

PRINCES OF THE APOCALYPSE™



ELEMENTAL EVIL™



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D&D ENCOUNTERS

Welcome to a special introductory edition of the *Princes of the Apocalypse*™ adventure, designed specifically for D&D Encounters™ (an official in-store play program) and the D&D Adventurers League™ (the official D&D organized play system).

This edition of the adventure is designed for **1st-through 4th-level characters**, and is divided up into two parts, each of which contains a number of adventure scenarios. Characters who finish both parts of the adventure should reach 5th level at the end. Characters of 5th level and above cannot play in this D&D Encounters edition of the adventure, though they can play the full adventure of *Princes of the Apocalypse*. Each part of the adventure should be played over multiple sessions of play. For D&D Encounters, the recommended session length is two hours. The full adventure contains additional play beyond this edition (see “Additional Play” at the end of the adventure).

Playing this adventure in store as a part of D&D Encounters is fun and offers additional benefits to enhance the experience. Folios connecting characters to different factions in the world of the Forgotten Realms® are provided for players, containing information and accessories, along with exclusive rewards. Dungeon Masters (DMs) receive a folio as well, themed to the storyline season (for this season, *Elemental Evil*™). Check with your store for more details. If you received this adventure and aren't currently associated with a store, you can find a nearby store by heading to our [Store and Event Locator](#).

THE D&D ADVENTURERS LEAGUE

This adventure is official for D&D Adventurers League play. The D&D Adventurers League is the official organized play system for DUNGEONS & DRAGONS. Players can create characters and participate in any adventure allowed as a part of the D&D Adventurers League. As they adventure, players track their characters' experience, treasure, and other rewards, and can take those characters through other adventures that will continue their story.

D&D Adventurers League play is broken up into storyline seasons. When players create characters, they attach those characters to a storyline season, which determines what rules they're allowed to use to create and advance their characters. Players can continue

SEASON LENGTH

The *Elemental Evil* storyline season for D&D Encounters runs from Wednesday, March 18, 2015, through Wednesday, August 12, 2015. This D&D Encounters edition of the adventure contains enough play for 9 to 13 sessions. If you start the adventure the first week and play the sessions in the recommended two-hour weekly increments, you will finish this edition well before the end of the D&D Encounters season. To fill out the rest of the season, see “Additional Play” at the end of this adventure.

to play their characters after the storyline season has finished, possibly participating in a second or third storyline with those same characters. A character's level is the only limitation for adventure play. A player cannot use a character of a level higher or lower than the level range of a D&D Adventurers League adventure.

For more information on playing, running games as a Dungeon Master, and organizing games for the D&D Adventurers League, please visit the [D&D Adventurers League home](#).

PREPARING THE ADVENTURE

You don't need to prepare this entire adventure for the first session. Simply get to know the different scenarios in the adventure prior to playing each scenario (but remember that the first short scenarios in part 1 can be played in any order). As you do so, spend some time familiarizing yourself with the adventure's locations, events, and characters—including the sites in Red Larch for part 1 of the adventure, and the select locations in the Dessarin Valley for part 2 of the adventure. You'll also want to review the relevant statistics for any monsters or nonplayer characters (NPCs).

Each part of the adventure contains a "Designing D&D Encounters Sessions" sidebar that talks about how to divide that part of the adventure up into two-hour sessions for D&D Encounters play. This adventure features a wide-open play style that means you will most often be creating sessions based on the characters' goals and the players' choices during the game, rather than forcing the characters to adhere to a fixed roster of events and locations.

In order to DM the game as a part of the D&D Adventurers League, you'll need a [DCI number](#). The DCI number is your official Wizards of the Coast organized play identifier. If you don't have a number, you can obtain one at a store event. Check with your organizer for details.

BEFORE EACH PLAY SESSION

This adventure is designed for **three to seven 1st- to 4th-level characters**, and is optimized for four characters. Players that have characters outside that level range cannot participate in the adventure with those characters. Players with ineligible characters can make a new 1st-level character or use a [pregenerated character](#). Players can play an adventure they previously played or ran as a DM, but not with the same character (if applicable).

Ensure that all players have official [Adventure Log-sheets](#) for their characters. Each player will fill out the adventure name, session number, date, and your name and DCI number. In addition, the player also fills in his or her character's starting values for XP, gold, downtime, renown, and number of permanent magic items. Players will fill in the other values and write notes at the conclusion of the session. Each player is responsible for maintaining an accurate logsheet.

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You can do a quick scan of a player's character sheet to ensure that nothing appears out of order. If you see magic items of very high rarity or strange arrays of ability scores, you can ask a player to provide documentation for the irregularities. If a player cannot, feel free to restrict item use or ask the player to use a standard ability score array. Point the player to the [D&D Adventurers League Player's Guide](#) as a reference.

DOWNTIME AND LIFESTYLE

At the beginning of each play session, players must declare whether or not they are spending any days of downtime. The player records the downtime spent on the adventure logsheet. The following options are available to players during downtime (see the [D&D Basic Rules](#) or the [D&D Adventurers League Player's Guide](#) for more information):

- Crafting (exception: multiple characters cannot commit to crafting a single item)

- Practicing a profession
- Recuperating
- Training

Other downtime options might be available during adventures or unlocked through play, including faction-specific activities.

In addition, whenever a character spends downtime days, that character also spends the requisite expense for his or her lifestyle. Costs are per day, so that a character who spends ten days of downtime also spends ten days of expenses maintaining his or her lifestyle. Some downtime activities help with lifestyle expenses or add lifestyle expenses.

PLAYER AND DM FOLIOS

At your first session, check with your store organizer to see if faction-specific player and story-specific DM folios are available. These are complimentary, and contain great game accessories and rewards for DMs and players. Whenever a new player shows up, check with the organizer to see if any more folios are available.

AFTER EACH PLAY SESSION

As the characters progress through the adventure, they can earn treasure in the form of valuables such as gold, jewelry, and art objects, as well as magic items. In addition, there might be special rewards that are story focused or intangible. Since a group's composition might change from one play session to the next, you'll want to have players update their logsheets before leaving the table.

Players are responsible for maintaining their own adventure logsheets. At the end of each session, you should give out rewards earned and each player should record that information on his or her logsheet.

Experience points (XP) are given out to each player. Divide XP by the number of characters, unless otherwise specified in the adventure.

Coin, nonmagical treasure, and other wealth rewards are totaled up in value. That total is then divided by the number of characters, unless otherwise specified in the adventure.

Consumable magic items are awarded at the end of each session. Potions, scrolls, and other consumable magic items are divided among the characters. A player notes the item obtained by recording it on his or her logsheet. Players should attempt to ensure an equitable distribution of consumable items.

Permanent magic items are awarded at the end of each session. Permanent magic items are rare, and do not appear often. A player notes each item obtained by recording it on his or her logsheet. See the sidebar for guidelines on how to distribute permanent magic items.

Other special rewards are awarded when noted in the adventure, usually at the end of a session.

EXPERIENCE AND MILESTONES

D&D Adventurers League play does not use the milestone experience rule. Characters track experience individually and level up when reaching the appropriate amount of XP.

ELEMENTAL CRYSTAL

This season provides one special certificate that is valid throughout the duration of *Elemental Evil*. The *elemental crystal* is a single-use item found in the D&D Encounters kit.

AWARDING CERTIFICATES

The D&D Encounters kit contains certificates for all permanent magic items and any rare or higher rarity consumable items found in an adventure. Whenever a character records such a magic item on his or her logsheet, ask the organizer for a certificate from the kit to award to that player. Certificates can be awarded while supplies last.

Certified magic items are a fun reminder of play, but they also serve an important purpose: most unlock the ability to trade a magic item to another D&D Adventurers League character. Magic items earned without certificates cannot be traded to other characters.

Other items in the adventure might also be certified, including special rewards. If a special item or other reward has a certificate, it is noted in the adventure.

CHARACTER ADVANCEMENT

A character who earns enough XP to advance a level can do so at the end of a long rest or at the end of a session. A character who earns enough renown to advance a rank in his or her faction can do so at the end of either part of the adventure.

DOWNTIME AND RENOWN

At different points during the adventure, additional awards might need to be given out.

Downtime days and renown are awarded twice during each part of this D&D Encounters edition of *Princes of the Apocalypse*. In part 1, characters are awarded downtime and renown after the completion of the initial short scenarios, then after the completion of the Tomb of Moving stones scenario. In part 2 of the adventure, characters are awarded downtime and renown after the completion of the Feathergale Spire scenario and of the Rivergard Keep scenario.

At each of these award points, each character is awarded 10 downtime days, which can be spent immediately or saved for later use.

DUNGEON MASTERING TIPS

As the DM running this adventure, you have the most important role in facilitating the enjoyment of the game for the players. You help guide the narrative and bring the words on these pages to life. The outcome of a fun game session often creates stories that live well beyond the play at the table. Always follow this golden rule when you run an adventure for a group:

Make decisions and adjudications that enhance the fun of the adventure whenever possible.

To reinforce this rule, keep the following points in mind:

- You are empowered to make adjustments to the adventure and make decisions about how the characters interact with the world of the adventure. This is especially important and applicable outside of combat, but feel free to also use the guidelines in the “Adjusting the Adventure” section (below) for groups that are having too easy or too hard of a time in an adventure.
- Don’t make the adventure too easy or too difficult for a group. Never being challenged makes for a boring game, and being overwhelmed makes for a frustrating game. Gauge the experience that the players (not the characters) have with the game. Try to get a sense of what each player likes in a game session (or simply ask the players), and try to give all players the experience they’re after when they play D&D. Give everyone a chance to shine.
- Be mindful of pacing, and keep the game session moving along appropriately. Watch for stalling, since play loses momentum when this happens. At the same time, try to provide the players with a full play experience that doesn’t finish too early. D&D Encounters sessions are about two hours long, so try to be aware of when you are running long or short. Adjust the pacing accordingly. Each part of the adventure provides guidelines for breaking the action up into D&D Encounters sessions.
- Give the players appropriate hints so they can make informed choices about how to proceed. Players should be given clues when necessary so they can tackle puzzles, combat, and interactions without getting frustrated over lack of information. This helps to encourage immersion in the adventure and gives players “little victories” for figuring out good choices from clues.

In short, being the DM isn’t about following the adventure’s text word for word. It’s about helping to create a fun, challenging game environment for the players. The *Dungeon Master’s Guide* has more information on the art of running a D&D game.

CHARACTER DISEASE, DEATH, AND RECOVERY

Bad things sometimes happen even to the heroes, and characters might be poisoned, diseased, or killed during an adventure. The following rules can help you manage such events during a D&D Encounters season.

DISEASE, POISON, AND OTHER DEBILITATING EFFECTS

A character affected by disease, poison, and other similar effects can recuperate during downtime to help resolve those effects. (See “Downtime Activities” in the *D&D Basic Rules*). If a character doesn’t resolve an effect between game sessions, that character begins the next session still affected by the debilitating effect.

DEATH

A character who dies during the course of an adventure has a few different options.

PERMANENT MAGIC ITEM DISTRIBUTION

D&D Adventurers League has a system in place to determine who is awarded permanent magic items at the end of a session. Each character’s logsheet contains a column to record permanent magic items for ease of reference.

- If all the players at the table agree on one character taking possession of a permanent magic item, that character gets the item.
- In the event that one or more characters indicate an interest in possessing a permanent magic item, the character who possesses the fewest permanent magic items gets the item. If there is a tie in the total number of permanent magic items owned by contesting characters, the item’s owner is determined randomly by the DM.

Party Magic. If a character in the party has access to a *raise dead* spell, a *revivify* spell, or similar magic, he or she can choose to raise a dead character. If *raise dead* is used, the dead character’s soul must be free and willing to be returned to life. A character subject to a *raise dead* spell also takes a penalty to attack rolls, saving throws, and ability checks that is normally reduced each time the character takes a long rest. In addition, each downtime day spent after a character is subject to *raise dead* can reduce this penalty by 1, over and above any other benefit the downtime provides.

Dead Character Pays for Raise Dead. If a dead character’s body is recoverable and his or her soul is willing to be returned to life, the party can take the body back to civilization and use the dead character’s funds to pay for a *raise dead* spell. A *raise dead* spell cast in this manner costs the character 1,000 gp.

Character’s Party Pays for Raise Dead. As above, except that some or all of the 1,000 gp cost of the *raise dead* spell is paid for by the party at the end of the session. Other party members are under no obligation to spend their funds to bring a dead character back to life.

Faction Charity. If the dead character is 1st to 4th level and a member of a faction, the character’s body can be returned to civilization, where a patron from the faction ensures that the character receives a *raise dead* spell. However, any character invoking this charity forfeits all XP and rewards from the session in which he or she died (even those earned prior to dying during that session), and cannot replay that portion of the adventure with that character again. Once a character reaches 5th level, this option is no longer available.

Create a New Character. If a character cannot be brought back from the dead, a player can create a new character. The new character does not have any items or rewards possessed by the dead character. A dead character keeps all his or her items and rewards, in case the player decides to raise the character later. Other characters cannot take a dead character’s treasure or magic items, and can use a dead character’s money only to pay for a *raise dead* spell for that character.

ADJUSTING THE ADVENTURE

This adventure has been designed for optimal play by a party of four characters all starting at 1st level, and who will advance as high as 5th level by the end of the adventure. However, the D&D Encounters format allows for characters of 1st to 4th level, and groups of from three to seven adventurers. If you are playing with a larger or smaller group, or with a group of four characters starting the adventure at higher than 1st level, you can make adjustments to the combat encounters to make sure the adventure plays well for your group. (You can make the same sorts of adjustments even for a group of four characters of the optimal level if those characters are having too hard or too easy a time in the adventure.)

REBUILDING ENCOUNTERS

The *Dungeon Master's Guide* and the *D&D Basic Rules* provide guidelines for creating balanced combat encounters. If you have time before you play, use these guidelines to calculate the appropriate XP budget for your party and increase the number of monsters in an encounter as appropriate.

ADJUSTING ON THE FLY

To make adjustments to encounters while you play, you can increase the number of monsters. This approach works best for encounters with four or more monsters (equal to or greater than the optimal party size of four). Start by adding one monster to an existing group of monsters for each additional character in the party.

Be careful if you find yourself doubling the number of monsters in an encounter. Many creatures—even low-challenge monsters—become much more dangerous in large numbers. In the event that you feel the need to increase the number of monsters in an encounter drastically (for example, if you have a large group of 3rd- or 4th-level characters starting the adventure), you should instead use the *Dungeon Master's Guide* or the *D&D Basic Rules* to calculate XP budgets as you rebuild the encounters.

NONCOMBAT XP

Though this adventure does not specify noncombat XP awards, you can give out such awards as appropriate when the characters engage in good roleplaying to overcome a challenge, or when the adventurers undertake a complicated, risky strategy that allows them to bypass a dangerous encounter rather than face it.

In general, if the characters are able to bypass a combat encounter with effective roleplaying and strategizing, award full XP as if the party had overcome the encounter, so as to ensure that characters can advance in the adventure as expected. However, in the event that a party later has to fight foes that were initially bypassed, characters gain no additional XP for the combat encounter.

Noncombat XP awards are given either on a per character basis or as a lump-sum award to be divided by the party. Where awards are given to each character, you can award the same value to any number of characters in the party. Where an award is given as a lump-sum value, divide the award by the number of characters in the party.

The *Dungeon Master's Guide* has more information on noncombat challenges and awarding XP.

RESOURCES FOR PLAY

To run this adventure, you should have the following resources available for your use:

- *Monster Manual* (all new monsters and NPCs are presented in the appendix)
- [D&D Basic Rules](#) (player's rules and Dungeon Master's rules)
- *Dungeon Master's Guide* (recommended)

INTRODUCTION

A TERRIBLE THREAT GATHERS IN THE NORTH. Throughout this region of the Forgotten Realms, savage marauders bring destruction. Monsters are on the prowl, preying on flocks, rampaging through croplands, and attacking homesteads and travelers. In settlements, discord and suspicion grow. Sinister strangers lurk in the shadows, whispering about how everything is soon to change.

BACKGROUND

The threat of Elemental Evil surfaces in different worlds of the multiverse whenever the force known as the Elder Elemental Eye tests its strength. Servants of this malevolence seek to master elemental magic and unleash its destructive power everywhere. In its current incarnation, Elemental Evil arises in the Sember Hills of Faerûn—the world of the Forgotten Realms. The scattered towns and isolated homesteads of this frontier now face a dire threat. If the forces of Elemental Evil can't be defeated before they grow, madness and destruction could spread unchecked through the North.

The full adventure of *Princes of the Apocalypse* sets the heroes against the forces of four elemental cults growing in power in the Sember Hills, claiming abandoned keeps that connect to an underground fortress once part of an ancient dwarven kingdom. Each of the four cults venerates a powerful entity of air, earth, fire, or water: a Prince of Elemental Evil. Like their princes, the four cults are rivals, yet they all serve a mysterious force they call the Elder Elemental Eye.

A prophet gifted with a powerful elemental weapon leads each cult. Those weapons—*Windvane*, *Ironfang*, *Tinderstrike*, and *Drown*—do not appear in this D&D Encounters adventure, but they are a primary focus in the full adventure of *Princes of the Apocalypse*. If you continue on with that full adventure, the heroes will build on their initial confrontations with the cult as they seek to destroy the four weapons and prevent elemental destruction from wreaking devastation on the Dessarin Valley and beyond.

This D&D Encounters adventure provides an overview of the threat of Elemental Evil, and a brief exploration of the town of Red Larch and some of the features of the Dessarin Valley. The full adventure of *Princes of the Apocalypse* explores the cult, Red Larch and its people, and the Dessarin Valley in much greater detail.

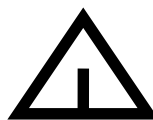
ELEMENTAL CULTS

Elemental Evil perverts the natural elements, limiting them to aspects of destruction. This force wants to gain the power to tear down everything—morals, social structures, governments, the laws of nature—and reduce existence to a more elemental state, tainted with conflict and madness. Elemental Evil uses mortal servants as a means to this end, tempting the broken, the wronged, and the wicked. As Elemental Evil grows

stronger, its corruption grows into madness. Cultists sink into insanity, lashing out at everything around them or destroying themselves in elemental cataclysms. Ruin rules as the forces of nature become instruments of destruction.

The four cults that make up Elemental Evil operate independently of each other. Each believes that its favored element is the most powerful and most worthy of worship. In this D&D Encounters adventure, the characters have the opportunity to infiltrate and fight the forces of the Cult of the Howling Hatred and the Cult of the Crushing Wave.

CULT OF THE BLACK EARTH



The earth cult worships the implacable strength and unyielding resistance of elemental earth. Cultists seek the power to destroy the works of civilization with landslides, sinkholes, or mighty earthquakes, thus demonstrating the true power of elemental earth and the futility of resistance.

CULT OF THE CRUSHING WAVE



Cultists of the Crushing Wave worship the awesome power of water, from the surging tides and deadly maelstroms of the sea to the raging torrents of rivers in flood and the rock-crushing power of ice and glaciers. It is the duty of Crushing Wave initiates to return nonbelievers to the primal waters by drowning them or shedding their blood.

CULT OF THE ETERNAL FLAME



The followers of the Eternal Flame cult worship the destructive power of fire in all its manifestations. They seek the power to burn away the “corruption” of both civilization and nature with volcanic eruptions, forest fires, heat waves, and droughts, creating a wasteland of ash and cinders ruled by fire alone.

CULT OF THE HOWLING HATRED



The followers of the air cult worship the destructive power of wind and storms, believing that those who venerate elemental air gain the power to punish those who have wronged them. Rather than seeing destruction as an end in itself, air cultists unleash destruction as an expression of personal freedom or to earn things wrongfully denied them.

OVERVIEW

The adventure begins when the characters arrive in the town of Red Larch, a small settlement on the western side of the Dessarin Valley. Strange rumors and ominous signs have the townsfolk concerned, including reports of bandit attacks on the roads, piracy on the Dessarin River, and monster sightings too close to town.

As the characters explore Red Larch and meet a selection of its people in part 1 of this adventure, they

are given leads that allow them to investigate three potential threats near the town—a bandit lair, a haunted tomb, and a necromancer’s cave. Their success in these scenarios leads the townsfolk to seek the adventurers’ aid when a sinkhole opens up in the middle of Red Larch—and reveals a mysterious and magical site hidden beneath the town.

In part 2 of the adventure, the heroes are called upon to investigate the disappearance of important travelers in the Dessarin Valley. As they do, an attack on the road leads them to the first of the so-called Haunted Keeps of the Sember Hills. These long-abandoned fortresses are now occupied by strange new sects masquerading as harmless societies or reclusive orders. However, these outposts all serve Elemental Evil.

(This D&D Encounters adventure sets the characters on a course to infiltrate two of the four Haunted Keeps. The other two are developed in the full *Princes of the Apocalypse* adventure—as are the keeps’ connections to a huge dungeon beneath the Sember Hills, the new Temple of Elemental Evil.)

These events make up an exciting adventure in their own right, but they can also be used as a springboard to play the full adventure of *Princes of the Apocalypse* or the exciting organized play adventures of D&D Expeditions. See “Additional Play” at the end of this adventure for more information.

USING MONSTER REFERENCES

Throughout the adventure, each encounter presents monster names in bold. This is a visual cue pointing you to look up the monster’s stat block. If a monster comes from this adventure’s appendix, you should find a parenthetical note telling you to look there. Finding no such note, you should head for the *Monster Manual*.





RED LARCH AND THE DESSARIN VALLEY

THE RISE OF ELEMENTAL EVIL IN FAERÛN begins in the Dessarin Valley, a lightly settled region of caravan towns, isolated homesteads, and uninhabited wilderness just a week's journey from Waterdeep. Residents in places such as Red Larch or Triboar boast that their humble settlements are "the Gateway to the North." Through these lands pass hundreds of caravans and keelboats each year, linking the great ports of Waterdeep and Neverwinter with places such as Everlund, Mirabar, or Silverymoon. The steady caravan traffic breathes life into the towns of this area, supporting businesses in the settlements along the

Long Road. Inns cater to travelers anxious to sleep safely within sturdy walls and enjoy good food by a warm fire instead of camping by the side of the road.

Minor issues are nothing unusual in the Dessarin Valley, from bands of savage humanoids from the Sword Mountains or the Evermoors, to bandits gathering in the lonelier parts of the vale to waylay caravans traveling the Long Road or the Kheldell Path. But six months ago, an insidious new threat began to grow in the area, unsuspected by the locals or any passing adventurers.

Dreams and visions have drawn four elemental prophets, one by one, to the Sember Hills. Each prophet began to gather like-minded followers. Strangers trickled into the Dessarin Valley in ones or twos. Some

were already cultists of Elemental Evil, eager to build a place where they could openly practice their vile rites. Others were brutal thugs, power-hungry dabblers in forbidden magic, or fanatics lured by the call of evil.

RED LARCH

Red Larch has been an important stop on the Long Road for two centuries now. Named for a distinctive stand of red larch trees that were cut down when the hamlet was founded, Red Larch is a prosperous community facing dark times. The heart of the Summer Hills has become far more dangerous, with monsters lurking seemingly everywhere. Banditry is on the rise, and the weather seems to be getting more severe and more unpredictable. The townsfolk fear that dangerous times are at hand, but no one seems to know what to do about it.

The inhabitants of Red Larch have become so frightened by the recent “dark doings” that rather than showing typical frontier reticence, they helpfully babble about everything they’ve seen and heard. Most hope to convince adventurers to investigate and put an end to the current troubles.

THE BELIEVERS

A dozen of the Red Larch town elders have a secret: They belong to a hidden society that calls itself “the Believers.” Some of the wealthiest and most powerful people in Red Larch are members, using their secret association to guide town affairs, plot against business competitors, and sometimes take care of people who cause problems when it becomes clear that “something must be done” for the good of the town.

The Believers formed years ago when local miners discovered a secret underground chamber beneath the town. Strange things happened in the chamber, such as heavy stones levitating and moving about when no one was around (this is described in the “Tomb of Moving Stones” scenario that ends part 1 of this adventure). The Believers gather secretly at the tomb once every nine nights to see if any stones have moved—and if any have, they covertly meet the next night to discuss what the movements mean, and what is to be done. They keep the tomb and its strange secret to themselves.

The Believers have no knowledge of Elemental Evil. However, the Cult of the Black Earth discovered their secret and became interested. A Black Earth priest named Larrakh has come to Red Larch to steer the group toward the worship of elemental earth. The discovery of a cult priest’s interest in Red Larch at the

TIME IN THE REALMS

The people of the Forgotten Realms number the years by the Dalereckoning calendar, which is abbreviated “DR.” Years are also given names, which are drawn from the writings of a great seer from long ago. The adventure is set in 1491 DR, the Year of the Scarlet Witch.

Each month consists of three ten-day long weeks called tendays. People refer to tendays the way people in other worlds refer to weeks.

end of part 1 of the adventure sets up the characters’ fight against the forces of Elemental Evil in part 2.

TROUBLE IN RED LARCH

Red Larch serves as the starting point for adventure. When the characters arrive in the town, a few minutes of conversation with any NPC reveals that the townsfolk are concerned about strange events. Asking around about what’s going on in town or points the party toward the following NPCs:

- Outlaws are lurking out on the Cairn Road, but Constable Harburk (area 11) hasn’t found anything.
- Mangobarl Lorren (area 8) and Minthra Mhandyvver’s granddaughter Pell (area 13) have tales to tell about an old tomb not far from town.
- The Tarnlar children (area 7) are telling wild tales about plague out by Lance Rock.
- Kaylessa Irkell, the owner of the Swinging Sword Inn (area 2), thinks the town’s troubles might connect to dark magic in a cave by Lance Rock.

Speaking with the NPCs involved in these rumors provides the characters with several leads to adventure opportunities in Red Larch. “Into the Wilderness” describes three short adventure scenarios located near town—an attack on a bandit camp in “Bears and Bows,” a spectral showdown in “Haunted Tomb,” and a necromancer’s cave near a landmark called “Lance Rock.” When the adventurers have completed these initial scenarios (which can be played in any order), they are called upon to investigate “The Tomb of Moving Stones”—an old dungeon-like mine chamber underlying part of Red Larch.

RED LARCH LOCATIONS

Here follow brief descriptions of important locations in town. Buildings shown on the map that don’t have a number and a description are houses, sheds, or outbuildings belonging to farmers, shepherds, and local laborers.

Some of the locations in town feature information meant to lead the characters into the adventure scenarios in “Trouble in Red Larch” (see part 1 of this adventure).

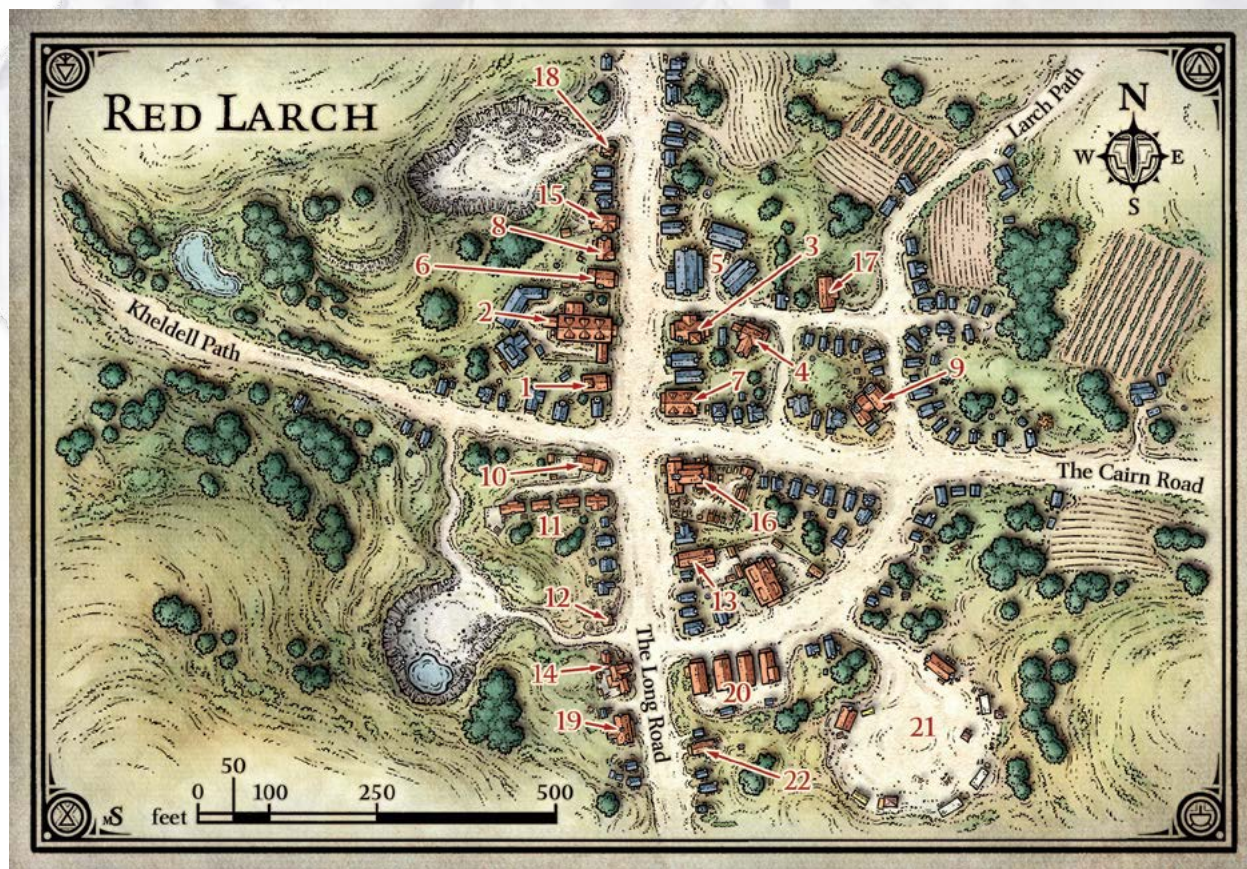
The full adventure of *Princes of the Apocalypse* explores Red Larch and its NPCs in much more detail, including revealing secret cult agents and potential faction allies for the player characters.

1. ALLFAITHS SHRINE

The Allfaiths Shrine is a wayside shrine used by many faiths and owned by none. Priests shuttle out from Waterdeep in pairs for month-long stays. The most frequent combinations are Sune and Selûne, Tymora and Lathander, and Tempus and Oghma.

2. THE SWINGING SWORD

This inn is a three-story stone structure, crowned by a steep slate roof that bristles with many chimneys. An inn yard with stables and outbuildings lies behind the building. While the Helm at Highsun is the place to hear



Red Larchers unwind, the Swinging Sword is the polite social hub and neutral meeting ground of Red Larch.

Adventure Hook: The proprietor of the Swinging Sword is Kaylessa Irkell (female Illuskan human **commoner**), a friend to adventurers. If the characters don't approach her, Kaylessa tells them of recent disturbances near Red Larch, and her theory that those disturbances are related to an evil presence at Lance Rock. She says neither the constable nor the town elders have helped her, so she offers the characters 50 gp to investigate Lance Rock and make sure no sinister forces are lurking there. This leads the characters to the "Lance Rock" scenario and the necromancer's cave in part 1 of this adventure.

3. THE HELM AT HIGHSUN

Rusty metal grills cover the dirty windows of this ramshackle two-story tavern. Inside is a large, dimly lit, wood-paneled taproom where locals relax, gossip, flirt, and tell the stories of their working days. It's not a place for refined dining.

4. MOTHER YALANTHA'S

This three-story, dilapidated boarding house has a cheerful—though generally noisy—atmosphere.

5. THELORN'S SAFE JOURNEYS

The foremost wagonmaker in this region, Thelorn's is a busy, always-bustling place. The quality of Thelorn's wagons is well known.

6. CHANSYRL FINE HARNESS

The pungent smell of tanned and oiled leather fills this crowded workshop, whose walls display leather saddles and harnesses, as well as stylish leather jackets, caps, boots, leggings, and armor.

7. HELVUR TARNLAR, CLOTHIER

Tarnlar's is the only place to buy quality clothing for a hundred miles around. The clothing, boots, and accessories sold here are all fine, warm, and sturdy.

Adventure Hook. A couple of tendays ago, the Tarnlar children (two boys and two girls, aged seven to ten) were out berry-picking when they met a grizzled dwarf prospector who warned them away from Lance Rock "because there's plague there." Their parents have no idea what they're talking about, but the children can provide directions to the ravine the dwarf warned them about. This leads the characters to the "Lance Rock" scenario and the necromancer's cave in part 1 of this adventure.

8. LORREN'S BAKERY

This aromatic, tidy bakery always has fresh round loaves and buns for sale. Its specialty is cheese-topped buns with melted mushroom cheese from outlying local farms.

Adventure Hook. Baker Mangobarl Lorren heard about Pell Mhandyvver's scare at the Haunted Tomb (see location 14) and went to look for himself. He saw a goblin near the spot, and figured that a gang of the creatures had moved in and rigged a "haunt" to scare off

intruders. He suspects a treasure could be hidden in the tomb, and says it shouldn't be left to a band of goblins. This leads the characters to the "Haunted Tomb" scenario in part 1 of this adventure.

9. TANTUR SMITHY

The din of forge hammers rings out late into most nights from this soot-stained building, whose skilled smiths can make or repair almost anything that requires no specialized alloys or treatments.

10. DROUTH FINE POULTRY

This largest of the two Red Larch poultry shops is ever-bustling thanks to thriving local farms and the endless appetite of communities along the Long Road.

11. JALESSA ORNRA, BUTCHER

These four identical single-story stone buildings are the workplace, shop, and home of Jalessa Ornra (female Illuskan human **commoner**). Her husband Harburk Tuthmarillar (male Tethyrian human **veteran**) is Red Larch's constable.

Red Larch doesn't have a jail or court, so Harburk employs four of Jalessa's laborers as assistant

constables (human **guards**). Harburk knows there are evil and secretive groups in the Sumber Hills, but he isn't sure just what is out there. Adventurers who could go investigating where he dares not would be a godsend.

Adventure Hook. Harburk has heard tales of banditry on the Cairn Road south of town, and he knows of several potential hideouts. He doesn't have the time to wander around the countryside on what he thinks is a wild goose chase, but he provides eager new adventurers with directions to one or two likely spots. This leads the characters to the "Bears and Bows" scenario in part 1 of this adventure.

12. DORNEN FINESTONE

This plain, dusty building is the business office of the busy Dornen quarry, run by Elak Dornen (male Tethyrian human **noble**). Dornen is a hard master to some twenty workers, and he insists on keeping careful records.

Unknown to most other townsfolk, Dornen is the effective leader of the secret society known as the Believers. The adventurers have a chance to discover more about the Believers in the "Tomb of Moving Stones" scenario, which ends part 1 of this adventure.



13. IRONHEAD ARMS

Run by former sellsword and caravan guard Ironhead (male half-orc **veteran**), this shop deals in arms and armor, both new and used.

14. MHANDYVVER'S POULTRY

Mhandyvver's is the less impressive of the two local poulterers, but is a favorite with Red Larchers.

Adventure Hook. Recently, proprietor Minthra "Minny" Mhandyvver's adventurous young granddaughter Pell had a frightening encounter with a "ghost" near a long-forgotten tomb a short distance outside of town. Minny has ordered the girl to stay away, but she wonders what Pell saw, and she thinks that someone ought to "make sure it's safe." The directions Pell provides lead the characters to the "Haunted Tomb" scenario in part 1 of this adventure.

15. HAELEEYA'S

Originally from Amn, Haeleeya Hanadroum (female human Tethyrian **commoner**) operates a bathhouse and dress shop in her large, well-appointed home.

16. WAELVUR'S WAGONWORKS

Ilmeth Waelvur (male Tethyrian human **bandit**) operates a cheaper alternative to Thelorn's Safe Journeys, making and selling replacement wheels and axles for wagons. Ilmeth is a town elder and a Believer (see "The Tomb of Moving Stones").

17. GAELKUR'S

This seedy wooden building serves as Red Larch's used tools and goods shop, its barber, and an unofficial second tavern for locals. In addition to providing grooming, Marlandro Gaelkur (male Tethyrian human **commoner**) deals in used (and sometimes shady) items with no questions asked. He is also a member of the Believers (see "The Tomb of Moving Stones").

18. MELLIKHO STONWORKS

A quarry pit begins just behind this small house, which serves as the business office and the home of the quarry owner, Albaeri Mellikho (female Tethyrian human **commoner**). A town elder, Albaeri is also a Believer (see "The Tomb of Moving Stones").

19. LURUTH'S TANNERY

This former warehouse reeks with an eye-watering, throat-closing stench that obliterates all other smells within a bowshot of the place. Ulhro Luruth (male Chondathan human **commoner**) is the tannery's owner and proprietor, and also a town elder and Believer (see "The Tomb of Moving Stones").

20. BETHENDUR'S STORAGE

Four identical, well-built warehouses stand here in ground covered in raked gravel and cinders.

21. THE MARKET

This muddy, well-used field is ringed with outhouses and rings of stones that have obviously been used as cook-fires or trash burn sites. Once a tenday, farmers drive in from homesteads miles away to sell all manner

of in-season produce, cheese, cider and cider vinegar, and last year's pickled beets in jugs.

On the other nine days of the tenday, Grund (male half-orc **thug**) ekes out a living by making pickles in vats at the end of the field. Grund is a happy, dim-witted sort if encountered here, but the adventurers meet him in more unpleasant circumstances in area T3 of the Tomb of Moving Stones (see part 1 of this adventure).

22. VALLIVOE'S SUNDRIES

Endrith Vallivoe (male Tethyrian human **commoner**) is a retired caravan merchant who sells new and used goods from his home. Almost anything might be available to buy here, buried under heaps of other stuff.

THE DESSARIN VALLEY

As the player characters get caught up with events in Red Larch in part 1 of this adventure, they eventually come to understand that a mysterious cult has taken an interest in the town. When word later reaches Red Larch of the disappearance of a delegation from Mirabar, the characters follow the leads that will take them to the Haunted Keeps in part 2 of this adventure—Feathergale Spire and Rivergard Keep. You do not need to play out these travels in detail. However, during these longer journeys—and even as the characters are exploring around Red Larch—you can augment this adventure's encounters and scenarios with random encounters.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

Most of the Dessarin Valley is wilderness in which wildlife is abundant and monsters are common. As well, agents of the cults of Elemental Evil move in secret throughout the area in service to their nefarious plans. The secret presence of the cults of Elemental Evil has also attracted elemental-themed monsters to the area, any of which can help highlight the rising menace of the cult.

Use random encounters to make wilderness travel more memorable for the characters, or to give them a sense of the threats facing the residents of Red Larch and the Dessarin Valley. (You should also use random encounters to allow the characters to gain additional XP if their advancement through the planned encounters seems too slow.)

Frequency. For this D&D Encounters adventure, you can specifically place random encounters when you decide it makes sense to. If you do choose to roll, check for a random encounter in the morning, afternoon, evening, and at midnight whenever the characters are traveling in the wilderness. Roll 1d20; an encounter occurs on an 18 or higher.

Range. Place an encounter at a range that fits the story you want. Every encounter need not be a confrontation. Some encounters can foreshadow their onset or allow the characters to choose to avoid them. Some of the encounters on the table (especially an encounter with a bulette or an elemental) could prove a deadly threat to low-level characters. Make sure the

THE DESSARIN VALLEY

1 hex = 10 miles



- City
- Town
- ▲ Abbey
- X Site
- Bridge

players understand that sometimes fleeing from such a threat is the best course of action.

Areas. Use the Wilderness Threats random encounter table when the adventurers are in forest or other wild terrain. Use the River Threats table if the characters travel close to or on the Dessarin River. In either case, roll 1d12 + 1d8 to determine what the adventurers run into.

Asterisks. Encounters marked with an asterisk have explanations that appear after the tables.

WILDERNESS THREATS

Roll	Encounter
2	1 bulette
3	1d4 + 1 jackalweres
4	1d2 owlbears
5	1d3 ankhegs
6	1d3 + 1 bugbears
7	1d4 + 1 orcs
8–9	Air cult scouts*
10–11	Water cult marauders*
12	1d4 + 1 gnolls
13	1d6 + 2 wolves
14	1d3 ogres
15–16	1d2 gargoyles
17	1d3 + 1 ghouls
18	1d2 perytons
19	1d3 wights
20	1 air elemental

RIVER THREATS

Roll	Encounter
2–4	Air cult skyriders*
5–7	River pirates*
8–10	Water cult marauders*
11–14	1d4 merrow
15–18	2d4 ghouls
19–20	1 water elemental

Air Cult Scouts. A group of scouts for the air cult consists of 1d4 + 1 **hurricanes** in *wingwear*. See the appendix for the cultists' statistics and *wingwear* description.

Air Cult Skyriders. One **Feathergale knight** leads 1d4 **skyweavers**. They all ride **giant vultures**. See the appendix for the cultists' statistics.

Elementals. A lone air elemental or water elemental wanders freely to unleash mindless destruction.

River Pirates. A keelboat carries 2d4 **bandits**, 1d4 **thugs**, and a pirate captain (a **bandit captain**).

Water Cult Marauders. A marauder gang of the water cult consists of 2d6 **Crushing Wave reavers**, a **Crushing Wave priest**, and 1d2 **fathomers**. See the appendix for the cultists' statistics.

VALLEY SITES

The Dessarin Valley has been a well-used highway into the heart of the Sword Coast North for an age upon an

age, and it has seen the ravages of many orc hordes, the rise and fall of a dwarven kingdom, frequent bands of brigands, and much more. Adventurers exploring the Sumer Hills and vicinity might visit many sites of interest as they trek across the valley.

Those sites that feature in this D&D Encounters adventure are explored in brief here. More detailed information—as well as information on the other sites and features of the Dessarin Valley—can be found in the full *Princes of the Apocalypse* adventure.

BELIARD

Beliard is home to many cattle ranchers whose herds roam the hills around it, particularly to the east. The village features a public well, and is home to a tanner, a smith, some horse dealers and trainers who keep extensive stables, and a popular inn called the Watchful Knight. Beliard was the last place anyone saw the missing delegation from Mirabar (see part 2 of the adventure).

GOLDENFIELDS

A huge walled temple-farm dedicated to Chauntea, the goddess of agriculture, Goldenfields is also a stronghold of the Emerald Enclave. The site was an intended destination of the missing delegation (see part 2 of the adventure).

HAUNTED KEEPS

In the southwestern Sumer Hills stand four ruined keeps built centuries ago by a band of adventurers, the Knights of the Silver Horn. According to most locals, these crumbling stone castles are haunted by ghosts and prowling monsters. Sensible valley dwellers avoid them.

In recent years, four elemental cults have taken over the keeps. The cultists are careful to keep the curious outside their walls—or to make sure visitors who learn the truth either join the cult or never return from their visit.

Of the four Haunted Keeps, Feathergale Spire and Rivergard Keep provide the locations for part 2 of this D&D Encounters adventure. Sacred Stone Monastery and Scarlet Moon Hall are featured in the full adventure of *Princes of the Apocalypse*.

FEATHERGALE SPIRE

This tall stone tower can be seen from afar by anyone traversing the Sumer Hills, and is used as a private retreat by an elite hippogriff flying club consisting of rich Waterdhavians calling themselves the Feathergale Knights. These “knights” affect a dashing image, but the club is a cover for the Cult of the Howling Hatred. Cult warriors watch the surrounding area but leave travelers close to the spire alone. They want to avoid drawing attention to their activities for now.

RIVERGARD KEEP

A stout castle on the banks of the Dessarin River, Rivergard is home to a mercenary band led by “Lord of the Castle” Jolliver Grimjaw (a wereboar). The band



is repairing the old castle, claiming to want to make it a base for protecting river-borne trade from monsters and bandits. In truth, Grimjaw and his followers are themselves the bandits, and Rivergard Keep is secretly the stronghold of the Cult of the Crushing Wave.

LANCE ROCK

A prominent landmark near Red Larch, Lance Rock is a slender stone monolith that juts up out of the plains a few miles west of the Long Road. It stands 25 feet high and can be seen from miles away across the flat and open landscape. Characters who investigate rumors of plague near Lance Rock can discover the lair of a necromancer nearby (see part 1 of the adventure).

STONE BRIDGE

This gigantic stone archway (two miles long and four hundred feet high) comfortably spans the widest spring flood of the Dessarin River. A sacred site of pilgrimage for many dwarves, the Stone Bridge is made of smooth, fused hard granite. It is only six paces wide and lacks railings or barriers, so anyone atop it is at the mercy of the wind, particularly in winter. It is the only crossing of the Dessarin River between Ironford and Yartar, though, so travelers and caravans frequently use it (with care).

SUMBER HILLS

The Sumbar Hills are windswept badlands sparsely covered in dry grass. In the last few years, the infamous “Haunted Keeps” in the western Sumbar Hills have all been reoccupied. Sightings of strange beasts and menacing figures have increased, too.

SUMMIT HALL

Summit Hall was established long ago as a fortified monastery by the Knights of Samular, an order dedicated to Tyr, god of justice. The occupants of Summit Hall grow their own food and keep perpetual watch over nearby lands. They are always ready for battle, and fully armed and armored if encountered outside their walls.

Summit Hall was one of the destinations of the Mirabar delegation from Beliard, which the characters track down in part 2 of the adventure.

WOMFORD

This tiny village has a dock on the Dessarin River for shipping the grain from its grist mill. It is also the local supply and market for the surrounding farms from which the grain comes. Womford is a center of thinly disguised cult activity thanks to its location on the Dessarin. River pirates and smugglers allied to the water cult frequently put in at the town’s dock.



PART I: ALARUMS AND EXCURSIONS



HIS SECTION PRESENTS A SERIES OF adventure scenarios that introduce the characters to the Elemental Evil storyline. All the adventures take place in and near Red Larch, allowing characters to explore the local area as they gain insight into the threats of the cult.

TRouble in RED LARCH

Red Larch is an excellent place for novice adventurers to begin their careers. The scenarios in this section provide 1st- through 3rd-level characters with the opportunity to learn about Red Larch while dealing with local troubles.

To unearth interesting rumors and find directions to potential adventure sites, the characters must explore Red Larch and interact with its citizens. Red Larch is described in the previous section of this adventure.

ARRIVAL IN RED LARCH

Red Larch is a town on the Long Road, a few days' travel north of Waterdeep and a few days' travel south of Triboar. It's a way stop for caravans coming to or from the cities of the North, with an inn named the Swinging Sword, a tavern called the Helm at Highsun, and many craftspeople who cater to travelers.

For descriptions of buildings and NPCs in Red Larch, see the previous section of this adventure. The characters might be locals or travelers. They and players learn about the area as the party explores the town and meets its citizens.

The Swinging Sword (area 2) is the only inn, and the Helm at Highsun (area 3) is a large tavern across the street from the inn. Locals gather at Gaelkur's store (area 17) or the tavern to gossip. Ironhead Arms (area 13) is the best place to buy weapons and armor, and Helvur Tarnlar (area 7) sells well-made clothing for travelers. Red Larch doesn't have a mayor, but Constable Harburk (area 11) keeps the peace.

INTO THE WILDERNESS

Hills partitioned into fields and pastures by fieldstone fences or hedges surround Red Larch. A mile or so outside the town, cultivated areas give way to unspoiled wilderness. Miles of hills, woods, and grassland stretch on as far as the eye can see, filled with plentiful wildlife.

The "Red Larch Surroundings" map shows several interesting sites and encounters in the vicinity. Sites not mentioned in this adventure can be found in the full adventure of *Princes of the Apocalypse*.

BEARS AND BOWS

Constable Harburk (Red Larch, area 11) has heard rumors of a bandit lair south of town. When the characters investigate this lead, read the following:

In a brush-choked dell a short distance from the Cairn Road is a makeshift camp in front of a cave entrance. Four surly humans sharpen their blades around the fire. Nearby is a wagon with a wooden cage atop it. Inside the cage, a black bear paws at the bars.

The four **bandits** attack strangers, preferring ranged attacks. Their hideout is a cave full of stolen food, wine, weapons, and coins. They stole a wagon loaded with a giant boar in a stout iron cage, bound for a noble in Waterdeep. They ate the beast, but then captured a **black bear**.

The bandits broke the cage's lock, so they have it spiked shut with an iron piton. Starved, the bear uses

DESIGNING D&D ENCOUNTERS SESSIONS:

ALARUMS AND EXCURSIONS

3 to 5 Sessions

The initial short encounters in the "Into the Wilderness" section—"Bears and Bows," "Haunted Tomb," and "Lance Rock/Necromancer's Cave"—can be played in any order. Let the characters' exploration of Red Larch and their interactions with the locals determine the manner in which they undertake these scenarios. Completing these scenarios (with added random encounters as you see fit) should bring the characters to 2nd level, setting them up to take on the "Tomb of Moving Stones" scenario that completes this first part of the adventure.

It is likely that you will fit two short adventure scenarios into a single session, or fill out a session with one long scenario. However, there's no right or wrong way to create a D&D encounters session, and the amount of time it takes to complete any part of the adventure will depend on your group and your play style. If you are a new DM with players who love to strategize and roleplay, you might find that even a short scenario fills out most of a session after being combined with roleplaying and investigation in Red Larch. As an experienced DM with players who just love to dive into tactics-heavy combat, you might manage to cover all three short scenarios in a single session, even while adding random encounters to fill things out.

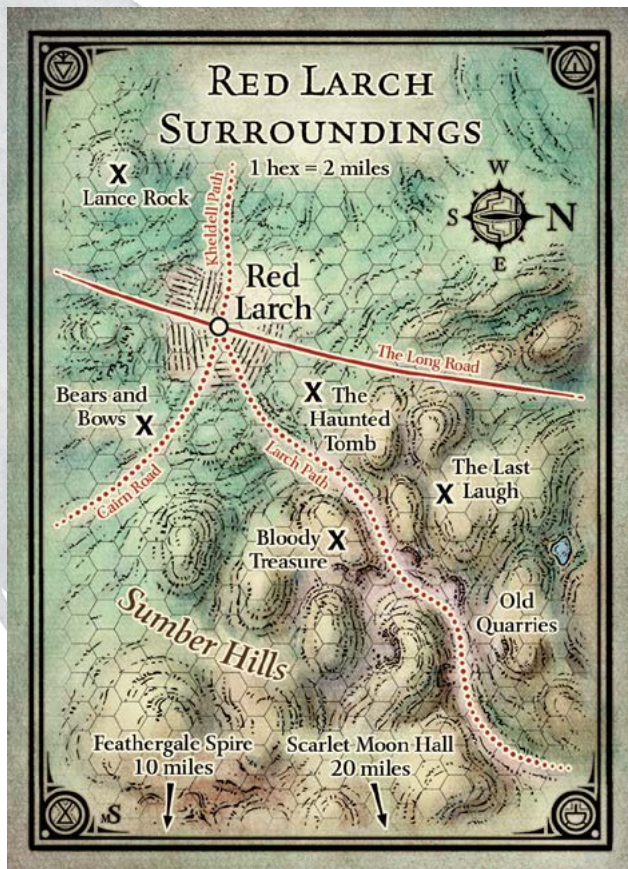
The following guidelines give a sense of how the different scenarios and sections of part 1 of this adventure can be assembled to create your D&D encounters sessions:

- **Trouble in Red Larch**—Short (roleplaying); see the previous section
- **Bears and Bows**—Short (combat, possible roleplaying)
- **Haunted Tomb**—Short (combat, possible roleplaying)
- **Lance Rock/Necromancer's Cave**—Short to long (combat, roleplaying)
- **Tomb of Moving Stones**—Long-plus (combat, roleplaying)

First Session Start. The adventure begins with the characters getting to know the town of Red Larch and hearing of a few different hooks for short adventure scenarios. If your players are a group that loves roleplaying and engaging with NPCs, this can make a great start to your first session—or you might even spend the entire first session in Red Larch, simply setting up the adventure to come. However, if your players prefer to fight first and talk later, consider starting your first session off with a random encounter on the way to Red Larch.

Starting the first session off with an exciting short combat scenario can help establish the threats facing the people of the Dessarin Valley, and can put the fears of the folk of Red Larch into a very real context. You can also combine random encounters to create a more complex scenario. A group of players smart enough to know to flee from a bulette might run straight into a group of bugbears or orcs fleeing from the same threat. An especially savvy group might try to drive those new foes back toward the bulette, dealing with the new threat in an unconventional way.

Maximum XP. The short scenarios that make up "Into the Wilderness" can earn each character a maximum of 300 XP (the amount that will take a 1st-level character to 2nd level). Each character can earn a maximum of 600 XP from the "Tomb of Moving Stones" scenario (the amount that will take a 2nd-level character to 3rd level).



an action to heave itself into the cage door when any violence starts. If it makes a successful DC 15 Strength check, it bursts free. The bear then attacks the closest creature or the creature that hurt it most recently. It runs off when reduced to fewer than half its hit points.

TREASURE

Coins in the cave total 99 cp, 74 sp, and 13 gp, divided among several coin purses. The bandits also accumulated other plunder worth 100 gp, including numerous weapons.

HAUNTED TOMB

Minthra Mhandyvver's granddaughter Pell (Red Larch, area 14) knows where this tomb is, as does Mangobarl Lorren (Red Larch, area 8).

A dark, rectangular hole gapes amid the grass and vines of a nearby hillside. A stone door can be seen, ajar, in the tunnel's dim depths. The door bears chiseled marks that might once have been a name.

Over time, many rich folks built in the valley. Some are buried in old tombs near town. One such tomb is the final resting place of a forgotten noble who was a warrior in his day.

If the characters scout the area before entering the tomb passage, they discover a brigand camp hidden in a boulder jumble 150 feet away. A **goblin** named Mougra

and a **half-ogre** named Geeraugh have been watching the tomb. They attack anyone who invades their camp. Otherwise, they might ambush the characters—see the next section.

TOMB PASSAGE

Within the tomb passage, the stone door is open enough to allow a Small character to shimmy through. It opens inward.

Geeraugh and Mougra built an improvised alarm made metal wagon wheel fittings against the inside of the door. If the door is pushed open without removing this “alarm,” the metal pieces fall with a loud crash. If Geeraugh and Mougra hear the alarm, they sneak up to watch the tomb and ambush anyone who emerges. They prefer robbery to a fight.

When the characters enter, read the following:

Inside the door is a passage, ten feet high by ten wide, running straight into the hill. Thirty feet later, it opens out into a square room, thirty feet by thirty feet, containing a stone block table. Stains and marks atop this slab suggest rusted objects were once arrayed on it. In the middle of the wall to the right of the entry passage, is a closed and severely rusted iron door.

If the rusted iron door is touched, a ghostly armored male human wielding a spectral longsword emerges from it. This minor ghost was a guard who died having failed to protect the noble interred here. (Use **specter** statistics, except this ghost is lawful neutral.) He warns intruders to leave his master's tomb. Although the ghost might talk to peaceful characters, he attacks those who refuse to leave. The ghost doesn't pursue those who flee.

INNER TOMB

The iron door is rusted shut. A characters can force it open with a successful DC 15 Strength check. Inside, the following is revealed:

Beyond the rusted door is another square room, twenty feet by twenty feet, containing a stone coffin. The ceiling is cracked, allowing roots and water into the chamber from multiple points, although little collects here. At the coffin's feet is a rusty iron chest.

Inside the coffin is a skeleton dressed in a rusted breastplate and clasping a longsword to its chest. This **flying sword** attacks intruders when the coffin

PRINCES OF THE APOCALYPSE

The scenarios in part 1 of this D&D Encounters adventure are taken from chapter 6 of the full adventure of *Princes of the Apocalypse*. That adventure is designed so that it can be started by 3rd-level characters, with preliminary encounters in chapter 6 provided to bring new characters up to 3rd level, making them ready to face off against the cults of Elemental Evil.

is opened. It returns to its place in the coffin if no one remains in this room.

TREASURE

The chest contains ruined cloth and the sodden remains of a book, but it also has a false wooden bottom. Someone who succeeds on a DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check notices the bottom is several inches higher than the chest should be deep. Within is a gold chain and locket with a portrait of a lovely half-elf female etched in profile on the inside (100 gp) and two rings of braided silver and electrum (25 gp each).

LANCE ROCK

Both Kaylessa Irkell, proprietor of the Swinging Sword (Red Larch, area 2), and the Tarnlar children (Red Larch, area 7) can send the adventurers toward this scenario. Northwest of Red Larch, Lance Rock is visible for miles. When the characters can see it, read the following text:

Lance Rock is a narrow, twenty-five-foot menhir of bare, gray rock that juts eastward at a sixty-degree angle.

The menhir is gray granite, unlike the surrounding limestone. (A dragon dropped it here long ago.) A few hundred feet south of the stone is a ravine choked with brush. A trail leads into the brush near a neatly-painted sign that reads, in Common:

Come no closer
lest you catch
the disfiguring plague
that afflicts me!
The Lord of Lance Rock

The trail continues down to a cave mouth. Another warning sign with the same message is posted by the opening. If the characters explore the cave, proceed with the “Necromancer’s Cave” encounters below.

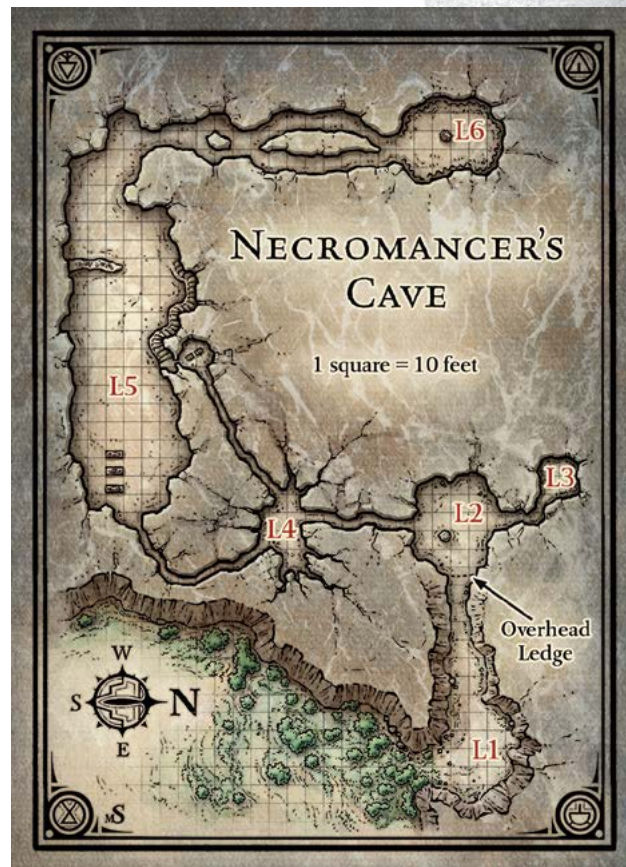
NECROMANCER’S CAVE

An insane and reclusive necromancer named Oreioth—the self-styled “Lord of Lance Rock”—has taken residence in the caves near Lance Rock. He poses no immediate threat to Red Larch but doesn’t take kindly to trespassers.

LI. ENTRY CAVE

The cave mouth opens into darkness from which a breeze blows, carrying the faint odor of death. Inside is a natural cave, its floor and ceiling uneven. The passage leads to the west, narrowing as it proceeds.

A body is sprawled on the floor 60 feet into the passage. When the characters get close enough to take a good look at the body, read the following:



The corpse of a human male is sprawled here on its back. It wears only leather breeches.

The body is a **zombie**, but it animates only if touched. Then, it attacks.

L2. GUARD CAVE

A round, high-ceilinged cave opens here. It has two narrow exits, one leading north and the other south. A flat boulder sits in the center of the cave. It’s about six feet across, eight feet long, and three feet high. Dark stains color its top.

The boulder is stained with dry blood.

Above the eastern entrance, two **zombies** stand on a ledge 10 feet up. They hold a wooden box full of rocks between them. When they spot an intruder, they let the box go so it crashes down on the interloper. The target must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw or take 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage. The zombies then jump down from the ledge (taking 1d6 bludgeoning damage each) to attack.

L3. CORPSE CAVE

Motionless humanoid figures dressed in dirty clothes or scraps of armor are propped against the walls of this cave. Some are little more than skeletons with wisps of hair and skin stretched tightly over their bones. Others are fresher. A few old shortswords lie on the dusty floor.

Twelve corpses are stored in this chamber. Seven are skeletal, and five are fresher. Three **skeletons** remain still among the other remains. They attack anyone who touches them or the corpses here.

L4. DANCING DEAD

The passage that leads to this room from the north can be described as follows:

This narrow passage is about ten feet high in most places, with rough, irregular walls. Protruding spurs on the walls are coated in dried blood.

Eventually this natural passage widens out:

The star-shaped cavern ahead has many clefts in its walls. Only two, across the cavern, seem large enough to traverse. Three zombies lurch about the area. One is costumed like a bear, another is dressed as a lady in a frilly dress and thick makeup, and the last is costumed as a jester with jingling bells on its collar and sleeves.

These three **zombies** are dressed to entertain the Lord of Lance Rock by acting out grotesque comedies. They have orders to playact for a few moments when they spot intruders, using the distraction to approach and attack.

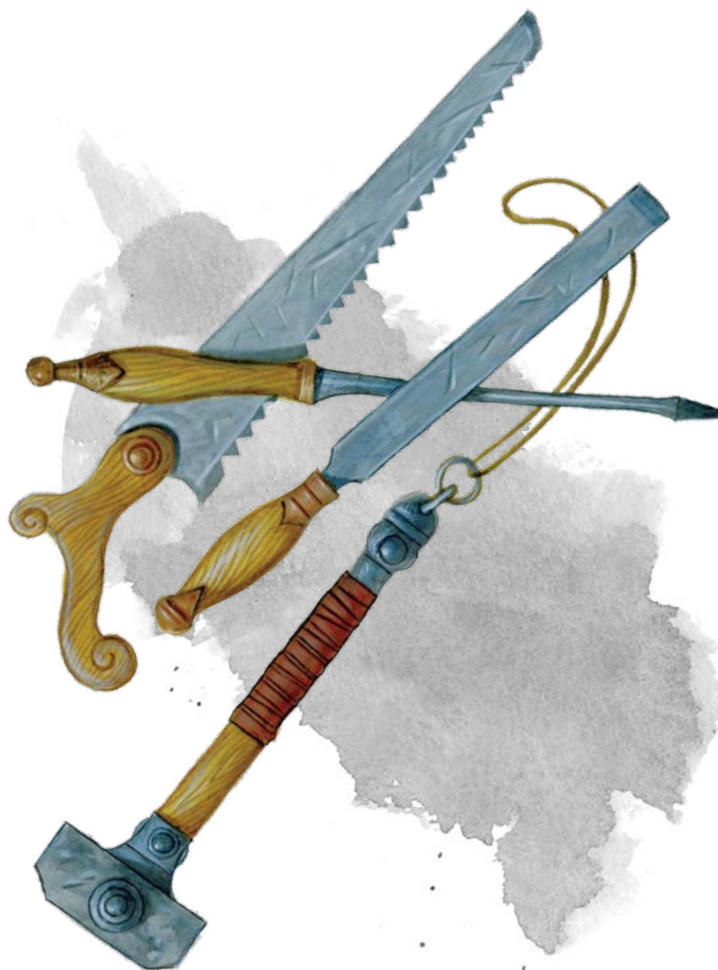
Sounds of combat in this room alert the necromancer Oreioth (in area L5) that intruders are nearby. Oreioth climbs the stairs in area L5 to peer into the end of the western passage (see that section), hoping to get a chance to trigger the trap there.

Southwestern Passage. This tunnel leads to a small cavern with two closed iron chests resting on the floor. A peephole in the south wall allows someone standing at the top of the stairs in area L5 to observe the chests. By the peephole is a lever that opens a trapdoor in the ceiling above the chests, releasing a rockfall.

If Oreioth is in position, he waits until at least two intruders have entered the cave, then he moves away from the peephole and pulls the lever. When he does, he cries, easily audible through the peephole, "You dare to pit yourselves against the Lord of Lance Rock? Death is your reward!" Then he continues to cackle as he retreats.

Those in the room can make DC 10 Dexterity saving throws, taking 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage on a failure, or half that damage on a success.

The iron chests are empty.



L5. WORKSHOP

The passage opens into an enormous cavern illuminated by several guttering torches set in sconces on the walls. The floor is uneven, and the ceiling is forty feet up. Three flat boulders near the passage serve as tables for human corpses. Severed body parts sit in baskets by the corpses, covered in dry gore. A figure in a dark hood stands by the third table, its back to you. Matted hair juts from the hood, and the figure holds a bone needle threaded with dark cord in its hand.

Farther to the west, a stone stair climbs the north wall, ending near the ceiling. A stone slab like a counter juts from the wall across the room from the base of the stairs. It holds saws, knives, and other tools. Four skeletons stand beyond this tool bench, guarding a wide passage that exits the to the west.

The hooded figure is a **zombie**, and five **crawling claws** hide among the other body parts in the baskets. If intruders do anything other than turn back, the monsters attack.

The "Lord of Lance Rock" is **Oreioth** (see the appendix), a wild-eyed Tethyrian human. If the characters moved through area L4 alerting him, they

find Oreioth arranging and cleaning his tools on the tool bench. Otherwise, he watches warily from behind the four **skeletons**. In any case, if confronted, he shrinks from conflict and orders his skeletons to attack while he retreats into area L6.

The necromancer refers to himself in the third person and by his self-appointed title. He's afraid of physical confrontation, but he pretends bravery when his pets shield him, saying, "Bow before the Lord of Lance Rock! Me! Behold my dark terrors!" He's willing to magnanimously consider a surrender or offers of truce, as long as intruders leave the cave.

Stairs. The steps along the north wall lead up to a ledge overlooking this room. A peephole by this ledge looks into the western passage of area L4, and there is a lever here that controls the rockfall trap in that room.

Tools. The stone counter serves as a tool bench. The tools here include saws, knives, awls, embalming tools, and metal bowls. Among them is a jug of grain alcohol and a cask of fresh water. Everything is very clean.

L6. STUDY

The workshop narrows into another passage that splits and links up twice. It gently descends to this area described as follows:

An oval cavern opens here, forty feet wide and sixty feet long. Dark purple tapestries hang on the walls. At the center stands a pedestal fashioned of severed arms arranged to clutch one another in a cone. Cradled in the uppermost hands is a glowing crystal sphere. A dark sigil floats above the sphere.

For the sigil, show the players the Elder Elemental Eye symbol seen on the title page of this adventure, without additional context. The sigil is an illusion that disappears if it or the pedestal is disturbed. (The significance of this sigil is explained in the full adventure of *Princes of the Apocalypse*.)

If he is here, **Oreioth** (see the appendix) is hiding behind the draperies at the north end of the room, holding a *wand of magic missiles*. He reacts only if attacked or someone approaches the floating sigil. In this latter case, he yells, "Can't you see it? It's the Eye! It sees your every move! Don't you fear it?"

If he dies, Oreioth turns into a black flame. The flame dwindles to nothing with a plaintive wail and vanishes.

TREASURE

The glowing sphere is a *driftglobe*. Behind the draperies are niches where Oreioth keeps his food, drink, supplies, clothes, and bedding, as well as 165 sp, 78 gp and four polished jet gems (50 gp each). If Oreioth

failed to retrieve it, the *wand of magic missiles* is stored in a niche.

REWARDS

Award standard XP for defeated foes in each of the "Into the Wilderness" scenarios. Each character participating in these scenarios can earn a maximum of 300 XP (the amount that will take a 1st-level character to 2nd level).

At the end of the last of these scenarios, each character also gains 10 downtime days and 1 renown point in his or her faction.

TOMB OF MOVING STONES

After the characters return to Red Larch upon completing the last of the "Into the Wilderness" scenarios, this scenario intended for 2nd-level characters begins. Beneath the town are tunnels and chambers carved by ancient dwarves. The place includes a vault in which great stones mysteriously change position.

Several generations ago, stonecutters working in the quarries discovered the old tunnels, buried miners, and the weird phenomenon of the moving stones. At first those who found the place kept it secret because they hoped to find treasure within. No such treasure was ever found, but the conspiracy survived.

The Red Larchers who knew about the place came to include the leading citizens of the town. They regarded the phenomenon as supernatural and portentous. They called themselves the Believers (see "Red Larch" in the previous section) and referred to the miners entombed in the chamber as the Delvers. The Believers carefully observed the stones for messages in their movements, and they saw the Delvers as stern guardians watching over an ancient mystery.

Several months ago, agents of the Cult of the Black Earth stumbled across the Tomb of Moving Stones, and an ambitious cult priest named Larrakh came to Red Larch to bring the Believers under the cult's control. Having learned the secret of how to manipulate the moving stones, Larrakh now uses the stones to deliver "messages" that he interprets for the Believers, manipulating them to do the earth cult's bidding.

SINKHOLE

This scenario begins some time after the characters have returned from the last of the initial scenarios in this part of the adventure, having attained 2nd level. When a sinkhole suddenly opens in the middle of Red Larch, it exposes the hidden chambers of the Tomb of Moving Stones. Read the following text when you're ready to start:



An ordinary afternoon in Red Larch is broken by a tremor. A second later, four small children and the old cart they are playing on slide down into a sinkhole that suddenly opens. They disappear from sight, shrieking for help.

A distraught woman runs out of a nearby house and sprints to the edge of the hole, which crumbles away, spilling her in as well. More people run from other homes. Calls of “A rope, a rope!” and “Get a ladder!” fill the air.

Any creature that moves to the sinkhole’s edge without taking precautions, such as lying flat on the ground and crawling forward or securing themselves with a rope, must make a successful DC 10 Dexterity saving throw or fall into the hole as the ground crumbles further. The bottom of the sinkhole is 30 feet down, but a cushioning heap of loose earth has already cascaded into the underlying cavern, so those who fall take no damage.

When characters can see within, read the following:

A dark chamber is about thirty feet below the level of the ground. It looks larger than the hole and extends into darkness on all sides. A heap of loose earth is piled in the middle. The children who first fell in are sitting on the mound of earth, coughing in the dust and sobbing with fright. “My boy, my boy!” a worried parent shouts, peeping over the edge. “Somebody do something!”

More townsfolk hurry up from all sides, staying clear of the edge. Among them are a few town elders, who pull people away from the edge and order the others to stay back. “Leave it to us!” says one of the elders. “We will tend to this matter! The children won’t be harmed by being down there a little while, but no one must go down there. Keep back!”

The sinkhole exposes area T1 in the Tomb of Moving Stones. Townsfolk who’ve fallen in are scared, bruised, and unable to climb out without aid, but otherwise unharmed.

The town elders trying to control the situation are Ilmeth Waelvur (male Tethyrian human **bandit**; see Red Larch, area 16), Albaeri Mellikho (female Tethyrian human **commoner**; see Red Larch, area 18), and Ulhro Luruth (male Chondathan human **commoner**; see Red Larch, area 19). Anxious to keep anyone from discovering that the sinkhole leads to passages, they make statements such as, “This isn’t to be discussed in front of strangers!” and “The Delves must not be angered!” and “The stones must not be moved!” Such commands elicit little obedience from the frightened townsfolk.

If no character has a rope, a helpful resident arrives with an old coil. He or she pushes past the elders to offer the rope to the characters. Children wail down in the pit as more onlookers arrive. It’s clearly time for a rescue mission.

Rescuing those who’ve fallen is a matter of lowering a rescuer down with a rope, tying it around a victim,

and having people above haul away. The townsfolk are grateful for the characters’ aid.

T1. ENTRY CAVERN

If the sinkhole opened up, this cavern has a pile of dirt in the center and a gaping, 20-foot-diameter hole in the 30-foot-high ceiling.

This wide, irregularly shaped cavern has a floor of smooth bedrock. Damp dirt and stone, with tree roots protruding here and there, make up the walls. A five-foot-wide tunnel leads off to the north, and a stone slab—a door with a rusty pull-ring—stands to the east. By the stone door, a couple well-used cloaks and a waterskin are on the floor.

The waterskin is half full of water. The cloaks are quite plain. They belong to Believers who don’t want to attract attention while coming or going from the entrance tunnel.

The stone door to the east has no lock. It slides open smoothly. Beyond it, a passage of dressed stone slopes downward, continuing east to area T2.

NORTH TUNNEL

This tunnel leads to Waelvur’s Wagonworks (Red Larch, area 16). If the characters investigate the tunnel, read the following:

The tunnel is muddy. It winds north a long way before rising gradually. After two hundred feet or so, it ends at a wooden door that forms a sloping roof. A small wooden coffer sits on the floor by the door, and beside the coffer is a heap of damp sand from which the ends of torches protrude.

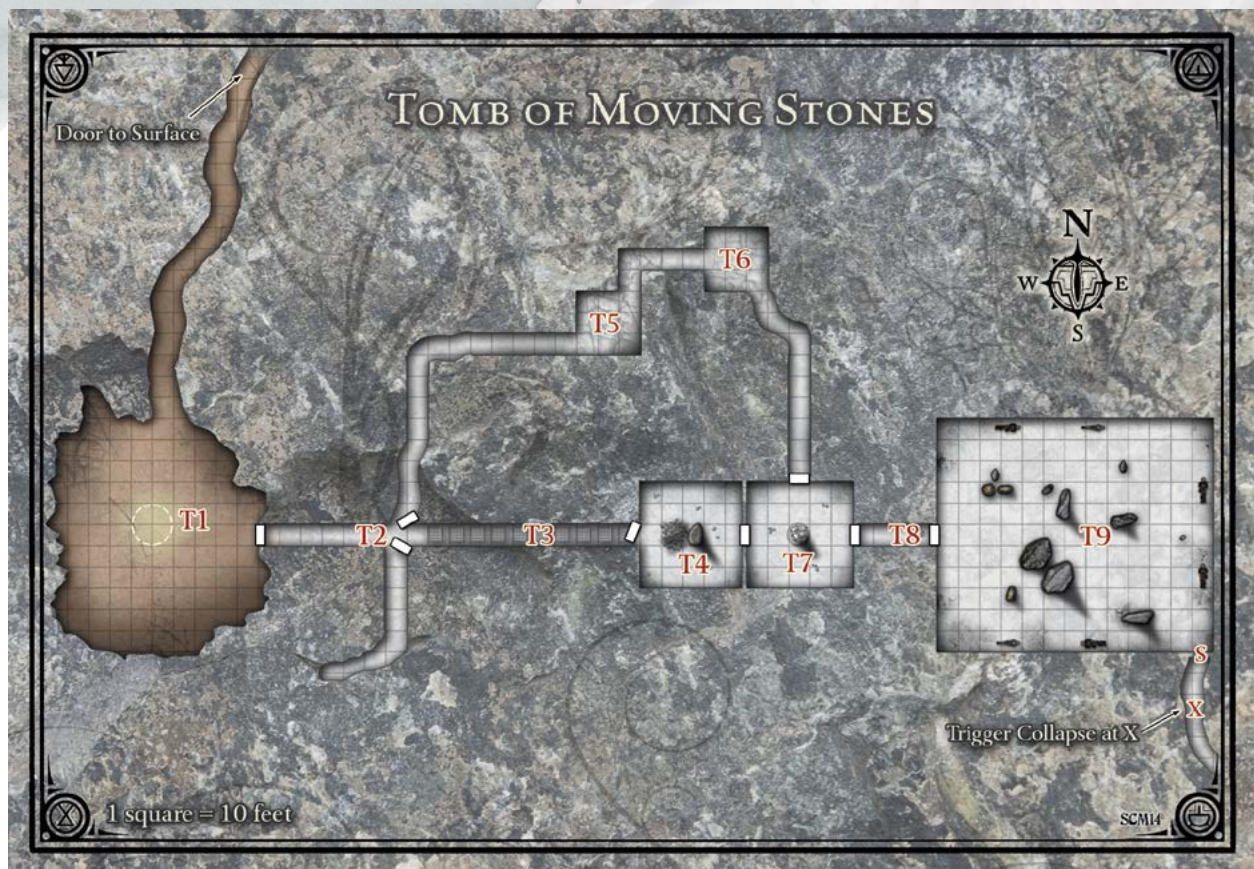
The door opens among several old wagons that have been left to rot. On the surface, the door looks like a wooden cellar door and opens next to Waelvur’s Wagonworks.

The damp torches were extinguished by being thrust into the sand. They are hard to light but readily burn if lit with an existing fire. The coffer contains flint and steel, as well as six dry torches.

T2. STONE SENTINELS

Sixty feet beyond the stone door, the tunnel levels out. Two stone reliefs of stern dwarves in chain mail and carrying battleaxes face each other across the tunnel. The carvings stand out from the passage walls, and they have gaps around them, so they could be doors. The passage continues past them.

The doors slide open easily if pushed. To the south, the door leads to a long stone tunnel that ends in a pit covered by a stone bench with a hole in it (a privy



unused for decades). The door on the north side of the hall guards a passage leading to area T5.

T3. CAGE TRAP

If the party continues east along the tunnel past area T2, they walk into a trap. Read the following text only if a character examines the ceiling:

The ceiling consists of square stone panels about ten feet on a side. Rusty iron frames surround each panel. The panels are suspended about several inches from one another and the wall to either side. They form a row overhead that continues down the passage.

Ten iron cages are suspended from chains over the hallway, and the “panels” are the cage bottoms. The true ceiling is 25 feet high, and each cage hangs from 5 feet of heavy chain and is 10 feet tall. The bottom panels appear to be a 10-foot ceiling from the hallway. The panels are thin plaster painted to resemble stone.

When the characters can see the eastern end of the hall, read the following:

At the end of the passage is another stone door with an iron pull ring in it. It stands slightly ajar with darkness beyond. About five feet up, the door has a two-inch-wide, foot-long horizontal slit.

Unless Grund (male half-orc **thug**) has already been dealt with, he is peering through the viewing slit. With his darkvision, he spots approaching characters 60 feet away, but if the characters are carrying light sources, he notices them as soon as they pass the doors in area T2.

Grund’s orders are to trap intruders. Anyone who isn’t an intruder is supposed to pause 60 feet from the door, cross his or her fists, and call out, “A Believer approaches!” Grund drops cages on anyone who doesn’t follow this protocol.

Dropping Cages. Each cage’s chain runs through a pulley secured to a heavy iron bar just inside the door in area T4. From where he is, Grund can use an action to release two chains. He starts with the cage at the western end of the tunnel, sealing off retreat, followed by a cage dropped on the party. Roll initiative at that point. Grund uses his second turn to block the eastern edge of the passage with a third cage and to drop another cage on characters not already trapped.

A falling cage targets the corresponding 10-foot square section of the passage. Targets in the area can stand still, taking no damage as the plaster on the cage bottom breaks and the cage seals them in. Those who wish to avoid a falling cage must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. Those who fail are caught in the cage. Anyone who fails by 5 or more is hit by the iron frame of the cage bottom. Such a creature takes 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage and is pinned under the cage. While pinned, the character is prone and restrained.

A character who uses an action to make a successful DC 15 Strength check can lift the cage enough to allow one creature to escape. It takes a successful DC 20

Strength check to bend the rusty bars enough to allow everyone in or under the cage to escape. A character pinned under a cage lacks good leverage and has disadvantage on these Strength checks.

DEVELOPMENT

If Grund traps the characters in the hall, he runs to tell Baragustas in area T8. Baragustas calls the Bringers of Woe (see area T7), who arrive 10 minutes later. The villains raise cages one by one to attack trapped characters, aiming to capture them. Larrakh then plans to sacrifice the characters at a special ceremony.

T4. ANTECHAMBER

This big, square chamber has been hewn out of the rock. In the center of the chamber's west wall is a stone door that has a narrow viewing slit. Beside the door is a set of iron bars bolted into the wall about three feet above the floor. Ten oiled chains are secured to the bars, leading up to a hole bored in the ceiling. Another solid stone door is in the middle of the east wall.

An eight-foot-tall rectangular stone stands upright in the room's center. The stone has an inscription on it that's hard to read from a distance. At the foot of the standing stone, a small human is pinned, face down, by rocks placed atop his arms, legs, and back. He is barefoot and wears ragged clothes.

Depending on what has happened in area T3, Grund (male half-orc **thug**) might be standing by the western door, keeping watch down the hallway. Grund is baffled by intruders that arrive behind him. After standing and gaping for a moment, he finally says, "You can't be here. You have to go!" He points down the western hallway. In obvious exasperation and desperation, he attacks anyone who attempts to leave by the eastern door.

Pinned under a pile of small boulders is an eleven-year-old boy named Braelen Hatherhand (male Tethyrian human **commoner** with 2 hit points and no effective attacks). He is drifting in and out of consciousness. If strangers enter the room, he revives enough to feebly plead for his freedom.

Roleplaying Braelen. Braelen has been pinned here for two days. Heavy stones were carefully placed to hold him in place without crushing or breaking anything. He is cold, thirsty, hungry, tired, and scared. The boy clams up in terror if he's intimidated or bullied. If approached in a friendly manner, he first begs for food and water. He can offer the following information as responses to the characters' questions.

- The Believers put him here as punishment for being disobedient. He failed to deliver a message from his father, Rotharr Hatherhand, to Ilmeth Waelvur. It was a slip of paper the boy didn't read.
- Rotharr is one of the Believers. Other Believers Braelen knows are Baragustas Harbuckler, Marlandro Gaelkur, and Ilmeth Waelvur. The boy also knows

THE CULT OF THE BLACK EARTH

The earth cult's plots in Red Larch and the Dessarin Valley are developed in more detail in the full adventure of *Princes of the Apocalypse*. However, this scenario is the only place that earth cultists appear in this D&D Encounters adventure, with the heroes facing off against air cultists and water cultists in part 2. If you are not planning to run the full adventure (or to further develop the presence of the earth cult here into an adventure scenario of your own), consider downplaying the signs and symbols of Black Earth so as to not make the players assume that they are expected to take the fight to that branch of the cult.

Grund isn't really a Believer, but the Believers take care of him, so he does what they tell him to do.

- The Believers are a secret group made up of some of the most important people in town. They guard the moving stones, and make sure no one disturbs the Delves, who are entombed here. The Believers watch the moving stones carefully, because it's a bad sign when they move, and they have to figure out what it means to avert danger. (This information isn't true, but that's what the Believers and Braelen believe.)
- Braelen isn't angry with his father or the Believers. He believes this sort of treatment is normal, and he's worried his father might find out the punishment ended before it was supposed to.
- The chamber of moving stones and the buried Delves are to the east, beyond three more stone doors.

If the characters release Braelen, he tries to go back to the surface through the tunnel in area T1.

Chains. Fastened to iron bars here are chains to the cages in area T3. Characters can raise a fallen cage back to its original position by hauling on its chain.

Inscription. The inscription on the standing stone reads, in Common: "Displease not the Delves."

T5. CHARNEL CHAMBER

Characters catch the scent of death as they approach this room.

The tunnel opens into a square room that reeks of decaying flesh. Three human corpses, reduced to little more than bloody bone and sinew, are sprawled in the room's center. Two oversized rats root among the bodies, stopping to chew flesh they've pulled free. Scuttling noises come from narrow crevices in the walls.

Five **giant rats** found their way in through the narrow crevices, which are just big enough for the rodents to squeeze through. Two are in the middle of the room, and three more lurk in the crevices. Believers don't yet know the rats are here, and the grisly meal is sufficient to keep the rats from wandering. The giant rats ignore intruders that give them a wide berth and avoid startling them. They attack if harmed or provoked.

The bodies are those of travelers who disappeared near Red Larch. Each has the symbol of the earth cult cut deeply enough in the forehead to mark the skull. To

pass a test commanded by the earth cultist Larrakh (see area T9), Believers waylaid and killed the travelers in separate incidents over the last month. The Believers are rarely murderers, but Larrakh is maneuvering them into darker and darker deeds.

T6. HOVERING STONE

The tunnel opens into a square room. In the center of it, a black rock about a foot across hovers three feet from the floor.

A normal rock floats here because of ancient magic that maintains an invisible floor-to-ceiling cylinder that is 10 feet wide. Visible to *detect magic* (transmutation school), the column enables objects placed and left in it to float where released. The column can hold up to 500 pounds. Objects in excess of this weight fall. If the characters move the rock, which weighs 20 pounds, out of the column, it is freed from the effect and crashes to the floor.

T7. DWARF STATUE

This fifty-foot-square chamber is hewn out of rock. The floor is rough but flat, the walls show the chisel-marks of the original builders, and the ceiling is about ten feet high. Identical stone doors with iron pull-ring handles stand in the middle of the east, north, and west walls.

In the center of the room stands a life-sized and lifelike statue of a dwarf warrior wearing a chain shirt, helm, and big boots. He carries a shield on his left arm and a battleaxe in his right hand. The statue has clearly been broken into, roughly, the head and upper torso, lower torso, and legs. These pieces have been reassembled and held together and upright in a stout wooden frame. A dagger along with several coins and gems lie on the floor in front of the statue, surrounded by an ring of fine gravel.

The statue is a petrified and long-dead dwarf. On the frame holding it together, a small, neat inscription reads:

Petrified Ironstar (?) dwarf,
found 1459 DR in Red Larch West Quarry
in broken condition.

The ring of gravel surrounds the statue at a distance of 5 feet, intended to mark a suitably respectful distance from the statue. Believers have a tradition of leaving small valuables here for luck. Larrakh urges them to bring more each tenday so he can collect it and take it with him when he leaves Red Larch.

TREASURE

Offerings left here by the Believers include 440 cp, 253 sp, and 97 gp. Six small green agates (worth 5 gp each) and two polished moonstones (worth 50 gp each) are among the coins.

To encourage the Believers, Larrakh left a *+1 dagger* decorated with star motifs and a grip of night-blue leather. Dried blood still coats the dagger from its use in killing and carving symbols on the murder victims in area T5. The dagger doesn't make noise when it hits or cuts something.

The name "Reszur" is graven on the dagger's pommel. If the wielder speaks the name, the blade gives off a faint, cold glow, shedding dim light in a 10-foot radius until the wielder speaks the name again.

DEVELOPMENT

It's only a matter of minutes before a group of secret Black Earth cultists in Red Larch—the so-called Bringers of Woe—hear about the characters' exploration of the tomb. They don't want anyone to expose their manipulation of the town elders, so they slip into the tomb via the north tunnel in area T1 and hunt down the party. These cultists can catch up to the party here, or if you prefer, in area T9.

The Bringers of Woe are six **bandits** whose leather armor bears the symbol of the Black Earth cult. When the Bringers of Woe meet the adventurers, the bandits grimly and confidently say, "We are the Bringers of Woe. We have come to reward your curiosity." The cultists then attack, fighting to the death. Three hang back and shoot at spellcasters, concentrating fire on one foe at a time. The other three advance to tie up the rest of the party in melee.

T8. APPROACH

A passage—ten feet wide, ten feet high, and hewn out of the rock—runs forty feet ahead. A small lantern hangs from a hook in the wall next to the door at the east end of the passage. Sitting on a wooden stool by the lantern is a balding, beardless old male human in patched and faded work trousers and a matching tunic. He is idly whittling a stick.

The human is an elder of Red Larch named Baragustas Harbuckler, a retired carpenter (male Tethyrian human **commoner**).

Roleplaying Baragustas. Baragustas, a Believer, is unarmed and afraid of the characters. He throws himself to the floor and begs for mercy. Baragustas is too weak to put up any sort of a fight, but he wrings his hands and begs the characters not to provoke "the wrath of the Delvers" by disturbing the stones of the tomb (area T9).

Baragustas knows everything that Braelen knows (see area T4). He freely acknowledges the existence of the Believers and explains the mystery of the moving stones, telling the characters, "From time to time, the great stones change position when no one is watching. That is how they talk to us. They show us signs of coming danger and warn us when we make bad choices."

The old carpenter knows much about the Believers' influence in Red Larch over the years. The recent



involvement with “the earth priests” who help them to understand the moving stones is something he idly mentions. He is quite intimidated by Larrakh, and more scared of the earth cultists than he is of the adventurers.

Baragustas isn’t as innocent as he acts. He denies knowledge of murders or any other foul play, feigning surprise at the mention of evidence such as the corpses in area T5. The old man had no hand in such activities, but his denial is a lie. He knows of the murders.

TREASURE

Baragustas has 25 cp and 19 sp on him. He also has a simple silver wedding band worth 10 gp.

T9. CHAMBER OF MOVING STONES

If the characters speak to Baragustas in area T8 or examine the door to this area, a **Black Earth priest** (see the appendix) named Larrakh hears them. If he does, he quickly sets down his lantern and hides. The following descriptive text assumes this is the case:

An enormous chamber with a twenty-foot ceiling has been carved out of the rock here. A lighted lantern rests on the floor near the center of the room. An odd array of stone monoliths—some upright standing stones, and others arranged in three-stone arches—stand around the chamber. Six low stone slabs are set against the walls around the perimeter of the room. Each holds humanoid bones, dressed in scraps of tattered cloth and rusted iron.

Larrakh is hidden behind one of the larger stones. He spends almost all his time in this chamber, studying the old stones and experimenting with the magical floor. When he sees the characters, he lashes out at them with his magic.

Roleplaying Larrakh. Larrakh uses the stones in the chamber for cover, but he has no intention of fighting to the death. If this place has been discovered and he can’t swiftly and easily eliminate the intruders, Larrakh tries to flee through a secret door (see below). He triggers a rock fall to cover his escape.

Larrakh is in disgrace among the Black Earth priesthood after bungling some earlier missions. He is determined to conquer Red Larch without violence by subverting and exploiting the Believers. Before the adventurers came along, he planned to ensnare the

Believers with ever-darker acts of obedience and evil, then take over the town through his new servants.

Bringers of Woe. If the characters didn't already fight the Bringers of Woe (see area T7), they fight them here instead. The Bringers show up late for the fight, arriving from area T8 or the secret door a few minutes after the party defeats Larrakh or he makes his escape.

Bones. Upon the stone slabs are the bones of human miners who discovered this chamber before Red Larch was founded. None of the skeletons are intact; each has a crushed limb, chest cavity, or head. The injuries are consistent with mining accidents. The Believers revere these skeletons, calling them "the Delvers," and leave the bodies untouched.

Secret Door. In the southeastern corner is a secret door that requires a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check to find by noticing the unmortared stone outlining the door. It swivels on a central point, making a narrow opening to either side. The tunnel leads to the quarry pit in Mellikho Stoneworks (Red Larch, area 18; see "Conclusion" for more information.)

The earth cultists use this passage to enter and exit the tomb, and the Believers have disguised it to keep away the curious. Farther in, the tunnel is partially blocked with dusty canvas, broken beams, and loose rock to make it look like it has collapsed. A Medium or smaller creature can carefully pick a way through the debris. If someone uses an action to yank out a shoring timber, the jumble does collapse. Then, a 10-foot section of the tunnel is buried in the heap, blocking passage. Removing the debris takes a few hours of work.

Moving Stones. This area was a large storage cellar and workshop carved out by the dwarves of Besilmer thousands of years ago. The dwarves left behind an odd array of pillars, threshold stones, lintels, and carved stone doors. Human miners from the ancient kingdom of Phalorm discovered the dwarven delving. The miners chose to bury their dead here. Until the Believers of Red Larch discovered it, the chamber was forgotten again.

The dwarves enchanted the chamber floor to levitate stone in contact with it, so the floor's magic can be detected with *detect magic* (transmutation school). A moderate impact on the floor, such as a dropped object weighing at least 1 pound or a firm stamp of the foot, activates the levitation effect, which lasts for 1 minute. When the floor is active, the stones hover less than an inch off the floor, and they move with a light touch. Thus, minor earth tremors can cause the stones to move. Intruders, even beasts, can move stones about accidentally.

The Believers have never figured out the magic, and none have seen the stones levitating. Larrakh and the Black Earth cultists discovered how the floor works. They have been amusing themselves by shifting the stones around and telling the Believers that the mysterious movements are fearsome signs of impending doom.

TREASURE

Larrakh carries four Mirabar trade bars, each a foot-long spindle of iron, like two long, four-sided pyramids joined at the base. The bars make a distinctive tone

when struck and are worth 5 gp each. Any character native to the North recognizes this distinctive currency.

CONCLUSION

If any of the cultists or Believers are questioned, they relate how Albaeri Mellikho has allowed her stoneworks quarry to be used as the site of secret meetings led by Larrakh. Over successive nights of the full moon, the earth cultist's magic and force of personality has slowly corrupted the Believers.

The real aftermath of the discovery of the Tomb of Moving Stones depends on how the last few encounters played out, in particular the discovery of bodies in area T5. The corpses are those of murder victims.

If the characters didn't pay much attention to the bodies, then the remaining Believers are able to abscond with them and bury them elsewhere before Harburk finds them. Red Larch is scandalized, but it's a matter of secrets and lies, not murder and justice.

If the characters expressed curiosity about the bodies, or if you deem it likely that Constable Harburk reached area T5 before Believers did, then matters grow more serious. Harburk quickly draws the correct conclusion that the Believers are the murderers. The constable launches a full-fledged investigation.

If he can, Harburk questions Grund and Baragustas. Grund didn't kill anyone or witness the murders, but admits to helping stash the corpses. He says Albaeri Mellikho and Ilmeth Waelvur oversaw the process. Baragustas is also innocent of any overt wrongdoing, so he's quick to confirm Grund's story and exonerate himself.

Marlandro Gaelkur, Albaeri Mellikho, and Ilmeth Waelvur are the actual culprits. Mellikho maintains her innocence in the face of all evidence, blustering loudly. Waelvur breaks down and confesses his involvement, and he implicates Mellikho. Gaelkur plays it cool as long as he can, and tries to flee town a few tendays later when it becomes clear Waelvur is about to implicate him as well. The murderers also tell of Larrakh's part in the scandal, and of their use of his magic dagger.

If you play the full version of *Princes of the Apocalypse* (or if you use Red Larch as a center for adventures of your own), some Believers flee the town over the following month, while others disavow knowledge of the murders before retreating into seclusion. Leadership of Red Larch passes to Harburk, but he's too busy as constable. After a month, Jalessa Ornra becomes Red Larch's mayor, with the townsfolk rallying around her.

The townsfolk pitch in to cover the sinkhole and shore up walls and ceilings against future cave-ins.

REWARDS

Award standard XP for defeated foes. Each character participating in the "Tomb of Moving Stones" scenario can earn a maximum of 600 XP (the amount that will take a 2nd-level character to 3rd level).

At the end of this scenario, each character also gains 10 downtime days and 1 renown point in his or her faction.



PART 2: SECRET OF THE SUMBER HILLS

THIS PART OF THE ADVENTURE STARTS IN Red Larch, with the characters investigating the disappearance of a delegation from Mirabar. Encounters with agents of the Cult of the Howling Hatred and the Cult of the Crushing Wave will lead the characters to two of the Haunted Keeps in the Sumber Hills. These old fortresses have become secret outposts for the cults of Elemental Evil.

THE MISSING DELEGATION

For months now, the cults of Elemental Evil have been establishing themselves in the Dessarin Valley without attracting much attention. The adventures and investigations undertaken by the player characters have uncovered the first real signs of the cult's activities around the town of Red Larch—and put them at the center of even larger developments.

Even as the characters were undertaking the challenges in part 1 of this adventure, an important delegation from the city of Mirabar disappeared in the Sumber Hills. The delegation traveled overland from

Westbridge to Beliard, crossing the Stone Bridge. From Beliard it headed south into the Sumber Hills, bound for Summit Hall. Cultists attacked the group a few miles from Summit Hall, taking the travelers prisoner. As the characters investigate the disappearance, they find themselves targeted by agents of the air cult and the water cult, and have a chance to discover that the cults of Elemental Evil have occupied the legendary Haunted Keeps of the Sumber Hills as a first step toward subduing all of the Dessarin Valley.

(In the full version of the *Princes of the Apocalypse* adventure, the missing delegation were taken prisoner by the earth cult enclave at Sacred Stone monastery, one of the Haunted Keeps that does not appear in this D&D Encounters adventure. If you are not planning to continue on with the full adventure, you can choose to have the missing delegation found in Rivergard Keep. See the sidebar at the end of that scenario for details.)

ADVENTURE START

In the aftermath of the revelations regarding the Believers, Red Larch is slowly getting back to normal. The air of anxiety and fear that hangs over the town seems even stronger, however, as rumors from across the Dessarin Valley continue to speak of fierce raiders, roaming monsters, suspicious strangers, and unseasonable weather. Even worse, word has come in that an important delegation from the city of Mirabar has disappeared while traveling through the nearby Sumber Hills.

The five factions know about the overdue delegation and are concerned enough to send agents to investigate. Because the adventurers' recent actions in and around Red Larch have brought them a certain amount of notoriety, characters affiliated with these factions are contacted and asked to help out. Tell each player in private why his or her faction is concerned about the missing delegation. The exact reasons for each faction are described as follows:

Harpers. The delegation included a renowned shield dwarf historian named Bruldentharr, who was transporting his collection of manuscripts to Waterdeep. The Harpers don't want the sage or his books to fall into the wrong hands.

Lords' Alliance. Three important diplomats from cities in the alliance were leading the delegation: a moon elf from Silverymoon named Teresiel, a shield dwarf from Mirabar named Rhundorth, and a human noble from Waterdeep named Deseyna Majarra. The diplomats are important, but each also carries one part of a secret, coded document that must be recovered at all costs.

Emerald Enclave. The moon elf Teresiel had in her possession a pouch of magical seeds she was taking to the abbey of Goldenfields, not far from Red Larch. When planted, these seeds are supposed to grow into a magical grove.

DESIGNING D&D ENCOUNTERS SESSIONS: SECRET OF THE SUMBER HILLS

6 to 8 Sessions

The characters are expected to begin this part of the adventure at 3rd level, with Feathergale Spire designed to work best with a 3rd-level party. Completing that scenario should bring the characters to 4th level, making them ready to take on Rivergard Keep.

The wide-open nature of the characters' engagement with the agents of the cult in this part of the adventure means that the number of D&D Encounters sessions you can fill with these scenarios—and the way those sessions play out—is entirely up to you. For example, one group of players might choose to approach the Feathergale knights openly, engaging in lengthy roleplaying, joining the knights as they hunt a mantichore from the air, and making a slow and stealthy infiltration of Feathergale Spire from the inside. Another group might launch a direct frontal assault against the fortress, creating a focused combat scenario and engaging in roleplaying and exploration only after the threat of the cult's agents has been ended.

Depending on the play style you and your group enjoy, you should be able to get three to four sessions out of each of the haunted keeps. Because these scenarios involve overland travel and exploration, you should add random encounters as desired, both to represent the threats facing the Dessarin Valley and to fill out your play sessions as necessary.

Maximum XP. Each character participating in the "Feathergale Spire" scenario can earn a maximum of 1,800 XP (the amount that will take a 3rd-level character to 4th level). Each character participating in the "Rivergard Keep" scenario can earn a maximum of 3,800 XP (the amount that will take a 4th-level character to 5th level).

Order of the Gauntlet. The delegation was also transporting the body of a knight who was killed fighting orcs in the Spine of the World. The knight was to be interred with honor at Summit Hall, the chapter house of an order called the Knights of Samular. It lies in the southeast Sumber Hills.

The Zhentarim. The Zhentarim aren't particularly concerned about the delegation for its own sake, but they see an interesting opportunity here to rescue the missing delegates and win the gratitude of the leaders of Mirabar. Accordingly, a Zhentarim character wants to prove the good faith of the Black Network by lending a helping hand.

Nonfaction Start. Characters who aren't attached to the five factions can search for the missing delegation on their own initiative or might be motivated by their personal calls to action. The mystery of a missing delegation might not seem to be directly connected to whatever personal goal the character brings to the adventure, but then again, it just could be the lead.

BEGINNING THE SEARCH

Characters who spend time in the Helm at Highsun, the common room of the Swinging Sword, or Gaelkur's store can learn what the folk of Red Larch have heard regarding the Mirabar delegation and its fate. In addition to any of the details previously mentioned (including any faction information you wish to make general knowledge), the characters should also remember the

Mirabar trade bars carried by Larrakh in part 1 of the adventure. These provide the first connection between the missing Mirabar delegation and the mysterious cultists.

A more important clue comes in the form of reports from travelers along Larch Path, who report having seen huge birds flying across the Sumer Hills in the time since the delegation disappeared. Allow the adventurers to decide how they want to investigate the disappearance (most likely heading into the Sumer Hills to look for clues). As they set out on their search, an unexpected assault by agents of Elemental Evil draws the characters directly into adventure.

FEATHERGALE SPIRE

In the Sighing Valley stands Feathergale Spire, the Haunted Keep inhabited by the Feathergale Society, Waterdhavian aerial-mount enthusiasts who have pretensions of nobility. They call themselves Feathergale Knights.

Secretly, the knights are dedicated to the Howling Hatred. They occupied the keep when the air cult established itself in the dwarven ruins beneath the Sumer Hills. The knights serve the cult as lookouts, messengers, spies, and a first line of defense.

SKYRIDERS

The adventurers' success at exposing the plots of Elemental Evil in Red Larch has brought them to the attention of the cult enclave closest to the town—the Haunted Keep known as Feathergale Spire. Having made note of when the characters leave Red Larch to begin their search for the missing delegation, the air cultists send a group of aerial raiders to eliminate the heroes, or at least to give them a good scare. This encounter can occur any time the characters are on the road away from Red Larch and other settlements.

A strange, croaking cry from somewhere above catches your attention. You spot a trio of huge, winged shapes gliding toward you—giant vultures! Each bird carries on its back a warrior in dull blue armor with a dirty white cloak.

The attackers include one **Feathergale knight** and two **Howling Hatred initiates** (see the appendix for both), each mounted on a **giant vulture**. The riders prefer to keep their distance and make ranged attacks, but they will drop down to engage the characters if they feel they have the upper hand.

TREASURE

None of the riders carry treasure, but one of them has a map tucked into his boot. (Whichever villain the characters defeat has the map—the characters should find it.) The map shows a crude sketch of the Dessarin Valley and marks a place called “the Spire” a few miles east of Red Larch. It also depicts a strange arrow-like symbol by the site (the air cult symbol).

If the characters do not manage to defeat any of the cultists, they note the direction in which the raiders

flee. Pursuing them along that course soon brings Feathergale Spire into sight.

SPIRE APPROACH

When the characters reach the area of Feathergale Spire, use the unique environment and its weather to add atmosphere. During the day, azure sky encompasses the tower and gusty winds buffet it from all sides. The wind sighs through rock formations in the canyon. At night, the wind calms to a breeze, and light fog settles over the canyon. The spire then appears to float among the stars on a sea of clouds. The summits of the hills rise above the fog like islands in that sea.

The area around the keep (described later in this section) provides opportunities for additional encounters as the characters seek it out. Once the spire is in sight, you can describe the keep as follows:

Feathergale Spire rises from a pillar of rock high into the air, the tallest point for miles. Built from white limestone and embellished in marble, the spire resembles a gleaming sword that pierces the sky.

The gatehouse faces the opposite cliff, its drawbridge the only apparent point of entry. Tall, wide windows encompass the bottom level of the tower, absent only upon the gatehouse side.

A circle of open stalls rings the tower's foundation where it meets the rock. Above each stall, the sculpture of a hippogriff in flight leaps from the tower's base.

Beneath Feathergale Spire to the east, a wide gusty canyon yawns through the hills.

A steep trail leads to the drawbridge over Feathergale Moat and to the keep's main entrance (area S2). Characters who approach along the floor of the canyon (the Sighing Valley, described later in this section) can scale the stone pillar on which the spire stands. It is 400 feet from the pillar's base to the lowest level of the spire (area S1), and each level of the spire is 20 feet higher than the level below it. Flying characters can enter the spire from the pinnacle or through one of the windows in the courtyard gardens.

Two **Feathergale knights** (see the appendix) patrol the pinnacle (area S11) at all times, taking flight on **giant vultures** to meet attackers. One knight is stationed in the front hall (area S2) with two **Howling Hatred initiates** (see the appendix). In daylight, the pinnacle knights have an excellent vantage point. They are likely to know of the characters' approach long before the party arrives.

Though the air cult's agents near Red Larch (see the “Skyriders” encounter) had been watching for the adventurers on the orders of Thurl Merosska, leader of Feathergale Spire, neither he nor any of the other air cultists knows what the characters look like. As such, the knights' reaction depends only on how the party chooses to enter the spire. Peaceful visitors who approach openly are welcome. Those who sneak in or assault the spire meet the full defenses of the keep.

SPIRE FEATURES

The refurbished spire has the following features. Any exceptions are noted in areas to which they apply.

Ceilings. Ceilings are 18 feet high.

Defenders. The spire is described as it is when the characters arrive. At that time, four Feathergale Knights and their giant vulture mounts are away until that evening's feast (see the "Knights' Quest" section).

Doors. Interior doors are made of wood banded with iron. Most have no locks but can be barred. It takes a successful DC 20 Strength check to break open a barred door.

Floors. All floors are made of white stone.

Light. Due to its many windows, Feathergale Spire is brightly lit during the day and dimly lit at night. With the reinforced shutters closed, the light becomes dim during the day and dark at night.

Locks. Any locks require thieves' tools and a successful DC 15 Dexterity check to open.

Treasure. Feathergale Knights keep their wealth locked in chests in their cells. Each knight also has 2d10 gp in mixed coinage and minor valuables.

Windows. Oversized windows on the ground level allow light and air to pass easily into the tower. They stand 3 feet from the ground and are 6 feet tall and 8 feet wide. Smaller windows, about half the size of the larger ones, are on levels 2 and 3. Shutters reinforced with iron bands permit the windows to be shut and barred. A barred window is like a barred door.

FEATHERGALE MOAT

A gap of twenty feet separates the ledge where the path ends from the closed drawbridge on Feathergale Spire. The space between the cliff's edge and the gatehouse drops several hundred feet to the bottom of the canyon. Near the ledge, a brass bell hangs from a wooden post.

At the bell's ring, a female human **Feathergale knight** (see the appendix) named Savra Belabranta opens a small window near the gate, welcomes the characters, and courteously asks what brings them here. Savra lowers the drawbridge to allow friendly visitors entry. If the characters accompany her, go to the "Knights' Quest" section.

SI. STABLE LEVEL

A circular landing surrounds the central shaft of a spiral staircase. The landing is piled with supplies and bales of straw. Radiating from the landing are twelve stalls with straw-covered floors. A harness, riding crop, and saddle hang in each stall. Swinging wooden doors cap either end of each stall, one leading from the tower to the stall and the other from the stall to the open air.

The round room in the center of the spire serves as a storeroom. It is filled with supplies. Any gear from the *Player's Handbook* you want the characters to have can be found here. The knights are willing to sell items at a ten percent markup.

When the characters arrive, four **hippogriffs** and two **giant vultures** occupy the stables, each in its own stall, and one **Feathergale knight** (see the appendix) stands watch and tends the creatures. The hippogriffs and vultures are aggressive toward strangers that enter their stalls unless a knight introduces the newcomers. Knight disguises can fool the creatures, but only at a distance.

The latches on the stall doors are fastened at multiple points on each door, so it takes two actions to open each door.

S2. FRONT HALL

The entrance is a thirty-foot-long hall of white stone. At the opposite end of the hall are two twelve-foot-tall doors like those of the entry gate.

An eagle carved from a massive timber hangs from the far side of the ceiling, suspended on strong chains. Slender wings of steel sweep close to its sides. Its head is also fashioned of steel.

One **Feathergale knight** (Savra when the characters first arrive) and two **Howling Hatred initiates** keep watch in the entry hall. See the appendix for their statistics.

Friendly Entry. If Savra has allowed the characters in, she tells the characters that they have excellent timing. She invites them to join the knights' feast this evening, commemorating the tenth year of the Feathergale Society. Savra leads the party through the tower to meet her captain, Thurl Merosska, in area S11.

The Eagle. The eagle is a battering ram. If released using a lever near the doors to area S4, the ram attacks an area that starts at the doors to area S4, extending 30 feet along a 5-foot-wide path in the center of the hall. Each creature in this area must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw or take 3d6 bludgeoning damage. Those who fail the save by 5 or more are swept along with the ram, pushed out of the hall onto the drawbridge, and knocked prone. The eagle resets when it swings back, locking back into place and resetting its activation lever.

S3. WEAPONS LOCKER

The Feathergale knights stow weapons and armor here under lock and key. The weapon racks currently hold four longswords, four suits of scale mail, four shields, four helmets, four longbows, and four quivers of twenty arrows each.

S4. CENTRAL STAIRS

A single spiral stair runs through the tower's center, with landings at each floor. The stairs have a handrail along the outer edge.

S5. INITIATE DORMITORY

Howling Hatred initiates, priests, hurricanes, and skyweavers sleep in this room on four double bunks. Most cultists spend their days in other parts of the spire.

S6. KITCHEN

In this kitchen, sacks are heaped along the walls, and a small pile of vegetables is spread on a table. A huge, steaming cauldron stands at the center. Two wooden paddles and two knives hang on a rack next to a brick oven. Four wall shelves hold a dozen loaves of bread.

Four **Howling Hatred initiates** (see the appendix) stand around the cauldron inhaling the steam wafting from it. The initiates are trying to “inhale—and become—the steam.” These cultists also serve as kitchen staff.

S7. SOLARIUM

A bright room occupies the east quarter of this floor. Flowers and shrubs of many varieties grow in a labyrinth of planters. Spidery red and purple plants grow suspended in baskets in mid-air. Robed humans water the plants.

Three **Howling Hatred initiates** and one **hurricane** (see the appendix for both) tend to the plants, contemplate philosophy, or train in this room.

Several barrels of fresh water are located around the perimeter of the room.

S8. GREAT HALL

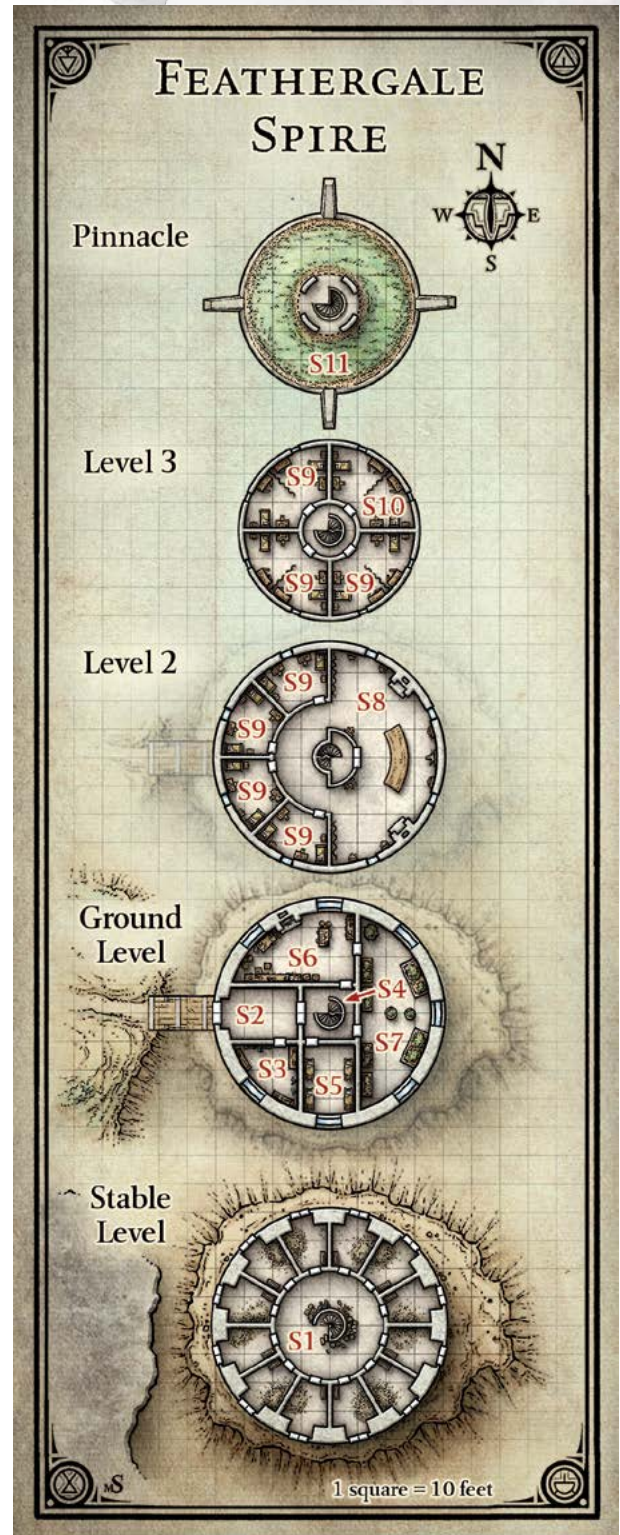
This great hall spans half the diameter of the tower. Between the overlarge windows, tapestries depict scenes of gallant knights on flying hippogriffs, fighting dragons and jousting with one another among the clouds. High on the walls are the mounted heads of griffons, wyverns, owlbears, and manticores. A long, curved table set for a feast stretches between the hall's twin hearths.

When the characters first arrive, two **Feathergale knights** (see the appendix) who aren't occupied with other duties or rest are found here. At night, the tower's servants sleep here after the knights have retired for the evening.

S9. KNIGHTS' CELLS

This chamber contains two beds, a fireplace, a closet, two chests, and a small tapestry on the wall.

Each knight's chest contains valuables worth d100 gp, and a feathered cloak.



S10. MEROSKA'S APARTMENT

This chamber contains a bed, a fireplace, a closet, a writing desk, a chest, and a small tapestry on the wall.

TREASURE

In addition to clothing and personal effects, the chest contains 320 gp in a sack, a *potion of heroism*, a scroll of *beast bond*, and a scroll of *skywrite* (see the sidebar for descriptions of both spells).

On the desk, the characters find a detailed map of the area showing the routes of Feathergale Spire's aerial patrols, as well as a large X marking a forested location south of the keep and close to Cairn Road. A note on the map reads "REAVER CAMP—WATCH AND REPORT". This is a hook meant to lead the characters to a squad of water cultists and Rivergard Keep.

Only if you are planning to play the full adventure of *Princes of the Apocalypse*, have the characters also find a cylindrical leather case on the desk. A letter within from the leader of the air cult reveals information important to the full adventure:

Merosska,

We are pleased to hear about the outcome of your altercation with the Black Earth cult, and we praise you for the capture of one of their prisoners. This noblewoman from Waterdeep has an interesting tale to tell, and we shall enjoy interrogating her further. Keep a close watch on the Sacred Stone Monastery. I want to know what our enemy is planning next.

*Your beloved queen,
Aerisi Kalinoth*

(Sacred Stone Monastery and Aerisi Kalinoth do not appear in this D&D Encounters adventure.)

SII. PINNACLE

At the apex of the tower, the stairs terminate at a round stone gazebo that continues upward in a needle-like minaret. Beyond this enclosure, a small lawn grows upon the top of the tower. Four paths paved with white stones point the directions of the compass, each path ending in a pointed stone crenellation. At the pinnacle's edge is a spyglass on a tripod, pointed downward.

From this vantage point, the Feathergale Knights possess a supreme view of all that transpires in the nearby canyon and the Sumber Hills beyond.

Two **Feathergale knights** (see the appendix) and their **giant vultures** are stationed here. Every hour, one of them patrols the air around the spire. The other patrols the tower. They watch for danger and fellow knights sent on errands. When the characters first arrive at the spire, **Thurl Merosska** (see the appendix) is here as well, gazing west toward Red Larch.

Shrine to Elemental Evil. Here in the high open air, the cultists gather to worship the power of elemental evil. They sacrifice their enemies, first marking them with the sign of the Howling Hatred and then throwing them off the pinnacle. In the Sighing Valley, area C2,

BEAST BOND

1st-level divination

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M (a bit of fur wrapped in a cloth)

Duration: Concentration, up to 10 minutes

You establish a telepathic link with one beast you touch that is friendly to you or charmed by you. The spell fails if the beast's Intelligence is 4 or higher. Until the spell ends, the link is active while you and the beast are within line of sight of each other. Through the link, the beast can understand your telepathic messages to it, and it can telepathically communicate simple emotions and concepts back to you. While the link is active, the beast gains advantage on attack rolls against any creature within 5 feet of you that you can see.

SKYWRITE

2nd-level transmutation (ritual)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Sight

Components: V, S

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 hour

You cause up to ten words to form in a part of the sky you can see. The words appear to be made of cloud and remain in place for the spell's duration. The words dissipate when the spell ends. A strong wind can disperse the clouds and end the spell early.

scavengers swiftly remove evidence of the knights' dark deeds.

Spyglass. Those who gaze through the spyglass without moving it first see a hooded figure enter the concealed door in Knifepoint Gully (area C3).

KNIGHTS' QUEST

Savra Belabranta escorts the characters through the spire and up to the pinnacle where Thurl Merosska surveys the territory. Briefly describe any other rooms or inhabitants of the tower the characters observe on their ascent. When the characters reach the pinnacle, read the following text:

The commander of the Feathergale Knights is a well-built male human in his early fifties. Embossed feather patterns ornament the plates of his armor, and his kingly cloak boasts a feathered mantle. He smooths his white-blond hair into place, then bows low before you as if he were only a lowly courtier.

"Welcome to Feathergale Spire, retreat of the Feathergale Society. I am Thurl Merosska, the lord commander."

Thurl Merosska offers the hospitality of the tower, inviting the characters to a feast in honor of the society's tenth year. Merosska especially shows favor to nobles, knights, members of the Lords' Alliance, and members of the Order of the Gauntlet.

If the characters wish to interview Merosska now, they can do so. He might answer questions on the following topics:

- The Feathergale Society, an “elite” group of aerial-mount enthusiasts from Waterdeep
- The origins of Feathergale Spire (see “Red Larch and the Dessarin Valley”)
- Doing one’s duty for the realm
- Hunting and hawking
- Hippogriffs, giant vultures, and other aerial mounts

If the characters mention elemental cults, read the following text:

Thurl’s face darkens. “Great evil lurks among these hills,” he says. “Depraved cultists led by wretched monsters. But let us speak of such matters after the feast has warmed our blood.”

Thurl allows the characters to rest in the tower until it is time to begin the feast. If the characters join the feast, read the following text:

Clad in the finest garments of velvet brocade, the knights feast at a curved table in the great hall, where twin hearths blaze. Thurl Merosska sits at the head of the table. “Honored guests,” he says. “Tell us of your adventures in the Sember Hills. Let us aid you in any way we can.”

The knights use the feast to learn about the characters and how much they know about the elemental cults. Applauding bravery and offering toasts, the knights listen to the characters’ stories and share anecdotes. When you decide it’s time, read the following:

The doors to the great hall fly open and a sentry from the pinnacle shouts, “Manticore! It’s on the move!” At this announcement the Feathergale Knights rise as one, the feast before them unfinished. “We should take this opportunity to slay the monster,” Thurl says. From his finger he removes a feather-patterned golden ring set with a garnet and holds it aloft, saying, “A prize for the one who brings me the beast’s head!”

Merosska asks the characters to join four of his knights in the manticore hunt. He offers to lend them hippogriffs for the task. If the characters agree, go to the “Manticore Hunt” section. Those who decline the invitation can stay at Feathergale Spire and rest, or explore the tower.

TREASURE

Thurl’s ring is worth 250 gp. Thurl also carries 3d10 gp and 2d6 pp in a pouch.

MANTICORE HUNT

Four Feathergale Knights join the characters on the hunt. To start, read the following text:

Four Feathergale Knights assemble at the pinnacle, each mounted upon a giant vulture. The moon illuminates the misty canyon below Feathergale Spire. In the far distance, a single shard of darkness moves, flitting in and out of the mist. Then the shadow sinks beneath the bank of clouds, lost again from sight.

The manticore hunt takes place in the skies above the Sighing Valley (see the accompanying map).

VISIBILITY

Vision is limited to 100 feet within the canyon because of the fog and night sky. The manticore, hippogriffs, and giant vultures know the canyon well enough to avoid running into the cliffs.

HUNTING THE MANTICORE

The knights ride giant vultures and stay together as a group. Characters can join the knights’ group, form their own group, or split up into multiple groups. A character or knight who moves more than 100 feet away from the rest of his or her group becomes a separate group.

Finding the Manticore. At the end of each minute spent searching for the manticore, have each group of hunters in the canyon roll a d20, adding 1 for each character or knight in the group. Any group that rolls a total of 18 or higher comes within 100 feet of the manticore. Any and all groups that find the manticore can engage it in battle.

If the knights find the manticore first, they blow their horns so that other groups can pinpoint the knights’ location and join the battle in 1d6 rounds.

Battling the Manticore. The giant vultures and hippogriffs are faster fliers than the manticore, and the manticore knows it. Once it is found, the manticore fights until it has no targets to attack, using its action every round to make three Tail Spike attacks. If there are no characters present, assume that one knight is injured and the manticore’s hit points are reduced by 8 at the end of each round of battle. A knight that is injured leaves the hunt. When no more knights remain, the knights are out of the hunt. If the manticore has nothing to attack, the battle ends and it flies off. Remaining groups can try to search for it again.

The manticore has twenty-four tail spikes. When it runs out of spikes, it does nothing other than fly away from its pursuers on its turn. At the end of each of these turns, have all characters and knights in the battle make a DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check. If all of their checks fail, the manticore gets away, though groups can try to search for it again.

Manticore Lost. If 10 consecutive minutes pass and neither the knights nor the characters find the manticore, it returns to its lair (area V9).

CONCLUSION

After the mantichore hunt, a few courses are open for furthering the story.

The Party's Fate. Thurl decides what to do with the characters. If they've been polite, Thurl is friendly as he tries to dissuade the characters from their search for the missing delegation, "lest the dangers of the Sumer Hills claim you as well." If the characters have been rude or proven themselves to be enemies of the elemental cults, the knights try to kill the characters later that night. Fighting all of the knights and cultists at once is a deadly encounter, but the villains aim to capture the characters first, and then hurl them from the top of the spire (area S11). The aarakocra in area V8 come to the characters' aid in that event.

If the characters defeat their attackers, surviving knights flee on hippogriffs and giant vultures. They lead pursuers past the griffon roost at area V7.

Savra's Revelation. If a character makes a strong impression on Savra and the party is on good terms with the knights, Savra looks for an opportunity to pull that character aside. Delighted with the character's deeds, Savra confides that the Feathergale Knights have a secret mission to master elemental air to annihilate Waterdeep's enemies. Savra offers to meet with Thurl to request he recruit the character into the Feathergale Knights. In doing so, she unwittingly reveals part of the knights' secret. (A victim of the air cult corrupted by elemental power, Savra plays a larger part in the full adventure of *Princes of the Apocalypse*.)

SIGHING VALLEY

Sighing Valley is actually a wide canyon consisting of a deep gorge through which a small river flows. Rock spires rise from the canyon floor, and when the wind blows past these natural structures it makes a sighing—and sometimes a howling—sound.

FEATURES

Fauna. Wild **goats** are common in the canyon.

Fog. At night, fog fills the canyon, limiting visibility to 100 feet. Beyond that range, creatures and objects are heavily obscured.

Light. The canyon is brightly lit during the day, and light varies at night from dim to dark.

Walls. The canyon walls are 200 to 400 feet high.

VI. FEATHERGALE SPIRE

See the "Feathergale Spire" section.

V2. DEAD ROCKS

A **giant vulture** picks at the gruesome remains on the rocks. The giant vulture attacks the characters only if provoked. Six **blood hawks** circle overhead, attacking any other creature that comes near the kill. After half an hour, the vulture flies away and the blood hawks swoop in.

Among the dry, days-old gore lie shattered bones.

A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals the bones belong to a humanoid creature. If the check succeeds by 5 or more, the character discovers



rusty stains among the rocks and bone fragments indicating that many more humanoids have died here.

V3. KNIFEPOINT GULLY

A narrow fissure in the canyon wall leads through a gully choked with pale brush and shrubs. A swift breeze passes through the fissure. At the end, a dark, jagged crevice awaits.

Only if you are planning to play the full version of *Princes of the Apocalypse*, the crevice at the end of the gully contains a hidden stairway that leads down to the Temple of Howling Hatred. See the full adventure for details.

V4. THE LOST RIVER

A river courses through the canyon, winding around tall spires and through the base of a plateau. Coarse green shrubs huddle along its banks.

A **gnoll pack lord** and three **gnolls** forage among large rocks west of the river. During the day, when the sky is clear, they use their longbows to take shots at characters. At night, they huddle behind the rocks, gnawing on fish from the river.

TREASURE

The gnoll pack lord carries a severed human finger with a gold ring (worth 25 gp) worn on it.

V5. HOWLING PLATEAU

This high rocky plateau rises from the center of the canyon. A river cuts through the canyon bottom, passing through it to the other side. The wind on the plateau keens and moans, alternating its pitch with the force and direction of the wind.

A creature standing atop Howling Plateau can see the whole canyon, but not the surrounding lands.

V6. THE LOST RIVER

The river that runs through the canyon sweeps close to the canyon's eastern wall. To the west, the ground is covered with rocky spires and wild brush.

Four **gnolls** and four **hyenas** forage here. During the day, when the sky is clear, the gnolls use their longbows to take down distant targets.



V7. GRIFFON ROOST

A mated pair of **griffons** occupies a cliff cave about 150 feet from the canyon floor. The griffons attack any horse or hippogriff that nears the lair. They slay the mount and escape with the carcass.

This cave stinks of animal musk and damp straw. A nest of straw and twigs follows the curvature of the cave walls.

The nest holds two griffon eggs, worth up to 2,000 gp each. For each day without sixteen hours of incubation, each egg has a ten percent chance of spoiling.

V8. AARAKOCRA CAMP

In a depression on a ridge near the canyon floor, five **aarakocra** have set up a watch post hidden with brush. They have seen grim pilgrims proceeding into and out of Knife-point Gully (area V3), and they witnessed the recent sacrifice from Feathergate Spire. Certain that the forces of Elemental Evil has taken hold in the canyon, they are now debating what action to take. They are willing to help characters who show an interest in confronting the evil in the canyon, and they might interfere with any attempt the Feathergate Knights make to sacrifice captured characters.

V9. MANTICORE LAIR

A pool fills the center of this deep cave, born from a natural spring beneath the rock and flowing outward into the river. Long stalactites hang above the pool, surrounding a natural central pillar. Water drips from the stalactites into the pool, echoing throughout the cave. Some of the debris here looks like leftovers from an old camp, including four old crates.

Two **manticores** lair here. Only one manticore is present at a given time, with the other one out hunting. If a manticore died in the “Manticore Hunt” event, the other is here.

TREASURE

The bones of six orcs litter the cave, along with signs the orcs camped here for many days. Coins scattered in the pool and around the lair total 60 cp, 26 sp, and 14 gp. The orcs also accumulated four crates of plunder that include plates, candlesticks, and silks worth 50 gp total.

REWARDS

Award standard XP for defeated foes. Each character participating in the “Feathergale Spire” scenario can earn a maximum of 1,800 XP (the amount that will take a 3rd-level character to 4th level).

At the end of this scenario, each character also gains 10 downtime days and 1 renown point in his or her faction.

RIVERGARD KEEP

A small but strongly built castle on the banks of the Dessarin River, Rivergard Keep is one of the Haunted Keeps of the Sember Hills. A taciturn mercenary lord named Jolliver Grimjaw and his band of sellswords occupy the keep. They are repairing the castle and protecting trade along the river from monsters and bandits, or so they claim. In fact, Rivergard Keep is the secret stronghold of the Cult of the Crushing Wave. Grimjaw and his followers are the very outlaws from whom they claim to be defending trade.

REAYER AMBUSH

The hook that brings the characters to the second Haunted Keep comes as they have a chance to stalk and ambush a group of water cultists. The map and note found in Merosska’s Apartment in Feathergale Spire (area S10) shows the location of a water cultist camp noted by the air cult’s patrols.

From this site, the water cult reavers attack travelers and keep an eye on the activities of the air cultists in Feathergale Spire. This encounter can occur anywhere along Cairn Road. Give the characters a chance to approach stealthily if they wish.

(The Dessarin Valley area map indicates a specific location for this event, as part of the characters’ larger explorations in the full adventure of *Princes of the*

Apocalypse. It can be ignored for this D&D Encounters adventure.)

A small, carefully banked cooking fire smolders in the middle of this haphazard encampment. Half a dozen battered old tents and crates of provisions are scattered around, along with racks on which pieces of smoked fish are curing. Several fierce-looking human warriors are hunkered down in front of their tents, tending to their gear or quietly conversing.

The camp is occupied by one **Crushing Wave priest**, two **Crushing Wave reavers**, and five **bandits** (statistics for the priest and the reavers appear in the appendix). If the characters have the advantage of foreknowledge and successfully sneak up on the villains, they can surprise the water cultists. Otherwise, the cultists assume that any strangers are enemies and attack. If all the Crushing Wave members are killed, surviving bandits try to flee or surrender.

DEVELOPMENT

Captured Crushing Wave cultists refuse to talk, but captured bandits aren’t as fanatically close-mouthed. The bandits reveal that they signed on with the “mercenaries” at Rivergard Keep, and that Jolliver Grimjaw is more than what he seems. They can tell the characters how to find the keep.

In the event that all the bandits flee, the characters can find a reference to Rivergard Keep among the personal effects of the Crushing Wave priest.

INVESTIGATING RIVERGARD

Grimjaw and his gang work with smugglers to move stolen goods on the river. They stage attacks against river boats that refuse to pay protection money, and they actively recruit thugs and monsters to join the Cult of the Crushing Wave.

When the characters arrive at Rivergard, read the following text:

A small castle overlooks the mighty Dessarin River, which is a good half-mile wide at this point. A gatehouse and keep stand atop a low bluff, but the walls are built to the water’s edge. On the river bank, another low tower guards a boat basin where keelboats are moored.

The keep seems old and worn, but new timbers and shingles suggest that repairs are underway. A white banner with a blue gauntlet flies over the keep.

The front gate is closed.

What happens next depends on why the characters are here and how they approach.

PEACEFUL APPROACH

If the characters approach openly and politely ask for admittance for almost any plausible reason, the cultists welcome them. Characters who claim to know the cult’s



business are considered to be either important guests or spies who know too much. If the characters use no such knowledge and are rude or provide no reasonable excuse for entrance, they are turned away.

Four **bandits** escort characters who enter peacefully through the gate (area K1). If the characters entered through the water gate (area K11), three **Crushing Wave reavers** (see the appendix) provide escort instead. The escort takes the party to the great hall (area K16), where Grimjaw interviews the characters to find out who they really are.

AGGRESSIVE APPROACH

Grimjaw and his cutthroats aren't expecting an attack. Characters who sneak in are challenged by anyone they meet inside. It's up to you whether fast-talking characters can stave off conflict at such a meeting.

KEEP FEATURES

The water cultists are busy repairing Rivergard, but parts of the complex remain inaccessible. For example, the upper floors of the north tower and the water tower are filled with debris. The following features are common to the keep. Any exceptions are noted in areas to which they apply.

Arrow Slits. In the castle walls, arrow slits are 9 feet above the ground level, 8 inches wide, and 4 feet high.

Ceilings. Most ceilings are 12 feet high.

Defenders. Jolliver Grimjaw is known as "Jolly" to his followers, as a shortening of his first name and an sarcastic comment on his demeanor. He leads bandits, who work for money rather than ideology, and water cultists. Only some of the commoner servants lack loyalty to Grimjaw and the cult.

Doors. Interior doors are made of wood. It takes a successful DC 10 Strength check to force open a locked door. Exterior doors are reinforced with iron bands and can be barred. Such a barred door requires a successful DC 20 Strength check to force open.

Light. During the day, the castle's windows and arrow slits provide bright light for all interior spaces. At night, interior spaces are brightly lit with small oil lamps.

Locks. A lock requires thieves' tools and a successful DC 15 Dexterity check to open.

Treasure. Each warrior in the keep carries 2d10 – 2 gp in mixed coinage and minor valuables.

Walls. The walls are 15 feet above outside ground level and 10 feet above inside ground level. A crenellated parapet faces the outside. One **bandit** stands watch on each of the four wall sections, pacing back and forth.

RAISING THE ALARM

If the characters are caught doing something suspicious, cultists nearby attempt to raise the alarm. When the alarm is raised, the following countermeasures happen:

- Castle denizens bar all exterior doors.
- Bandits in area K8 move to the tops of the walls, adding two more bandits to each wall section.
- The Crushing Wave reavers in area K8 head straight for the source of the trouble, arriving 1 minute after the alarm is raised.
- After 10 minutes, Grimjaw and the reavers from area K20 leave the keep and search for intruders in the castle.

K1. FRONT GATE

The keep's main entrance features a two-story gatehouse attached to a round tower. Arrow slits look out onto the ground outside the gate. The gate itself is a double door of thick timbers reinforced by iron bands.

The gate is barred from the inside. It can't be forced open by any means short of a siege engine. The bar can be raised from inside the gatehouse passage (area K2) or lifted by an iron chain from the upper floor of the gatehouse (area K3).

One **bandit** stands watch on the wall section just north of the gatehouse. If he spots the party approaching, he warns the cultists in areas K2 and K3. If the characters openly approach the gate and call out, read the following text:

Clattering sounds and muffled voices come from inside the gatehouse. Then a human warrior appears at the second-story arrow slit directly over the gate. You can't see much of him, but he wears a leather jerkin and has a black beard. "Who are you? What do you want?"

The person at the arrow slit is Holger, a **thug** who commands the gatehouse. Holger is a high-strung martinet, and no one in the gatehouse likes him. Holger decides whether to open the gate, tell the characters to go away, or order his bandits to open fire. If Holger admits the characters, he orders four **bandits** (two from area K2, two from area K3) to meet them at the gate and escort them inside.

If fighting breaks out here, characters standing in front of the gate are exposed to fire from the arrow slit in area K3 and the parapet on the wall. If the bandits in area K2 can't line up shots at the intruders, they climb the stairs to area K3 and then move out onto the parapet to join the battle.

DEVELOPMENT

If the characters kill some or all the gatehouse guards (areas K2 and K3) and then leave Rivergard, the dead guards are replaced by troops from areas K8 or K20. If those guards are killed too, it takes Grimjaw 1d4 + 1

days to get reinforcements and replace the gate guards. During this period, the front gate remains barred but unguarded.

K2. GATEHOUSE

The gates open to a thirty-foot passage leading east. A portcullis blocks the far end of the passage, but you can see the castle yard on the other side. An arrow slit in the southern wall of the passage provides defenders a way to fire on intruders who get this far.

Characters who specifically examine the ceiling notice the murder holes (see area K3). Otherwise, it takes a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check to discern the murder holes overhead.

GATEHOUSE INTERIOR

If the characters find a way into the round tower south of the gatehouse passage, read the following text:

This is the ground floor of the gatehouse tower. A door leads to the east, and stairs climb to the floor above. Arrow slits in this room offer a view of the ground outside the castle and the gate passage to the north. Two double-bunks stand against the walls.

The tower interior serves as the barracks for four **bandits**. If the gatehouse comes under attack, three move to the arrow slits, while the fourth steps into area K4 and heads toward area K8 to raise the alarm.

The stairs lead to area K3.

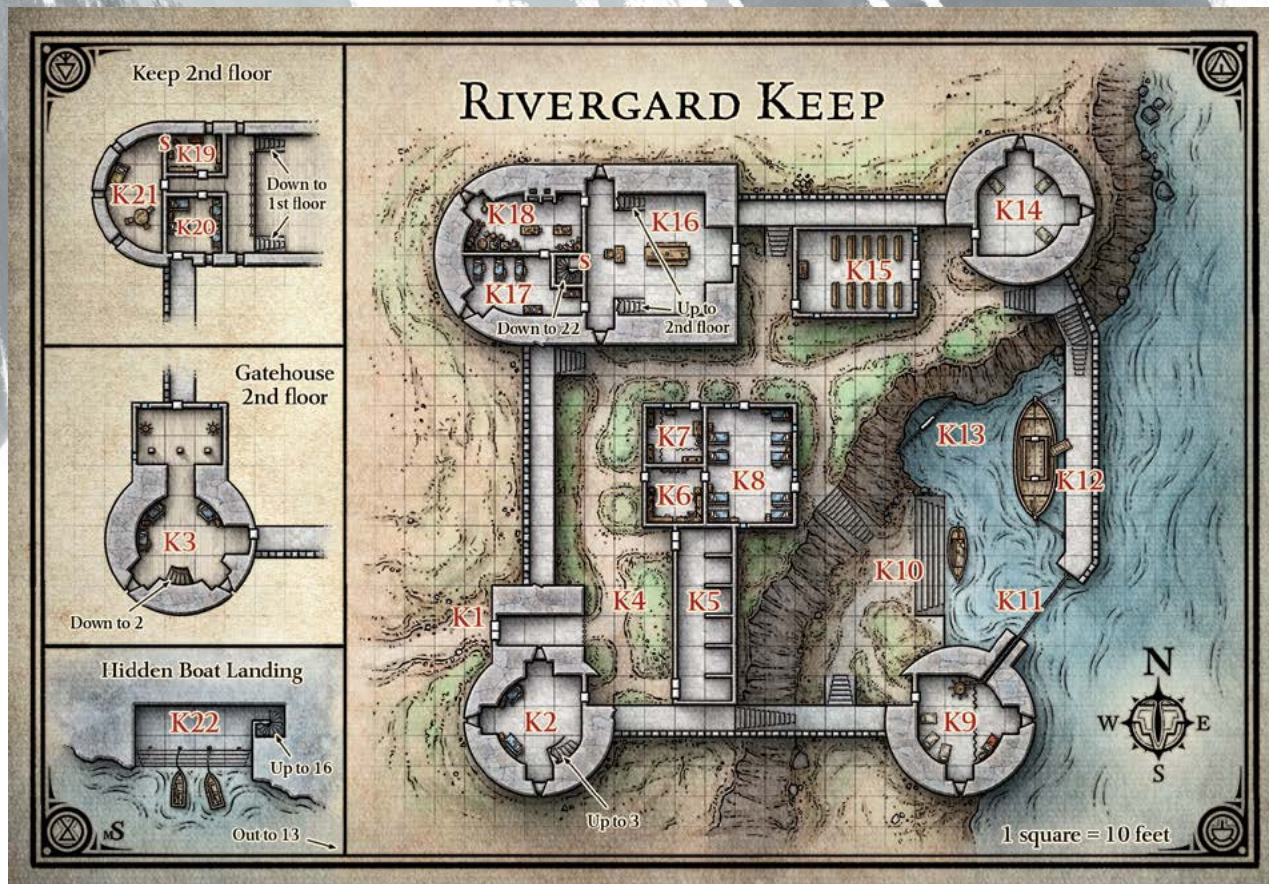
K3. GATEHOUSE UPPER FLOOR

This room above the castle gatehouse features doors that lead out to the tops of the walls to the north and to the east. Stairs lead down to the floor below. A chain mechanism in the northern half of the room positioned over the main gate raises or lowers the gate bars. Another controls the portcullis. Three holes in the floor, each about a foot square, look down on the passage below.

This area serves as a barracks and a defensive post. Holger, a **thug**, commands the gatehouse. Three more **bandits** have bunks here.

The chain mechanisms are easy to operate. A character has to use three actions to bar or unbar the gate, or to raise or lower the portcullis. The bandits posted in this area operate the mechanisms to let people into or out of the castle.

The stairs in this room descend to area K2. The doors lead out onto the wall sections on the south and west side of the castle.



TREASURE

Holger has accumulated a tidy little hoard, mostly through “fining” the warriors under his command for minor infractions. He stores a locked wooden coffer under his bunk (he keeps the key on a string around his neck). The coffer contains 150 sp, 40 gp, a *potion of healing*, and a *potion of diminution*.

K4. CASTLE YARD

The area just inside the castle gatehouse consists of a small courtyard of bare dirt and tufts of wiry grass. A stable stands to the east, the gatehouse to the west, and the main yard of the castle lies to the north. The keep occupies the northern corner of the castle yard. Stone stairs near the keep lead up to the top of the wall.

As the characters move around the castle yard, it’s easy to see (and be seen by) any or all of the four **bandits** standing on the wall. They pay no attention to people inside the walls who act like they’re supposed to be there.

Bluff. A steep bluff of earth and loose rock on the eastern edge of the castle yard leads down to the boat basin and landing. Carved into the bluff is a 20-foot-long staircase.

Random Encounters. Characters lingering in the castle yard are likely to encounter various denizens of Rivergard going about their business. Check for random

encounters once per 5 minutes during the day or once per 15 minutes at night. Roll a d20; if the result is 18 or higher, a random encounter occurs. To determine the encounter, roll a d6 and consult the following table:

d6	Encounter
1	1d3 commoners (see area K17)
2	1d4 bandits (see area K8)
3	1d3 Crushing Wave reavers (see area K20)
4	1d3 giant rats
5	Drosnin and her guards (see area K15)
6	Reash and his guards (see area K9)

The commoners are helpful, especially if they realize the characters plan to take on the Crushing Wave cultists. If they think the characters are cultists, the commoners hurry past with their eyes averted. All other groups challenge the characters if the party looks like it might not belong here.

K5. RUINED STABLE

This old stable is in bad shape. Most of the roof has caved in, and rotting debris fills the interior. Six horse stalls line the back wall.

The cultists haven’t bothered to repair the stables yet, since they have little need for mounts here.

K6. ARMORY

Weapon racks along the walls of this armory hold spears. Barrels full of crossbow bolts and arrows stand near the doors. Open chests in the middle of the room contain suits of leather armor. The most unusual items in this armory are the shields—they are made of beaten copper and fashioned into the shape of horseshoe crab shells.

The room contains twenty spears, ten shortswords, five scimitars, five light crossbows, four hundred crossbow bolts, two hundred arrows, fifteen suits of leather armor, and eight shields shaped like horseshoe crab shells.

K7. BATHHOUSE

Two big wooden washtubs occupy the middle of this room, and a row of curtains along the west wall provides privacy for several privies.

K8. BARRACKS

Nine double bunks fill this barracks, each with a pair of footlockers tucked underneath. Doors exit to the north, west, and east.

This area is home to twelve **bandits** and four **Crushing Wave reavers** (see the appendix). At any given time, four of the bandits stand watch as sentries on the outer wall, and two of the Crushing Wave reavers are on duty in area K16. The remaining eight bandits and two reavers linger here. They spend most of their time gambling, dozing in their bunks, tending to their gear, practicing in the yard just outside, or starting pointless quarrels with each other.

At night, most of these warriors are asleep in their bunks, but the cultists post a watch in this room throughout the night. At least two bandits remain awake and armed at all times. Sleeping cultists sleep through their first turn of any combat that takes place here, then awaken and arm themselves during their second turn.

DEVELOPMENT

If the characters convince Grimjaw that they are here to join up, they are assigned bunks in this room (only two of the bunks are empty, so the characters might need to share). Little camaraderie exists in the barracks—most of these cultists are sullen, boastful, or ill-tempered, and they bully new recruits.

K9. WATER TOWER

The upper floor of this tower looks deserted, but the ground floor is still in use. Curtains hanging across the eastern half of the room wall off someone's private quarters, and several straw pallets lie on the floor near the door. A capstan stands against the north wall, with a heavy chain disappearing through a pipe to the northeast. The river laps just beneath the arrow slits of the tower.

Three **Crushing Wave reavers** and a **fathomer** named Reash (see the appendix for both) occupy this tower. Reash is in command and does most of the talking. He's a sour-faced fellow with a drooping mustache and an arrogant manner. Reash is instantly suspicious of strangers.

Reash uses the curtained area as his private quarters, while the reavers make do with the straw pallets. The fathomer's private quarters hold a folding wooden cot and a saddlebag on a table (see "Treasure" below).

Capstan and Chain. The capstan raises or lowers the chain that blocks the castle's water gate (area K11). It only takes one person to operate the capstan, but lowering the chain to allow a boat to pass requires a character to use three actions cranking.

TREASURE

Reash carries a key to the grate in area K13. His leather saddlebag holds 70 gp, 12 pp, and six agates (worth 10 gp each).

K10. LANDING

The keep's eastern wall juts out into the river, forming a good-sized basin in which a couple of keelboats float. A wide gap in the southeast wall provides access to the river, although it is blocked by a heavy chain. A twenty-foot tall bluff of rock and earth separates the landing and a nearby tower from the rest of the castle grounds. To the north, a wide stream flows out of a cave mouth into the boat basin. An iron grate blocks access to the stream.

Keelboats full of loot and stolen goods off-load their cargo here. The boat tied up right next to the landing is currently empty. The water in the boat basin is about 15 feet deep, although it naturally shallows near the shore.

K11. WATER GATE

The keep's eastern wall is built into the river, forming a long pier that encloses a boat basin. A heavy chain that emerges from the tower to the south stretches across the entrance.

The heavy chain raised and lowered by the winch in area K9 provides Rivergard's defenders with the ability to block boats from entering or leaving. A swimming character can easily go over or under the chain—it impedes only boat traffic.

The sentry—a bandit posted on the wall section jutting out into the river—hails characters approaching by boat. He then shouts for Reash in area K9, who moves to the arrow slit in his tower to see what's happening.

A male human with lank black hair looks out of the arrow slit in the tower by the river. He has a drooping mustache and a sour expression. "What do you want?" he asks.

Reash decides whether to admit the party. If he does, he has the reavers in area K9 lower the chain and tells the characters to tie up their boat in area K10. He then sends the reavers to escort the characters.

K12. MOORED KEELBOAT

A large keelboat is moored to the inner side of the keep's east wall, floating in the boat basin. A rope ladder leads from the top of the wall to the deck of the boat, about six feet below. Hatchways lead into the boat's cabin from the bow and the stern.

This is the *Rivermaid*. The ship's water genasi captain, **Shoalar Quanderil** (see the appendix) and a halfling servant named Pike (a **thug**) occupy the boat's cabin. Two **bandits** serve as the rest of the crew. They remain in a cramped bunkroom below the deck on the bow, which is accessed by a hatch and a short ladder.

Shoalar is a high-ranking Crushing Wave cultist, and he is well informed about events in the towns throughout the area. As such, he is likely to recognize the characters from accounts of their deeds. It's up to you whether he plays dumb or attacks immediately. If he does play dumb, he invites the characters to drink and gamble, quietly sends one bandit to warn Jolliver Grimjaw, then signals Pike and the other bandit to launch a surprise attack. If the fight goes badly, Shoalar flees by leaping into the river.

TREASURE

A locked chest in the deckhouse holds 190 sp and 95 gp. Shoalar wears a leather belt pouch containing 10 gp, three small malachites worth 10 gp each, and a *potion of healing*. In addition, the cargo hold (below the stern) is currently full of stolen goods: casks of ale, salted fish, and twelve large bundles of cured pelts (beaver and sable) worth 40 gp each.

K13. DARK STREAM

The north side of the boat basin laps against a steep, rocky bluff. From the base of the bluff, a subterranean river empties into the boat basin. The river is close to thirty feet wide, and the cave ceiling is about six feet above the water level in the middle. An iron grate blocks the stream mouth.

The iron grate has a swinging gate section secured by a simple lock. Reash (area K9) and Jolliver Grimjaw (area K16) carry keys. The stream is 10 feet deep and leads to a hidden boat landing under the keep (area K22).

K14. NORTH TOWER

This tower stands on top of the bluff, overlooking the Dessarin River and the castle harbor below.

Filthy furs and discarded bones litter the interior of this tower. A rank animal stench hangs in the air.

Jolliver Grimjaw hopes to advance far within the Cult of the Crushing Wave. As such, he has plans to augment his own forces with monstrous mercenaries to make sure no one challenges his rule over Rivergard Keep. The three **bugbears** that are presently part of the garrison are bored and spoiling for a fight. They attack anyone they don't recognize, not caring if they injure or kill new recruits.

K15. CHAPEL

The keep's chapel contains plain wooden pews facing a large altar at the west end of the room. No idol hints at what deity is venerated here. A crude symbol is painted on the wall above the altar, resembling an X with a horizontal bar linking the bottom limbs. Several straw pallets lie near the chapel door.

The intendant of the chapel is Drosnin, a **Crushing Wave priest**. Two **Crushing Wave reavers** serve as her bodyguards and somewhat unwilling acolytes. (See the appendix for the cultists' statistics.) They are enthusiastic converts to the cult, but they would rather be out raiding or fighting instead of stuck in the chapel listening to Drosnin rant about the unstoppable power of the Crushing Wave. The symbol painted above the altar is the symbol of the Crushing Wave cult.

Drosnin assumes that any strangers who wander into her chapel have been assigned to her for indoctrination. Drosnin's favored technique is enthusiastic, relentless oratory. As long as the characters don't attack, she launches into an exhaustive sermon about the "truth of the deep waters" and the "great revelations" to come. The two reavers with her roll their eyes and look bored, but Drosnin keeps going and going, brooking no interruptions. Once Drosnin begins, she drones on for

two hours before dismissing the party. If they attempt to leave before she finishes her sermon, or if they interrupt her frequently, she orders the reavers to keep them from leaving. She attacks if the characters ignore her commands.

If a fight breaks out here, Drosnin defends the chapel to the death. Once she falls, any surviving reavers retreat to area K14 or K16 to raise the alarm.

KI6. GREAT HALL

The great hall becomes a banquet hall, a practice hall, or a throne room as the occasion requires.

This room is the great hall of the keep. It is two stories high, with stone stairs on both sides of the room leading up to a stone balcony at the west end of the chamber. Heavy double doors lead east to the castle yard, while two interior doors open to the west. Arrow slits look out to the north and the south.

At the west end of the room, below the balcony, a large wooden chair sits behind a wide table littered with papers and discarded plates. A second table, this one long and furnished with benches, runs down the middle of the hall. The walls are painted in green and blue, decorated with tattered banners showing nautical designs.

Jolliver Grimjaw conducts most of his business here. He is a **wereboar**, although he remains in his human form during any audience with strangers to Rivergard. Grimjaw usually remains in the hall until late in the evening, when he slips down to the riverside to hunt in boar form. He returns before dawn and sleeps in his quarters (area K21). In the Great Hall, he is attended by a **fathomer** named Urshnora and two **Crushing Wave reavers** (see the appendix for both). If a battle breaks out, Grimjaw prefers to fight in his hybrid form. If the battle goes poorly, he flees through the secret door (see “Secret Door” below).

Reports. Grimjaw has little patience for administration. Various reports from gangs of bandits and smugglers throughout the area are buried in the piles of paper on the table, along with routine notes about Rivergard’s supplies, boat sailings on the river, and logbooks and manifests taken from plundered ships. The bandits report exactly what loot they take, but location descriptions are imprecise: for example, “wagonload of flour, near B.,” or “40 silver pieces, traveler near W.” The abbreviations stand for towns in the area, Beliard and Womford.

One of these reports details caravan traffic in Red Larch. It makes note of the arrival of “a band of troublemakers” with the racial mix of the party.

Secret Door. A secret door behind Grimjaw’s seat can be found with a successful DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check. The door hides a spiral staircase that descends to area K22.

AUDIENCE WITH GRIMJAW

Jolliver Grimjaw is sullen, suspicious, and humorless. He asks very direct questions, such as “Who are you?” and “Why are you here?” If a character tries to flatter him or concoct any kind of fanciful story, Grimjaw tells the talkative character to shut up and points at someone else to answer.

After listening to the characters, Grimjaw decides among the following options:

- If the party seems unaware of the cult and annoys him, he has the characters thrown out of Rivergard.
- If the party seems unaware of the cult but offers a good reason to remain in Rivergard, Grimjaw permits the characters to stay only as long as needed, giving them bunks in area K8.
- If the party seems to know something but appears weak or dangerous, Grimjaw orders the cultists to attack.
- If the party seems to know something and appears to be important (or useful as recruits), Grimjaw allows them to stay, giving them bunks in area K8.

If the characters were escorted to Grimjaw’s hall from one of the gates, their escorts are also present for during the talk with Grimjaw.

DEVELOPMENT

If the characters leave Rivergard after killing Grimjaw or forcing him to flee, any remaining cultists abandon the keep over the next day or two.

Grimjaw carries a key to the iron grate in area K13.

KI7. SERVANTS’ QUARTERS

This plain dormitory features six bunk beds and a small wooden table and chairs, as well as two large laundry tubs and several baskets full of dirty clothes and linens.

This room houses the servants who work in the kitchens and tend to menial chores throughout the castle. Three human **commoners** (Anya, Berd, and Nayreen) currently work in here. They are natives of Womford who were kidnapped by the Crushing Wave cult and brought here to take care of cleaning, cooking, laundry, and waiting on the cult warriors. All three are anxious to escape and head home, but they don’t dare try. Grimjaw has already had two others flogged to death for attempting to flee.

The servants know about the secret door in area K16, but they don’t know where it leads.

KI8. KITCHENS

Two large hearths on the north wall of this room hold kettles full of simmering stew. Washbasins and worktables with old, battered crockery stand in the middle of the room. Sacks, casks, and barrels are piled along the southern wall, and cheeses and smoked fish hang from the ceiling.

Five human **commoners** labor here. Two (Lathna and Oric) are captives who don't want to be here, but the other three (Gorm, Herek, and Shadnil) are ne'er-dowells from Womford. These three aren't tough enough to be Crushing Wave warriors, so they've been pressed into service in the kitchens. If intruders enter in the kitchen, the would-be bandits try to slip away to warn the cultists.

TREASURE

The sacks contain flour, the dozen casks hold ale (worth 10 gp per cask), and the barrels hold salted meat.

K19. OLD LIBRARY

Old bookshelves line the walls of this room, but most are empty. One old shelf has been cleared and restocked with a selection of tomes. A single bunk sits under the narrow window at the far end of the room, near a small desk, a wooden chair, and a chest. The floor looks wet.

This room was once the library and parlor of the keep's lord, but Grimjaw has no particular interest in reading or entertaining. It now serves as the personal quarters of Urshnora, who is normally found in area K16. Urshnora is a **fathomer** (see the appendix). She hates Reash (area K9), who heartily reciprocates Urshnora's ill will.

Secret Door. One of the bookshelves hides a secret door. A successful DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals the door, which connects to area K21.

TREASURE

Urshnora keeps a small wooden chest by her bed. The chest contains 80 sp, 30 gp, a silk pouch that holds four excellent jaspers worth 70 gp each, a scroll of *haste*, and a scroll of *wall of water* (see the sidebar).

The books—a dozen in all—are worth 25 gp each. Most cover nautical topics and include charts, excerpts from ships' logs, and the like.

THE MISSING DELEGATION

In the full adventure of *Princes of the Apocalypse*, the members of the missing Mirabar delegation are scattered across different locations controlled by the cults of Elemental Evil, and rescuing them is the focus of multiple sections of the adventure. Unless you are planning to play the full adventure—or to create additional Elemental Evil scenarios of your own to continue this adventure—have the missing travelers found in the lord's chambers (area K21) of Rivergard Keep. Jolliver Grimjaw has incarcerated them there while he waits for word from higher-ranking members of the cult as to what to do with them, knowing that his treasure chamber is the most secure location in the keep.

The members of the delegation (as described in the faction information at the start of this section) are all weak with hunger but otherwise healthy. Returning them to civilization earns each character a 100 gp reward, in addition to the gratitude of the victims and the notice of the adventurers' grateful factions.

WALL OF WATER

3rd-level evocation

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 feet

Components: V, S, M (a drop of water)

Duration: Concentration, up to 10 minutes

You conjure up a wall of water on the ground at a point you can see within range. You can make the wall up to 30 feet long, 10 feet high, and 1 foot thick, or you can make a ringed wall up to 20 feet in diameter, 20 feet high, and 1 foot thick. The wall vanishes when the spell ends. The wall's space is difficult terrain.

Any ranged weapon attack that enters the wall's space has disadvantage on the attack roll, and fire damage is halved if the fire effect passes through the wall to reach its target. Spells that deal cold damage that pass through the wall cause the area of the wall they pass through to freeze solid (at least a 5-foot square section is frozen). Each 5-foot-square frozen section has AC 5 and 15 hit points. Reducing a frozen section to 0 hit points destroys it. When a section is destroyed, the wall's water doesn't fill it.

K20. KEEP GUARDROOM

Four bunk beds line the walls of this guardroom. To the south, an arrow slit looks out over the castle yard, and a door exits to the castle parapet. Another door exits to the north.

This guardroom serves as a barracks for six **Crushing Wave reavers** (see the appendix). At any given time, two are on duty in area K16, while the other four rest here. At night, at least one reaver remains awake at all times.

If the reavers in this room hear fighting in areas K19 or K21, they quickly move to investigate and deal with any threat.

K21. LORD'S CHAMBERS

A large semicircular room occupies the western half of this floor of the keep. Three narrow windows look out over the countryside outside the castle walls. The room's furnishings are very plain, including a hard-looking bunk, a small wooden table, and a couple of simple chairs. Several large chests occupy the room's southern corner.

Jolliver Grimjaw has no use for creature comforts, but he is very fond of his riches. The best pickings from his gangs' raids and robberies end up here, where he can see and touch them whenever he wants. Grimjaw is a **wereboar**, and he only sleeps a few hours each morning in this room.

If confronted here, Grimjaw fights furiously to defend his hoard, roaring in anger and calling for help. Any nearby cultists (see areas K19 and K20) answer his call. If the characters are discovered in this room when Grimjaw isn't here, they are immediately attacked, since the room is off limits to everyone except Grimjaw.

Secret Door. A secret door leading to the library (area K19) is hidden in the northeast corner of the room. A successful DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals the door.

TREASURE

Grimjaw's loot consists of 600 sp, 450 ep, and a pouch containing fifteen blue azurites (worth 10 gp each).

K22. SECRET LANDING

The secret stairway in area K16 descends 20 feet to this landing, which abuts an underground stream that flows east to area K13.

At the bottom of the stairs, you find a torchlit chamber where two boats bob in an underground stream. The stream flows toward daylight to the east and leads upstream into darkness toward the west.

Six **ghouls** lurk in the waters just beyond the boat landing. Spotting the ghouls in the inky water requires a successful DC 17 Wisdom (Perception) check.

All six ghouls spend their first action of any combat combining their efforts to overturn any boat and dump its passengers into the river. Doing so allows three of the ghouls to use their actions to attempt Strength checks, while three others use their actions to take the Help action. If any ghoul succeeds on a DC 20 Strength check, the boat capsizes. Some might continue to try to tip a boat later in the battle.

CONCLUSION

Only if you are planning to play the full version of *Princes of the Apocalypse*, the underground stream winds for more than two miles through lightless grottos, leading to an underground lake and the Temple of the Crushing Wave. See the full adventure for details.

REWARDS

Award standard XP for defeated foes. Each character participating in the “Rivergard Keep” scenario can earn a maximum of 3,800 XP (the amount that will take a 4th-level character to 5th level).

At the end of this scenario, each character also gains 10 downtime days and 1 renown point in his or her faction.

DEVELOPMENTS

With two of the four Haunted Keeps routed, the adventurers have struck the first blow against the cults of Elemental Evil in the Dessarin Valley. They have also come to the attention of the leaders of those cults, who have no intention of letting would-be heroes disrupt their plans for conquest and destruction. You can use the events of this adventure as a springboard to your own adventures or a lead-in to the exciting adventures of D&D Expeditions, or you can continue the storyline started in this adventure in the full adventure of *Princes*

of the Apocalypse. See “Additional Play” at the end of this adventure for more information.

In the full adventure of *Princes of the Apocalypse*, the characters scour the Dessarin Valley in search of the still-missing delegation. Tracking them through the last two Haunted Keeps of the Sember Hills, the characters face off against the forces of the earth cult and the fire cult that hold those keeps. As they take the fight to the cultists, the adventurers realize that the Haunted Keeps are merely outposts of the cult's power, which extends deep beneath the Dessarin Valley into ancient dwarven ruins and the dark magic that lurks there. Setting their sights on the elemental weapons wielded by the leaders of the four cults, the adventurers reveal the full scope of Elemental Evil's threat—and fight to prevent the destruction sought by the Princes of the Apocalypse.



ADDITIONAL PLAY

Once you complete this D&D Encounters edition of *Princes of the Apocalypse*, you have a number of options available to explore more of the *Elemental Evil* storyline through the D&D Adventurers League.

CONTINUE THE ADVENTURE

The full adventure of *Princes of the Apocalypse* expands on the setting and scenarios presented in this D&D Encounters adventure, and you can continue to play that adventure as an official part of the D&D Adventurers League. The D&D Encounters kit contains certificates for all the permanent magic items in the full version of *Princes of the Apocalypse* to support this continued play.

Keep in mind the following as you progress beyond this D&D Encounters edition of the adventure:

- Players still track all rewards earned session to session on their logsheets.
- You should apply all other D&D Adventurers League rules as presented in this document.
- Each character earns 10 downtime days at the end of each episode.

- Each character earns 1 faction renown point in his or her faction at the end of each episode.

PLAY D&D EXPEDITIONS

D&D Expeditions adventures are available to select stores and at public play events outside of stores, such as conventions. Most of these adventures are set in the Moonsea region of the Forgotten Realms. Each adventure takes approximately three to four hours to complete, and when played together, can take characters all the way to 20th level. The first few adventures will be available starting in April 2015, and new adventures will be released frequently.

MORE INFORMATION

If you'd like more information on the D&D Adventurers League and want to join in the discussion, check out the following links:

- [Official Wizards D&D Adventurers League Announcements](#)
- [D&D Adventurers League Organizers Page](#)
- [D&D Adventurers League Official Forums](#)
- [D&D Adventurers League Twitter](#)
- [D&D Adventurers League Facebook Group](#)
- [D&D Adventurers League G+ Community](#)

APPENDIX: CULTISTS AND MAGIC



HIS SECTION PRESENTS A SELECTION OF the new villains and magic serving the cults of Elemental Evil. The full adventure of *Princes of the Apocalypse* features many more cultists and elemental monsters—including the Princes of Elemental Evil, beings of overwhelming power and malice.

Some of the cultists featured in this appendix have access to new magic items and spells (marked with an asterisk), which are presented alongside their stat blocks.

BLACK EARTH CULTISTS

The followers of evil elemental earth call themselves the Cult of the Black Earth, and dream of the day when earthquakes reduce the world of mortals to rubble. They are single-minded and stubborn, working tirelessly to undermine their enemies.

BLACK EARTH PRIEST

Medium humanoid (human), neutral evil

Armor Class 17 (splint)

Hit Points 45 (7d8 + 14)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)

Skills Intimidation +5, Religion +3, Persuasion +5

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Common, Terran

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Spellcasting. The priest is a 5th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). It knows the following sorcerer spells (an asterisked spell appears in this appendix):

Cantrips (at will): *acid splash*, *blade ward*, *light*, *mending*, *mold earth**

1st level (4 slots): *earth tremor**, *expeditious retreat*, *shield*

2nd level (3 slots): *shatter*, *spider climb*

3rd level (2 slots): *slow*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The priest makes two melee attacks.

Glaive. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target.
Hit: 7 (1d10 + 2) slashing damage.

REACTIONS

Unyielding. When the priest is subjected to an effect that would move it, knock it prone, or both, it can use its reaction to be neither moved nor knocked prone.

The priests of the Black Earth have developed a twisted dogma to explain how the evil of elemental earth is destined to remake the world and rule over all.

EARTH TREMOR

1st-level evocation

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Self (10-foot radius)

Components: V, S

Duration: Instantaneous

You cause a tremor in the ground in a 10-foot radius. Each creature other than you in that area must make a Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, a creature takes 1d6 bludgeoning damage and is knocked prone. If the ground in that area is loose earth or stone, it becomes difficult terrain until cleared.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 2nd level or higher, the damage increases by 1d6 for each slot level above 1st.

MOLD EARTH

Transmutation cantrip

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 30 feet

Components: S

Duration: Instantaneous or 1 hour (see below)

You choose a portion of dirt or stone that you can see within range and that fits within a 5-foot cube. You manipulate it in one of the following ways:

- If you target an area of loose earth, you can instantaneously excavate it, move it along the ground, and deposit it up to 5 feet away. This movement doesn't have enough force to cause damage.
- You cause shapes, colors, or both to appear on the dirt or stone, spelling out words, creating images, or shaping patterns. The changes last for 1 hour.
- If the dirt or stone you target is on the ground, you cause it to become difficult terrain. Alternatively, you can cause the ground to become normal terrain if it is already difficult terrain. This change lasts for 1 hour.

If you cast this spell multiple times, you can have no more than two of its non-instantaneous effects active at a time, and you can dismiss such an effect as an action.

HOWLING HATRED CULTISTS

Most air cultists are idealists lured to the cult by lofty notions such as detachment from material possessions, bodily addictions, and physical desires. Cultists that survive their initiation usually gain all the things the cult promised—at the cost of their free will.

FEATHERGALE KNIGHT

Medium humanoid (human), lawful evil

Armor Class 16 (scale)
Hit Points 33 (6d8 + 6)
Speed 30 ft.

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

Skills Animal Handling +2, History +2

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Auran, Common

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Spellcasting. The knight is a 1st-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks). It knows the following sorcerer spells (an asterisked spell appears in this appendix):

Cantrips (at will): *gust*,* *light*, *message*, *ray of frost*
1st level (2 slots): *expeditious retreat*, *feather fall*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The knight makes two melee attacks.

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) slashing damage, or 7 (1d10 + 2) slashing damage if used with two hands.

Spear. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage, or 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack.

The Feathergale Knights are ambitious, wealthy folk from cities such as Waterdeep seduced by the air cult's promises of power.

The knights have access to *wingwear*, and are often wearing it when encountered.

WINGWEAR

Wondrous item, uncommon (requires attunement)

This snug uniform has symbols of air stitched into it and leathery flaps that stretch along the arms, waist, and legs to create wings for gliding. A suit of *wingwear* has 3 charges. While you wear the suit, you can use a bonus action and expend 1 charge to gain a flying speed of 30 feet until you land. At the end of each of your turns, your altitude drops by 5 feet. Your altitude drops instantly to 0 feet at the end of your turn if you didn't fly at least 30 feet horizontally on that turn. When your altitude drops to 0 feet, you land (or fall), and you must expend another charge to use the suit again.

The suit regains all of its expended charges after spending at least 1 hour in an elemental air node (see the full adventure of *Princes of the Apocalypse*).

AIR CULTIST
USING WINGWEAR



HOWLING HATRED INITIATE

Medium humanoid (human), neutral evil

Armor Class 13 (leather)

Hit Points 9 (2d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	9 (–1)	11 (+0)

Skills Deception +2, Religion +2, Stealth +4

Senses passive Perception 9

Languages Common

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Guiding Wind (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). As a bonus action, the initiate gains advantage on the next ranged attack roll it makes before the end of its next turn.

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

ACTIONS

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

Howling Hatred initiates are attracted by the cult's philosophy of non-attachment and the rejection of material things, unaware of the cult's true nature.

HURRICANE

Medium humanoid (human), lawful evil

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 33 (6d8 + 6)

Speed 45 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)

Skills Acrobatics +5

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages Auran, Common

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Spellcasting. The hurricane is a 3rd-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 11, +3 to hit with spell attacks). It knows the following sorcerer spells (an asterisked spell appears in this appendix):

Cantrips (at will): *blade ward*, *gust*,* *light*, *prestidigitation*

1st level (4 slots): *feather fall*, *jump*, *thunderwave*

2nd level (2 slots): *gust of wind*

Unarmored Defense. While the hurricane is wearing no armor and wielding no shield, its AC includes its Wisdom modifier.

Unarmored Movement. While the hurricane is wearing no armor and wielding no shield, its walking speed increases by 15 feet (included in its speed).

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The hurricane makes two melee attacks.

Unarmed Strike. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

GUST

Transmutation cantrip

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 30 feet

Components: V, S

Duration: Instantaneous

You seize the air and compel it to create one of the following effects at a point you can see within range:

- One Medium or smaller creature that you choose must succeed on a Strength saving throw or be pushed up to 5 feet away from you.
- You create a small blast of air capable of moving one object that is neither held nor carried and that weighs no more than 5 pounds. The object is pushed up to 10 feet away from you. It isn't pushed with enough force to cause damage.
- You create a harmless sensory affect using air, such as causing leaves to rustle, wind to slam shutters shut, or your clothing to ripple in a breeze.

REACTIONS

Deflect Missiles. When the hurricane is hit by a ranged weapon attack, it reduces the damage from the attack by 1d10 + 9. If the damage is reduced to 0, the hurricane can catch the missile if it is small enough to hold in one hand and the hurricane has at least one hand free.

Skilled Howling Hatred initiates learn to imitate the cycling patterns of the fiercest storms. Becoming hurricanes, they dedicate their bodies and minds to the world's destruction.

SKYWEAVER

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic evil

Armor Class 12 (15 with *mage armor*)

Hit Points 44 (8d8 + 8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (–1)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)

Skills Deception +5, Persuasion +5

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Auran, Common

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Spellcasting. The skyweaver is an 6th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). It knows the following sorcerer spells:

Cantrips (at will): *blade ward*, *light*, *message*, *ray of frost*, *shocking grasp*

1st level (4 slots): *feather fall*, *mage armor*, *witch bolt*

2nd level (3 slots): *gust of wind*, *invisibility*

3rd level (3 slots): *fly*, *lightning bolt*

ACTIONS

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d4 + 1) piercing damage.

Skyweavers brim with rage and desire, which makes them perfect vessels for the wildly destructive magic of the Cult of the Howling Hatred.

THURL MEROSSKA

Medium humanoid (human), lawful evil

Armor Class 16 (breastplate)

Hit Points 71 (11d8 + 21)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	15 (+2)

Skills Animal Handling +2, Athletics +5, Deception +4, Persuasion +4

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Auran, Common

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Spellcasting. Thurl is a 5th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks). Thurl knows the following sorcerer spells (an asterisked spell appears in this appendix):

Cantrips (at will): *friends, gust,* light, message, ray of frost*

1st level (4 slots): *expeditious retreat, feather fall, jump*

2nd level (3 slots): *levitate, misty step*

3rd level (2 slots): *haste*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Thurl makes two melee attacks.

Greatsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) slashing damage.

Lance. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d12 + 3) piercing damage.

REACTIONS

Parry. Thurl adds 2 to his AC against one melee attack that would hit him. To do so, Thurl must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

Thurl Merosska is the leader of the Feathergale Knights. Once a griffon rider of Waterdeep, Thurl retired after a storm nearly claimed his life. Obsessed with his near-death experience, Thurl learned of Elemental Evil and promised to serve it in exchange for power.

CRUSHING WAVE CULTISTS

The Cult of the Crushing Wave venerates the element of water as a force of destruction and evil, seeing the power of Elemental Evil as a tool by which they can sweep away the existing order of things and make themselves rulers over all.

CRUSHING WAVE PRIEST

Medium humanoid (human), neutral evil

Armor Class 13 (chain shirt)

Hit Points 52 (8d8 + 16)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	16 (+3)

Skills Deception +5, Religion +2, Stealth +2

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Aquan, Common

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Spellcasting. The priest is a 5th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). It knows the following sorcerer spells (an asterisked spell appears in this appendix):

Cantrips (at will): *chill touch, mage hand, minor illusion, prestidigitation, ray of frost*

1st level (4 slots): *expeditious retreat, ice knife,* magic missile, shield*

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

3rd level (2 slots): *sleet storm*

ACTIONS

Quarterstaff. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

Crushing Wave priests are the fanatical core of the cult.

ICE KNIFE

1st-level conjuration

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 feet

Components: S, M (a drop of water or piece of ice)

Duration: Instantaneous

You create a shard of ice and fling it at one creature within range. Make a ranged spell attack against the target. On a hit, the target takes 1d10 piercing damage. Hit or miss, the shard then explodes. The target and each creature within 5 feet of the point where the ice exploded must succeed on a Dexterity saving throw or take 2d6 cold damage.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 2nd level or higher, the cold damage increases by 1d6 for each slot level above 1st.

CRUSHING WAVE REAVER

Medium humanoid (human), neutral evil

Armor Class 14 (shield)

Hit Points 22 (4d8 + 4)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	8 (-1)

Skills Athletics +4, Stealth +4

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Common

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

ACTIONS

Sharktoothed Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) slashing damage, or 7 (1d10 + 2) slashing damage if used with two hands. Against a target is wearing no armor, the reaver deals an extra die of damage with this sword.

Javelin. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

The foot soldiers of the Crushing Wave cult are vicious sea reavers. Many of them were pirates before they fell in with the cult, and they remain eager for blood and plunder.

FATHOMER

Medium humanoid (human), neutral evil

Armor Class 10 (13 with *mage armor*)

Hit Points 52 (8d8 + 16)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Skills Arcana +2, Perception +4, Stealth +4

Senses passive Perception 14

Languages Aquan, Common

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Shapechanger (2/Day). The fathomer can use its action to polymorph into a Medium serpent composed of water, or back into its true form. Anything the fathomer is wearing or carrying is subsumed into the serpent form during the change, inaccessible until the fathomer returns to its true form. The fathomer reverts to its true form after 4 hours, unless it can expend another use of this trait. If the fathomer is knocked unconscious or dies, it also reverts to its true form.

While in serpent form, the fathomer gains a swimming speed of 40 feet, the ability to breathe underwater, immunity to poison damage, as well as resistance to fire damage and bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons. It also has immunity to the following conditions: exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, poisoned, restrained, prone, unconscious. The serpent form can enter a hostile creature's space and stop there. In addition, if water can pass through a space, the serpent can do so without squeezing.

Olhydra's Armor (Human Form Only). The fathomer can cast *mage armor* at will, without expending material components.

Spellcasting (Human Form Only). The fathomer is a 5th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks). It has two 3rd-level spell slots, which it regains after finishing a short or long rest, and knows the following warlock spells:

Cantrips (at will): *chill touch*, *eldritch blast*, *mage hand*

1st level: *armor of Agathys*, *expeditious retreat*, *hex*

2nd level: *invisibility*

3rd level: *vampiric touch*

ACTIONS

Constrict (Serpent Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage. If the target is Medium or smaller, it is grappled (escape DC 12). Until the grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the fathomer can't constrict another target.

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

Fathomers are cultists who have the ability to transform their bodies into water, taking serpent-like shapes.

SHOALAR QUANDERIL

Medium humanoid (water genasi), lawful evil

Armor Class 10 (13 with *mage armor*)

Hit Points 60 (8d8 + 24)

Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	17 (+3)

Skills Arcana +4, Deception +5, Insight +2, Persuasion +5

Damage Resistances acid

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Aquan, Common

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Amphibious. Shoalar can breathe air and water.

Innate Spellcasting. Shoalar's innate spellcasting ability is Constitution (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). He can innately cast the following spells (an asterisked spell appears in this appendix):

At will: *shape water**

1/day: *create or destroy water*

GENASI

Genasi are individuals with ties to both the material world and the elemental realms, yet belonging to neither. Some genasi are born of mortal-genie unions, others have two genasi as parents, and a rare few have a genie further up their family tree, manifesting an elemental heritage that's lain dormant for generations.

Occasionally, genasi result from exposure to a surge of elemental power, through phenomena such as an eruption from the Inner Planes or a planar convergence. Elemental energy saturates any creatures in the area and might alter their nature enough that their offspring with other mortals are born as genasi.

SHAPE WATER

Transmutation cantrip

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 30 feet

Components: S

Duration: Instantaneous or 1 hour (see below)

You choose an area of water that you can see within range and that fits within a 5-foot cube. You manipulate it in one of the following ways:

- You instantaneously move or otherwise change the flow of the water as you direct, up to 5 feet in any direction. This movement doesn't have enough force to cause damage.
- You cause the water to form into simple shapes and animate at your direction. This change lasts for 1 hour.
- You change the water's color or opacity. The water must be changed in the same way throughout. This change lasts for 1 hour.
- You freeze the water, provided that there are no creatures in it. The water unfreezes in 1 hour.

If you cast this spell multiple times, you can have no more than two of its non-instantaneous effects active at a time, and you can dismiss such an effect as an action.

TIDAL WAVE

3rd-level conjuration

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 120 feet

Components: V, S, M (a drop of water)

Duration: Instantaneous

You conjure up a wave of water that crashes down on an area within range. The area can be up to 30 feet long, up to 10 feet wide, and up to 10 feet tall. Each creature in that area must make a Dexterity saving throw. On a failure, a creature takes 4d8 bludgeoning damage and is knocked prone. On a success, a creature takes half as much damage and isn't knocked prone. The water then spreads out across the ground in all directions, extinguishing unprotected flames in its area and within 30 feet of it.

Spellcasting. Shoalar is a 5th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). He knows the following sorcerer spells:

Cantrips (at will): *acid splash*, *chill touch*, *friends*, *prestidigitation*, *ray of frost*

1st level (4 slots): *disguise self*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*

2nd level (3 slots): *hold person*, *misty step*

3rd level (2 slots): *tidal wave**

ACTIONS

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft. or ranged 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d4 + 1) piercing damage.

A plump water genasi armed with a jovial manner and biting sense of humor, Shoalar Quanderil is the captain of a pirate ship that harries the Sword Coast, and a high-ranking Crushing Wave cultist.

OTHER VILLAINS

OREIOTH

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic evil

Armor Class 11 (14 with *mage armor*)

Hit Points 39 (6d8 + 12)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (–1)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	9 (–1)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws Wis +1

Skills Arcana +5, Investigation +5, Medicine +1

Senses passive Perception 9

Languages Abyssal, Common

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Grim Harvest. Once per turn when Oreioth kills one or more creatures with a spell of 1st level or higher, he regains hit points equal to twice the spell's level.

Spellcasting. Oreioth is a 6th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). He has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *chill touch*, *minor illusion*, *prestidigitation*, *shocking grasp*

1st level (4 slots): *false life*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *ray of sickness*

2nd level (3 slots): *crown of madness*, *misty step*

3rd level (3 slots): *animate dead*, *vampiric touch*

Swift Animation (Recharges after a Long Rest). When a living Medium or Small humanoid within 30 feet of Oreioth dies, he can use an action on his next turn to cast *animate dead* on that humanoid's corpse, instead of using the spell's normal casting time.

ACTIONS

Dagger. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d4 + 1) piercing damage.

A lean, black-bearded young noble from Baldur's Gate, Oreioth is more at home among the dead than the living. He styles himself the Lord of Lance Rock, surrounding himself with zombies and skeletons compelled to heed his every whim.