

A GUIDE TO OUT OF THE ABYSS

BY SEAN MCGOVERN

POWER SCORE RPG

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This document grew out of my blog:

POWER SCORE RPG

thecampaign20xx.blogspot.com

powerscorerpg.blogspot.com

Twitter: @powerscorerpg

I write about role-playing games and Dungeons & Dragons. The most popular things I write are the “guides” like this one where I try to help DMs prepare to run an official adventure.

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This is a reference to help Dungeon Masters running Out of the Abyss, the tabletop adventure for the Rage of Demons storyline. I have tried to do some of your prep work for you and help you sort through this giant book.

I did not run this adventure. I read through the book and prepared it as if I was going to run it.

THINGS TO WATCH OUT FOR

This is a fun adventure, but there are some elements that can kill your game if you are not wary. The biggest pitfall for DMs to watch out for is the travel sections. The journeys between settlements are long and the book wants you to roll for a whole bunch of stuff each day.

Boredom is Your Enemy: I think you need to be really careful and organized, because it feels like the players will get bored during these long traveling stretches. Make sure you know the drow pursuit rules and make yourself a plan as far as to how you will handle each day. Do you need to roll for foraging each day, or should you hand-wave it? Pacing is extremely important! Do not be afraid to just say “two weeks pass without incident” if you feel like things are lagging.

The Drow: The Drow pursuers also might throw you for a loop. Keep in mind that the heroes might decide to stop and face the drow as soon as they find out they’re being followed. You should have a plan in case that happens – maybe a dramatic battle near a chasm, or perhaps some nasty creature explodes onto the scene mid-battle and disrupts the whole thing.

The Beginning: Be careful how you handle the first chapter. It’s one thing to have the drow be cruel, it’s another thing to just heap abuse on your players. The point of the chapter is for the heroes to make a thrilling escape! Let the drow be jerks, but remember that you’re building them up just so the group can feel satisfied when the drow get what is coming to them.

Stool is a very likeable NPC. You might want to have the drow treat Stool poorly instead of the heroes. That way, you can get across the idea that the drow are scum and you won’t be hammering away on the heroes who are virtually helpless.

You will be shocked to see that this book has no adventure summary. I cooked two up for you. One is short, and the other is more detailed:

SHORT ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The heroes are imprisoned by the drow. They escape and try to find a way to the surface world. As they travel, they see that demon lords have somehow come to the Underdark. Upon reaching the surface world, King Bruenor of Gauntlgrym asks the group to go back down and try to deal with the demon lords.

The heroes go back down, find a magic library and meet a drow named Vizeran. He has a plan: make a talisman that can summon the demon lords to a single spot in the Underdark, and let them kill each other. This will banish their essences back to the Abyss. The heroes will have to kill off the last demon lord standing.

DETAILED ADVENTURE SUMMARY

1. The heroes start off as prisoners of the drow, along with various NPCs.
2. The group breaks out with the NPCs and tries to find a way out of the Underdark. The drow pursue them the entire way. They may end up in:
3. **Sloobludop** - Where kuo toa worship Demogorgon.
4. **Gracklstugh** - Where duergar have problems with a derro faction.
5. **Neverlight Grove** - Where Zuggtmoy has tainted the myconids.
6. **Blingdenstone** - Where an agent of Juiblex is causing problems.
7. The DM decides where the group can find an exit out of the Underdark. They should be 7th level when leaving.
8. The drow have a final showdown with the group as they head through the exit tunnel.
9. 3 months of resting. The group should be level 8 when heading to Gauntlgrym.
10. The group either seeks out or is summoned to **Gauntlgrym**, home of the dwarves.
11. The group takes a small army of NPCs down to the Underdark to try to find a solution to the demon lord problem.
12. They go to **Mantol-Derith** and get a magic ring from a Zhent agent. The ring shows the way to Gravenhollow. The heroes should be 10th level by this point. The group has the chance to shatter a gem and banish Fraz-Urb'luu.
13. They use the ring to get to **Gravenhollow**, a magic library that can help them figure out what to do about the demonic incursion.
14. In Gravenhollow, the heroes learn that all of this may have been caused by a wizard named Gromph Baenre of Menzoberranzan. They meet a wizard named Vizeran DeVir who invites the group to his tower.
15. The group meets with Vizeran in his tower. If the group can get ingredients to create a talisman, he can cast a ritual that will bring all the demon lords together so they can kill each other. With their physical forms destroyed, their essences will return to the Abyss.
16. **The Wormwrithings** is where the group can obtain some ingredients. They can also learn about the maze engine here.
17. **The Labyrinth** contains more ingredients and an encounter with Yeenoghu. The group might use a device called the Maze Engine to banish Yeenoghu and Baphomet.
18. The heroes are called on to aid **Araumycos** (chapter 16). The group can get an elusive ingredient (timmasks) for the ritual here. The group might banish Zuggtmoy and Juiblex.
19. The group goes to **Menzoberranzan** to get Gromph's grimoire.
20. The heroes bring the ingredients to Vizeran. He makes the dark heart talisman.
21. Now the heroes need to place the dark heart somewhere. Vizeran casts the ritual from his home tower. The demon lords are summoned to the dark heart. They slaughter each other...
22. ..Except for one. The adventurers have to take down the last demon lord standing.

WHAT LEVEL SHOULD THE HEROES BE?

Basically, the group should gain a level in each chapter except the two travel chapters (2 and 10). The book gives vague guidelines. The heroes should be level 7 when they escape the Underdark, and they should be level 15 when fighting Demogorgon in the final chapter.

APPENDIX A: MODIFYING BACKGROUNDS

I am putting this in the beginning of this guide, because you should deal with this ideally before the campaign even starts. I am going to list each bond (from page 221) and then briefly note how it plays into the adventure:

Friend of the Kuo-Toa: You might want to say that the hero made friends with Ploopploopeen (page 44). He can become an ally of the group in chapter 3.

Melded with the Myconids: The hero might have met Basidia (page 85), who is a potential ally in chapter 5 or even visited Araumycos (page 210), the hive-mind/place/fungus thing in chapter 16. In fact, it might be cool to say that the hero actually bonded with Araumycos, went to the astral plane and saw Araumycos' astral form - a fungus skull the size of a mountain (212).

Morista Malkin: She's on page 128. Morista doesn't have much of a role in this adventure. She gives the group giant lizard mounts and some NPC allies.

Davra Jassur: She's on page 129. Davra is a Zhentarim agent who has a small role in this adventure. She has goggles of night and dust of disappearance.

Library Dream: This dream refers to Gravenhollow (page 152), a magic library run by stone giants. You might want to say that the hero is able to catch glimpses of the future like Ustova, the Keeper of the Future (page 152). Perhaps she can train this PC and enhance their precognitive abilities. Or maybe the PC could summon a spirit echo now and then (page 153).

Kazook Pickshine: Kazook (page 103) has a small role in this adventure. He owns a merchant stall in Blingdenstone. He likes to blow things up with his alchemical concoctions.

Feldrun Clan: You should probably establish ties to Eldeth Feldrun (page 6), an NPC that the heroes start the adventure off with. Gauntlgrym's role in this adventure is mostly as a place to rest. It's the stopping point between the two halves of the adventure. The biggest upside of taking this background is that it might make King Bruenor's summons a little less ham-fisted.

Ghazrim DuLoc: Ghazrim (page 140) has the ring that the group needs to find Gravenhollow. He is part of a very chaotic battle in Mantol-Derith and is likely to die in it.

My Family is Imprisoned: Blingdenstone (page 95) was raided by the drow years ago, so that might make a good location for the past abduction. The family could be prisoners in Gracklstugh (page 57) or Menzoberranzan (maybe family members are part of the slave parade on page 201).

Gauntlgrym: This is similar to the Feldrun clan background. Gauntlgrym ultimately plays a small role in this adventure. Maybe the hero has a magic item made in the Great Forge (page 123) and would like to repair the severed conduits (perhaps the PC could learn how to do this in Gravenhollow).

CHAPTER 1: PRISONERS OF THE DROW

The Heroes are Prisoners: This whole campaign starts off with the heroes having been captured. You should let your players know this ahead of time, as this kind of thing can cause problems with some players. The heroes were knocked out with drow poison, collared and shackled and are going to be sold as slaves or "entertainment" in drow cities.

Restrained: The slave collars and manacles put the heroes in the restrained condition. They have normal speed.

The Dire Situation: There's a lot of little things to keep straight for the opening:

1. No Gear: The heroes have no equipment or spell components
2. Track Madness: You might want to tell your players to keep a spot open on their character sheets to track their madness score (see page 21).
3. Days Have Passed: Each PC has been a prisoner in Velkenvelve for d10 days.
4. Special Item: Roll on the chart on page 5 to see if a PC has a scavenged item (unless you decide to have the characters steal these items during forced labor).
5. Manacles: Slipping out of the manacles is a DC 20 DEX check, breaking them a DC 20 STR check.
6. Food: They are fed once per day - a thin mushroom broth in a clay bowl.
7. Slave Pen: The adventurers are being held in area 11, the slave pen (page 15).
8. Magical Wards: Spells cast in the pen have no effect. Bad guys can cast spells into the pen from the outside.
9. Picking Locks: Picking the lock with makeshift tools is a DC 20 DEX check. The PC also has to make a DEX (Stealth) check vs the drow elite warrior's (in area 10) passive Wisdom, which is 14 (Monster Manual page 128)
10. Dreams: Spellcasters might have dreams foreshadowing the madness/demon threat (see page 9)
11. Punishment: If the PCs annoy the drow while in their slave pen, they're hit with a ray of sickness.

The Other Prisoners: The NPCs in the pen with the heroes are really cool. I'd recommend having Ront the orc bully pick on Stool, the myconid sprout. This will be a nice way for a PC to stick up for Stool and begin to roleplay and portray their character. Or who knows, maybe the adventurers will want to bully Stool, too. You never know what will happen, that's the fun of D&D. But this is a nice place to have the players introduce their character.

Stool's Telepathy: The most important thing to remember is that Stool will probably use his rapport spores to allow everyone to communicate telepathically. This is extremely helpful when planning an escape.

The Prisoners May Be With The Party For A Long Time: The adventure warns us that many of these NPCs may accompany the heroes for a long time in this campaign. That means you will need to be very familiar with them. You're going to need a cheat sheet. So let's do this thing:

NPC PRISONER STAT SHEET

All of their profiles are on pages 6-8 in Out of the Abyss. These stats assume they are not wearing armor.

Bupido (Derro, OOTA page 224): AC 12 HP 13 +2 1(d4-1) or trip: DC 9 STR check or fall prone.

- Advantage on saves vs spells, advantage on saves vs charm/frighten
- God Delusion: Talkative and cunning, he secretly thinks he's an insane derro god named Diinkaranzan. After the group escapes, he wants to kill the heroes one by one. Wants to go to Gracklstugh.

Prince Derendil (Quaggoth, MM 256) AC 13 HP 45 +5/+5 6 (d6+3)

- When he has 10 HP or less, +7 (2d6) damage and advantage to hit
- Immune poison, darkvision 120, climb 30
- Thinks he's an Elf: Thinks he is a cursed elf prince, speaks elven. He's being deluded by Fraz'Urbluu. He goes into a violent rage both in times of stress, and when someone grills him on his story.

Eldeth Feldrun (Dwarf, Scout stats MM 349) AC 12 HP 16 +4/+4 5(d6+2)

- Advantage on Wis (Perception) checks
- Trusty Pal: She is defiant and proud, and may die before getting home. If so, she asks the heroes to bring her shield and warhammer back to Gauntlgrym, her home.

Jimjar (deep gnome, MM 164) AC 12 HP 15 +4 6(d8+2)

- Advantage on Stealth in rocky terrain, adv on INT/WIS/CHA saves vs magic
- Can cast spells, DC 11. At will: Nondetection (self only). Once per day: Blindness/Deafness, Blur, Disguise Self.
- Has a gambling problem. Constantly makes wagers. Loves money. Can guide the party to Blingdenstone.
- Secret Deity: Check out the sidebar on page 217. Jimjar might be a god in disguise! It's up to you, but if he is, you can drop clues from the very beginning instead of revealing it all the way at the end of the adventure.

Ront (Orc, MM 246) AC 11 HP 15 +5 9(d12+3)

Bonus action: Move up to its speed toward a hostile creature it can see.

A Bully: Hates Eldeth. Fled from a battle with dwarves and thinks his god, Gruumsh, is punishing him.

Sarith Kzekarit (Drow, MM 128) AC 12 HP 13 +4 5 (d6+2)

- Adv on saves vs. charm, can't be put to sleep.
- Casts spells, DC 11. At will: Dancing Lights. Once Per Day: Darkness, Faerie Fire.
- Spores: Accused of murder, doesn't remember if he did it or not. Doesn't know that Zuggtmoy's spores are infecting his brain and are the source of his dilemma. Wants to go to Neverlight Grove. Knows the Underdark well.

Shuushar the Awakened (Kuo Toa, MM 199) AC 11 HP 18 +3 3(d4+1)

Breathes in air and water, sense any creature within 30 even if they are invisible/ethereal, Adv to escape a grapple.

Hermit and mystic. Calm and peaceful. A total pacifist, he won't fight or even defend himself. Wants to share his enlightenment with the kuo-toa of Sloobludop.

Stool (Myconid, MM 230) AC 10 HP 7 +1 1(d4-1) Speed 10 feet

- Can let out distress spores, all myconids within 240 feet can sense its pain.
- 3 times per day: Rapport Spores 10 foot radius. Affected creatures can communicate telepathically with each other while within 30 feet. This lasts for one hour.
- Goofy Pal: Wants to return to Neverlight Grove but not sure how to get there. Might become attached to a character like an enthusiastic younger sibling.

Topsy and Turvy (Deep gnome/wererats MM 209)

Deep Gnome stats: AC 12 HP 15 +4 6(d8+2)

Wererat Stats: AC 12 HP 33 +4 4(d4+2) & DC 11 CON save or be cursed with lycanthropy.

- Adv on WIS (percep) due to enhanced sense of smell, can use an action to polymorph into giant rat or rat/humanoid hybrid. Stats are the same in each form except for size.
- Twins: Topsy is female and does all the talking. Turvy is her brother, and mumbles darkly. They don't want anyone to know that they are wererats. They were recently infected with the curse of lycanthropy. They don't want to go back to Blingdenstone, and will likely abandon the group at some point.

VELKENVELVE SLAVE DUTIES

Jobs: The prisoners are divided into 3 groups and put to work for a third of the day, supervised by quaggoths. You are going to have to decide if your heroes are put in the same group, or set apart.

You'll also need to come up with what happens during their menial labor. You might want to have your heroes quietly steal the items from the list on page 5. You're going to run into situations where the heroes in theory will have the opportunity to acquire items outside of that list.

For example, if they're cooking a meal, they might have knives. The quaggoths will be watching them, but you can bet your PCs will be thinking of anything they can to slip a knife in their boot or.. wherever.

SLAVE TASKS

- **Fill and Haul Water Barrels:** See page 14, area 9.
- **Operate the Lift:** This is on page 12, area 5.
- **Clean Area of the Outpost:** The place that makes most sense for this would be the barracks on page 11, area 2.
- **Empty Chamber Pots:** Waste is dumped into the pool in area 14, page 15. There is a very aggressive grey ooze in the pool, which makes for a lot of fun possibilities. Maybe the adventurers notice it somehow, and are able to trick their overseers into getting to close to the pool.
- **Food Preparation and Service:** This would be in area 3 on page 11. The heroes could be in charge of serving 4 drow who are playing cards. The drow would probably yell at the heroes for any infraction. You could make a skill challenge out of preparing a delicious meal. Your menu might include a florescent fungus salad, cave jelly, roasted deep beetles and a toadstool steak.
- **Wash Dishes:** I think this would be in the main hall, which is area 3 on page 11.
- **Laundry:** I guess to do laundry, you could hold garments under the waterfall at area 9. Then, maybe there's a few spidersilk lines where the clothes can be hung to dry. The idea of the heroes handling the dirty underwear of the drow is quite amusing.

Stealing Stuff: Requires a DEX (sleight of hand) check vs. a guard's passive Wisdom (perception) score. If the hero fails, they'll have to hand it over or possibly be killed.

Where is Our Stuff? The gear of the heroes is in Ilvara's quarters (area 7, page 12). It's in the locked chest.

Gearless Start: The DM also has the option of just saying that the group's gear is gone and having the heroes make do with whatever they can scavenge. If you want to do this, run it by your players and make sure they're cool with it before you start playing! A spellcaster without a spellbook, that's pretty rough at 1st level.

THE DROW

The Main Bad Guys: Here's a quick rundown of the bad guys. There's a total of 19 drow, 12 quaggoths and 6 giant spiders. There are four important drow:

1. Ilvara Mizzrym: She is the commander and a priestess. She hates this job. She has taken Shoor as her lover, but it's nothing serious. She is WAY too powerful for the PCs to fight, with an AC 16 HP 71, 2 attacks each doing 5+17 points of damage and she can cast spells up to level 5.
2. Asha Vandree: Asha is Ilvara's apprentice. Asha is no fan of Ilvara, and is quietly antagonizing Jorlan to try to get him to take out Ilvara.
3. Shoor Vandree: Arrogant. Ilvara's lover who lords it over Jorlan. He has a wand of viscid globs.
4. Jorlan Duskryn: A black ooze scarred his face and hand. Ilvara dumped him. Jorlan now hates Ilvara and Shoor. Because of his injury, he has disadvantage to hit, on DEX checks and DEX saves.

TRINKETS

There are a bunch of areas with chests, each of which has d4 trinkets. I cooked up some drow-centric trinkets. If you can, you should place them in chests prior to running the game. Rolling right there at the table could be time-consuming and boring:

1. A diary written in elvish, gives clues as to what it is like in Menzoberranzan.
2. A vest with 100 tiny pockets (sized for vials of poison).
3. An extremely detailed and well-done sketch of Ilvara Mizzrym, obviously done by someone who is infatuated with her.
4. An old, ornate key that fits a door in an apartment in the section of Menzoberranzan called "Lolth's Web" (See West Wall page 202)
5. A nightcap that, when worn, gives you dreams of spiders treating you like their best buddy and Lolth singing your praises.
6. A sheet of parchment partially detailing a schematic of a drow crawler chest (a treasure chest with spider legs, controlled by a magic ring).
7. A living mindflayer tadpole (this is from Dragon+ issue 3).
8. A bottle of fungus wine.
9. Drow incense that, when inhaled, causes hallucinations and euphoria for d4 hours.
10. A tiny glob of silvery goo called quintessence (created by mind flayers). There's enough of it to coat a finger or coin, and can forever protect a tiny object from the ravages of time.

ESCAPING

Ways to Escape: These are on page 16. There are a few ways for the heroes to bust out:

1. Traitor: Jorlan offers to unlock their door. Jorlan is angry that Ilvara cast him aside because of his disfigurement and is looking to embarrass her.
2. Demon attack: This is very cool. It might work out really well if a few heroes are doing forced labor while other members of the party are trapped in the slave pen. The heroes can free their friends and flee together.

There are three escape tunnels to choose from. Check out the chart on page 18 for travel times. The map is confusing, but here is how the journey goes as far as I can tell:

- North Passage: This leads to Menzoberranzan (26 days away), a place the NPC prisoners don't want to go to. Check out page 149 if the heroes go this way. As they get within a few days of the city, Khalessa Draga warns the group not to go there.
- West Passage: This leads to Darklake.
- South Passage: This leads to Gracklstugh, which is 28 days away.

CHAPTER 2: INTO DARKNESS

Now What? Here's the deal. For the next half of the book, the heroes wander the Underdark, looking for a way out. The adventure encourages you to have an exit in Blingdenstone, after "steering" the group to the other locales. There is no set exit point! It is entirely up to you how and when they exit. The book even suggests using a magic portal on page 117.

Read Up on the Drow Pursuit: The entire time, the drow pursue the group as detailed on page 24. Check out the Drow Chase stuff on page 118! It should be implemented right away. Keep in mind that if the heroes do something that slows them down during the journey, the drow scouts will catch up with them.

Madness Rules: These are detailed on page 21. You'll need to have page 259 of the DMG handy, too. When a PC fails a madness check (from being in the faerzress or laying eyes on a demon lord, etc.), they permanently gain a madness level.

"If a creature with level 3 madness fails a madness saving throw, its madness level becomes 1. In this way, characters can potentially accumulate multiple forms of madness."

Curing Madness: A greater restoration spell will cure indefinite madness and reset your level to 0.

Just So You Know: Once the heroes escape the Underdark, they meet with the dwarf king of Gauntlgrym. He's worried about the demon lords running around. He asks the heroes to go back down to find out more in a place called Gravenhollow, where great knowledge is kept.

Foraging: This is on page 111 of the DMG. The party can forage while traveling at a normal pace. Don't forget the NPCs need to eat too, and they can also forage. Check out page 22 of Out of The Abyss for a great list of edible fungi.

You might even want to roll to see which type of fungus is found during foraging, as some also give water! Match this up with the material on page 22. Roll a d6:

1. Barrelstalk
2. Ripplebark
3. Trillimac
4. Waterorb
5. Zurkhwood
6. Giant, edible, cave grubs?

Surviving Without Food and Water: Check out page 185 of the Players Handbook. Each character needs a pound of food and a gallon of water each day.

Daily Outline: This is basically what you do each day:

1. Roll to see if the group gets lost.
2. Roll for random encounter (page 25). Roll a d20. 14 or higher is a random encounter.
3. Make foraging rolls.
4. Did anything happen that would cause the drow to catch up?

5. Make Camp. Roll for a random encounter again.

Planning: I suggest you make yourself a little cheat sheet and map out the journey in advance, so you're not sitting there at the table rolling a million dice and looking up stats constantly. There's so much material here that it's easy to forget to include it when you're juggling 50 different things.

HOW TO PLAN THE JOURNEY THROUGH THE UNDERDARK

What I'd do is make a list of things that happen each day. Let's say that the heroes are taking the tunnel from Velkynvleve to Sloobludop. That's 8 days away. Keep in mind that the heroes will likely get lost, which will add days to their travel.

What follows is an outline just to give you an idea of how this kind of thing can be organized and run. I pre-rolled the encounters, and only ended up with two. So I decided to use one of the mini-dungeons to fill out the trip a bit. Here's the first 7 days:

Day 1:

Derendil the Elf: As the group delves into the Underdark, Prince Derendil speaks of his great elven kingdom. His story has some inconsistent elements. He claims the elf king has a great curly mustache.

Stool Bonding: Stool is scared and sticks to his favorite PC very closely. The group finds some Tongues of Madness (page 23) growing on a wall.

Rockfall: Toward the end of the day, there's a rockfall. DC 12 DEX save, 10 damage on a fail. Those who are buried take d6 per turn until they are dug out. A carrion crawler attacks, attracted by the commotion.

Day 2:

Gambler's Neon Claws: Jimjar bets a PC that he can find more food when foraging on this day. He gambles rations of food and water.

Faerzress: The group enters tunnels suffused with faerzress, weird dim light tainted by the demon lords. When a spell is cast, the caster has a 1 in 20 chance of a wild surge. The faerzress distresses Shuushar greatly. Remember that because the heroes are spending more than 8 hours in the faerzress, they will need to make madness checks.

Day 3:

Narrow Tunnel: The tunnel becomes so thin that the group must travel single file. The walls are lined with Ormu (page 23), shedding dim green light.

Orc Bully: Ront the orc can't stand the close quarters and begins berating the group leader for bringing them this way.

Sneaky Twins: During the night, a PC notices Topsy and Turvy nervously whispering to each other.

Day 4:

Dwarf Heart A-Flutter: Eldeth flirts with a PC.

Silken Paths: The group comes upon The Silken Paths (page 31). It's a network of spiderwebs crisscrossing a 500 feet deep chasm. The group is going to have to cross it to continue on their journey.

There's a number of encounters:

1. **Guides**: Goblin webrunners Yuk Yuk and Spiderbait offer to be guides for 2 gp.
2. **Large Arachnids**: Giant spiders messing with a cocoon that has a still-living halfling named Fargas Rumblefoot trapped inside.
3. **Spectator**: They meet a spectator who warns the group that 'demons are rising in the dark'.
4. **Loot Surprise**: There's a chest stuck in the webbing! It turns out to be a mimic. During the battle, a web strand breaks under a hero's feet. DC 15 DEX save fail = fall d10 x 10 feet and feet entangled in webs and restrained.

Day 5:

Sloping Tunnel: The tunnel the heroes are in clearly slopes downward, causing great dismay. The tunnel is lined with patches of Nilhogg's nose (page 23).

Fish Evangelist: Shuushar speaks of pacifism and enlightenment. He rambles on a bit about Sloobludop and someone named "Plooploopleen" (the archpriest the heroes are likely to meet in chapter 3).

Day 6:

Dead Bandito: The path opens into a large cavern with massive stalactites. The area is dotted with timmasks (page 23). They find an uprooted timmask and a dead bandit neat it. He was stabbed to death (uprooting the mushroom created a cloud which put the bandit under a confusion spell. He attacked his fellow bandits and was slain).

Ambush: While the group is camped for the night, 4 bandits and their leader attack. They are also surface dwellers who are now lost in The Underdark, trying to find Blingdenstone - they heard there's an exit there. The leader has 70 gp in gems and is touched by madness.

Day 7:

Assassination Attempt: The group travels on a ledge. On one side, it drops off into a void. Buppido becomes sweaty. If he can get a PC away from the group, he will try to shove them over the side and claim it was an accident.

If you plan stuff out like this by rolling in advance, that lets you organize things so they're more coherent. You can also foreshadow events and avoid weird hiccups - many of the random encounters don't really work too well if they occur at night.

THE MINI DUNGEONS

You're meant to drop these in whenever you feel like running them. The Silken Path is really great. The Hook Horror dungeon is not much, but it has some great rules on raising hook horrors.

The Oozing Temple: This place is beyond awesome. You must use it.

The Lost Tomb of Khaem: This dungeon is OK. I think some players will completely steer clear of the hook. 90% of the time in D&D, when a voice calls out for aid, it's a trap. This is a higher level dungeon, so I would wait a while to use it.

In the back of the book, there are details on this sword called Dawnbringer (page 222). I had a hard time finding where it was in the adventure. It's on page 38, in a sarcophagus in the Lost Tomb of Khaem. If you decide not to run this tomb, you should place this sword somewhere else. I think that the authors were pretty stingy with treasure in this adventure, though some people disagree with me on that.

Keep Teleportation Circles in Mind: I'm going to mention this again further along, but I think you should strongly consider the concept of the group finding a teleportation circle in each settlement. A wizard/bard/sorcerer can study it for a minute and memorize the sequence (see the teleportation circle spell in the PH, page 282).

In this adventure there is an excessive amount of walking for miles and miles and it is bound to become tedious, especially if all of the different daily checks bog you down. Prepare in advance so that once your group hits level 9, they can start teleporting around a bit.

CHAPTER 3: THE DARKLAKE

How Long Does Darklake Travel Take? On the water, the heroes are traveling 1 mile per hour. Assuming there are a few people per raft, which means they can sleep in shifts and thus the raft can travel 24 hours per day.

If you eyeball the Underdark map, you can guesstimate the scale of the map based on the fact that it was 56 miles between Velkynvelve and Sloobludop. Assuming the heroes travel nonstop on the lake, that's 24 miles per day. So:

Sloobludop to Gracklstugh: 160 miles, 7 days of sailing.

Do the Drow Pursue the Group on the Water? Yep.. I guess they make rafts of their own and question anyone they come upon. They will not follow the heroes into Sloobludop, as they don't want to risk an altercation with 500 kuo toa.

Makeshift Rafts: AC 11 HP 25, can hold up to 3 people. Made from the cap of a giant mushroom - what an awesome idea. Each raft takes a day to make.

Whirlpool (page 42): This works like the control water spell (PH page 227). It is 50 feet wide. Anything within 25 feet is pulled ten feet toward it per round. You can make STR (athletics) checks at DC 14 to escape the pull. Once you enter the whirlpool, you make a DC 14 STR save.

- **Succeed** = half damage and you get out of the vortex.
- **Fail** = 2d8 bludgeoning and you're stuck in the vortex.. for good..! I think you might want to let the PC roll a saving throw each round. Also, the drowning rules should probably kick in on the second round.

Keelboats: AC 15 HP 100 fits 6 people, see DMG page 119. The kuo toa have 6 of these parked at the docks in their village of Sloobludop.

The Plan: The heroes are meant to meet Plooplookeen as they approach Sloobludop. He tells the heroes that his daughter has overthrown him as ruler. She worships a new entity (Demogorgon!). Ploop has a plan - he wants the heroes to pretend to be prisoners that will be used for human sacrifices.

Sacrificial Dwarf: The kuo toa have a duergar named Hemeth that they are getting ready to sacrifice. That leads to the coolest encounter in the book so far...

The Ritual: This is such an awesome scene. I almost hate to spoil it. But here it is: The kuo toa ritual begins, and DEMOGORGON rises out of the water to come get his sacrifice! The heroes will have to make DC 13 CHA saves or gain a level of madness.

The heroes have no chance against him. They need to run. But if you have young players or players who aren't aware that not everything in this adventure can be slain, you should drop some obvious clues to give them fair warning. You can have Demogorgon make two tentacle attacks on a building.

When this happens, say out loud: "He has +17 to hit and does 35 damage per tentacle."

CHAPTER 4: GRACKLSTUGH

This is a notoriously confusing chapter, so don't feel weird if you have a hard time with it.

The Most Important Thing To Know: All of this chapter is about one thing: Finding Droki, a crazed derro. He's clearly based on the White Rabbit from Alice in Wonderland. The deal here is that the heroes will be chasing him, and he's going to get away at least once.

Almost all of the quests ultimately involve finding him. His stats are on page 231. The contents of his sack of stuff is on page 69. Remember, he's wearing boots of speed.

Here are the main things you need to know about the duergar city of Gracklstugh:

1. **The Gates:** When the heroes first come near the city gates (page 57), they will be up to their neck in duergar guards and will need to do some fast talking. If the heroes are arrested, they'll either get free when a stone giant goes on a rampage (page 59), or they'll be conscripted by the stone guard (page 62).
2. **Demonic Presence:** The duergar are starting to notice the rise of demonic madness in the city.
3. **Derro Immunity to Madness:** There are many derro (insane evil gnomes) in Gracklstugh. They are mostly immune to the demonic madness, because they are already mad.
4. **Grackle-Lung (page 54):** This is crazy. Every single day, the heroes make a DC 11 CON save or they gain a level of exhaustion due to smog! If they catch grackle-lung (page 54) they will cough, spew black phlegm and gain a level of exhaustion. Once they hit level 6 exhaustion, they die.
5. **Themberchaud the Wyrmsmith:** The city has a red dragon that keeps the forges ablaze. The duergar are secretly getting ready to off him and replace him with a new dragon.
6. **City Cut in Half:** The city is split in half by a rift. There's over a dozen stone bridges that cross the rift, connecting the two halves.
7. **Drow Tracking the Heroes:** Drow might be here looking for the heroes (Signs of Pursuit, page 61).
8. **Places to Stay:** The Ghohlbrorn's Lair (page 63) is the only place that accepts non-duergar guests. There are also abandoned guardhouses (page 64) that the PCs can squat in.
9. **Two Factions in the City Are at War:** The Gray Ghosts stole a red dragon egg vital to the city's interests (this dragon is meant to replace Themberchaud). The Keepers of the Flame are trying to get it back. The egg is being kept deep in Whorlstone Caverns (page 81).
10. **Bye, Buppido:** If Buppido is with the party, he ditches them and secretly goes to Whorlstone Caverns (Buppido's Lair, page 70).

GRACKLSTUGH QUESTS

This chapter is organized in a confusing way. Spend some time going through it and figure out what you want to use and what you want to throw in the garbage. I'm going to try to give you a clear picture of the things that happen in this chapter:

When the Heroes First Arrive at Gracklstugh: After dealing with the guards on page 57, the heroes are either wandering the city or being led to jail. Rampaging Giant (page 59) encounter kicks in, which leads to Audience with the Stonespeaker (page 65). The heroes are given a stonespeaker crystal (page 223).

If the Group is Arrested and are Brought to Jail: They are either Conscripted by the Stone Guard (page 62) or bailed out by the Keepers in Guests of the Stone Guard (page 60). Let's go through the Conscripted quest line first:

1. In **Conscripted by the Stone Guard** (page 62), they are asked to spy on a derro named Droki in the West Cleft district and bring him in for questioning. They are also asked to look for signs of demonic corruption among the duergar citizens.

Droki Sighting: If the heroes then look for signs of demon madness/go shopping, go to Blade Bazaar (page 60) where they notice Merchant Madness (page 61). Then they spot Droki (page 61). He gets away (sad trombone noise).

Droki has Lightning Speed: Remember, Droki is wearing boots of speed (DMG page 155). He can double his speed for up to 10 minutes. Also see Chasing Droki (page 64). The heroes will need to go to the derro section of the city to find Droki (see below the next paragraph, "Finding Droki").

2. If the heroes were bailed out by the Keepers in **Guests of the Stone Guard** (page 60) duergar priests bring them to Themberchaud's Lair (page 65). The dragon talks to the group in private in Agents of the Wyrmsmith (page 66). The dragon makes the heroes be his spies. Then, in A Task for the Keepers (page 66), he tells our heroes to find Droki. That leads us to:

Finding Droki: Entering Derro Territory (page 64) to look for Droki is unnerving. Searching will uncover Access to the Whorlstone Tunnels (page 65). I will talk about Whorlstone below, as it is a gigantic dungeon. Going through that dungeon and nabbing Droki will bring the group an interesting reward. They are brought to the Hold of the Deepking (page 82) and have an Audience with the Deepking (page 82). His consort is actually a succubus, an agent of Graz'zt corrupting him. How the heroes would find this out, I have no idea.

Other Quests

How Do We Get Home? If the group asks around about how to get to the surface world, they're directed to Ylsa in Ylsa's Deal (page 61). She will help them if the heroes investigate how the derro are getting all this surface world coinage. I guess this leads to Entering Derro Territory (page 64) where the heroes find the entrance to Whorlstone Tunnels (page 65).

Pliinki: On page 81, the heroes meet a derro named Pliinki. She has an ancient elven coin. Ylsa will then tell the group how to get to Blingdenstone, where there is a way to get to the surface.

I Think This Merchant Quest Should be Run after Whorlstone: The heroes might have found the letter in Whorlstone on page 76 detailing how Gorgok of the Stone Guard plans to "deal with" Werz Saltbaron. At the Docks, the heroes see a merchant being attacked in Assassins Interrupted (page 62). His name is Werz Saltbaron.

Time to go to Blingdenstone! Werz asks the heroes to meet him at the Shattered Spire the following day in The Shattered Spire (page 63). Werz asks the group to deliver a sack of gemstones to Kazook Pickshine in Blingdenstone. While negotiating, a Bar Fight (page 63) breaks out. With that done, the group can head to Blingdenstone.

WHORLSTONE TUNNELS

This place is gigantic. It has some unique traits:

Faerzress: Whorlstone is suffused with faerzress, which means wild surges and if the group is here for more than 8 hours, madness checks.

Foul Water: Drinking water here is not good. DC 12 CON save or you are poisoned for at least one hour.

Fungi: Lots of edible fungi here, as well as magic fungi:

Bigwig: Eat it and make a DC 12 CON save. Fail = enlarged for 1 hour. Enlarge is on page 237 of the PH. The character doubles in size (as does their equipment - any item dropped returns to normal size), their weight is multiplied by 8. +d4 damage and advantage on STR checks and saves.

Pygmywort: Eat it and make a DC 12 CON save. Fail = reduced for one hour. Reduce is on page 237 of the PH. The target's size is halved, weight is reduced to 1/8th of normal. -d4 damage, disadvantage on STR checks and saves.

Finally Finding Droki: On page 68, we are told that the heroes are meant to spot Droki and then chase him through the dungeon (he uses tunnels that only small creatures fit in). It is up to you, the DM, as to when the heroes catch up with him. On the map, his route is traced in a red line. Don't forget about his boots of speed.

The Ghost: A ghost named Pelek (page 70) wants the heroes to get his severed hand (which is in area 13) and return it to Blingdenstone.

2. Diseased Pool (page 72): Cackle Fever is on page 257 of the DMG. Gnomes are immune. You laugh madly for d4 hours. Any stressful event forces a DC 13 CON save or 5 psychic damage and incapacitated for 1 minute. You can make the save each round. Any humanoids within 10 feet must make a DC 10 CON save or they also have the disease.

14. Obelisk (page 80): The egg is here, there's a monolith with weird powers (including the power to teleport the group outside of Gracklstugh). There's a mention of an ancient coin which I don't understand. I probably missed something. This chapter is gigantic and very exhausting. If anyone knows what the deal is, please let me know.

Don't forget, the king wants to meet with the heroes after they complete Whorlstone Tunnels. See page 82.

CHAPTER 5: NEVERLIGHT GROVE

How to get to Neverlight Grove: Getting to this myconid community is difficult, as it doesn't appear on maps. The adventure expects that the heroes will either stumble on it, or that one of three npcs will lead them there:

1. **Stool:** It is his home and he innately senses the location.
2. **Sarith Kezerait:** This drow has been secretly infected by Zuggtmoy from the start. Since Zuggtmoy is here in Neverlight Grove, he is drawn to this place.
3. **Rumpadump:** This myconid is from Whorlstone in chapter 4 might have joined the party. Rump is worried that his home is infected.

The Grove is defended by Sentinel Mushrooms/awakened zurkhwoods (giant mushrooms that have a wood-like quality to them). You have to assemble their stats. Here they are:

Awakened Zurkhwood: AC 13 HP 59 (reach 10 ft) +6 to hit 14 (3d6+4) dmg Speed 20

- Vulnerable: Fire Resistances: Bludgeoning, Piercing
- False Appearance: When motionless, it is indistinguishable from a zurkhwood
- Darkvision 120 feet, Can't speak, was created by a myconid sovereign

The Bad Guys have Spores: Demon-tainted myconids can release demon spores in a 10 foot radius that force you to make a CON save (DC is usually around 12). Fail = infected with the spores of Zuggtmoy and roll on the Madness of Zuggtmoy table on page 249. You repeat the save every 24 hours. If you fail again, your body is slowly taken over with fungal growth. You die after 3 fails in a row, and are reborn as a spore servant.

Neverlight Grove is ruled by two myconids:

1. **Sovereign Phylo:** He is secretly a thrall to Zuggtmoy, and is corrupting the colony.
2. **Sovereign Basidia:** Basidia is suspicious of Phylo, and wants the heroes to check out a place called The Garden of Welcome. He offers them a reward (a chest full of treasure).

The Garden of Welcome: Here's an outline of what happens in the garden (page 90).

1. Guards: On page 90, it is noted that 2 chuul spore servants guard the path to the garden and they won't allow anyone to pass without Yrberop's permission.
2. Drow: Once in the garden, the group stumbles on some drow who had been hunting for them. The drow are buried up to their heads, rotting and fungus-y. They beg for death.
3. Mutant Fungus Attack: Yestabrod, a myconid who is mutating into a larval creature, attacks the group along with some flunkies.
4. NPC Sinus Problem: At the same time, Sarith (drow NPC ally of the heroes) screams - his head splits open and releases spores! He becomes a spore servant and turns against the heroes.
5. Flee: If Yestabrod is killed, his servants go inert and his other flunkies flee.
6. Rehearsal: Then, nearby the heroes hear singing. There's a fungus wedding rehearsal going on. If they spy on it, they have a vision of Zuggtmoy. DC 10 WIS save or gain a level of madness.
7. Yggmorgus: The procession files into Yggmorgus, a massive mushroom.
8. Demon Lord: If the heroes go inside Yggmorgus, they're going to run smack dab into Zuggtmoy, who is sleeping. Yikes.

CHAPTER 6: BLINGDENSTONE

Lots of cool stuff here. Here's what you need to know about this deep gnome settlement:

- Ten years ago, the drow of Menzoberanzan slaughtered the deep gnomes of Blingdenstone. The deep gnomes have rebuilt, but the city is still a mess.
- If there are any drow in the group, they'll need to make a DC 15 CHA (persuasion) check to get in.
- This is the point where you have a bunch of options as far as what to do with Topsy and Turvy. They are deep gnome wererats. They might join the Goldwhisker Clan (page 99), they might come clean to the group, or they might flee into the Underdark.
- Sections of the city have been taken over by monster factions, including wererats, ghosts, and The Pudding King (who is an agent of Juiblex who controls slimes/oozes/puddings).
- Strangers aren't allowed to buy or borrow maps.
- The group has the opportunity to really change this whole town. If they banish Ogremoch's Bane, make peace with the wererats, and take out The Pudding King, Blingdenstone will be a much safer place.

Random Encounters: This city is dangerous. Roll once per day. These are really good! I love the xorn who follows the heroes around, expecting to be fed valuables. All of the molds and slimes are on page 105 of the DMG.

Where To Stay? The group can stay at The Foaming Mug (page 108). The innkeeper, Tappy, will be thrilled to have them, and she'll give them free food and drinks.

Turning in Quests From Other Locations: There are a couple:

- **Kazook Pickshine:** This NPC is on page 103. Werz Saltbaron of Gracklstugh might have hired the heroes to bring him some gems.
- **The Severed Hand Quest:** If the group got the severed hand in Whorlstone, they can place it in the temple on page 104.

Can We Go Home Now? The svirfneblin won't tell the heroes how to get to the surface until they are friendly with them. The group will need to complete some tasks for the deep gnomes, most notably defeating The Pudding King. I'll talk about it at the end of this section.

An Outline: Here is what happens once your group is in Blingdenstone:

1. There are layers of defenses that the group will have to pass through just to get in to Blingdenstone (Area 1, page 101).
2. When the group goes to the Traders' Grotto, there is a gelatinous cube attack (page 103). This sort of foreshadows the menace of The Pudding King.
3. If the group goes to the temple on page 104, they will meet Barrow Warden Jadger, who asks them to complete two quests: destroy a spectre named Vazuk (area 2 page 104), and bring back the remains of Udhasik (area 8, page 108), who died somewhere in Rockblight.
4. A bunch of NPCs have quests for the group to complete in Rockblight (see below). There are also further quests given in area 14 for Goldwhisker and The Pudding King (on page 106).

5. When the group checks out The Pudding King, they see he has an army of oozes and slimes. If the group tries to attack alone, they are doomed.
6. Once the group tells the deep gnomes about this army of oozes, there is a council meeting (page 114).
7. The council decides to have their army distract the oozes so the group can try to kill The Pudding King.

Rockblight: There's a bunch of NPCs who all want to send the group to Rockblight:

- **Nomi Pathshutter:** She wants samples of elementals that were tainted by Ogremoch's bane (sample can be obtained from area 18, page 108).
- **Barrow Warden Jadger (page 104):** Wants the group to retrieve the remains of Udhar (located at area 17 on page 108).
- **Sark Axebarrel (page 105):** Asks the party to kill the medusa (she's in area 20, page 109).
- **Gurnik Tapfinger (page 106):** Gives the group a spell gem to place in a menhir in Rockblight (see area 22, page 109).

Villains: This area is home to an evil sentient fog called Ogremoch's Bane. Also lurking here is Nehedra Duskryn, a drow who turned into a medusa.

AGAINST THE PUDDING KING

Wading into Battle: Getting to The Pudding King, the group will need to have d4+2 encounters with oozes, slimes and puddings! That sounds really fun. Like with most of these charts, I recommend you roll them in advance and have the monster stats on a cheat sheet.

Pudding King Magic Defenses: The Pudding King's stats are on page 233. The heroes will probably be worn down from all the previous fights, but this guy only has 49 hit points. While the heroes approach, he will have time to cast spells to give himself a boost:

- **Mage Armor:** Lasts 8 hours, he'll have an AC of 16
- **Shield:** Cast as a reaction during the battle, gives a +5 to AC until the start of his next turn.
- **False Life:** Cast using a 4th level slot, he gains d4+19 temporary hit points.
- **Blur:** He has this as an innate ability usable once per day. Any creature has disadvantage to hit him.

He Can Turn Into an Ooze: It doesn't appear that he can cast spells in this form. He keeps his original hit points. I guess he uses Gray Ooze (MM page 243) stats? So he can attack with a pseudopod which does 4 + 7 acid, which also corrodes armor. Also, any non-magical weapon that hits him corrodes, too.

Bonus Action - Green Slime Drops on Random PC: Don't forget, a green slime (DMG page 104) will drop on a PC every round during this battle. DC 10 Dex save. Fail = 5 damage, and the creature takes the damage again at the start of each subsequent turn until it is scraped off. It also does 11 damage to wood or metal, which is really nasty to your armored fighters.

Treasure: You might want to add teleportation circle to the spells in the spellbook entitled Magick from Beyond the Mirror on page 115. I strongly believe teleporting around the Underdark is a good idea once the group hits level 9.

CHAPTER 7: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERDARK

So How Do We Get Out? After all of this, the characters should be 7th level by the time they get to this chapter. Here's what all this boils down to:

- **Showdown with the Drow:** The group has a final showdown or a final chase scene with the drow that have been pursuing them (page 118).
- **Farewell:** They say goodbye to their NPC allies.
- **Surface:** They go out the tunnel and emerge in a location of the DM's choosing.

The adventure suggests that the group pops out in the Evermoors or the Lurkwood:

- **The Evermoors:** Trolls used to live here. Frost giants moved in and chased the trolls out. There is a frontier trading town called Nesme. You can get a lot of info on Nesme from a free adventure download on Candlekeep called Northern Journey West. On page 63 there's a map of Nesme and a description.
- **The Lurkwood:** A dangerous place with bottomless bogs. The Lurkwood is teeming with orcs, barbarian tribes, ettins and giants.

Three Month Vacation: The group will probably want some considerable rest time. The adventure suggests three months (page 120). The heroes should also feel the need to warn people that demon lords are in the Forgotten Realms and may come up to the surface.

They should also want to go to Gauntlgrym, either because of Eldeth or because they are summoned...

Beware: From what I am seeing online, quite a few groups end the campaign here. A lot of players don't want to go back down there, either because fighting demon lords is way above their pay grade or due to the fact that this adventure can feel like a drag if you don't keep it snappy.

CHAPTER 8: AUDIENCE IN GAUNTLGRYM

Here's What Happens: The group is treated as great dignitaries upon their arrival. They meet with King Bruenor (page 124) and have a great feast. At the end, Bruenor asks the heroes to go to Gravenhollow to learn what exactly is going on with the demon lords. To get to Gravenhollow, the group will need to meet with a Zhentarim agent in Mantol-Derith.

The Feast: Members of each faction are here (detailed below). I guess you could put in some prominent NPCs from your campaign world, though be careful. If you have Drizz't there at the table, then the players are going to wonder why the king doesn't ask Drizz't to handle this.

Reward: Bruenor offers the group rewards, including property in Gauntlgrym and items made in the Great Forge.

The Factions: Bruenor wants the group to enlist the aid of as many factions as possible. The Zhentarim are needed, because their agent in Mantol-Derrith can get the group to Gravenhollow.

- (Harpers) **Lord Zelraun Roaringhorn:** He's a wizard who likes to gamble. He is accompanied by a shield guardian. He'll let a PC have the control amulet to his shield guardian if the PC can beat him at chess (best of three INT checks. Zelraun has a +9 to the rolls).
- (Order of the Gauntlet) **Sir Lanniver Strayl:** He's a paladin with a squire named Rhiele Vannis. He might offer the group 5 NPC veterans or a +1 hammer.
- (Emerald Enclave) **Morista Malkin:** She is an advisor to King Bruenor. She is stern and stubborn. She can give the heroes giant lizard mounts and 3 NPC dwarf scouts.
- (Lords' Alliance) **Lord Eravien Haund:** Charming and sly. He can give the group a whopping 8 NPCs.
- (Zhentarim) **Davra Jassur:** She is evil and values order and ambition. She wants a full share of whatever treasure the heroes get as well as a full report. She can give the group 8 NPC thugs.

The heroes also learn about some side-quests:

- Spy: There's a Lords' Alliance operative spying on the drow. Her name is Khalessa Draga. She uses a hat of disguise to look like a drow. She's detailed on page 149.
- Missing Person: An Emerald Enclave scout named Sladis Vadir has gone missing. He's in Mantol-Derith, page 135. He has gone crazy.

That is a Lot of NPCs: The group may end up in control of 25 NPCs! I guess we'll see how that works out. It seems like it would slow the game down in a major way. Remember, you have the option of telling your players that NPCs split XP with them if they're involved in a fight.

Non-Essential Personnel: On twitter, Chris Perkins (the guy in charge of D&D stories) said that the reason these NPCs were put in the adventure is so that the heroes have someone to roleplay with. That's it! These people serve no real purpose. If you think you don't need them, don't use them. Or have them die horrible, horrible deaths.

CHAPTER 9: MANTOL-DERITH

The Trip From Gauntlgrym: The heroes must travel 180 miles on the surface world to the Surbrin Hills. There's a tunnel in a cave (page 133) that is an Underdark trade route used by the Zhentarim. The journey through the Underdark to Mantol-Derith is 200 miles!

Yes, you roll for random encounters the entire way. Check out the next chapter for details (scroll down - I did 8 sample travel days). At the end of the long journey, the Zhentarim guides lead the group to a secret door that leads to 1a in Mantol-Derrith (page 135).

Mantol-Derith is Guarded by Trapped Secret Doors: Trying to open one of these secret doors without the password will probably disintegrate you: 55 force damage, save for half.

The Goal: The group needs to find Ghazrim DuLoc. He can help them get to Gravenhollow. He's on page 141. He has a magic ring that can guide the wearer to the safest, shortest route to Gravenhollow.

A Black Gem is Causing Problems: The demon lord Fraz'urb'luu is trapped in a black gem. The gem is spreading demonic madness. If you touch the gem: Make a DC 23 CHA save or gain an indefinite madness (roll on the chart on page 239). Destroying the gem is a little tricky (page 133). Basically, you need to smash it with a magic weapon.

Mantol-Derith has 3 Rules:

1. No stealing of goods from fellow merchants.
2. No disguising of goods by any means.
3. No use of magic during negotiation and haggling.

The punishment for violating a rule: You are wrapped in chains and tossed into the Darklake.

Tons and Tons of Stats: This chapter is overloaded with stuff you have to look up. I don't even know where to begin. You need to look up traps and you need to roll magic items from table b of the DMG. Definitely set aside some extra time to get this chapter ready.

Complicated Situation: So basically, everyone has succumbed to demonic madness here. Mantol-Derrith has a population of 140 people split into factions who are all turning against each other. The duergar are trying to kill the deep gnomes. The drow are planning to kill both of them. And there's a crazy drow provoking the Zhentarim into conflict.

Meeting Goes Badly: When the heroes find Ghazrim, he's about to have a big meeting (he's accompanied by a beholder and 6 thugs) with the drow that breaks out into a massive battle on page 140. A drow assassin attacks the beholder (to everyone's surprise) and the beholder ends up killing everyone in the crossfire except the assassin, who flees. There's a gargoyle that is secretly in love with the assassin watching. I'd guess he'll swoop in to save her under certain circumstances.

CHAPTER 10: DESCENT INTO THE DEPTHS

This chapter deals with travel, like chapter 2. It discusses the horde of NPCs accompanying the heroes, a situation that seems to me like it will grind the game to a halt. But first...

Teleportation Circles: Your group should be level 9 by now, which means wizards have access to the teleportation circle spell. I highly recommend using this to cut down on the travel time which, in my opinion, gets way out of control in this adventure. Do remember that teleportation to and from Menzoberranzan is impossible as it is magically blocked by the drow due to the demonic incursion. Also be sure to read up on how the faerzress affects teleportation on page 21, but remember that you have a lot of control over what areas are in the faerzress.

Traveling With the NPC Horde:

- **Not Stealthy:** The group can't use stealth, as the group is too large (individuals would have to scout ahead to use stealth).
- **Navigation is Easier:** Advantage on Wisdom (survival) checks to avoid getting lost.
- **Food is Provided:** The NPCs are given provisions, so you don't have to worry about foraging for 25 NPCs every day.
- **NPCs Want Loot:** The NPCs are going to want a split of the treasure.
- **Less Encounter Rolls:** Instead of Random Encounters, you roll on the Random Events table (page 146).

Random Events: Every second day of travel or camping, roll on the random events table (page 146). Again, I suggest you roll these in advance so you can have stats ready. Some of these charts have tables within tables.

Sample Travel Time: I'm going to go ahead and do 8 days of travel, just so I can again show you how I think this can be prepared to keep the game running smoothly. Plus, I love rolling on charts.

We're traveling at a normal pace, which according to page 18 is 6 miles per day. That means that the journey to Mantol-Derith will take 34 days. I would suggest saying that King Bruenor provided the heroes with provisions as well, so you don't have to make foraging rolls for 34 days.

I am going to put some kind of NPC moment on each of the "off" days so we can flesh these NPCs out and make them more than just stat blocks. The NPC names are listed back in the faction entries in chapter 8.

Day 1: Thora Nabal has a prophetic dream of a hideous ooze-thing with eyes coming to drive everyone mad (she's having a vision of Juiblex).

Day 2: Discipline Problem - Loud Argument (does not attract monsters): Nero Kalvane (Zhentarim) claims that the giant lizard mount of Griswalla (Emerald Enclave) ate a portion of his provisions. He demands to get to ride the lizard as compensation. He's lying. He ate a bunch of his own food and now is trying to weasel his way into riding a mount rather than walking like a sucker.

Day 3: Zilna Oakshadow (Lords' Alliance) starts sucking up to a PC in the hopes of getting to keep a cool magic item the hero has, but doesn't use very much.

Day 4: Juiblex! (I swear I rolled this legit). This demon lord is on page 242. He's immune to non-magic weapons! I'd probably have the cavern rumble, and have his pseudopods reach out from the darkness of a side tunnel and attack three NPCs: +14 to hit, 21 damage, and any creature killed is drawn into Juiblex's body. Anyone closing in on him will have to save vs his foulness (fail = poisoned) and probably make a madness check.

Best case is that everyone runs, and any NPCs that survived now have madness to deal with.

Day 5: In an attempt to bolster everyone's spirits, Brim Coppervein shares his stash of booze with anyone who thinks they can hang with him. Let's say that it is Gutbuster, a strong dwarven brew. Only the toughest dwarves drink it and some non-dwarves call it "the most foul-tasting concoction ever brewed." This drink is from the Forgotten Realms novel "Starless Night," by R.A. Salvatore.

Day 6: Raiders - Goblin boss and 3 goblins: This is sort of amusing. What chance do these goblins have? I imagine they'd spring out from the shadows and scream a threat, and then see just how many people are in the party, turn, and run.

Day 7: Saliyra Dalnor (Zhentarim) confides in a hero that she thinks Ghazrim, the agent in Mantol-Derith, has a beholder as an ally. The beholder is missing three eyestalks (this is all true).

Day 8: Demon Encounter -2 Barlguras: Again, I don't know what chance these monsters have. It might be fun to let the PCs hand-pick NPCs to fight them, and let the players roll for their chosen NPCs. Conversely, maybe it would be fun to have everyone swarm them, competing for the killing blow. Because they are demons, remember that they vanish rather than die. To truly kill a demon, you have to slay them on their home plane. So their bodies turn to smoldering goo, something like that.

Returning to Settlements: The book spends a few pages talking about what happens if the heroes revisit places they've been to, places like Neverlight Grove or Sloobludop. The Gracklstugh section is actually really cool (page 148). The duergar want to sacrifice the red dragon to Demogorgon!

CHAPTER 11: GRAVENHOLLOW

This place is 360 miles from Mantol-Derith. That's 60 days of travel. Sixty days! You'll run out of random event encounters by then. Wow. The ring they got from Ghazrim will lead the party right to Gravenhollow.

Here's what happens in this chapter:

1. The group is greeted by a behir who brings them into Gravenhollow.
2. The heroes can explore the library, talk to ghostly echoes, and learn a bit about the demon lords.
3. They meet a wizard named Vizeran DeVir and his death slaad bodyguard (The slaad's name is Kleve, he is detailed on page 161). He is looking into the demonic invasion as well. He tells the group that he thinks a wizard from Menzoberranzan named Gromph has something to do with the demonic incursion.
4. Ulthar, the stone giant librarian who records the past, will give the group a stone speaker crystal (page 156), which only functions in Gravenhollow. They can use it to have tons of visions, where they learn a lot. Most notably, they have a vision that implies that Gromph is indeed the one who started all of this. They also get clues that Lolth is using this opportunity to have her demon children take over the vacated abyssal realms of the demon lords.
5. Vizeran talks to the group again, and claims he knows how to banish the demon lords back to the Abyss. He wants to team up with the heroes.
6. Vizeran asks the group to come with him to his tower to talk in private. The tower and the meeting are detailed in chapter 12.

Things to Know About Gravenhollow:

- Magic has warped the place so that it is bigger than should be possible.
- Every event that has ever occurred in the Underdark is recorded on tablets in Gravenhollow.
- Troublemakers will be turned to stone by the behir.
- Finding anything (tablets, ancient texts, etc.) requires a DC 14 Wisdom check. Failure just means you wasted some time and need to roll again.

There are 3 stone giant librarians:

1. **Ulthar, Keeper of the Past:** He files ancient texts. He likes to compose poetry and is friendly to the PCs.
2. **Urmas, Keeper of the Present:** He has a network of monster informants (galeb duhr, xorn, stone giants, etc) constantly filing in and telling him what's going on in the Underdark. He is very busy.
3. **Ustova, Keeper of the Future:** She is a seer who meditates and transcribes her visions onto stone tablets.

Echoes: The library "remembers" those who have been there. Ghostly apparitions of other visitors flicker in and out. This is a chance for the heroes to talk to 'famous' NPCs like Elminster and get some advice. There's actually a chart of NPCs to roll on if you want. They could also run into an 'echo' of their future selves, or even their own children!

CHAPTER 12: THE TOWER OF VENGEANCE

Vizeran DeVir has invited the group to his home to discuss his plan in private. Things to know:

- There's a secret door that leads to the tower. Without Vizeran's map or Vizeran himself, it will be very hard for the group to find it.
- Vizeran allows only the heroes inside. The NPCs will have to wait outside.
- Vizeran is secretly a follower of the Elder Elemental Eye, is a rival of Gromph's, and despises Lolth.

Sneaking In: The group will need to overcome 24 suits of animated armor and a guards and wards spell (Player's Handbook page 248). That means hallways will be full of fog, doors are protected by illusions and are magically locked, stairs are full of webs and there might be stinking clouds in very inconvenient places. There's even more horrific details on page 165.

The Meeting: Vizeran feeds the group smoked rothe meat and explains that Gromph is the archmage of Menzoberranzan (page 163). Gromph performed a ritual that drew on the energy of the faerzress and accidentally opened portals to the Abyss. The adventurers can learn a lot more if they pry it out of him. The adventure suggests DC 20 skill checks to get these nuggets of information:

- Lolth manipulated Gromph into doing this.
- Gromph vanished after the ritual.
- Demogorgon rampaged through Menzoberranzan before heading to Sloobludop.
- Gromph may have been trying to summon and bind a demon lord.

Vizeran Has a Plan: Vizeran tells the group his plan (flavor text is on page 164). He wants to cast a ritual to create a dark heart talisman. This talisman will bring all of the demon lords to the same place. He hopes that doing this will cause them to destroy each other. With their physical forms destroyed, their essences will return to the Abyss.

RITUAL COMPONENTS

The Ritual Needs Ingredients: For Vizeran to cast the ritual, the heroes need to get some things (Check out page 215 for more details). Basically, he's going to make a dark heart talisman, a device that can summon all of the demon lords:

1. The egg of a purple worm (found in the Wormwrithings, page 173).
2. The central eye of a beholder (found in the Wormwrithings, page 176).
3. 6 feathers from 6 different angels (found in the Labyrinth, page 185).
4. The heart of a goristro (found in the Labyrinth, page 184).
5. 13 timmasks (found in the aftermath of the battle between Zuggtmoy and Juiblex, page 214)
6. A few drops of blood of a demon lord (Labyrinth, page 184).
7. Gromph's Grimoire (It's in Menzoberranzan, page 207). It is unclear on what exactly the grimoire is needed for (see below).

What is the Grimoire Needed For? On page 189 under "Goals", it says:

"...they have two goals in the City of Spiders: obtain Gromph Baenre's demon summoning grimoire, and place Vizeran's talisman in Menzoberranzan..."

Obviously this implies that the talisman is made without the grimoire. But on page 215 under "Readying the Plan", the components needed to create the talisman include:

"Gromph Baenre's grimoire (from Sorcere in chapter 15)".

So do you need the grimoire to make the talisman or not?

Back on page 164, here's some of Vizeran's flavor text:

"All I need are the necessary ingredients," Vizeran say, "and ideally a look at Gromph's grimoires and notes from his sanctum."

Then on page 165, there's a list of the components he needs that includes this:

"Gromph Baenre's grimoires and notes on his ritual, to assist in better understanding the power that summoned the demon lords."

Final Verdict: That notation on page 215 really threw me. If the group doesn't need the grimoire to make the talisman, than do they really need to go to Menzoberranzan at all? I'd say that you should declare that the ingredients make the talisman, and the grimoire is needed to cast the ritual that will summon the demon lords.

How the Ritual Will Work: So in the end, the group will need to decide where to place the dark heart talisman. Vizeran will be back at his tower. The group will alert him, via a sending spell, that it's time. He will cast the ritual, which takes 9 hours. The ritual summons all of the demon lords to the talisman, where they will all fight each other and destroy their physical forms. The group is going to have to finish off the last demon lord standing (which is detailed on page 219).

Vizeran Gives Directions: Vizeran gives the group a map to a purple worm nursery and tells them about the gallery of angels in the Labyrinth.

Getting the Timmasks: You have a few options for the timmasks. If you want to skip chapter 16, then you can have the group find the timmasks in the goristro footprints after the Yeenoghu encounter on page 184. Or you can have the group find them following the battle between Zuggtmoy and Juiblex as described on page 214 in the "Treasure" section.

Run Chapter 16 After Chapter 14: If you are going to put the timmasks in chapter 16, then that chapter probably should be run before 15. The group could get the grimoire in 15 and then go get the timmasks, but it's a bit more neat and tidy to have the dark heart talisman already made before going to Menzoberranzan.

CHAPTER 13: THE WORMWRITHINGS

The Wormwrithings are hundreds of miles of tunnels carved out by purple worms. Vizeran will give the group a map of a purple worm nesting area, which is about 48 miles from his tower.

- Foraging is more difficult here, requiring DC 20 Wisdom (survival) checks.
- The tunnels are 10 feet in diameter.
- Check for random encounters once per day using the chart on page 167. Roll a d6 to determine natural illumination. 1 means it is lit by luminescent lichen, otherwise it is dark.

Once the group is halfway to the worm nursery, they stumble on a troglodyte lair (page 168). Troglodytes are fighting over a magic sword. The troglodytes have a 20 minute standoff, and then a series of events occur throughout the complex (see page 171).

5. Supplies and Captives: The troglodytes have a bunch of prisoners, all with only a single hit point remaining. There are 2 drow (members of House Milarn who were searching for a purple worm egg as a gift for their matron) and 4 shield dwarves (prospectors from Mithril Hall).

Voice in the Dark (page 171): Once the group is 6 miles from the worm nursery, a lone lost drow named Hanne tries to scare them off with illusions. She could end up befriending the party. Hanne is a good ally to have, as she knows a lot about purple worm eggs (see page 174, "Hanne's Help"). The group will encounter Hanne's allies that she got separated from in the worm nursery. If the group treated Hanne well, this will work out good. If the group treated her poorly, things are going to be really rough for them in the worm nursery.

Worm Nursery (page 172): As the group explores this place, purple worms show up and carve new tunnels. 2 minutes before each one arrives, there is a loud rumbling. The worms actually create tunnels on the map (T1, T2, and T3).

Exploring the First Few Rooms: The group arrives and explore rooms 1-4 for 15 minutes. A purple worm comes out of a random wall, plows through room 3 and tunnels through the wall to 8.

8. Egg Chamber: The eggs are suspended up in a resin web. The eggs are each 3 feet in diameter. Check out the map on page 173. To get up to the eggs, you need to climb up from a strand anchored to the ground (marked as "0" on the map). Stuff to know:

- The text says there are two strands but the map shows three.
- Climbing is slow. You move at 1/3rd normal speed.
- Taking any strenuous action on a strand causes a DC 10 DEX (acrobatics) check or you fall.
- Cutting an egg free takes 2d4 minutes.
- Zhora and the Dark Hunters show up from Area 7.
- Every 5 minutes the group is in here, roll on the egg encounters table (page 174). A 16 or higher means problems.
- In 10 minutes, the second worm shows up. 2 minutes prior, the place rumbles. 1 minute prior, a swarm of bats from area 9 comes into the room.
- Also remember that 10 minutes after the first purple worm carved out T1, the second worm comes through 7 into this room.

- 15 minutes after the second worm showed up, a third worm comes in from area 7.

Beware Room 5: There's a number of room 5's here. If the group makes noise in any of these rooms, a purple room arrives in 1d4 minutes and checks on the eggs in room 8.

A Thing of Beauty: The Worm Nursery is a great little dungeon. It takes a bit of planning to manage. It will be easy to forget something. But all in all, it is fantastic. What's really cool is that they built it around a fairly dull monster and made it really fun. This is definitely something to use in your own campaign even if you are not going to run Out of the Abyss.

THE VAST OBLIVIUM

This place (page 175) is 12 miles from the worm nursery. The cavern has a giant carving of a beholder glaring down upon a gaping chasm. Here's who is there:

- Karazikar the Eye Tyrant: This beholder is obsessed with finding a thing called the Maze Engine (page 175). He wants to find some modrons (!) too.
- Shedrak of the Eyes: A human slave of the beholder. He is the "high priest" of the slaves, and he leads them in worship of Karazikar. His staff has a beholder eye on it that Karazikar can see through.
- 100 Slaves: Of various races (page 177 has details). They worship the beholder as if he was a god.

Here's how things go when the group comes to the Vast Oblivium:

1. Once they get within a mile of the place, the heroes feel like they are being watched. There might be madness saving throws involved.
2. The tunnel comes to a shaft with a rope ladder leading down. The ladder leads to a vast cavern with a chasm and the image of a beholder carved in the ceiling. This place is Karazikar's Maw.
3. The group will first run into Shedrak, and either negotiate with him or attack him.
4. Then they will have to cross a bridge over the chasm. The beholder is on land on the far side.
5. If the PCs talk to him, he'll want to know about the Maze Engine.
6. If a fight breaks out, the beholder will disintegrate a 10 foot section of the bridge under their feet! Falling means 20d6 damage.
7. Karazikar gets lair actions, too.
8. With the beholder slain, they can claim his eye.
9. The slaves now worship the heroes. They will tell them where Karazikar hid his treasure, and lead them to his modron prisoner.

The Modron Prisoner: How crazy is this? He got lost on a Great Modron March! If the heroes cast greater restoration, the modron regains his senses and can lead them to a machine that can bring order to chaos. It is 289 miles away (apparently "the orderer" is the maze engine).

CHAPTER 14: THE LABYRINTH

The Labyrinth is hundreds of miles of twisting tunnels. Both Baphomet and Yeenoghu are roaming around in here.

- Vizeran told the heroes to find the Gallery of Angels to get some angel feathers.
- The Maze Engine is also in here.
- Getting Lost is Easy: DC 12 WIS(Survival) check see page 20 for rules on getting lost). Fail means you're lost, wandering in a random direction for d6 hours before the navigator can make a new check to try to get back on track.
- Random Encounters: Roll twice a day on the chart on page 179.

There's two really interesting random encounters (page 179):

1. **Kurr**: The gnoll whose madness has made him hate violence. He actually throws himself at the mercy of the group, thinking his fellow gnoll savages.
2. **Monodrone**: I really get a kick out of the use of monodrones in this adventure. This particular monodrone is a rogue, and he shouts "Down with Primus!" Primus is the god of the modrons. This is odd because in 2nd edition, it was established that modrons can only sense modrons one rank higher than them. Thus, this little guy should have no idea who Primus is. But maybe that has changed in subsequent editions and honestly it's fine with me. The whole modron-perceiving-each-other thing was extremely complicated and led to some really confusing situations.

Adamantine Tower (page 180): This place is actually a magic item - Daern's instant fortress (DMG page 160). The only way to get in is to learn the command word, which can be obtained with an identify spell. Two shadow demons phased through the wall and killed the owner.

Spiral of the Horned King (page 181): The group comes to a cave and meets a pathetic, trembling gnoll named Gash. He offer to be their guide through this deadly area of the labyrinth. If the group treats him poorly, he goes out of his way to lead them into danger. If the group is nice to him, he steers them away from danger. Stuff to know about the maze:

- It takes 2 hours to navigate the maze.
- Halfway through, DC 15 WIS (survival). Fail = you're back at the beginning.
- Every 30 minutes toll on the encounter table on page 182. Advantage or disadvantage depending on how the group treats Gash.

Filthriddens (page 182): This shanty town is 48 miles from The Spiral. The people here worship Yeenoghu as their protector.

March to Nowhere (page 183): Heroes might hear the sounds of marching feet in the distance. It is 12 monodrones and a tridrone, lost in the labyrinth since the last Great Modron March. They might join the party. They warn the group to avoid the center of the labyrinth, as a malfunctioning "orderer" (the Maze Engine) is there. The tridrone could lead them to it.

Yeenoghu's Hunt (page 184): Once the group gets 12 miles from the modron encounter, they come upon Yeenoghu himself killing a goristro. That's a DC 12 WIS save or gain a level of madness. This is an

opportunity for the group to get two components for the ritual, the heart of a goristro and demon lord blood (some of Yeenoghu's blood is on the goristro's horn).

The Group Might Find Timmasks Here, Too: We were told that they are mushrooms that grow in the footprints of goristros and demon lords (?). The group needs 13 timmasks for the ritual. If you don't want to run chapter 16, then you can put them here in the footprints of the goristro.

Gallery of Angels (page 185): There are 8 angels in here, all turned to stone. They're conscious and insane. Nothing can free them from their petrified state. If a hero touches one of them, they learn the angel's name and experiences. Each angel has the power to affect someone touching it, from dominating a PC to forcing a madness check.

Getting the Feathers: You can just break off some stone feathers and blam, quest complete.

THE MAZE ENGINE

This section is on page 186. The Engine is 48 miles southeast of the angels.

It Fell: This thing looks like a working model of the Great Wheel. It's stuck halfway down in a crevasse 40 feet above super-hot magma which does 42 damage per round if you fall in it!

Guardian: There's a nalfeshnee (Monster Manual page 62) in here guarding the Maze Engine. Once the heroes beat him up, the real fun begins. We are about to have an EPIC encounter.

Write Down Magma Mephits Stats: Be familiar with these guys (MM page 216). Are they too weak for your group? They seem like they might be. We're about to be neck deep in them. They have fire breath and they can cast heat metal! Don't forget that when they die, they explode in a lava burst, so definitely have some of the mephits close in for melee.

Maze Engine Effects (page 188): This is a table of effects that you roll on every round after the Engine is activated. You must read these over well before hand. Here's some notes on the more eyebrow-raising ones:

1: All magic items within 300 feet are destroyed. Will your players set fire to your Out of the Abyss hardcover book? Yes. Maybe change this one.

09-10: The group travels back in time to the start of the adventure! Hilarious? Yes. End of the campaign? Almost assuredly. Maybe just have this happen for a couple of rounds, and then the group returns to whence they left.

16-19: Pick this NPC or PC out in advance!

28-32: Have green slaad stats handy (MM page 277).

40-43: Get them flying snake stats ready (MM 322). Be mindful that you might suddenly have a character in the fight with five hit points.

49-52: Maybe pick this item out in advance?

53-57: Do you really want to disintegrate a character that has been playing through the campaign for this long? That's a very tough saving throw to make.

58-60: Faerie fire is kind of lame. Maybe have this one cure those angels. I feel sorry for them.

81-100: Baphomet and Yeenoghu are banished back to the Abyss (see page 218 for confirmation).

Climbing Up or Down: DC 12 STR (athletics) fail = no progress. Fail by 5 or more = fall into the magma!

Starting the Engine: If the group climbs down and starts the Maze Engine (a modron can help if Arcana checks are failed), roll initiative. The Maze engine 'acts' on initiative 15. I've mapped out this encounter by round so we don't miss anything when the fight occurs:

Round 1: On initiative count 15, roll on the Maze Engine Effects table. On initiative count 10, 2 magma mephits pop out of the magma and attack. 2 more join for the next 5 rounds.

Round 2: Roll on the Maze Engine Effects table. Two more mephits.

Round 3: Roll on the Maze Engine Effects table. Two more mephits. The Engine shifts, anyone on it must make a DC 10 DEX save or fall.

Round 4: Roll on the Maze Engine Effects table. Two more mephits.

Round 5: Roll on the Maze Engine Effects table. Two more mephits.

Round 6: Roll on the Maze Engine Effects table. The Engine shifts again. Two more mephits.

Round 7: Roll on the Maze Engine Effects table.

Round 8: Roll on the Maze Engine Effects table.

Round 9: Roll on the Maze Engine Effects table. The Maze Engine slides down the crevasse, dropping ten feet each round.

Round 10: Roll on the Maze Engine Effects table. Ten more feet.

Round 11: Roll on the Maze Engine Effects table. Ten more feet.

Round 12: Roll on the Maze Engine Effects table. Ten more feet.

Round 13: Roll on the Maze Engine Effects table. It sinks into the magma and is destroyed.

Round 14: Add a minor eruption at your discretion (see bottom of page 188)

I Ran This Encounter: I liked this so much that I shoehorned this into my 5th edition Planescape campaign. There were some problems.

1. **The Mephits Were Too Weak:** The group wiped them out with no problem each round. There was no danger.
2. **Standing on the Machine:** The heroes didn't have to stand on the machine. This encounter is a lot more fun if the heroes are on the maze engine. I made up some BS about a latch that needed to be manually held down, but it felt a little forced.
3. **The Random Chart Didn't Work:** I rolled really lame results on the chart. I suggest that you change the chart beforehand and only use the results that you think will be fun.

CHAPTER 15: THE CITY OF SPIDERS

Why We're Here: The group is coming to Menzoberranzan to get Gromph's grimoire out of Tower Sorcere. Vizeran also wants the group to place the dark heart talisman in Gromph's sanctum.

Drow NPC Guide: Grin Ousstyl (detailed on page 162), a drow ally of Vizeran, accompanies the group. Once in Menzoberranzan, he tells the group some things that may complicate everything (see page 205). You might want to establish that Grin knows the spell "knock", as the party might need him to use it in Sorcere (see page 206).

Travel to Menzoberranzan: It is 72 miles from Vizeran's tower. Vizeran suggests that the group leave their NPC horde behind, as a small team will have a better chance of infiltrating the city. They can take a secret tunnel free of monsters (page 190).

The Secret Entrance: The tunnel leads to the bottom of the Westrift in Menzoberranzan (page 201). The group will emerge on a narrow ledge 60 feet below the lip of the rift. Climbing up isn't hard. If you look at the map, the group will be near West Wall (detailed on page 202) up in the top section of the city.

You Can't Teleport In: No divination or teleportation works in Menzoberranzan, a precaution taken due to the chaos of the demon lords.

Sneaking Around: Traveling here is tricky. Check out the city laws on page 195. Any non-drow who disguises themselves as a drow is to be slain.

Place to Stay: There's an encounter on page 196 that opens up the possibility of the group staying at Narbondell's Shadow in Eastmyr. The price is high but the owner, Dalfred Noakes, seems like a handy fellow to know if things go south.

How the City is Lit: I'm not familiar with Menzoberranzan so this may not be news to you. There's a 1,000 foot tall rock column. The base is magically heated each day by the city archmage. This causes the stone to glow. The band of warm light rises up the column, taking 24 hours to reach the top.

The Heroes Gain an Ally: Basically, one of three factions approach the group:

1. **Matron Mother Quenthel Baenre of House Baenre** (page 203) - She doesn't know where Gromph, her brother, is.
2. **Jarlaxle Baenre of Bregan D'aerthe** (page 204) - Secretly knows that Gromph is hiding in the city of Luskan up on the surface world.
3. **The Council of Spiders** (page 203) - A secret cabal of wizards friendly with Vizeran. Vizeran has told them about the adventurers. They are ready to disable the wards in Sorcere.

Khalessa Draga: I had a really hard time finding her in this chapter when I first read this book. She's on page 192. She first appeared on page 149 to stop groups from going to Menzoberranzan so early in the adventure. I highly recommend that you put her to use here to help the heroes out and maybe connect them to one of the three factions. Maybe she even knows a bit about Vizeran and can warn the heroes not to trust him.

Grin's Change of Heart: After the meeting, Grin gives his above-mentioned confession (on page 205). He thinks the ritual doesn't have to be done in Menzoberranzan at all. He thinks Vizeran wants it done in Menzoberranzan simply so that the demon lords will destroy the city.

SORCERE

This is where Gromph's grimoire is, and it's the place where Vizeran wants the ritual done. When preparing Sorcere, you're going to want to sit down and look up all of the traps and spells in Gromph's room. You'll probably need a cheat sheet handy to keep things moving. Here's how things go down in the tower:

Getting In: There is a guards and wards spell, but presumably the council of spiders gives the group the password. This resets in an hour, so the party needs to hustle.

Safe Passage? The group goes through the tower. The creatures inside will probably leave the group alone due to the aid of the faction.

Bypass the Door: Open Gromph's door via lockpick or knock spell.

Guardian: Entering Gromph's room (page 206) causes a fire elemental to appear and attack (MM page 125).

Loot, but no Grimoire: There's some valuable treasure in here, but it's all trapped (page 207).

Another Guardian: If anyone touches the desk, the statue animates and attacks (stone golem, MM page 170, has four attacks: +10 to hit, 10 damage each).

Secret Door: There's a secret door with a really nasty trap on it.

The Maze: Beyond the secret door is a void. If you go in or even touch it, you're sucked into a maze. Creatures need to make a DC 20 INT check to get out.

Sanctum: Those who escape the demiplane reach Gromph's inner sanctum (page 207).

Yochlol: There's a "drow" in here named Y'Lara who tries to trick the group into releasing her. She's really a yochlol (MM page 65). She's standing in a magic circle that she can't leave unless someone breaks it. She does whatever she can to stop the group from taking Gromph's grimoire.

The Grimoire: It's on a lectern in here, open to a chapter that discusses summoning Demogorgon. This proves that Gromph was responsible for bringing the demon lords to the Underdark.

Building the Dark Heart: Once the group has the ingredients collected in the Wormwritings and the Labyrinth (and Araumycos), they can bring them back to Vizeran. It will take him 10 days to make the dark heart. Now the group must place it. Vizeran would like them to place it in Gromph's sanctum (which is in the tower of Sorcere page 207).

CHAPTER 16: THE FETID WEDDING

The group receives a psychic call for help from Basidia of Neverlight Grove. Zuggtmoy is trying to bond with Araumycos, a powerful sentient entity - "the largest life-form in the Underdark." She has lulled Araumycos into some kind of sleep.

After his warning, thousands of myconids make a pilgrimage to Araumycos. Juiblex notices and heads that way with an army of oozes.

Araumycos is 40 miles south of Darklake.

Here's how this chapter unfolds once the group gets to Araumycos:

1. Basidia helps the group create a psychic rapport with Araumycos' mind.
2. As the rapport is being established, black puddings attack the group (page 211).
3. The group must then defeat two otyughs who are Araumycos defenders.
4. The bodies of the adventurers are paralyzed as their astral bodies meet with Araumycos in the Astral Plane.
5. Araumycos is a mountain-sized skull full of fungi.
6. Zuggtmoy senses the heroes, but Juiblex attacks her in the physical realm.
7. The heroes need to go into the skull and battle a tainted fungus mass.
8. Zuggtmoy is distracted by the heroes' actions, which allows Juiblex to destroy her physical form. Her essence returns to the Abyss.
9. The heroes return to their bodies, and now must defeat a weakened Juiblex.
10. On page 214, it states that the timmasks can be found in the area of the battle between Zuggtmoy and Juiblex.

Reward: Araumycos rewards the group with charms of heroism (DMG page 228). It's a one-use item that gives you 10 temporary hit points and gain +d4 to attack rolls and saving throws for an hour. That's kind of cool, but that's not much of a reward for killing a demon lord.

CHAPTER 17: AGAINST THE DEMON LORDS

The characters should be 15th level at this point.

Set-Up: The group has the dark heart talisman. They choose where to place it. They alert Vizeran, who is far away safe in his tower, via a sending spell to begin the ritual. The ritual takes 9 hours to cast. Then the demon lords are summoned to the heart, and they all fight. The group waits to see who wins. Their job is to defeat the final demon lord standing.

Choose the Location: There's a list of possible places the group might put the dark heart. My favorite is to put the heart right near Vizeran's tower. The guy did try to trick the group into destroying Menzoberranzan, after all. Remember that due to casting the ritual, Vizeran has 3 levels of exhaustion (PH 291). This means he has disadvantage on attack rolls and saves, his speed is cut in half, and he has disadvantage on ability checks.

Which Demon Lords Are Left? If the group used the maze engine to banish Baphomet and Yeenoghu, destroyed Fraz-Urb'luu's gem (page 133) and they took care of Zuggtmoy and Juiblex in chapter 16, which leaves three demon lords:

- Orcus, Demon Lord of Undead
- Graz'zt, Demon Lord of
- Demogorgon, Demon Prince
- Additionally, other lesser demons come through the faerzress portals as well

Hide and Watch: The group might want to hide and watch. In fact, if they have that Daern's instant fortress (page 180), they might be holed up in there. I think I'd use a couple of the suggested encounters. As the demon lords duke it out, I'd have 3 (or 6?) vrock attack the group and roll on the "near miss" chart every round (page 218).

The Wand of Orcus: A hero might try to snatch up the Wand of Orcus (DMG page 227) once Orcus is slain. It will attune itself immediately to anyone other than Demogorgon! It is a +3 mace and does an extra 2d12 necrotic on a hit. You'll need to cook up a bunch of random properties beforehand. Remember that the wand is indestructible, unless the ancient hero whose skull is on the wand somehow comes back to life.

Not a bad way to end a campaign! Thanks for reading.

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A Guide to Out of the Abyss is a walkthrough designed to help dungeon masters prepare Out of the Abyss. Inside, you will find stats, summaries and guidance. This guide should help keep your prep time to a minimum.

This is an extension of the Power Score RPG blog, a site that contains resources for Dungeons & Dragons DMs.