left. The arcanaloth has no idea where they went, but suggests that the characters search area D2 or area T4 if they haven't already.

Treasure. Zexmanthass is willing to part with a *potion of supreme healing* in thanks for the characters leaving them to their research. If the characters refrained from attacking the arcanaloth and didn't destroy any of their experiments, Zexmanthass also offers up a *necklace of fireballs* for the characters' kindness. See appendix 4, “Character Rewards,” for more information on these items.

RESTING

The characters can choose to take a long rest between this section of the adventure and part 3.

PART 3: X MARKS THE SPOT

Estimated Duration: 1 hour 40 minutes

The final part of the adventure sees the characters pursuing the Cult of the Dragon to Waterdeep—and discovering that the cultists are not the only foes they must face.

TRAVELING TO WATERDEEP

The maps found in the cultists' hideout in the Mere of Dead Men clearly point toward the characters' next destination in their pursuit of the cultists who stole the *Wyrmskull Throne*. Waterdeep is some 150 miles south of the Mere of Dead Men, or six day's travel along the High Road for characters without access to teleportation magic. The characters can shorten the trip by a few days by seeking ship's passage from any coastal settlement south of the Mere of Dead Men.

STORY OBJECTIVE

Discovering that another group is searching for the missing *Wyrmskull Throne* on the orders of a giant death knight is **Story Objective C**.

SPEEDING UP THIS ENCOUNTER

If you are running this encounter in less than the recommended time, or if you find that time is running short during your session, you can speed things up by narrating the search of Dragonhorn Manor up to the point where the characters locate the access to the secret underground lair.

Another option is to collapse some of the encounters, such as removing the **helmed horrors** from D1 and moving the *illusory dragon* trap to D6 with the quicklings.

DRAGONHORN MANOR

Standing near the end of a quiet street, this two-story stone manor appears less well maintained than the other homes in the area. The grass and flowerbeds are overgrown, and moss is spreading across the roof. Characters who approach the front doors can see that all the windows are shuttered, denying any glimpse inside the house. Knocking at the door yields no response.

Characters who ask around the neighborhood learn that the manor has been empty since its previous owners left Waterdeep a year ago. (Those owners were devotees of the Cult of the Dragon who left to join its operations elsewhere. They bequeathed the house—and its elaborate system of hidden cellars—to the cult for use as a headquarters.)

GETTING INSIDE

Gaining entrance to the manor requires breaking in. The main doors on the ground level, the door leading into the kitchen (area D4), and the doors on the second-floor balcony (area D8) are all locked, but can be opened with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools, or forced with a successful DC 17 Strength (Athletics) check. Any of the shuttered windows can be forced open with a successful DC 13 Strength (Athletics) check. As long as the characters take a bit of care, they can enter the manor unobserved by neighbors or passersby (but see "Wrap-Up" below for information on another group watching the house).

AREA INFORMATION

The area has the following features.

Terrain. A layer of dust covers the floors in all areas of the manor, making it clear that the place has been unoccupied for months.

Light. By day, the manor is filled with dim light filtering in through the shuttered windows. Opening the shutters lets in bright light by day. The manor is dark at night.

D1. GRAND SALON

This room is lavishly appointed with ornately carved chairs and matching tables, all arranged in small groups. Lavish curtains cover the large window, making this area dark while the shutters are also closed. A large tapestry hangs opposite the windows, depicting a scene in which humanoids of different lineages bow down in submission before a pair of blue dragons.

Creatures. Four sets of regal armor flank both the entrances into this room. When the first character moves more than 10 feet into the salon, these **helmed horrors** animate and attack the party. The constructs pursue characters who leave this area.

Additionally, when any character moves within 5 feet of the tapestry, a shadow illusion of a blue dragon appears in the center of the room, created by the *illusory dragon* spell (see the sidebar). The illusion is programmed and does not move, but it unleashes a cone of lightning on initiative count 0 each round. Saving throws against the illusion are made at DC 20. A character who suspects the dragon isn't real can attempt a DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check to assess it, noting that the dragon is an illusion on a success.

The illusion vanishes when all the helmed horrors are destroyed, or after 1 minute.

Alarm. When the helmed horrors activate, an alarm magically triggers in area U1. Members of the Cult of the Dragon would normally come upstairs to engage intruders, but they are already occupied by other threats. See the "Underground Lair" section for more information.

ILLUSORY DRAGON

8th-level illusion

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 120 feet

Components: S

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

By gathering threads of shadow material from the Shadowfell, you create a Huge shadowy dragon in an unoccupied space that you can see within range. The illusion lasts for the spell's duration and occupies its space, as if it were a creature.

When the illusion appears, any of your enemies that can see it must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw or become frightened of it for 1 minute. If a frightened creature ends its turn in a location where it doesn't have line of sight to the illusion, it can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on itself on a success.

As a bonus action on your turn, you can move the illusion up to 60 feet. At any point during its movement, you can cause it to exhale a blast of energy in a 60-foot cone originating from its space. When you create the dragon, choose a damage type: acid, cold, fire, lightning, necrotic, or poison. Each creature in the cone must make an Intelligence saving throw, taking 7d6 damage of the chosen damage type on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

The illusion is tangible because of the shadow stuff used to create it, but attacks miss it automatically, it succeeds on all saving throws, and it is immune to all damage and conditions. A creature that uses an action to examine the dragon can determine that it is an illusion by succeeding on an Intelligence (Investigation) check against your spell save DC. If a creature discerns the illusion for what it is, the creature can see through it and has advantage on saving throws against its breath.

This spell is found in *Xanathar's Guide to Everything*.

D2. MUSIC ROOM

A small stage sits at one end of this room, with a dusty golden harp upon it. The room also features a grand piano badly in need of tuning, a lute, and a matching pair of reed pipes. A number of lavish chairs are pushed in along the walls and covered with linen cloth.

D3. LIBRARY

Bookshelves filled with tomes covering a wide range of subjects fill most of this room, and a pair of plush reading chairs are tucked into the far corners. Any character examining the shelves and succeeding on a DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check notes that the books are organized by subject, and that sections on liches and giants are both missing a number of volumes. Any character with the sage background or experience with research has advantage on this check.

D4. KITCHEN

This area features dust-covered stoves and preparation tables. Room 4a is a large walk-in cabinet filled with cookware and dishes. Unlike the rest of the manor, the dust on the floor in this area shows signs of being regularly disturbed, with tracks leading from the outside door to the larder (area D5). A successful DC 18 Wisdom (Survival) check determines that the most recent tracks were made just a few hours ago, by five humanoid creatures.

D5. LARDER

Opening the door to this area reveals a mess of broken crates and overturned shelves. A thorough search allows the characters to follow the trail of footprints from the kitchen through the debris, and to locate a hidden trapdoor that leads to the Cult of the Dragon's secret underground lair (see that section below).

D6. DINING HALL

A fine wooden table large enough for twelve diners stands at the center of this room, a luxuriously soft rug covering the hardwood floor beneath. The table is set with dusty cutlery and exquisitely crafted plates and bowls, as though a dinner party were about to occur. Two sideboards stand against the walls, each set with a pair of ornate golden candlesticks. One of the candles on the sideboard opposite the door has been knocked over onto its side, ruining the otherwise perfect decorations.

Conjuration Trap. A magic trap triggers the first time any creature steps onto the rug in the center of the room. When the trap triggers, two **quickklings** are conjured on the stairwell in the hallway outside the door, each under the effect of a *greater invisibility* spell as they dart into the dining hall and attack any characters they can see. The trap can be triggered once for each character who steps onto the carpet, with two additional invisible quickklings conjured each time.

D7. GRAND BALLROOM

The largest room in the manor, this ballroom features oversized mirrors along its walls with light sconces placed between them.

D8. BALCONY

This large open balcony is enclosed behind an iron railing, and offers a stunning view of Waterdeep's North Ward. The floor here is set with colorful mosaic tiles featuring images of doves.

D9. GUEST BEDROOMS

Each of these chambers is furnished with a wooden four-poster bed, a wardrobe, and a small writing table, and has a painting hung on the wall opposite the bed. Each painting depicts a scene of a battlefield with a different-colored chromatic dragon soaring above it—red, black, green, and white.

D10. MASTER BEDROOM

This large bedchamber features an ornately carved canopy bed draped with dusty silk. A large wooden chest in the corner of the room has an enormous white dragon scale hanging above it, etched with some sort of rune. (The chest contains moldering fine clothing if opened.) A large wardrobe stands next to the chest.

A writing table sits across from the door, with a large woven tapestry hanging on the wall next to it. The tapestry shows dragons soaring across a night sky filled with lightning, above cultists on the ground hurling living sacrifices onto pyres. A painting similar to those seen in the other chambers also graces the wall across from the bed, this one depicting a majestic ancient blue dragon leading an army to battle.

Dragon Shield Trap. A close investigation of the dragon scale hanging on the wall shows that its underside is set up to allow it to be wielded as a shield. Taking the shield triggers a magical glyph inscribed on the wall behind it, which activates the *symbol (death)* spell (DC 20).

Ravenous Wardrobe. The wardrobe is a **giant mimic** that came here just after the manor was abandoned, and which has been feeding on mice and insects. The creature is ravenous, and attacks if any character moves more than 10 feet into the room. The mimic pursues characters into other areas of the manor, but must squeeze to get through doors and move down hallways.

Treasure. The dragon scale is actually a *shield of the uven rune* (see appendix 4, “Character Rewards”).

UNDERGROUND LAIR

The Cult of the Dragon has an underground lair beneath Dragonhorn Manor, accessed by way of a trapdoor hidden in the larder off the kitchen (area D5).

AREA INFORMATION

The area has the following features.

Dimensions and Terrain. The tunnels and chambers in the lair have walls and ceilings reinforced with rough-hewn stone, and floors of packed earth. Ceilings in the tunnels are 10 feet high, with ceilings in chambers from 10 to 15 feet high.

Light. Torches mounted in brackets along the walls fill all areas of the lair with bright light.

U1. ENTRANCE AREA

This area would normally be guarded by low-ranking cultists assessing all those who enter the lair. However, the Cult of the Dragon has come under attack, as the characters will discover.

Two dead bodies wearing black robes with the insignia of the Cult of the Dragon lie sprawled in the middle of the room, blood seeping into the dirt floor beneath them. Both show signs of having taken damage from weapons and spells. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) check confirms that the two were killed within the last two hours.

U2. ARMORY

The door to this area is locked, but can be opened with a successful DC 16 Dexterity check using thieves’ tools, broken through with a series of three successful DC 18 Strength (Athletics) checks, or smashed down. The iron door has 150 hit points, AC 20, and immunity to poison and psychic damage.

When the characters enter this area, they find three **cultists** wearing the insignia of the Cult of the Dragon. All three have weapons at the ready and attack at once.

Playing the Pillars. You can make use of the following suggestions when running this encounter.

Combat. If the characters have alerted the cultists to their approach by talking loudly in area U1, or by attempting to force or attack the door for more than 1 round, the cultists have surprise and have taken the time to rig a trap. When the door opens, the first character to pass through it must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or have six vials of acid drop on them from above,

dealing 42 (12d6) acid damage. If the cultists do not know the characters are coming, each spends the first round of combat throwing two vials of acid at the first character to enter the room. Each vial of acid is +1 to hit and deals 7 (2d6) acid damage.

Exploration. The room contains weapons racks holding mundane weapons of your determination. A smaller rack mounted on the wall behind the cultists contains additional vials of various substances, most notably alchemist’s fire. If the rack is smashed or disturbed (including by being caught in the area of a damage-dealing spell), all the glass vials explode, dealing 17 (5d6) piercing damage and 21 (6d6) fire damage to every creature in the room.

Social. The three neutral cultists are terrified. They are prepared to fight to the death, but would much prefer to live and are willing to negotiate. If the characters stop the fight to parley, the cultists can report that they were on guard in area U1 when another adventuring party entered the lair two hours before. The adventurers killed two guards then pushed past the others, who locked themselves in the armory. They have no idea who the attackers were, but describe them all wearing the sigil of black crow’s wings on their armor. With a successful DC 15 Intelligence (History) check, a character recognizes that as the symbol of the Ebon Wings—a brutal company of adventurers for hire.

U3. LIVING QUARTERS

This room is furnished with several basic beds with straw mattresses. The attackers who pushed past the cultists in area U2 have been through here, as evidenced by the six bloody bodies of cultists lying dead on the floor.

U4. TEMPORARY HOLDING CELLS

Four cells have been set up in this chamber, but currently do not hold any prisoners.

U5. OFFICE

Most of this room is filled by a large writing desk. The drawers of the desk have been yanked open, and papers are strewn around the room. A quick glance at the papers shows that all are mundane correspondence and directives between members of the cult.

U6. STORAGE

Barrels and crates are stacked along the walls in this area, holding water, grain, salted meat, and other basic foodstuffs.

U7. RITUAL HALL

This huge chamber has several pillars supporting the ceiling. An elaborate altar decorated with symbols of Tiamat stands near the center of the room.

Five humans (see the “Ebon Wings” sidebar and the “Creature Statistics” section) stand just past the altar, corralling a group of ten **cultists** and three **cult fanatics** from the Cult of the Dragon against the far wall. Five of those cultists are already on the ground, alive but brutally beaten.

The lawful evil members of this adventuring party arrived at Dragonhorn Manor two hours before the characters.



After picking the lock at the kitchen door, they followed the tracks in the dust to the larder and began their assault against the Cult of the Dragon.

EBON WINGS

The members of the Ebon Wings are **Whaylon** (a warlord), **Azalathar** (an evoker), **Emita** (a blackguard), **Ravek** (a warlock), and **Serinna** (an assassin). All are lawful evil, and were hired by the Thayans to seek out the *Wyrmskull Throne* after the Red Wizards failed to acquire it at Maelstrom.

What They Want. The Ebon Wings were hired by a giant death knight to search for the missing *Wyrmskull Throne*. (This death knight is King Hekaton, raised by the Red Wizards and now a servant of Szass Tam, the ancient lich who rules Thay. The Ebon Wings have no idea of the death knight's true identity.)

Hired Mercenaries. Though they might share similar goals with the characters, the Ebon Wings are unwilling to share loot or information unless they are completely defeated. They know only that their patron, the giant death knight, sent them to this location to seek information about the throne. Having been paid in advance, they are content to report what they've found and end their involvement in the search, and have no interest in joining forces with the characters.

Playing the Pillars. You can make use of the following suggestions when running this encounter.

Combat. If the characters attempt to intervene in the Ebon Wings' brutal interrogation of the cultists, Whaylon (the group's leader) tells them to clear off. If the characters refuse, the Ebon Wings attack. See "Social" below for making use of the cultists in combat.

Exploration. The ground in the ritual chamber is especially damp. A character who succeeds on a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check can spot a slippery patch of dirt and lead one of the Ebon Wings into it during melee combat. That enemy must succeed on a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw or fall prone.

Social. Any character with a passive Wisdom (Insight) score of 13 or higher, or who succeeds on a DC 13 Wisdom (Insight) check made to assess the Cult of the Dragon followers, can tell that they are all terrified of the Ebon Wings. A successful DC 18 Charisma (Persuasion) check convinces the ten cornered **cultists** and three **cult fanatics** to assist the characters in combat. Though all the cult followers have been disarmed, cultists can use the Help action to aid the characters in combat, and you can have the cult fanatics use their spells against the Ebon Wings. The cultists fight for their own self-preservation first and foremost, though, and flee the fight and the lair at the first opportunity, taking their wounded comrades with them.

Mystery Mission. If the characters parley with the members of the Ebon Wings or question survivors after defeating them, the mercenaries know only that their patron, a giant death knight, sent them to this location seeking information about the *Wyrmskull Throne*. If none of the Ebon Wings survive a fight with the characters, this information can be found on notes or a journal retrieved from one of them.

What's Known of the Throne. Any of the cult fanatics still present after a skirmish with the Ebon Wings are able to confirm that the Cult of the Dragon has taken possession of the *Wyrmskull Throne*, though none of these cultists were involved in the raid on Maelstrom. They do not know

where the throne currently is or what it is meant to be used for, nor do they have any knowledge of King Hekaton having been kidnapped by the cult. They do know that a blue dracolich that has joined the cult has a particular interest in the throne. If all the cult fanatics flee the fight, a surviving cultist can share this information, or it can be found in area U8.

Treasure. The members of the Ebon Wings carry sacks full of valuables and coins they've looted on other recent jobs. (They were intending to loot Dragonhorn Manor after finishing their business with the Cult of the Dragon.)

U8. STORAGE

This room is used to store candles and components required for rituals calling on the power of Tiamat. Any character doing a search of the room and succeeding on a DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check discovers a well-hidden secret entrance behind a shelf of components. Opening the door reveals footprints in the soft floor, leading along an upward-sloping dirt tunnel. With a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check, a character determines that two or more people fled this way approximately an hour ago.

If the characters could not obtain the information from the cult fanatics or cultists in area U7, they find a small backpack dropped here. The pack contains mundane personal effects, plus an incomplete letter detailing the information in "What's Known of the Throne" above.

The tunnel leads up to a secret trapdoor in a backyard shed a few houses down from Dragonhorn Manor. If questioned, the owners of the shed have no idea that the trapdoor is there. Footprints through the yard show that whoever fled the lair ran to the street and disappeared.

Treasure. The characters can claim a selection of valuable oils and incense from the cultists' stores.

WRAP-UP

Estimated Duration: 20 minutes

The characters' incursion into Dragonhorn Manor has gained them valuable information, but the trail of the servants of the Cult of the Dragon has gone cold. If none of the characters does so first, Zehira Deryan suggests that their best course of action would be to return to Maelstrom to brief Princess Serissa on what they have learned so far. However, even as the characters leave Dragonhorn Manor, they are met by an unexpected group of would-be allies.

UNLIKELY ALLIANCE

The Thayan zulkir of enchantment, Dar'lon Ma, says that he has learned of the troubles of the storm giant court, and has information that he believes might prove helpful to the party. As soon as the characters leave the manor, Dar'lon and a small retinue approach them on the street. You can read or paraphrase the following to set the scene:

As you depart the manor, a figure steps out from a lane farther along the street. They set their course for you, led by a figure in the unmistakable robes of a Red Wizard of Thay.

Dar'lon and his entourage are nonthreatening as they approach the characters, stopping and nodding in greeting. Dar'lon explains that he has had Dragonhorn Manor

watched for some time now, and says that if the characters are investigating what went on there, he might have information of use to them. He invites the characters to a private meeting in a tavern he knows to talk more.

DAR'LOH MA

Lawful evil Thayan human enchanter

Broad shouldered and oozing charisma, Dar'lon Ma is the Thayan zulkir of enchantment—a consummate politician and manipulator. While his bright smile serves to mark him as approachable, his sizable frame and cautious body language suggest that he is a formidable combatant.

What They Want. Dar'lon Ma wants to ensure that the characters are indebted to him in case he ever needs to call in a favor in the future.

Cunning Politician. One of the twelve zulkirs of Thay, Dar'lon Ma uses his command of enchantment magic to ensure that he remains in power and that his enemies are kept at bay.

DAR'LOH MA'S OFFER

Dar'lon Ma has important information about the location of King Hekaton that he is willing to share if the characters ally with him in their search. If the characters accept, Dar'lon Ma then introduces them to a wizard named Khynree (or reintroduces them if they sought Khynree's aid to read Maelstrom in part 1 of the adventure).



LEGACY EVENT: ALLY OF THE ZULKIR

By accepting the zulkir's aid, the characters gain the **Ally of the Zulkir** legacy event.

Rumors heard through agents and informers suggest that King Hekaton has been kidnapped by the Red Wizards and taken to the Thaymount, for reasons unknown. (Dar'lon does not know that Hekaton was killed in the attack on Maelstrom or that the king has been raised as an undead.) On Dar'lon Ma's instructions, Khynree can assist the characters with gaining access to Thay, allowing them to seek more information and attempt to determine what's happened to the king. If the characters ask about his motivations for aiding them, Dar'lon says only that he has longstanding disagreements with Thayan ruler Szass Tam, and any trouble the characters can make for that legendary lich would please the zulkir. (The characters will learn more of Dar'lon Ma in the next adventure.)

If the characters are not inclined to accept but have met Khynree already, the wizard tries to sway them, telling them (half truthfully) that Dar'lon Ma is trustworthy. If the characters owe Khynree for teleporting them, agreeing to work with Dar'lon Ma clears that debt.

If the characters are noncommittal, they can return to Princess Serissa with what they've learned. With the characters having gained no word on her father's whereabouts, Serissa entreats them to continue onward to the Thaymount, with or without Dar'lon Ma's help, as his information is the only lead the party has.



LEGACY EVENT: A COSTLY RIDE

Characters who owe Khynree and refuse to work with Dar'lon Ma gain the **A Costly Ride** legacy event.

The choices the characters make at the end of this adventure are key legacy events. They should be recorded, as they affect the next adventure.

REWARDS

At the **end of the session**, the characters receive rewards based upon their accomplishments.

CHARACTER REWARDS

The characters earn the following rewards.

ADVANCEMENT

A character participating in this adventure gains one level. Players must tick the box to show that this reward has been claimed.

OPTIONAL: DECLINING ADVANCEMENT

Each player can decline advancement if they so choose, gaining potential benefits. It's possible that a player might want their character to not advance outside of an adventure's level range, meaning that they'd be unable to play the adventure as planned. Similarly, advancing too quickly means that a character won't earn as much gold as their peers.

Conversely, remind the players that the amount of gold their characters can earn per level is limited. Characters declining advancement might reach a point where they no longer earn gold.

GOLD

Award each character gold for each hour of the session. Adventures typically feature cues for where this treasure appears, but you can add it wherever you see fit. The maximum gold that you can award a character per hour is determined by their tier, as follows:

Tier	Hourly GP Award	GP Limit per Level
1	20 gp	80 gp
2	30 gp	240 gp
3	200 gp	1,600 gp
4	750 gp	6,000 gp

MAGIC ITEMS

If found during the adventure, the characters can keep the following magic items. These items are described in appendix 4, "Character Rewards":

- *Dragontooth dagger*
- *Necklace of fireballs*
- *Potion of supreme healing*
- *Potion of water breathing*
- *Shield of the uven rune*

LEGACY EVENTS

The characters can gain either of the following legacy events in this adventure.

A Costly Ride. You offered a favor to the wizard Khynree and passed up a chance to repay that debt. Since you refused him once, your debt has grown. To clear your debt, Khynree requires that you forfeit a common or rarer permanent magic item or a rare or rarer consumable magic item.

Ally of the Zulkir. You have agreed to work with the Thayan zulkir of enchantment, Dar'lon Ma.

DUNGEON MASTER REWARDS

For running this adventure, you earn a DM Reward. See the *Adventurers League Dungeon Master's Guide* for more information.



DRAMATIS PERSONAE

The following NPCs feature prominently in this adventure.

DAR'LOH MA

(DAR-lon MA)

Broad shouldered and oozing charisma, Dar'lon Ma is the Thayan zulkir of enchantment—a consummate politician and manipulator. While his bright smile serves to mark him as approachable, his sizable frame and cautious body language suggest that he is a formidable combatant.

What They Want. Dar'lon Ma wants to ensure that the characters are indebted to him in case he ever needs to call in a favor in the future.

Cunning Politician. One of the twelve zulkirs of Thay, Dar'lon Ma uses his command of enchantment magic to ensure that he remains in power and that his enemies are kept at bay.

KHYNREE

(KEN-ree)

A Turmishan wizard who has become indebted to the Red Wizards, Khynree is currently in the employ of the Thayan zulkir Dar'lon Ma, though he does not reveal this fact.

LAKAR KLOTD

(LUH-kar klot)

Lakar has lived in the Mere of Dead Men his entire life, and he is familiar with the unique dangers found there. An agent of the Cult of the Dragon, he enjoys acting the part of a simple fisher, and is friendly toward strangers to get them close enough for his frogemoth companions to strike.

What They Want. Lakar enjoys watching the frogemoths feed—and the money the Cult of the Dragon provides him for each potential intruder eaten makes it that much sweeter for him.

Opportunist. Always on the hunt for a way to make coin, Lakar will consider any bargain—and will betray anyone if there's profit in it for him.

PRINCESS SERISSA

(SAH-riss-ah)

The youngest daughter and chosen successor of King Hekaton, Serissa is cool and calm, even as she understands that others in the giant court covet her position.

What They Want. To maintain peace among the giants, Serissa must find her father and the *Wyrmskull Throne*, and have whoever attacked Maelstrom face justice.

Optimistic Leader. Serissa wants to believe that all folk are innately good at heart. Reluctantly accepting the mantle of ruler once more in her father's stead, she is determined to do everything she can to find King Hekaton and return the *Wyrmskull Throne* to Maelstrom. She fears that her father's disappearance will bring about a new rise in tensions between the giant races, and knows that she must defuse those tensions if she can.

THE EBON WINGS

The members of the Ebon Wings are **Whaylon** (a warlord), **Azalathar** (an evoker), **Emita** (a blackguard), **Ravek** (a warlock), and **Serinna** (an assassin). All are lawful evil, and were hired by the Thayans to seek out the *Wyrmskull Throne* after the Red Wizards failed to acquire it at Maelstrom.

What They Want. The Ebon Wings were hired by a giant death knight to search for the missing *Wyrmskull Throne*. (This death knight is King Hekaton, raised by the Red Wizards and now a servant of Szass Tam, the ancient lich who rules Thay. The Ebon Wings have no idea of the death knight's true identity.)

Hired Mercenaries. Though they might share similar goals with the characters, the Ebon Wings are unwilling to share loot or information unless they are completely defeated. They know only that their patron, the giant death knight, sent them to this location to seek information about the throne. Having been paid in advance, they are content to report what they've found and end their involvement in the search, and have no interest in joining forces with the characters.

ZEHIRA DERYAN

(zeh-HEER-uh DAIR-yuhn)

Zehira is an experienced privateer, once the daughter of Turmishan merchants. She has keen dark eyes, olive skin, and black hair that she keeps in a tight braid.

What They Want. Zehira possesses the *Iltkazar Scepter*, and wants to make sure that this powerful relic does not fall into the wrong hands. She aspires to protect the greater good.

Reckless at Heart. Zehira is intelligent and kind, but can be a little reckless in her pursuit of adventure.

ZEXMANTHASS

(ZECKS-man-thass)

Like all yugoloths, Zexmanthass is a mercenary of the highest order. When contacted by the Cult of the Dragon, the arcanaloth agreed to undertake research into powerful magic concerning liches on the cult's behalf. Zexmanthass takes pride in wearing fine robes set with intricate embroidery and silk linings.

What They Want. Zexmanthass's all-consuming drive in life is to acquire knowledge, and their well-paid assignment with the Cult of the Dragon has provided them with endless research opportunities.

Knowledge Enthusiast. Zexmanthass cares little who they work for, as long as their pursuit of knowledge can continue. They are not concerned with the morality of their employers.

CREATURE STATISTICS

The following creatures appear in this adventure.

ARCANALOTH

Medium fiend (yugoloth), neutral evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 104 (16d8 + 32)

Speed 30 ft., fly 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	11 (+0)	19 (+4)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Dex +5, Int +9, Wis +7, Cha +7

Skills Arcana +13, Deception +9, Insight +9, Perception +7

Damage Resistances cold, fire, lightning; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Damage Immunities acid, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, poisoned

Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 17

Languages all, telepathy 60 ft.

Challenge 12 (8,400 XP)

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

At will: *alter self*, *darkness*, *heat metal*, *invisibility* (self only), *magic missile*

Magic Resistance. The arcanaloth has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Magic Weapons. The arcanaloth's weapon attacks are magical.

Spellcasting. The arcanaloth is a 16th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 17, +9 to hit with spell attacks). The arcanaloth has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *fire bolt*, *mage hand*, *minor illusion*, *prestidigitation*

1st level (4 slots): *detect magic*, *identify*, *shield*, *Tenser's floating disk*

2nd level (3 slots): *detect thoughts*, *mirror image*, *phantasmal force*, *suggestion*

3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell*, *fear*, *fireball*

4th level (3 slots): *banishment*, *greater invisibility*

5th level (3 slots): *contact other plane*, *hold monster*

6th level (1 slot): *chain lightning*

7th level (1 slot): *finger of death*

8th level (1 slot): *mind blank*

ACTIONS

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (2d4 + 3) slashing damage. The target must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw, taking 10 (3d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Teleport. The arcanaloth magically teleports, along with any equipment it is wearing or carrying, up to 60 feet to an unoccupied space it can see.

ASSASSIN

Medium humanoid (any race), any non-good alignment

Armor Class 15 (studded leather)

Hit Points 78 (12d8 + 24)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws Dex +7, Int +5

Skills Acrobatics +7, Deception +4, Perception +4, Stealth +11

Damage Resistances poison

Senses passive Perception 14

Languages thieves' cant plus any two languages

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Assassinate. During its first turn, the assassin has advantage on attack rolls against any creature that hasn't taken a turn. Any hit the assassin scores against a surprised creature is a critical hit.

Evasion. If the assassin is subjected to an effect that allows it to make a Dexterity saving throw to take only half damage, the assassin instead takes no damage if it succeeds on the saving throw, and only half damage if it fails.

Sneak Attack (1/Turn). The assassin deals an extra 13 (4d6) damage when it hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of the assassin that isn't incapacitated and the assassin doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The assassin makes two shortsword attacks.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 24 (7d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Light Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 24 (7d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

AZALATHAR (EVOKER)

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

Armor Class 12 (15 with *mage armor*)

Hit Points 66 (12d8+12)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (–1)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	17 (+3)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws Int +7, Wis +5

Skills Arcana +6, History +6

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages any four languages

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Spellcasting. The evoker is a 12th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). The evoker has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *fire bolt*,* *light*,* *prestidigitation*, *ray of frost**

1st level (4 slots): *burning hands*,* *mage armor*, *magic missile**

2nd level (3 slots): *mirror image*, *misty step*, *shatter**

3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell*, *fireball*,* *lightning bolt**

4th level (3 slots): *ice storm*,* *stoneskin*

5th level (2 slot): *Bigby's hand*,* *cone of cold**

6th level (1 slot): *chain lightning*,* *wall of ice**

*Evocation spell

Sculpt Spells. When the evoker casts an evocation spell that forces other creatures, it can choose a number of them equal to 1+spell level. These creatures automatically succeed on their saving throws against the spell. If a successful save means a chosen creature would take half damage from the spell, it instead takes no damage from it.

ACTIONS

Quarterstaff. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d6 – 1) bludgeoning damage, or 3 (1d8 – 1) bludgeoning damage if used with two hands.

CATOBLEPAS

Large monstrosity, unaligned

Armor Class 14 (Natural Armor)

Hit Points 84 (8d10 + 40)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	12 (+1)	21 (+5)	3 (–4)	14 (+2)	8 (–1)

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages —

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Keen Smell. The catoblepas has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

Stench. Any creature other than a catoblepas that starts its turn within 10 feet of the catoblepas must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned until the start of the creature's next turn. On a successful saving throw, the creature is immune to the stench of any catoblepas for 1 hour.

ACTIONS

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 21 (5d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or be stunned until the start of the catoblepas's next turn.

Death Ray (Recharge 5–6). The catoblepas targets a creature that it can see within 30 feet of it. The target must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw, taking 36 (8d8) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. If the saving throw fails by 5 or more, the target instead takes 64 necrotic damage. The target dies if reduced to 0 hit points by this ray.

COMMONER

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

Armor Class 10

Hit Points 4 (1d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages any one language (usually Common)

Challenge 0 (10 XP)

ACTIONS

Club. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d4) bludgeoning damage.

CULT FANATIC

Medium humanoid (any race), any non-good alignment

Armor Class 13 (leather armor)

Hit Points 33 (6d8 + 6)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)

Skills Deception +4, Persuasion +4, Religion +2

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages any one language (usually Common)

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Dark Devotion. The fanatic has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened.

Spellcasting. The fanatic is a 4th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 11, +3 to hit with spell attacks). The fanatic has the following cleric spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *light*, *sacred flame*, *thaumaturgy*

1st level (4 slots): *command*, *inflict wounds*, *shield of faith*

2nd level (3 slots): *hold person*, *spiritual weapon*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The fanatic makes two melee attacks.

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

CULTIST

Medium humanoid (any race), any non-good alignment

Armor Class 12 (leather armor)

Hit Points 9 (2d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

Skills Deception +2, Religion +2

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages any one language (usually Common)

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Dark Devotion. The cultist has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened.

ACTIONS

Scimitar. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature.

Hit: 4 (1d6 + 1) slashing damage.

EMITA (BLACKGUARD)

Medium humanoid (any race), any non-good alignment

Armor Class 18 (plate)

Hit Points 153 (18d8 + 72)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	11 (+0)	18 (+4)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws WIS +5, CHA +5

Skills Athletics +7, Deception +5, Intimidation +5

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages any one language (usually Common)

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Spellcasting. The blackguard is a 10th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). It has the following paladin spells prepared:

1st level (4 slots): *command*, *protection from evil and good*, *thunderous smite*

2nd level (3 slots): *branding smite*, *find steed*

3rd level (2 slots): *blinding smite*, *dispel magic*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The blackguard makes three attacks with its glaive or its shortbow.

Glaive. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target.

Hit: 9 (1d10 + 4) slashing damage.

Shortbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Dreadful Aspect (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). The blackguard exudes magical menace. Each enemy within 30 feet of the blackguard must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened for 1 minute. If a frightened target ends its turn more than 30 feet away from the blackguard, the target can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on itself on a success.

FROGHEMOTH

Huge monstrosity, unaligned

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 184 (16d12 + 80)

Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
23 (+6)	13 (+1)	20 (+5)	2 (–4)	12 (+1)	5 (–3)

Saving Throws Con +9, Wis +5

Skills Perception +9, Stealth +5

Damage Resistances fire, lightning

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 19

Languages —

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Amphibious. The froghemoth can breathe air and water.

Shock Susceptibility. If the froghemoth takes lightning damage, it suffers several effects until the end of its next turn: its speed is halved, it takes a –2 penalty to AC and Dexterity saving throws, it can't use reactions or Multiattack, and on its turn, it can use either an action or a bonus action, not both.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The froghemoth makes two attacks with its tentacles. It can also use its tongue or bite.

Tentacle. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (3d8 + 6) bludgeoning damage and the creature is grappled (escape DC 16) if it is a Huge or smaller creature. Until the grapple ends, the froghemoth can't use this tentacle on another target. The froghemoth has four tentacles.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 22 (3d10 + 6) piercing damage, and the creature is swallowed if it is a Medium or smaller creature. A swallowed creature is blinded and restrained, has total cover against attacks and other effects outside the froghemoth, and takes 10 (3d6) acid damage at the start of each of the froghemoth's turns.

The froghemoth's gullet can hold up to two creatures at a time. If the froghemoth takes 20 damage or more on a single turn from a creature inside it, the froghemoth must succeed on a DC 20 Constitution saving throw at the end of that turn or regurgitate all swallowed creatures, each of which falls prone in a space within 10 feet of the froghemoth. If the froghemoth dies, a swallowed creature is no longer restrained by it and can escape from the corpse using 10 feet of movement, exiting prone.

Tongue. The froghemoth targets one Medium or smaller creature that it can see within 20 feet of it. The target must make a DC 18 Strength saving throw. On a failed save, the target is pulled into an unoccupied space within 5 feet of the froghemoth, and the froghemoth can make a bite attack against it as a bonus action.

GELATINOUS CUBE

Large ooze, unaligned

Armor Class 6

Hit Points 84 (8d10 + 40)

Speed 15 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	3 (-4)	20 (+5)	1 (-5)	6 (-2)	10 (-5)

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion frightened, prone

Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 8

Languages —

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Ooze Cube. The cube takes up its entire space. Other creatures can enter the space, but a creature that does so is subjected to the cube's Engulf and has disadvantage on the saving throw.

Creatures inside the cube can be seen but have total cover.

A creature within 5 feet of the cube can take an action to pull a creature or object out of the cube. Doing so requires a successful DC 12 Strength check, and the creature making the attempt takes 10 (3d6) acid damage. The cube can hold only one Large creature or up to four Medium or smaller creatures inside it at a time.

Transparent. Even when the cube is in plain sight, it takes a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check to spot a cube that has neither moved nor attacked. A creature that tries to enter the cube's space while unaware of the cube is surprised by the cube.

ACTIONS

Pseudopod. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 10 (3d6) acid damage.

Engulf. The cube moves up to its speed. While doing so, it can enter Large or smaller creatures' spaces. Whenever the cube enters a creature's space, the creature must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw. On a successful save, the creature can choose to be pushed 5 feet back or to the side of the cube. A creature that chooses not to be pushed suffers the consequences of a failed saving throw.

On a failed save, the cube enters the creature's space, and the creature takes 10 (3d6) acid damage and is engulfed. The engulfed creature can't breathe, is restrained, and takes 21 (6d6) acid damage at the start of each of the cube's turns. When the cube moves, the engulfed creature moves with it.

An engulfed creature can try to escape by taking an action to make a DC 12 Strength check. On a success, the creature escapes and enters a space of its choice within 5 feet of the cube.

GIANT CROCODILE

Huge beast, unaligned

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 85 (9d12 + 27)

Speed 30 ft., swim 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	9 (-1)	17 (+3)	2 (-4)	10 (+0)	7 (-2)

Skills Stealth +5

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages —

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Hold Breath. The crocodile can hold its breath for 30 minutes.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The crocodile makes two attacks: one with its bite and one with its tail.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 21 (3d10 +52) piercing damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 16). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the crocodile can't bite another target.

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target not grappled by the crocodile. *Hit:* 14 (2d8 +5) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

GIANT MIMIC

Large monstrosity (shapechanger), neutral

Armor Class 12 (natural armor)

Hit Points 75 (10d10 + 20)

Speed 15 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)	5 (-3)	13 (+1)	8 (-1)

Skills Stealth +3

Damage Immunities acid

Condition Immunities prone

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages —

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Shapechanger. The mimic can use its action to polymorph into an object or back into its true, amorphous form. Its statistics are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It reverts to its true form if it dies.

Adhesive (Object Form Only). The mimic adheres to anything that touches it. A Huge or smaller creature adhered to the mimic is also grappled by it (escape DC 13). Ability checks made to escape this grapple have disadvantage.

False Appearance (Object Form Only). While the mimic remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from an ordinary object.

Grappler. The mimic has advantage on attack rolls against any creature grappled by it.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The giant mimic attacks twice with its pseudopod and once with its bite.

Pseudopod. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) bludgeoning damage. If the mimic is in object form, the target is subjected to its Adhesive trait.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage plus 4 (1d8) acid damage.

HELMED HORROR

Medium construct, neutral

Armor Class 20 (plate, shield)

Hit Points 60 (8d8 + 24)

Speed 30 ft., fly 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Skills Perception +4

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't adamantine

Damage Immunities force, necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, stunned

Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 14

Languages understands the languages of its creator but can't speak

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Magic Resistance. The helmed horror has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Spell Immunity. The helmed horror is immune to three spells chosen by its creator. Typical immunities include fireball, heat metal, and lightning bolt.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The helmed horror makes two longsword attacks.

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) slashing damage, or 9 (1d10 + 4) slashing damage if used with two hands.

HUGE GRAY Ooze

Huge ooze, unaligned

Armor Class 8

Hit Points 152 (16d12 + 48)

Speed 10 ft., climb 10 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	6 (–2)	16 (+3)	1 (–5)	6 (–2)	2 (–4)

Skills Stealth +2

Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, prone

Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 8

Languages —

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Amorphous. The ooze can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.

Corrode Metal. Any nonmagical weapon made of metal that hits the ooze corrodes. After dealing damage, the weapon takes a permanent and cumulative –1 penalty to damage rolls. If its penalty drops to –5, the weapon is destroyed. Nonmagical ammunition made of metal that hits the ooze is destroyed after dealing damage.

The ooze can eat through 2-inch-thick, nonmagical metal in 1 round.

False Appearance. While the ooze remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from an oily pool or wet rock.

Enlarge (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). For 1 minute, the ooze magically increases in size. While enlarged, the ooze is Gargantuan, doubles its damage dice with its pseudopod attack, and makes Strength checks and Strength saving throws with advantage.

Invisibility (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). The ooze magically turns invisible for up to 1 hour until it attacks, it uses its Enlarge, or its concentration is broken (as if concentrating on a spell).

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Huge Gray Ooze can make two attacks with its pseudopods.

Pseudopod. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 21 (6d6) acid damage plus 7 (2d6) acid damage, or 42 (12d6) acid damage while the ooze is enlarged. If the target is wearing nonmagical metal armor, its armor is partly corroded and takes a permanent and cumulative –1 penalty to the AC it offers. The armor is destroyed if the penalty reduces its AC to 10.

HYDRA

Huge monstrosity, unaligned

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 172 (15d12 + 75)

Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	12 (+1)	20 (+5)	2 (–4)	10 (+0)	7 (–2)

Skills Perception +6

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages —

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Hold Breath. The hydra can hold its breath for 1 hour.

Multiple Heads. The hydra has five heads. While it has more than one head, the hydra has advantage on saving throws against being blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, stunned, and knocked unconscious.

Whenever the hydra takes 25 or more damage in a single turn, one of its heads dies. If all its heads die, the hydra dies.

At the end of its turn, it grows two heads for each of its heads that died since its last turn, unless it has taken fire damage since its last turn. The hydra regains 10 hit points for each head regrown in this way.

Reactive Heads. For each head the hydra has beyond one, it gets an extra reaction that can be used only for opportunity attacks.

Wakeful. While the hydra sleeps, at least one of its heads is awake.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The hydra makes as many bite attacks as it has heads.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (1d10 + 5) piercing damage.

OOZE MASTER

Huge undead, lawful evil

Armor Class 9 (natural armor)

Hit Points 138 (12d12 + 60)

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	1 (-5)	20 (+5)	17 (+3)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Int +7, Wis +4

Skills Arcana +7, Insight +4

Damage Resistances lightning, necrotic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities acid, cold, poison

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned, prone

Senses blindsight 120 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Common, Primordial, Thayan

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Corrosive Form. A creature that touches the ooze master or hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it takes 9 (2d8) acid damage. Any nonmagical weapon that hits the ooze master corrodes. After dealing damage, the weapon takes a permanent and cumulative -1 penalty to damage rolls. If its penalty drops to -5, the weapon is destroyed. Nonmagical ammunition that hits the ooze master is destroyed after dealing damage.

The ooze master can eat through 2-inch-thick, nonmagical wood or metal in 1 round.

Instinctive Attack. When the ooze master casts a spell with a casting time of 1 action, it can make one pseudopod attack as a bonus action.

Spellcasting. The ooze master is a 9th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). It has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *acid splash*, *friends*, *mage hand*, *poison spray*

1st level (4 slots): *charm person*, *detect magic*, *magic missile*, *ray of sickness*

2nd level (3 slots): *detect thoughts*, *Melf's acid arrow*, *suggestion*

3rd level (3 slots): *fear*, *slow*, *stinking cloud*

4th level (3 slots): *confusion*, *Evard's black tentacles*

5th level (1 slot): *cloudkill*

Spider Climb. The ooze master can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

ACTIONS

Pseudopod. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 13 (3d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage plus 10 (3d6) acid damage.

REACTIONS

Instinctive Charm. If a creature the ooze master can see makes an attack roll against it while within 30 feet of it, the ooze master can use a reaction to divert the attack if another creature is within the attack's range. The attacker must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, the attacker targets the creature that is closest to it, not including itself or the ooze master. If multiple creatures are closest, the attacker chooses which one to target. On a successful save, the attacker is immune to this Instinctive Charm for 24 hours. Creatures that can't be charmed are immune to this effect.

QUICKKLING

Tiny fey, chaotic evil

Armor Class 16

Hit Points 10 (3d4 + 3)

Speed 120 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
4 (-3)	23 (+6)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	7 (-2)

Skills Acrobatics +8, Perception +5, Sleight of Hand +8, Stealth +8

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages Common, Sylvan

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Blurred Movement. Attack rolls against the quickling have disadvantage unless the quickling is incapacitated or restrained.

Evasion. If the quickling is subjected to an effect that allows it to make a Dexterity saving throw to take only half damage, it instead takes no damage if it succeeds on the saving throw, and only half damage if it fails.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The quickling makes three dagger attacks.

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. Hit: 8 (1d4 +6) piercing damage.

RAVEK (WARLOCK OF THE FIEND)

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

Armor Class 12 (15 with *mage armor*)

Hit Points 78 (12d8 + 24)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Wis +4, Cha +7

Skills Arcana +4, Deception +7, Persuasion +7, Religion +4

Damage Resistances slashing damage from nonmagical attacks not made with silvered weapons

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages any two languages (usually Abyssal or Infernal)

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

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

At will: *alter self*, *false life*, *levitate* (self only), *mage armor* (self only), *silent image*

Spellcasting. The warlock is a 17th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). It regains expended spell slots when it finishes a short or long rest. It knows the following warlock spells:

Cantrips (at will): *eldritch blast*, *fire bolt*, *friends*, *mage hand*, *minor illusion*, *prestidigitation*, *shocking grasp*

1st-5th level (4 5th-level slots): *banishment*, *burning hands*, *flame strike*, *hellish rebuke*, *magic circle*, *scorching ray*, *scrying*, *stinking cloud*, *suggestion*, *wall of fire*

Dark One's Own Luck (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest).

When the warlock makes an ability check or saving throw, it can add a d10 to the roll. It can do this after the roll is made but before any of the roll's effects occur.

ACTIONS

Mace. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage plus 10 (3d6) fire damage.

ROT TROLL

Large giant, chaotic evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 138 (12d10 + 720)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	13 (+1)	22 (+6)	5 (-3)	8 (-1)	4 (-3)

Skills Perception +3

Damage Immunities Necrotic

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Giant

Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Rancid Degeneration. At the end of each of the troll's turns, each creature within 5 feet of it takes 11 (2d10) necrotic damage, unless the troll has taken acid or fire damage since the end of its last turn.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The troll makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage plus 16 (3d10) necrotic damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage plus 5 (1d10) necrotic damage.

SERINNA (ASSASSIN)

Medium humanoid (any race), any non-good alignment

Armor Class 15 (studded leather)

Hit Points 78 (12d8 + 24)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws Dex +7, Int +5

Skills Acrobatics +7, Deception +4, Perception +4, Stealth +11

Damage Resistances poison

Senses passive Perception 14

Languages thieves' cant plus any two languages

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Assassinate. During its first turn, the assassin has advantage on attack rolls against any creature that hasn't taken a turn. Any hit the assassin scores against a surprised creature is a critical hit.

Evasion. If the assassin is subjected to an effect that allows it to make a Dexterity saving throw to take only half damage, the assassin instead takes no damage if it succeeds on the saving throw, and only half damage if it fails.

Sneak Attack (1/Turn). The assassin deals an extra 13 (4d6) damage when it hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of the assassin that isn't incapacitated and the assassin doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The assassin makes two shortsword attacks.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 24 (7d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Light Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 24 (7d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

WHAYLON (WARLORD)

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

Armor Class 20 (plate)

Hit Points 229 (27d8 + 108)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Str +9, Dex +7, Con +8

Skills Athletics +9, Intimidation +8, Perception +5, Persuasion +8

Senses passive Perception 15

Languages Common, Giant

Challenge 12 (8,400 XP)

Indomitable (3/Day). The warlord can reroll a saving throw it fails. It must use the new roll.

Survivor. The warlord regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn if it has at least 1 hit point but fewer hit points than half its hit point maximum.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The warlord makes two weapon attacks.

Greatsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 5) slashing damage.

Shortbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The warlord can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The warlord regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Weapon Attack. The warlord makes a weapon attack.

Command Ally. The warlord targets one ally it can see within 30 feet of it. If the target can see and hear the warlord, the target can make one weapon attack as a reaction and gains advantage on the attack roll.

Frighten Foe (Costs 2 Actions). The warlord targets one enemy it can see within 30 feet of it. If the target can see and hear it, the target must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened until the end of the warlord's next turn.

ZEHIRA DERYAN

Medium humanoid (human), neutral good

Armor Class 19 (mariner's studded leather, shield +1)

Hit Points 90 (12d10 + 24)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+2)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Dex +9, Int +5

Skills Acrobatics +9, Athletics +12, Insight +8, Perception +8, Persuasion +12, Stealth +9, Survival +8

Senses passive Perception 18

Languages Common, Elvish, Infernal, Primordial, Sahuagin, thieves' cant

Challenge 13 (10,000 XP)

Cunning Action. Zehira can take a bonus action on each of her turns to take the Dash, Disengage, or Hide action.

Fancy Footwork. During her turn, if Zehira makes a melee attack against a creature, that creature can't make opportunity attacks against her for the rest of her turn.

Rakish Audacity. Zehira adds her Charisma modifier (+2) to her initiative rolls. She doesn't need advantage on the attack roll to use Sneak Attack against a creature if she is within 5 ft. of it, no other creatures are within 5 ft. of her, and she doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

Sneak Attack (1/Turn). Zehira deals an extra 7 (2d6) damage when she hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally that isn't incapacitated and Zehira doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll. Also see **Rakish Audacity**.

Spellcasting. Zehira is a 12th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 16, +8 to hit with spell attacks). Zehira has the following ranger spells prepared:

1st level (4 slots): *cure wounds*, *goodberry*, *zephyr strike*

2nd level (3 slots): *darkvision*, *lesser restoration*

3rd level (2 slots): *water breathing*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Zehira makes two attacks with either her club, dagger, or rapier.

Club +3. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d4 + 7) bludgeoning damage.

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d4 + 6) piercing damage.

Rapier. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (1d8 + 6) piercing damage.

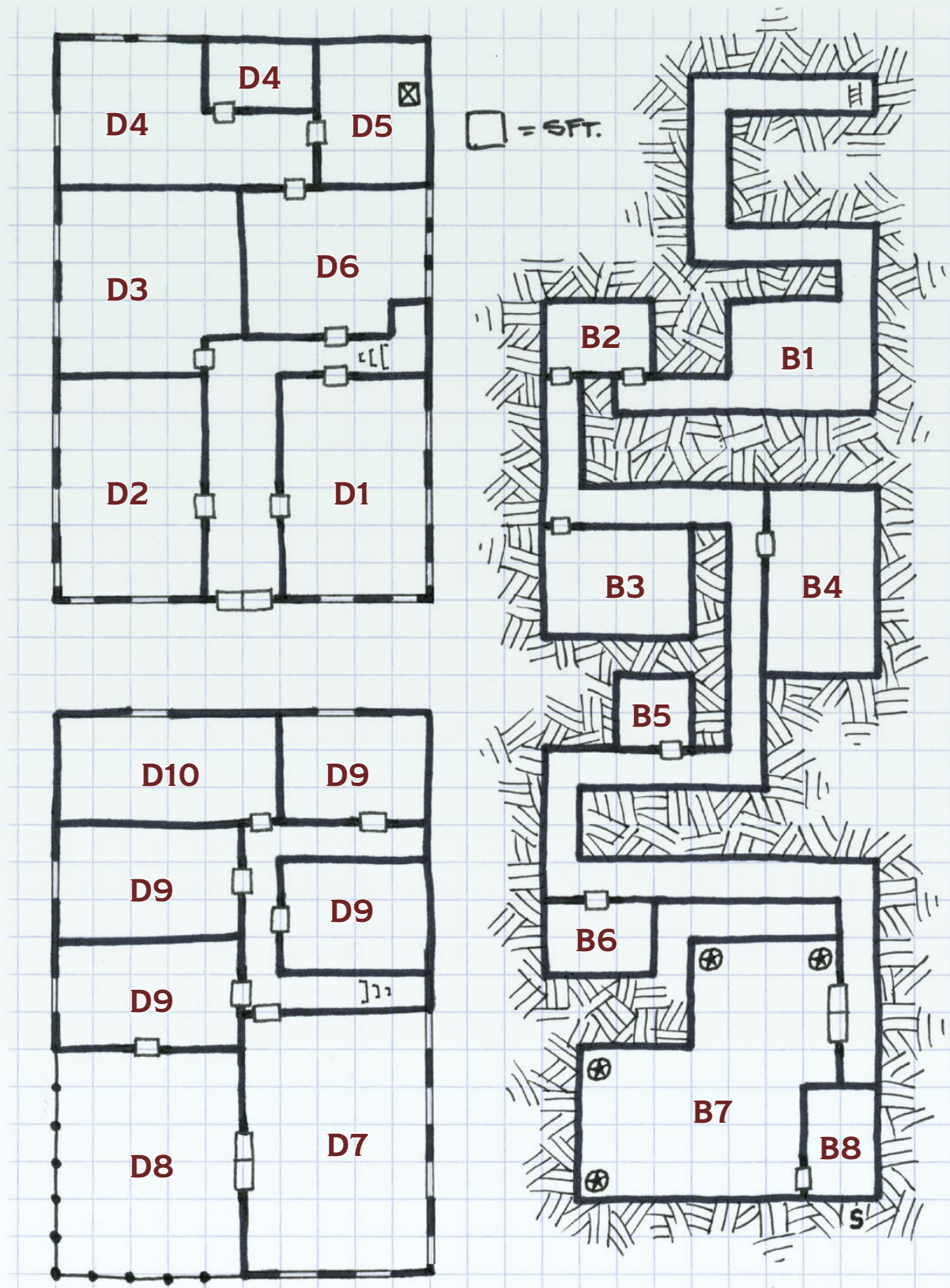
MARINER'S STUDED LEATHER

While wearing this armor, Zehira has a swimming speed equal to her walking speed. In addition, whenever she starts her turn underwater with 0 hit points, the armor causes her to rise 60 feet toward the surface. The armor is decorated with fish and shell motifs.

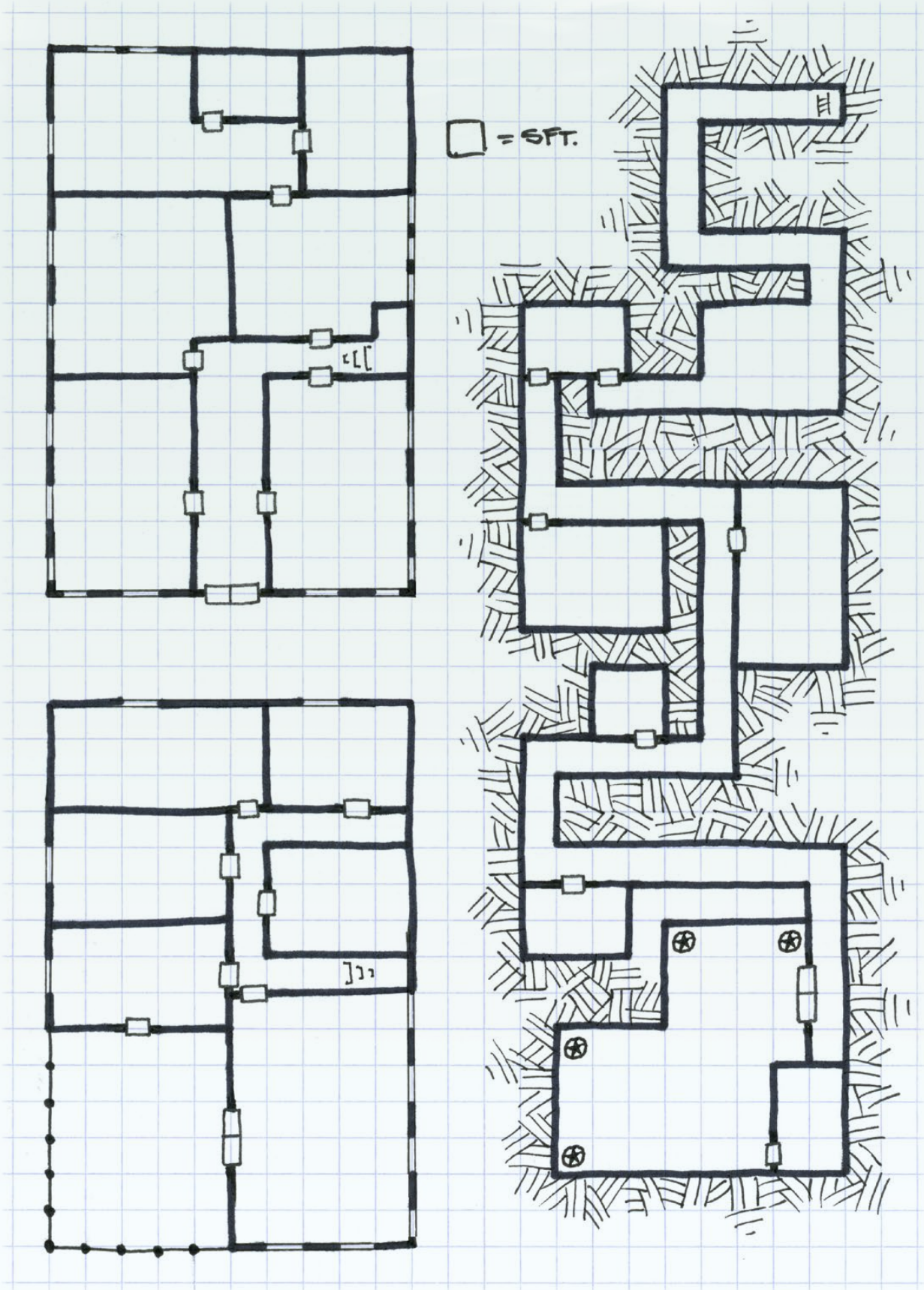
APPENDIX 1: DRYBED MAP



APPENDIX 2: DRAGONHORN MANOR AND UNDERGROUND LAIR MAP



PLAYER MAP



APPENDIX 3: THE GIANT COURT

You can give these pages as a handout to the players as the characters interact with the members of the giant court.

PRINCESS SERISSA

Chaotic good storm giant

The youngest daughter and chosen successor of King Hekaton, Serissa is cool and calm, even as she understands that others in the giant court covet her position.

What They Want. To maintain peace among the giants, Serissa must find her father and the Wymskull Throne, and have whoever attacked Maelstrom face justice.

HESTIA

Chaotic good storm giant

With her great height and long, silky-white hair, Hestia carries herself like the noble she is. A longtime resident of Maelstrom, Hestia and her brother Thellan grew up with Princess Serissa and her sisters.

What They Want. Hestia has been friends with Princess Serissa since childhood, and wants to help her friend stop the endless bickering among the giant races.

JARL FRELLA

Neutral evil frost giant

Jarl Frella has braided blue hair only slightly lighter than her skin, wears a majestic horned helm, and carries a gigantic battleaxe. Like most frost giants, her countenance is as cold as the territory she rules in the Sea of Moving Ice.

What They Want. Jarl Frella has been at court for some time now, and is quite tired of listening to Lord Mephyr prattle on about his conquests.

MURGEN

Chaotic evil hill giant

Murgen has deeply tanned skin and a hulking figure. As the leader of her tribe, she has grown accustomed to having food at her leisure, and she believes that if the hill giants were elevated in status, it would improve her life even more.

What They Know. Murgen is deeply distrustful of all the other giants. But she believes that Kralvar in particular has been acting aloof and suspicious.

THELLAN

Chaotic good storm giant

Thellan has icy white hair, in stark contrast to his warm demeanor. A longtime resident of Maelstrom, Thellan and his sister Hestia grew up with Princess Serissa and her sisters.

What They Want. Thellan wants to protect his sister Hestia, and worries that her friendship with Princess Serissa makes her a target for control by the other giants of the court.

COUNT NIMBIAN

Neutral good cloud giant

Having only just arrived at court, Count Nimbian is more convinced than ever that the storm giants are unfit to rule. Wearing a pale-green robe and carrying an eighteen-foot-long staff, Nimbian stands out among the other giants in residence at the court.

What They Want. Count Nimbian hopes to gather enough evidence of the incompetence of the ruling family to convince the other cloud giants to rally behind him, pushing for a higher place for their kind in the ordning—with him as the giants' new leader

KRALVAR

Neutral stone giant

Kralvar has dark-gray skin and wears a tunic made of animal pelts. Most of the time, he sits with an expression that makes him appear lost in his own thoughts. In actuality, Kralvar pays close attention to everything happening around him.

What They Want. Kralvar is in attendance at the giant court in the hope of seeing some semblance of order restored among the giants, so that the members of his tribe can go back to their peaceful way of life.

LORD MEPHYR

Lawful evil fire giant

With dark skin and flaming-red hair, Lord Mephyr has a commanding presence in any room. The fire giant is proud of his days as a solider, and is always ready to tell a tale of some village or other that he single-handedly conquered.

What They Want. Lord Mephyr wants the giant empire to resume its prior state of glory, and reconquer all the territory of their kingdoms of old. He distrusts Count Nimbian, who he describes as being secretive.

APPENDIX 4: CHARACTER REWARDS

The characters can keep the following magic items if they are found during the adventure. It is suggested that you print off enough copies of this page to be able to give one to each of your players, crossing out rewards they didn't receive during the session.

DRAGONTOTH DART

Weapon (dagger), rare

A dagger fashioned from the tooth of a dragon. While the blade is obviously a fang or predator's tooth, the handle is leather wrapped around the root of the tooth, and there is no cross-guard.

You gain a +1 bonus to attack rolls and damage rolls you make with this weapon. On a hit with this weapon, the target takes an extra 1d6 acid damage.

Draconic Potency. Against enemies of the Cult of the Dragon, the dagger's bonus to attack rolls and damage rolls increases to +2, and the extra acid damage increases to 2d6.

This item is found in *Tyranny of Dragons*.

NECKLACE OF FIREBALLS

Wondrous Item, rare

This necklace has 6 beads hanging from it. You can use an action to detach a bead and throw it up to 60 feet away. When it reaches the end of its trajectory, the bead detonates as a 3rd-level fireball spell (save DC 15). You can hurl multiple beads, or even the whole necklace, as one action. When you do so, increase the level of the fireball by 1 for each bead beyond the first. This item is found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

POTION OF SUPREME HEALING

Potion, very rare

You regain 10d4+20 hit points when you drink this potion. The potion's red liquid glimmers when agitated. This item is found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

POTION OF WATER BREATHING

Potion, uncommon

You can breathe underwater for 1 hour after drinking this potion. Its cloudy green fluid smells of the sea and has a jellyfish-like bubble floating in it. This item is found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

SHIELD OF THE UVEN RUNE

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)

This shield is made from the scale of an ancient white dragon. It has a rune burned into its outward-facing side. A character who examines the rune and succeeds on a DC 20 Intelligence (History) check recognizes it as an uven ("enemy" in Giant) rune that confers great power.

While holding the shield, you benefit from the following properties.

Winter's Friend. You are immune to cold damage.

Deadly Rebuke. Immediately after a creature hits you with a melee attack, you can use your reaction to deal 3d6 necrotic damage to that creature.

Bane. You can cast the *bane* spell from the shield (save DC 17). The spell does not require concentration and lasts for 1 minute. Once you cast the spell from the shield, you can't do so again until you finish a short or long rest.

Gift of Vengeance. You can transfer the shield's magic to a nonmagical weapon by tracing the uven rune on the weapon with one finger. The transfer takes 8 hours of work that requires the two items to be within 5 feet of each other. At the end, the shield is destroyed, and the rune is etched or burned into the chosen weapon. This weapon becomes a rare magic item that requires attunement. It has the properties of a +1 weapon. The bonus increases to +3 when the weapon is used against one of the following creature types, chosen by you at the time of the magic weapon's creation: aberrations, celestials, constructs, dragons, elementals, fey, fiends, giants, or undead.

This item is found in *Waterdeep: Dungeon of the Mad Mage*.

LEGACY EVENTS

The characters might earn either of the following legacy event story awards in this adventure.

A COSTLY RIDE

You offered a favor to the wizard Khyree and passed up a chance to repay that debt. Since you refused him once, your debt has grown. To clear your debt, Khyree requires that you forfeit a common or rarer permanent magic item or a rare or rarer consumable magic item.

ALLY OF THE ZULKIR

You have agreed to work with the Thayan zulkir of enchantment, Dar'lon Ma.

APPENDIX 5. DUNGEON MASTER TIPS

To run an adventure as a DM, you must have three to seven players, each with their own character within the adventure's level range (see the "Adventure Primer" section at the start of the adventure).

NEW TO D&D ADVENTURERS LEAGUE?

Information about the Adventurers League, including finding places to play, organizing events, and a list of supporting resources and documents, can be found here: <http://dnd.wizards.com/playevents/organized-play>.

NEW TO THE ANNUAL STORYLINE?

You can find out more about the Dreams of Red Wizards storyline here: <http://dndadventurersleague.org/storyline-seasons/dreams-of-the-red-wizards/>

PREPARING THE ADVENTURE

Before you start play, consider the following:

- Read through the adventure, taking notes of anything you'd like to highlight or remind yourself of while running the adventure, such as a way you'd like to portray an NPC or a tactic you'd like to use in a combat. Familiar yourself with the adventure's appendices and handouts.
- Gather any resources you'd like to use to aid you in running this adventure--such as notecards, a DM screen, miniatures, and battlemaps.
- Ask the players to provide you with relevant character information, such as name, race, class, and level; passive Perception score, and anything the adventures specifies as notable (such as backgrounds, traits, flaws, etc.)

Players can play an adventure they previously played as a Player or Dungeon Master but may only play it once with a given character. Ensure each player has their character's adventure logsheet (if not, get one from the organizer) with their starting values for level, magic items, gold and downtime days. These are updated at the conclusion of the session. The adventure information and your information are added at the end of the adventure session—whether the completed the adventure or not.

Each player is responsible for maintaining an accurate logsheet. If you have time, you can do a quick scan of a player's character sheet to ensure that nothing looks out of order. If you see magic items of very high rarities or strange arrays of ability scores, you can ask players to provide documentation for the irregularities. If they cannot, feel free to restrict item use or ask them to use a standard ability score array.

Point players to the *D&D Adventurers League Players Guide* for reference. If players wish to spend downtime days and it's the beginning of an adventure or episode, they can declare their activity and spend the days now, or they can do so at the end of the adventure or episode. Players should select their characters' spells and other daily options prior to the start of the adventure, unless the adventure specifies otherwise. Feel free to reread the adventure description to help give players hints about what they might face.

ADJUSTING THIS ADVENTURE

To determine whether you should consider adjusting the adventure, add up the total levels of all the characters and divide the result by the number of characters (rounding .5 or greater up; .4 or less down). This is the group's average party level (APL). To approximate the **party strength** for the adventure, consult the table below.

DETERMINING PARTY STRENGTH

Party Composition	Party Strength
3-4 characters, APL less than	Very weak
3-4 characters, APL equivalent	Weak
3-4 characters, APL greater than	Average
5 characters, APL less than	Weak
5 characters, APL equivalent	Average
5 characters, APL greater than	Strong
6-7 characters, APL less than	Average
6-7 characters, APL equivalent	Strong
6-7 characters, APL greater than	Very strong