

TYRANNY of DRAGONS™



THE RISE OF TIAMAT™

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®

Avert the cataclysmic return of Tiamat in this adventure
for the world's greatest roleplaying game

THE RISE OF TIAMAT™

BY STEVE WINTER AND ALEXANDER WINTER



TYRANNY of DRAGONS™



CREDITS

KOBOLD PRESS

Designers: Steve Winter, Alexander Winter
Developer and Producer: Wolfgang Baur
Editor: Scott Fitzgerald Gray
Interior Illustrators: John-Paul Balmet, Nicole Cardiff,
Guido Kuip, Marcel Mercado, Bryan Syme
Cartographer: Jared Blando
Art Director: Marc Radle

WIZARDS OF THE COAST

D&D Lead Designers: Mike Mearls, Jeremy Crawford
Producer: Greg Bilslund
Adventure Contributors: Mike Mearls, Christopher Perkins,
Matt Sernett, Chris Sims, Rodney Thompson,
Jeremy Crawford
Art Directors: Kate Irwin, Shauna Narciso
Cover Illustrator: Michael Komarck
Graphic Designers: Bree Heiss, Emi Tanji
Project Management: Neil Shinkle, John Hay
Production Services: Cynda Callaway, Jefferson Dunlap,
David Gershman, Anita Williams
Brand and Marketing: Nathan Stewart, Liz Schuh,
Chris Lindsay, Shelly Mazzanoble, Hilary Ross,
Laura Tommervik, Kim Lundstrom, Trevor Kidd

Playtesters: Melissa Bassett, André Bégin, Mik Calow,
Mélanie Côté, Manon Crevier, Ben Danderson, Dave
Eadie, Frank Foulis, Rodrigo Gorgulho, Pete Griffith,
Liam Gulliver, Jon Harvill, Joseph Kauffmann, Yan
Lacharité, Renata Landim, Rodrigo Landim, Éric Leroux,
Carlos Eduardo Lopes, Julia Lopes, David Muller, Claudio
Pozas, Paula Pozas, Count Response, Sara Servin, Robin
Stacey, Jaime Thayer, Keoki Young

Disclaimer: Tiamat does not apologize for TPKs.



Forgotten Realms, the dragon ampersand, Tyranny of Dragons, Hoard of the Dragon Queen, The Rise of Tiamat, Player's Handbook, Monster Manual, Dungeon Master's Guide, all other Wizards of the Coast product names, and their respective logos are trademarks of Wizards of the Coast in the USA and other countries. All characters and their distinctive likenesses are property of Wizards of the Coast. This material is protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America. Any reproduction or unauthorized use of the material or artwork contained herein is prohibited without the express written permission of Wizards of the Coast.

The Kobold Press logo is a trademark of Open Design and is used by permission.

Printed in the USA. ©2014 Wizards of the Coast LLC, PO Box 707, Renton, WA 98057-0707, USA. Manufactured by Hasbro SA, Rue Emile-Boéchat 31, 2800 Delémont, CH. Represented by Hasbro Europe, 4 The Square, Stockley Park, Uxbridge, Middlesex, UB11 1ET, UK.

FOREWORD

With this adventure, you are ready to begin the final assault against Tiamat, wrapping up the first great campaign for the fifth edition of *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS*. Whether or not you played through the first installment of this series—*Hoard of the Dragon Queen*—you need only the basic rules and the *Tyranny of Dragons* online appendix to play through this adventure.

This campaign takes the game to ever-greater heights of power, both for the heroes and for the foes they face. The challenges of this adventure are greater than anything the characters have faced before—and of course the thrill of presenting those bigger challenges in an epic light is more satisfying for the Dungeon Master as well. Go big in these episodes!

The adventurers might be blasted and destroyed by dragon fire, ensnared by sorcery, or cut down by vengeful cultists. But the options and allies available to the heroes as they fight against the Cult of the Dragon are equally great.

Defeating Tiamat won't be easy, but I am certain you and your players will make it both exciting and memorable. Good luck, and good gaming!

Wolfgang Baur
Founder, Kobold Press
July 2014

ON THE COVER

No longer imprisoned in the Nine Hells, Tiamat makes her triumphant ascent and claims the Well of Dragons as her lair. Her arrival, as illustrated by Michael Komarck, portends the dawn of a grim new age.

620A9607000001 EN
ISBN: 978-0-7869-6565-6
First Printing October 2014
9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2



DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, D&D, Wizards of the Coast,

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	4	Episode 7: Xonthal's Tower	62
Background	4	The Maze	63
Overview	5	<i>Map: Xonthal's Tower</i>	65
Outline of Episodes	5	The Tower	69
Adventure Hooks.....	6	Dungeon.....	71
Additional Encounters	6	Exiting Xonthal's Tower	74
Running the Adventure.....	7	Conclusion	74
Groups.....	8	Episode 8: Mission to Thay	75
Villains.....	8	The Enemy of My Enemy.....	75
Allies	11	Conclusion	77
Episode 1: Council of Waterdeep	18	Episode 9: Tiamat's Return	78
Starting the Adventure.....	18	The Well of Dragons	79
Back in Waterdeep.....	19	<i>Map: The Well of Dragons</i>	80
Gathering Allies.....	19	<i>Map: Tiamat's Temple</i>	84
Sessions of the Council	19	Tiamat's Temple.....	85
Scoring the Sessions	23	Enemies and Allies	86
Episode 2: The Sea of Moving Ice	24	Victory or Defeat	88
The Sea of Moving Ice.....	25	Appendix A: Monsters	89
Oyaviggaton	27	Appendix B: Magic Items	93
Ice Caves	29	Appendix C: Council Scorecard.....	94
<i>Map: Arauthator's Lair</i>	31		
Arauthator's Lair	36		
Developments	37		
Leaving Oyaviggaton	37		
Arauthator's Treasure.....	37		
Conclusion.....	37		
Episodes 3 and 4: Death to			
the Wyrmspeakers	38		
Varram the White.....	38		
Tomb of Diderius	40		
<i>Map: Tomb of Diderius</i>	40		
Ss'tck'al	45		
Conclusion	47		
Neronvain.....	48		
The Misty Forest.....	48		
Neronvain's Stronghold.....	50		
<i>Map: Neronvain's Stronghold</i>	51		
Conclusion	53		
Episode 5: The Cult Strikes Back	54		
First Attack	54		
Second Attack.....	55		
Third Attack.....	56		
Sequence of Events	57		
Episode 6: Metallic Dragons, Arise	58		
Unlikely Ambassadors	58		
Council of Dragons	59		
Conclusion	61		



TYRANNY OF DRAGONS

T*yranny of Dragons: The Rise of Tiamat* is a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS adventure for characters beginning at 8th level, and the continuation of the first volume, *Hoard of the Dragon Queen*. By the time the adventure runs its course, the characters should reach 15th level (or be close to it).

Four characters is the ideal party size. If your group is smaller than that, consider removing a few opponents from combat encounters. If the group is bigger, consider adding opponents to the fights. Consider altering encounters for smaller groups to avoid overly tough battles.

INTRODUCTION

Tyranny of Dragons is set in the Sword Coast region of the Forgotten Realms—a thin strip of civilization stretching down Faerûn's western shore. The widely spaced cities of the Sword Coast are arranged on a single great road like beads on a string. The road goes by several names as it winds over two thousand miles from Luskan in the north to Calimport in the south, passing through Neverwinter, Waterdeep, Baldur's Gate, and other great ports along the way. The first volume of *Tyranny of Dragons* took place largely on the stretch between Baldur's Gate and Neverwinter. This second volume takes the adventurers farther afield across the Sword Coast, preparing them for the final showdown against the servants of Tiamat.

Adventure Supplements. You can play this adventure with just the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS basic rules and the *Tyranny of Dragons* online supplement, which contains all the monsters and magic items not described in this book. Both of these supplements are available as free downloads on DungeonsandDragons.com.

Character Advancement. This adventure uses the milestone experience rule. Under this rule, completing certain events in the campaign causes the characters to level up. See "Advancement," below.

BACKGROUND

The Cult of the Dragon has been active in Faerûn for centuries. For most of that time, its focus has been on undead dragons, but that's changed. Now the cult seeks to act more directly and more boldly—by summoning Tiamat out of the Nine Hells and bringing her bodily into the world. So far, cultists and their leaders have gathered great stores of treasure, forged an alliance with Thay to assist with learning and performing the required summoning ritual, gathered up the five dragon masks central to the ritual (see "Dragon Masks," below), and persuaded or cajoled many of the oldest and strongest evil dragons of Faerûn into supporting them.

However, not everything has gone according to the cult's plans. The discovery of an alliance between the Cult of the Dragon and the Red Wizards of Thay has shaken the various factions aligned against both organizations. The Harpers view any such alliance as an abomination, as does the Order of the Gauntlet. The

Lords' Alliance recognizes the obvious threat to the lands and rulers of the Sword Coast and the North, while the Emerald Enclave suspects that anything Thay promotes is likely against the natural order. Even the Zhentarim fear the union of two such powerful forces.

News of the alliance has thus brought the various factions of the Sword Coast together. The leaders of those factions understand that they must gather and rally forces to fight the cult, even as the situation in Faerûn grows more dire. Abductions and raids undertaken by the Cult of the Dragon increase daily, and refugees are fleeing from burned-out regions under cult attack to major cities and fortresses. Villagers have abandoned their crops and herds, fleeing the constant predation of dragons.

In many cities, all-out panic has created a growing movement in favor of agreeing to the cult's demands in the hope of winning concessions in return. It is difficult to muster troops when people are afraid they will be burned by dragonfire. This is a time for heroes to inspire the people of the Sword Coast with a great victory or two. Fortunately, the Forgotten Realms has just such a group of heroes.

DRAGON MASKS

The new leader of the cult is a Calishite named Severin Silrajin, who believes that real draconic knowledge and power belongs to living dragons, not undead ones. Severin's ambition amused Tiamat, so she revealed the existence of five dragon masks to him—one for each chromatic dragon color. Individually, these ancient masks allow wearers to communicate with dragons. More importantly, a character who is erudite in draconic lore becomes a wyrmspeaker while wearing the mask, which allows the wearer to think like a dragon, gain favor among dragons, and subtly influence their behavior. When all five are brought together, they magically merge into a single Mask of the Dragon Queen. With the assembled mask, the cult can release Tiamat from her prison in the Nine Hells.

After Severin (subtly guided by Tiamat) discovered that secret, he bent all the cult's resources to finding the long-lost dragon masks in their secret hiding places. When he recovered the red mask, Severin became the first of the wyrmspeakers, but others soon followed.

SECRETS

In the first volume of *Tyranny of Dragons*, the Cult of the Dragon gathered up a hoard for Tiamat—then lost a portion of that hoard when Skyreach Castle fell. All the while, the cult kept secret its goal of bringing back Tiamat and its alliance with an exiled group of Red Wizards of Thay. The cult now needs only to gather enough sacrifices to power the ritual by which the dragon masks will open a portal to the Nine Hells, allowing Tiamat to travel to the Material Plane.

These plans continue to move ahead as the Thayan exile Rath Modar and his Red Wizards bring expertise in summoning magic to the cult, preparing a tremendous blood sacrifice to empower the ritual.

NEW FACES

This adventure makes use of certain NPCs from *Hoard of the Dragon Queen*, and makes the assumption that those NPCs escaped any conflict with the adventurers. In the event that important nonplayer characters such as Wyrmspeaker Rezmir or the Red Wizard Rath Modar were killed or captured, simply replace them with new nonplayer characters here—or assume that they were resurrected between the previous adventure and this one. Characters returning from the dead show the level of magical power the cult and its Red Wizard allies wield—and their dedication to seeing Severin's plans brought to fruition.

The alliance between wizards and cultists is fragile, however, since neither side entirely trusts the promises of the other.

ALLIED FORCES

This second volume of *Tyranny of Dragons* assumes that the factions of good-aligned adventurers and the people of the Sword Coast are aware of the threat posed by the cult. What's unclear is how to deal with it. Depending on the nature of the characters and their relationships with the factions, different groups might recommend different courses of action to the heroes. It falls to the players to figure out how they want to proceed.

OVERVIEW

At the start this adventure, representatives of groups and factions from across the Sword Coast meet to discuss their concern about the Cult of the Dragon, and to draw up plans for opposing the cult. The adventurers are summoned to Waterdeep for a summit that will come to be known as the Council of Waterdeep (see episode 1 for details).

Four council sessions take place over the course of the adventure, naturally dividing events into four stages. Between the council gatherings, the characters undertake missions to thwart the cult's plans. Some of these missions will be proposed by NPCs (nonplayer characters) during council sessions. Others can be proposed by the characters. The adventurers understand that thousands of lives depend on their actions. The characters are among the greatest heroes of the Sword Coast, and the Council of Waterdeep looks to them for wise guidance and swift action.

Many of the power groups represented on the council don't trust each other, and some even have conflicting goals. Over the course of the council's four meetings, the players and characters need to forge this disparate, feuding group into a coordinated force. Only with all factions working together and contributing to the overall effort can enough power be brought to bear against the cult to prevent Tiamat's return. The more successful the characters are in their actions against the cult, the more esteem and influence they gain with the council.

Events are arranged in this book in a logical sequence for staging *The Rise of Tiamat*, and the episodes are numbered for ease of reference. You can even add more episodes of your own devising, or which expand on ideas the players generate.

OUTLINE OF EPISODES

The events of *Hoard of the Dragon Queen* lead directly into *The Rise of Tiamat*. The shape of this adventure is defined by the meetings of the Council of Waterdeep, which divide the adventure into four stages.

STAGE 1

First Council of Waterdeep. The characters are invited by NPCs they know and trust to the first session of the Council of Waterdeep. (If you played *Hoard of the Dragon Queen*, Leosin Erlanthar or Ontharr Frume are likely candidates.)

Varram the White. The adventurers learn the location of one of the cult's highest-ranking leaders—Wyrmspeaker Varram. After discovering that Varram is held captive by yuan-ti in the Serpent Hills, the characters can fight the yuan-ti and negotiate to take custody of the cultist.

The Sea of Moving Ice. Maccath the Crimson, a tiefling sorcerer of the Arcane Brotherhood, is an acknowledged expert on the *Draakhorn*—an ancient relic being used by the cult to summon dragons to their cause. She disappeared three years ago in the Sea of Moving Ice, where she is presently a prisoner of the white dragon Arauthator. The characters must make their way to Arauthator's iceberg lair and convince Maccath to join them. By driving away the dragon and carrying off valuable dragon lore, they deal a blow to the cult and might gain the Arcane Brotherhood as allies in the process.

The Cult Strikes Back (Part 1). The cult's leaders aren't oblivious to the damage being caused by the heroes. Assassins try to stop the characters' interference, but the cultists misjudge the strength needed to complete the job.

STAGE 2

Second Council of Waterdeep. The characters regroup with the leaders of the Sword Coast's factions at the Council of Waterdeep, assessing their victories over the cult and planning the factions' next moves.

Neronvain. The Emerald Enclave requests that the adventurers help them investigate the aftermath of cult raids led by a green dragon in the Misty Forest—a dragon possibly controlled by one of the cult's wyrmspeakers. That investigation leads to a showdown against the green dragon Chuth and Wyrmspeaker Neronvain, who has a surprising connection to the council.

Metallic Dragons, Arise. The metallic dragons of the Sword Coast send word to the Council of Waterdeep that they wish to participate in the coming struggle. The adventurers are chosen to attend a council of dragons in the Sunset Mountains, pleading the humanoid factions' case to some of the oldest and most powerful creatures in Faerûn.

The Cult Strikes Back (Part 2). After a first attempt to assassinate the heroes failed, the Cult of the Dragon tries again. With a better idea of what they're up against, they have a better chance to succeed.

STAGE 3

Third Council of Waterdeep. At the third meeting of the Council of Waterdeep, the characters take lead roles in shaping the fight against the cult.

Xonthal's Tower. The Cult of the Dragon is not without its own internal strife, as the adventurers discover when a cultist contacts them with the offer to turn over one of the dragon masks essential to Severin's plans. The characters must infiltrate a cult stronghold and claim the mask, then save a nearby village from the blue dragon that means to take the relic back.

Mission to Thay. The ritual that will bring Tiamat to Faerûn is too complex for the cult's spellcasters to perform without their Red Wizard allies—all Thayan exiles. The adventurers travel to Thay to forge an alliance with the Red Wizards, whose lich lord Szass Tam hungers for revenge against the exiles. The Red Wizards of Thay are evil to the core, though, and the delegates must tread carefully as they present their case.

The Cult Strikes Back (Part 3). The Cult of the Dragon now knows the adventurers' strengths and methods. If the characters don't take precautions to safeguard themselves, the cult stands a good chance of killing them all with a third attack.

STAGE 4

Fourth Council of Waterdeep. At the final meeting of the council, the characters must work to unite the factions of the Sword Coast for the final battle against the Cult of the Dragon. Severin is ready to fulfill his plans, and the combined forces of the Sword Coast must strike now if the cult is to be stopped.

Tiamat's Return. At the Well of Dragons, a battle unfolds that will decide the fate of Faerûn. The factions of the Sword Coast fight alongside new and unexpected allies, facing off against the assembled might of the dragon cultists, flights of chromatic dragons, other monsters, and mercenaries. The adventurers choose their own role during the battle, and might rescue sacrificial prisoners, shut down the *Draakhorn*, or take the lead in disrupting the magical ritual that will allow Tiamat to enter the world.

ADVANCEMENT

Tyranny of Dragons: The Rise of Tiamat was designed around the milestone system of advancement. At the start of the adventure, the characters should be 7th or 8th level. Instead of tracking specific experience awards, characters can level up at the completion of significant episodes of the adventure. The characters level up after every episode listed below:

- Episode 3: Death to the Wyrmspeakers (Varram)
- Episode 2: The Sea of Moving Ice
- Episode 5: The Cult Strikes Back (First Attack)
- Episode 4: Death to the Wyrmspeakers (Neronvain)
- Episode 5: The Cult Strikes Back (Second Attack)
- Episode 7: Xonthal's Tower
- Episode 8: Mission to Thay (level gain at DM's option)
- Episode 5: The Cult Strikes Back (Third Attack)

Leveling up after seven milestones should bring the characters to 14th or 15th level in time for the final battle at the Well of Dragons.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

For characters who have not played *Hoard of the Dragon Queen*, the adventure can also begin by playing out another episode before the first session of the Council of Waterdeep. The party could be summoned by a factional leader seeking aid against the Cult of the Dragon, with the characters asked to undertake the "Varram the White" portion of the "Death to the Wyrmspeakers" episode. Seeking to capture a high-ranking cult leader is a great step in the fight against the cult. Once they return to Waterdeep, the adventurers then become embroiled in the first session of the "Council of Waterdeep" episode.

Tyranny of Dragons can be adapted to different regions of the Forgotten Realms, or to a different campaign setting entirely with a bit of preparation on your part. Change the names, factions, and locations present in the adventure to suit your own campaign.

ADDITIONAL ENCOUNTERS

The Rise of Tiamat is an open-framework adventure designed for higher-level characters. As such, not all your game sessions need to stick to the main track of the adventure narrative. Additional events, rumors, and encounters can be used as needed or added as side treks or distractions. The following encounter seeds are meant to be used when you want to break up the narrative or if the players get off track. Each can be expanded as you like, and is meant to tie into one of the main episodes in the adventure (or to let you gently guide the players in that direction). Each additional encounter also provides a sense of the wider scope of the setting.

MONSTROUS UPRISING

A charismatic **half-red dragon veteran** leads a band of 21 **kobolds** and 7 **lizardfolk**, taking advantage of the unrest along the Sword Coast. The group might besiege a village the characters are staying at, raid and enslave another settlement, or start charging tolls along one of the trade roads of the Sword Coast. This band isn't organized enough to attack all at once and provide a significant challenge to the party. Instead, it shows the increasing anarchy of the region, and the way that Tiamat's rise has emboldened evil creatures that aren't directly serving the Dragon Queen.

POWER OF THE CULT

The Cult of the Dragon expands its operation in larger and bolder ways. Its leaders send diplomatic missions to Berdusk, Triel, and other settlements demanding tribute—and offering protection from dragon raids for those who comply. Cultists shake down caravans seeking protection money, and have been burning caravans that belong to the rivals of those who do pay. Less scrupulous merchants are finding it easier to do business with the cult than to fight against them. Any Zhentarim contacts of the adventurers are understandably worried about these developments.

MONSTER NAMES

Throughout the adventure, monster names are presented in **bold**. This is a visual cue pointing you to look up the monster's stat block in the *Monster Manual* (or in the free supplement available at DungeonsandDragons.com). New monsters appear in appendix A of this adventure. A note appears after a monster's name if that is the case.

Elite bands of cultists have been charged with establishing the cult's control from the Gray Peaks to the Sunset Mountains. They seek out allies in the area, with an eye toward choosing friendly territory for a capital city and a seat of power for the cult's Inner Circle. Such bands are led by a **dragonsoul** defended by 4 **dragonclaws** and a pack of 3 **guard drakes**. The dragonsoul rides a **warhorse**, but the other cultists are on foot. See appendix A for the cultists and drakes.

DEVILISH DEMANDS

Though the Cult of the Dragon and the Red Wizards are making use of diabolic allies as they plan the ritual that will free Tiamat, not all devils are on their side. Some fiends not wanting to see Tiamat gain worldly power seek to break the alliance between the cult and Thay. This encounter can be used to reveal to the characters the divisions already present among the evil factions.

The devils who are aligned against Tiamat send a delegation of 5 **cultists** and 2 **cult fanatics** (devil worshippers) and a **bone devil** named Lord Volmer to treat with the party. The cultists lead the characters to a large tent, inside which Lord Volmer awaits.

Using telepathy, Lord Volmer tells the adventurers about the so-called "Thayan Resurrection" (the attempt by Thayan exiles to supplant Szass Tam), as well as the fact that Szass Tam intends to destroy Rath Modar and his "splinter sect" for their impudence. The bone devil assures the characters that they can earn the Red Wizards' favor by providing him with information leading to Rath Modar's capture.

Lord Volmer also tells the party that the lords of the Nine Hells are divided when it comes to the matter of Tiamat's release. He tells the party that if Tiamat is prevented from escaping, the party will earn "powerful friends" in the Nine Hells. If the characters attack Lord Volmer, he and his allies retaliate. The devil is not worried about dying, since he reforms at full strength in the Nine Hells upon his demise.

CAPTIVE CULTIST

A group of dwarf miners has captured a high-ranking member of the Cult of the Dragon—a Wearer of Purple named Cheela Flegsteel who got a little too greedy while leading a group of cultists that was terrorizing the dwarves. Having killed Cheela's drakes and subordinates, the dwarves bring their prisoner to the adventurers hoping for a reward.

Cheela has useful information about the cult's activities, which could be used to lead into any episode of your choice. However, she also knows that a rescue party is not far behind her. The adventurers need to help the dwarves fend off an attack by 4 **ogres** and a

half-red dragon veteran named Yggran. The dwarves are hopelessly overmatched and flee rather than fight. If her fellow cultists can't save Cheela, they might kill her rather than leave her in the adventurers' hands.

FALLEN HERO

The adventurers meet a seriously injured elf ranger—a well-known hero named Cylanestriel. She speaks of her capture by the Cult of the Dragon and her escape from the stronghold at the caldera of the Well of Dragons. (If possible, make Cylanestriel an associate, mentor, or relative of someone in the party.)

Use this encounter to make the players aware of the dangers presented by a direct assault against the Well of Dragons. The army of the cult is huge and powerful enough to have destroyed a major adventuring group. The Well of Dragons is on alert, and its defensive forces include flights of dragons that prowl the skies above the site. The characters should be made to understand that attacking with a large allied force is their only option for defeating the cult.

DEATH AT THE COUNCIL

During the second or third session of the Council of Waterdeep, rumors spread of an aide from Neverwinter who killed an aide from Mithral Hall and then hanged himself. In truth, the Cult of the Dragon sent a **succubus** spy to Waterdeep. She charmed the Neverwinter aide into collecting information for her, but the other aide discovered their meetings. The succubus forced her victim to slay the other aide to cover her tracks, then to kill himself.

If the characters investigate, they can obtain the body to question it using *Speak with Dead*, or they might use *Commune* to discover the spy. The succubus has gained another victim by that point—a knight of the Order of the Gauntlet who regularly goes to meet her at her slum dwelling in the Field Ward of Waterdeep. This pattern of murder and suicide continues unless the spy's true identity is discovered.

RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

Tyranny of Dragons is a big, sprawling adventure that covers many levels of play and a huge swath of the Forgotten Realms. This book outlines the overall structure of the adventure and presents many episodes and events with which to challenge the characters as they investigate the nefarious plots of the Cult of the Dragon. This is not, however, a script to be read aloud with stage directions that must be followed. *Tyranny of Dragons* does not hold your hand and guide you step-by-step from the story's beginning to its inevitable conclusion. Instead, it presents people, creatures, locations, and situations for the adventurers to explore and interact with in a constantly changing, lively way.

You, the Dungeon Master, play a vital role. The creators of *Tyranny of Dragons* have tried to foresee the most likely courses of action that the characters might take in the adventure. However, D&D players are curious and unpredictable, and Faerûn is immense and filled with possibility. In a scenario as open-ended

as this one, it is all but guaranteed that at some point during the adventure—and possibly at many points—the players will develop their own ideas about how to handle a situation or how to deal with the cult. And just like that, they'll be off and running in directions that aren't covered by this book. Those kinds of situations put a DM's skill to the test—but they also produce some of the greatest gaming moments and memories.

VILLAINS

The plot to return Tiamat to the mortal realm has brought some of Faerûn's most sinister organizations and most powerful monsters into deadly alliance.

THE CULT OF THE DRAGON

The Cult of the Dragon has existed for centuries. During most of that time, its members have focused on the creation and worship of dracoliches, based on a prophecy translated by the cult's founder, Sammaster. However, those goals changed with the rise of a young cultist named Severin.

Inspired by Tiamat, Severin reexamined the texts translated by Sammaster and discovered a different interpretation, believing that "naught will be left save shattered thrones, with no rulers but the dead. Dragons shall rule the world entire . . ." Severin's quest to reshape the cult led him to the dragon Hoondarrh, "the Red Rage of Mintarn." The fact that Severin not only survived this encounter but befriended the dragon impressed Tiamat in her exile in the Nine Hells. As a reward and further test, she allowed Severin a scrap of knowledge regarding the existence of the five dragon masks. Severin took that bit of information and did what few others could have accomplished, searching for and finding all five masks. The task took years to complete, and it led directly to the crisis that Faerûn now faces.

Severin kept the red mask for himself. As other masks were found, he presented them to his closest allies in the Cult of the Dragon, granting each the power of a wyrmspeaker. Using the magic of the dragon masks, this Inner Circle of Wyrmspeakers helps Severin prepare the way for Tiamat's return.

DAILY OPERATIONS

The plots of the Cult of the Dragon are secret, but its existence is not. Most folk of the Sword Coast have heard of the cult, but know only that its members revere evil dragons. The cult recruits new members in major cities, and word quickly gets around. Moreover, many cultists engage in legitimate business or are assigned to ordinary academic research. Only a relative few serve as thieves, assassins, and spies.

Dragon-themed symbolism and iconography pervade the cult's official regalia—black clothing that features a cape or cloak cut to resemble dragon wings, and festooned with jewelry and draconic imagery reflecting the wearer's favorite type of dragon. Masks are common at cult gatherings.

Cultists avoid this regalia in public, but a character who knows what to look for can often pick an incognito dragon cultist out of a crowd. Cultists sometimes

greet one another with the sign of Tiamat: right hand extended, palm forward, with all five fingers spread in imitation of Tiamat's five heads. Characters trying to pass as cultists might find this sign useful if they don't overdo it.

Cult members venerate dragons as powerful icons and masters, but their worship is reserved for Tiamat. They look forward to the Dragon Queen's return, believing that she will destroy mortal civilization and usher in a glorious reign of dragons—and of those who helped bring about draconic rule. The complex plot dedicated to bring Tiamat to Faerûn has so far seen the cult recover the five dragon masks and collect an immense treasure worthy of the Dragon Queen. All that now remains is to raise her temple in the Well of Dragons, sacrifice hundreds of victims whose souls will power an ancient ritual, and then use that ritual to open a portal through which Tiamat will emerge from the Nine Hells.

CULT STRUCTURE

The cult has a simple hierarchical structure, consisting of initiates on the bottom, four ranks for cultists, and one highest rank for "Wearers of Purple"—the lords, leaders, and cult masters of particular locales. The cult is ruled by a secretive inner group led by Severin and four other wyrmspeakers—a term of respect given to those whose bond with dragons is supernaturally strong.

Rank in the cult is based on merit and fanaticism. As raw recruits, initiates (represented by **cultists** and **cult fanatics**) have no rank and follow the orders of their superiors. Only initiates that prove their worth are allowed to advance. A Wearer of Purple can promote an initiate along the track of **dragonclaw** (first rank), **dragonwing** (second rank), **dragonfang** (third rank), and **dragonsoul** (fourth rank). Statistics for those four ranking cultists are found in appendix A.

Cult operation groups are assembled to match their assigned tasks. They vary in size, from a few low-ranking cultists operating on their own to hundreds of cultists of various ranks under the control of multiple Wearers of Purple.

WEARERS OF PURPLE

The Wearers of Purple stand at the top of the cult's humanoid hierarchy, and their word is law for the cultists in the cities, strongholds, and lairs they command. They are the only members of the cult to wear purple, and most are proud enough to flaunt the color. The Wearers of Purple have an affinity for talking to and negotiating with dragons—the gift of wyrmspeaking. Dozens of Wearers of Purple are spread throughout the Cult of the Dragon, and all are able to marshal the cult's resources.

Only Severin's inner circle can promote a dragonsoul to a Wearer of Purple, granting that character a base of operations and funds. Most new Wearers of Purple have already developed a working relationship with a dragon as part of their power and authority. Those who do not cultivate and expand this relationship are sometimes demoted. A number of priests of Tiamat have recently been made Wearers of Purple, and have

been charged with establishing temples for her open worship in Faerûn. This aspect of the cult's plans is still in the early stages, and the inner circle remains divided on how the Cult of the Dragon should interact with the faithful of Tiamat.

THE INNER CIRCLE

These four Wearers of Purple are the keepers of the dragon masks and Severin's most devoted servants in the effort to summon Tiamat. Each of these wyrmspeakers bears one of the dragon masks, which they never part with except under the direst circumstances—and then only at the request of Severin or a draconic ally. The members of the inner circle each have an affinity for a particular color of chromatic dragon. They treat with dragons of those colors to recruit more dragons to the cause, and plan cult missions that advance Severin's plots.

In addition to Severin, the Red Wyrmspeaker, the members of the inner circle are: Galvan (male human), the Blue Wyrmspeaker; Neronvain (male moon elf), the Green Wyrmspeaker and son of Melandrach, King of the Misty Forest; Rezmir (female half-black dragon), the Black Wyrmspeaker; and Varram (male dwarf), the White Wyrmspeaker.

If any wyrmspeakers are killed or captured in your campaign—including Rezmir, who the characters might have defeated in *Hoard of the Dragon Queen*—Severin appoints new followers to his inner council.

DISSENT IN THE RANKS

Under Severin's leadership, most cultists are devoted to Tiamat—but not all. Some of the old guard dislike the cult's new direction, and long for the established traditions and the rise of the dracoliches. A common thought among the dracolich loyalists is that Severin is being played by the fiendish Tiamat. Notable among these members of the old guard are Naergoth Bladelord, the former commander of the stronghold at the Well of Dragons, and Jorgen Pawl and Iskander, two high-ranking cultists in command of Xonthal's Tower.

USING THE CULT OF THE DRAGON

Cultists are suitable foes for the adventurers in most situations. They keep a low profile in public, so characters are unlikely to see cultists in full regalia on the streets of Waterdeep or Scornubel. As their plots near fruition, however, the cultists grow bolder and might engage the adventurers openly.

By the start of *The Rise of Tiamat*, the effects of the cult's activities are visible across the Sword Coast. The scorched ruins of farming communities pillaged by cultists for Tiamat's hoard are a common enough occurrence that travelers know something is amiss.

RED WIZARDS OF THAY

The Red Wizards hail from Thay, over two thousand miles east of the Sword Coast. A grim, dismal region spread across a towering plateau, Thay is defended by an army of undead warriors and ruled by the lich Szass Tam and the zulkirs he appoints to rule over the eight schools of magic. The Red Wizards of Thay are

SEVERIN



known across Faerûn, and are easily recognized by their distinctive crimson robes and the arcane sigils tattooed onto their shaved heads. Because of their evil reputation, Red Wizards are arrested or killed on the spot in many lands. For that reason, they often travel in disguise, invisibly, or by magical means.

For many years, Szass Tam's grip on absolute power in Thay has been weakened by internal strife. Mortal Red Wizards have risen against their undead masters, destroying some of Szass Tam's lich zulkirs and thinning the ranks of other undead. Little is known of the conflict beyond Thay's borders, however. In this quiet civil war, both sides fear that too much attrition will make Thay a target for its long list of enemies. Szass Tam questions the allegiance of all living Red Wizards outside Thay, and has made it clear that death and worse await any who oppose him.

RATH MODAR'S AMBITION

One such Red Wizard exile is Rath Modar, an illusionist of great skill who long ago made the Sword Coast his home. Having a natural interest in dragons, it wasn't long before Rath Modar came into contact with the Cult of the Dragon and Severin. The young, ambitious cult

leader sought powerful magic to locate the scattered dragon masks and to perform the ritual that would summon Tiamat from the Nine Hells. Rath Modar dreamed of an army that could confront and defeat Szass Tam. Out of mutual need, their alliance was born.

The secret cornerstone of this union is Rath Modar's belief that once Tiamat returns, she will see that the Red Wizards are more useful allies than the devoted but magically weak cultists. Rath Modar hopes that Tiamat will show her gratitude for the pivotal role he and his fellow Red Wizards played in her return, granting them an army of dragons with which to assault Thay. After unseating Szass Tam, Rath Modar plans to take his place at the head of all Red Wizards. Whether Tiamat will grant such a reward—or have any further use for the Red Wizards at all—remains unknown.

Not all members of the Cult of the Dragon are happy about the Red Wizards' involvement in the cult's plans. Wyrmspeaker Varram foresees trouble in the cult joining forces with Rath Modar's splinter sect. He has warned Severin about the potential danger, to no avail.

USING THE RED WIZARDS

Red Wizards can be encountered anywhere on the Sword Coast (use **mage** stats if necessary), whether operating alongside cultists or on their own. They most often work alone, but two or three Red Wizards might join forces for an important assignment. In a public area where their appearance could put them at risk, Red Wizards favor deep hoods and scarves to hide their faces. Their undead **wight** bodyguards are usually nearby—and often invisible. Each Red Wizard specializes in a single school of magic, but all learn spells outside their specialty schools.

Red Wizards don't share the cultists' fanaticism for Tiamat. For them, bringing the Dragon Queen into the world is just one stage of what they call the Thayan Resurrection—the larger plan to destroy Szass Tam and reclaim Thay. They tolerate the dragon cultists but do not acknowledge them as equals.

Not every Red Wizard on the Sword Coast is working for Rath Modar or the Cult of the Dragon. Some pursue their own interests, while others are spies for Szass Tam. The adventurers might thus find themselves making uneasy alliances with characters they would normally never trust, since the easiest and surest way to eliminate a Red Wizard in service to the cult is to betray that wizard's location to an agent of Szass Tam. However, characters who get too close to Szass Tam's servants and his paranoid vendetta against the Red Wizard exiles might find themselves at the mercy of the Thayans. This possibility is explored more fully in episode 8.

HOSTS OF THE NINE HELLS

Tiamat has long threatened Faerûn, often appearing in lands such as Chessenta and Unther to drive mortals to worship her awesome power. Although mortals don't know it, the end of the Sundering and the Era of Upheaval also put an end to such direct meddling by the gods. Without powerful magic and mortal aid, Tiamat cannot travel from her home in Avernus into the world.

Avernus is a boulder-strewn desolation where fiery comets streak across the sky and devil aristocrats rule from dismal iron fortresses. The River Styx saws a jagged course through Avernus's basalt cliffs, winds its way across ashen plains, and eventually plunges through a yawning pit into the eight levels of the Hells below. All the rivers of Avernus feed into the Styx, each one flowing red with blood beneath a roiling cloud of flies.

Asmodeus recently reinstated the fallen angel Zariel as the Archduchess of Avernus, reversing an earlier decision that allowed a pit fiend named Bel to take the throne. While in exile from her seat of power, Zariel was at the mercy of Tiamat—a fate that rankles her still. Despite her power as ruler of the first layer of the Nine Hells, Zariel cannot kill the dragon goddess, and she sees the summoning of Tiamat to the world as a way to be rid of her.

Zariel has directed her mortal agents to assist those who seek to free Tiamat, and her power has made it easier for the Red Wizards to summon devils and for the Cult of the Dragon to find more adherents. However, just as Zariel wants Tiamat out, other devils would be happy to see the Dragon Queen stay in Avernus. Foremost among them is the deposed pit fiend Bel and the devils still loyal to him.

Ordinarily, the Cult of the Dragon has nothing to do with devils. However, releasing Tiamat into the world is a massive undertaking, and Severin has called on every resource he can. Though many of his allies among the Red Wizards are well schooled in summoning and commanding devils, doing so is never a straightforward process. Devils cannot leave the Nine Hells of their own accord, and though Asmodeus can bend these laws, he seldom does. Most devils in the Material Plane were summoned there by mortal mages who expended tremendous amounts of magical power to breach the barriers that separate the Nine Hells from other planes.

USING DEVILS

Devils aren't numerous in *The Rise of Tiamat* until the final showdown at the Well of Dragons, but their presence elsewhere in the adventure (including the additional encounter "Devilish Demands") should make attentive players wonder at the connection between devils and dragons. Devils are supreme manipulators, and if the characters have the opportunity to speak with devils that aren't working for the cult, don't be afraid to offer them diabolical assistance. Such an offer should put all characters—not just those of good alignment—in a bind. Bargaining with devils is a fool's game, but if the alternative is the end of the world, it might be the adventurers' only option.

Devils in the adventure should always be one step ahead of the adventurers. Characters who like to charge in and decide on strategy later will find that their diabolical foes have well-executed plans. If the characters plan two steps ahead, the devils are one step beyond that. Nothing mortals do should ever surprise them.

CHROMATIC DRAGONS

Severin and his supporters intend to use the ancient draconic artifact known as the *Draakhorn* to rally the chromatic dragons to Tiamat's cause. However, chromatic dragons are notoriously arrogant, territorial, greedy, and suspicious of any creatures begging favors—especially if those creatures might be a threat. Getting dragons to cooperate is a monumental task, even when bringing the Queen of Dragons into the world is the ultimate goal.

The Cult of the Dragon has a secret weapon for dealing with chromatic dragons, in the form of the five dragon masks. Even with a dragon mask, the process of influencing a dragon remains arduous and dangerous—though the payoff is enormous. These relics give their wearers the ability to communicate with dragons, but more importantly, they impart a subtle influence over dragons that cannot be detected. Dragons cannot be controlled by the masks, but they can be swayed by ideas and proposals that they would not normally find persuasive.

USING CHROMATIC DRAGONS

The power of the chromatic dragons is a motif running through every aspect of *Tyranny of Dragons: The Rise of Tiamat*. As the events of the adventure unfold, more and more dragons respond to the *Draakhorn's* rumbling moan and journey to the Well of Dragons—a migration that inspires alarm and panic in people across Faerûn.

Characters and players should seldom be allowed to forget that the evil dragons are on the move. Whenever the adventurers are outside, they might see a dragon winging overhead in the distance. The shadow of a dragon could fall across the adventurers in the daytime, and dark draconic wings might momentarily blot out the moon at night. When the characters arrive in a settlement, they should hear stories about dragon sightings and attacks. When they travel, burned-out hamlets and demolished caravans line the road.

Dragons are among the oldest, most intelligent, and most powerful monsters in Faerûn and the *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* game. Chromatic dragons are evil and merciless, and every battle against these creatures should be a life-or-death struggle. No dragon should ever fall without the heroes suffering during the battle. Chromatic dragons use every possible advantage with no regard for fairness, and their chief advantage is flight. A dragon never fights on foot where enemies might hack at it when it can soar majestically out of reach and slaughter foes with its breath weapon. Only in its lair will a dragon typically engage in melee, and then only if its hoard is threatened.

Characters who can tackle the challenges of this adventure are high enough level to have allies raised from the dead when those allies fall to a draconic foe. If the characters can't do so themselves, their allies in the Order of the Gauntlet or the Harpers should be willing to help out.

With lifetimes of a thousand years or more to lose, chromatic dragons have no interest in dying in battle against mere humanoids, and they don't sacrifice themselves nobly for any cause—Tiamat included. A

dragon caught in a losing battle takes any escape that presents itself, most often simply soaring away. This changes during the final showdown at the Well of Dragons, however, when Tiamat can be seen clawing her way through the portal from the Nine Hells.

GIANTS

If the characters claimed Skyreach Castle in *Hoard of the Dragon Queen*, they might well hear from a frost giant diplomat who shows up to reclaim it as property of the giants who built it. A frost giant named Harshnag lives on Mount Sar north of Waterdeep, and he is sometimes called upon when the Sword Coast faces dire threats. The player characters could fly the citadel to him or—in a more dramatic interlude—he might come to a council meeting and demand the citadel's return on behalf of his kin so that he might rally them against their ancient foes.

If the player characters did not claim the citadel (or crashed it), this option is not available to them.

USING GIANTS

Giants are unlikely to appear side by side with dragons anywhere before the final showdown at the Well of Dragons. However, characters who gain any insight into the giants' alliance with the dragons should understand its apocalyptic significance.

ALLIES

Several powerful organizations battle the Cult of the Dragon even as the party does. The characters are key players in the drama, but everyone in Faerûn has a stake in the outcome of the battle against Tiamat and her allies. Each faction has a presence in the Council of Waterdeep, and all factions are ultimately on the adventurers' side—even if some of them occasionally hinder the characters more than they help.

This section describes each faction's goals and driving concerns, its leading delegate or delegates to the council, and what resources it can contribute to the final battle against the Cult of the Dragon.

THE HARPERS

The secret society known as the Harpers has been disbanded and rebuilt several times over its long history. The latest incarnation of the group retains its focus on gathering information, keeping a close watch on the balance of power in Faerûn, and promoting fairness and equality in quiet, unobtrusive ways. Harpers try to keep out of the public eye, preferring secrecy to fame and using knowledge to win the day over brute force. However, as the Cult of the Dragon grows more brazen and destructive, the Harpers are forced to act more openly in their opposition.



If the characters played through *Hoard of the Dragon Queen*, they've already met one of the most influential of the Harpers: Leosin Erlanthar, a male half-elf monk from Berdusk.

USING THE HARPERS

Harper agents operate most effectively alone or in small groups, much like adventurers. When on a mission, they are independent and self-reliant. The ideal Harper is a keen observer, persuasive, and able to go almost anywhere without arousing suspicion.

NPC Harpers are the kinds of characters who consistently pop up when they're least expected and most useful. If the characters need a safe house in a strange city, are unable to locate an elusive foe, or have been captured by the cult and need inside help to escape, a Harper can offer up a secure hideout, a whispered clue, or a smuggled knife. Bards, mages, and rogues are the most common character types in the Harpers, but characters of every class can be found in the organization.

REMALLIA HAVENTREE

Chaotic good female moon elf fighter

Ideals: Freedom, respect ("Our failure would spell an end to all beautiful and honest things.")

Interaction Traits: Honest, friendly

Pledged Resources: Harper mages and scouts

The elf noble Remallia—"Remi" to her friends—is the Harper's leading delegate to the Council of Waterdeep. She is quiet, speaking only after others have had their turn, and is content to let events unfold until she feels a need to offer intervention and guidance. This embodies her attitude about combating the cult as well.

Remi is convinced that the rumors of Tiamat's return are true, and she is frustrated by the unwillingness of the other Harpers to commit to fighting the Cult of the Dragon. She understands their hesitation, however. The Harpers' have only recently been reformed, and the cause of their near-destruction was the decision to act more openly and aggressively.

The Harpers measure success in the value and quantity of intelligence gained by a course of action, as well as how that knowledge can be used to leverage an enemy into submission. Remallia wants the party to succeed using such tactics, knowing that this will sway the conservatives in her faction.

The Harpers are willing to cooperate with unsavory types and leverage evil assets, but not if doing so endangers others unnecessarily. They can respect the deftness and skill needed to make such an arrangement, even if they do not like the arrangement itself. The Harpers are always dissatisfied if the characters kill important cultists rather than capturing them—or at least trying to extract information from them beforehand.

THE ORDER OF THE GAUNTLET

The Order of the Gauntlet shares the Harpers' dedication to justice and equality, but their methods and attitude are quite different. Bearers of the gauntlet are holy warriors on a righteous quest to crush evil and promote justice, and they never hide in the shadows. Evil must be opposed openly and vanquished in the light of day, so that all can see and be emboldened by its destruction.



Members of the order are driven by religious fervor and by devotion to the principle of justice for all. Whether a member places more emphasis on one or the other of those ideals is an individual choice. Camaraderie and esprit de corps run high within the order, and an individual member will risk anything to save a fellow member or to complete an important mission.

The Order of the Gauntlet is a young organization, and it is eager and restless for action. It does not take orders from any government or temple, although the opinions of holy figures are greatly esteemed within the order. When evil threatens, the gauntlet strikes.

USING THE ORDER OF THE GAUNTLET

The Order of the Gauntlet is an invaluable asset at the final showdown at the Well of Dragons. No other faction can muster more paladins and priests to heal the wounded and combat Severin's devil allies directly.

Before the final battle, members of the order make interesting NPCs for roleplaying encounters because of their outgoing ways and strong opinions. Sharing a roadside inn with twenty paladins from the Order of the Gauntlet, or joining their march for a few days when headed in the same direction, should be a memorable experience.

Clerics, paladins, and monks make up the majority of the Order of the Gauntlet, but any character of a righteous mind is welcome in the order's ranks.

ONTHARR FRUME

Lawful good male human paladin

Ideals: Responsibility, greater good ("The strong must defend the weak, whatever the cost.")

Personality Traits: Friendly, hot-tempered

Pledged Resources: Paladins and healing clerics to support the fight against Tiamat's forces

Boisterous and gregarious to a fault, Ontharr is the leading delegate for the Order of the Gauntlet. He has all the justification he needs to support the party (especially if the characters played through *Hoard of the Dragon Queen*). However, the rest of the order is not yet convinced. In particular, the order does not tolerate evil, and if the characters are known to have committed acts of a dubious moral nature, Ontharr Frume will be pressured to withhold his support. Members of the order will seek proof that the party is righteous or has

divine guidance, for it is only with the blessing of Torm and the other gods that Tiamat can be defeated.

Just as good deeds must be performed in the light for all to see, evil must be shunned and fought at every turn. Members of the order can be won over by heroic and righteous deeds, but they will turn against characters who cooperate with or tolerate evil. The order can best be swayed by actions that demonstrate heroism and divine providence—uniting the metallic dragons to fight Tiamat's brood, for example. Slaying a wyrmspeaker will also serve the party well, while capturing and delivering such a villain to justice will raise them even higher in the order's sight.

Ontharr Frume's dedication to heroic justice creates a strong connection between him and the paladin Sir Isteval. However, Ontharr has difficulty reconciling the heroic Isteval of legend with the diplomatic and retiring figure of the Council of Waterdeep. It's incomprehensible to him why Sir Isteval does not take to the field himself in this great conflict.

THE EMERALD ENCLAVE

The Emerald Enclave is dedicated to maintaining balance in the natural order and combating the forces that threaten that balance. Members of the enclave live in the wilderness or in small communities, and the order has almost no representatives in towns and cities. They are not opposed to civilization, however. Rather, they seek to prevent civilization and wilderness from harming one another. Those who serve the Emerald Enclave are masters of survival and living off the land, of navigating through the wilderness, and of reading the signs that indicate approaching weather, the passage of creatures, and the general weal of the natural world.

Severin's plan to release Tiamat from the Nine Hells represents a grave threat to the natural order. The Dragon Queen's reign and the ascendancy of chromatic dragons would trigger a continent-wide catastrophe that the Emerald Enclave cannot allow.

USING THE EMERALD ENCLAVE

Members of the Emerald Enclave operate alone or in small groups. Their primary focus is places where the natural world and civilization intersect, because that's where the natural order is most easily upset. Humanoids and monsters alike can become a threat to nature when they are thrown out of balance with their environment or their role in the world.

Whenever characters are traveling through the wilderness—and especially if they get into trouble in a remote area—they can encounter agents of the Emerald Enclave. If the adventurers need someone to guide them safely across a mountain range or lead them through



trackless, monster-infested forest, there is no better choice than a member of the order.

Druids, rangers, and barbarians make up most of the Emerald Enclave, but any character with a strong affinity for nature can find a place in the order.

DELAAN WINTERHOUND

Neutral good male half-elf ranger

Ideals: Balance, life (“In all good hearts is a spot of darkness, and in all tragedy is a glimmer of light.”)

Interaction Traits: Quiet

Pledged Resources: Druids, treants, and good- and neutral-aligned lycanthropes

Delaan has come to the Council of Waterdeep as the lone representative of the Emerald Enclave. Even his regular companion, a winter wolf named Loska, remains on patrol outside the city. Delaan spends much of his time wandering the northern wilderness, and although he visits friends in Nesmé once a year, he otherwise shies away from large settlements. He is clearly uncomfortable in Waterdeep.

There is no question that Tiamat must be stopped, but the Emerald Enclave wants to see the world restored to order. This sometimes means taking a middle ground in battles between good and evil. Delaan is acutely aware of the destruction accompanying the recent activities of the Cult of the Dragon. He knows the cult must be destroyed for upsetting the balance of nature, and he knows that many dragons supporting the cult will die before the end. He would rather not kill unnecessarily, however.

Delaan is initially reserved in his support of the party. To earn his respect, the characters must recognize that their battle is not just to save civilization but to preserve the natural order. He thus objects to many actions that good or neutral characters might not think twice about—including destroying chromatic dragon eggs and other acts that disrupt the natural cycle.

Delaan's oldest friend and mentor is a mighty treant named Turlang who resides in the High Forest. With Delaan's support, many treants will join the fight against Tiamat.

THE LORDS' ALLIANCE

“The Lords' Alliance” is not a metaphor. This organization was created and is led by leaders and nobles from across Faerûn. Although many of its members have conflicting goals and long-standing rivalries outside the alliance, they band together in the face of events that are too big for any of them to handle on their own. The rulers of Waterdeep, Silverymoon, Baldur's Gate, and other cities, families, and trading houses of the Sword Coast might never set aside their differences, but they can pull together when the survival of all depends on it.



The Lords' Alliance represents the richest interests and the most powerful armies on the Sword Coast. The order controls wealth that can hire mercenaries, ensure the loyalty of wavering princes, and possibly even bribe a few chromatic dragons to switch sides or break from Tiamat's cause. Without the help of the alliance against the Cult of the Dragon, the Dragon Queen's victory might be assured.

USING THE LORDS' ALLIANCE

Even while they are working together, members of the Lords' Alliance are always advancing their own interests. Everyone knows and expects it—it's a fact of dealing with the alliance. That doesn't mean member cities don't cooperate and help each other in times of crisis. But if a crisis rearranges the power structure of the Sword Coast, all the players involved hope that the new order leaves them better off. For anyone to move up, someone else must move down.

Whenever a military campaign is underway, the Lords' Alliance is likely to be in command. Even if it isn't, alliance representatives will be on hand to observe and advise. If the characters find themselves in legal trouble, a councilor might come to the party's aid with a writ of pardon.

Fighters and sorcerers are plentiful in the Lords' Alliance, but the order takes on any character who feels at home in civilized lands. Barbarians, rangers, and druids are seldom involved with this faction, which sometimes leads to strained relations with the Emerald Enclave.

ON THE COUNCIL

Because the Lords' Alliance is a confederation, the order sends seven delegates to the Council of Waterdeep, each effectively representing his or her own faction. Their diverse character, motivations, and obligations ensure that they are not in agreement about the current threat facing Faerûn. Moreover, the standing of certain delegates changes from one council to the next.

Although it is not necessary for all delegates to back the adventurers, without at least some support from the Lords' Alliance, there is almost no way for the party to marshal enough forces to win the day.

LADY LAERAL SILVERHAND

Chaotic good female human wizard

Ideals: Creativity, respect (“We cannot stop what we do not understand.”)

Interaction Traits: Quiet, curious

Pledged Resources: Waterdeep's army and conscript troops

Lady Laeral is present starting with the second council, at which point she becomes the Open Lord of Waterdeep. She is one of the Seven Sisters—legendary, nigh-immortal figures known to have been blessed by Mystra. (Some even say they are the goddess's daughters.) Her spellcasting ability is impressive but is beginning to wane, and she focuses more on political power than on the arcane these days. The Masked Lords of Waterdeep choose her as the successor to

Dagult Neverember between the first and second sessions of the Council of Waterdeep, making her the leader of the Lords' Alliance.

Laeral Silverhand brings centuries of leadership experience and an impressive reputation to the negotiations. A consummate diplomat, she can wield words that wound or soothe with equal ease. As the Open Lord of Waterdeep, she holds great sway with all the delegates except Dagult Neverember, who believes that she engineered his removal from the position of Open Lord.

Laeral's primary concern is keeping all parties at the negotiating table, and making sure that concrete actions result from each council's discussions. However, she is leery of committing troops to battle. No stranger to the horrors of war, she is keenly aware that the lands represented by the Lords' Alliance need their soldiers for the protection of their own people. Only when convinced that the Cult of the Dragon is likely to succeed in summoning Tiamat does she change her mind. However, she doesn't trust the adventurers with leadership unless their deeds in the field and at the negotiating table have impressed her.

If the adventurers sway Laeral to their side, she speaks highly of the party in the periods between council sessions. Having the support of the leader of the Lords' Alliance increases the party's stature in the eyes of all other factions, granting additional bonuses. See the “Council of Waterdeep” episode and the Council Scorecard (appendix C) for more information.

LORD DAGULT NEVEREMBER

Lawful neutral male human fighter

Ideals: Moderation, responsibility (“The commoners need strong leaders to protect them—and to do what must be done even when it is distasteful.”)

Interaction Traits: Honest

Pledged Resources: Neverwinter conscript troops, and mercenaries from around the world

Lord Neverember holds many titles and wears several crowns. During the first council, he is the Open Lord of Waterdeep, the Lord Protector of Neverwinter, and leader of the Lords' Alliance. He looks the part of such an impressively titled figure: tall and broad-shouldered, with a thick beard, a wild mane of hair, and a forceful manner. Rarely seen without his hand around a glass of strong spirits, he is a master manipulator and looks and behaves as a king should.

Strong and decisive, Dagult acts always for the good of his subjects and realm—and in doing so, has consistently built up his own power and wealth. Unfortunately for him, the Masked Lords of Waterdeep have recently chosen to replace him as Open Lord. Laeral Silverhand, his successor, claims her title in the second council meeting.

Dagult demands order and rewards discipline, but he is pragmatic and driven by results above all else. He knows that nothing comes without effort, and sacrifices must be made when necessary. Tireless in his actions, he never stops until he has achieved his goals. He will use any means at his disposal, as long as those means

are legally justifiable—even when such justification must be “rediscovered” from long-forgotten or ignored laws.

In the first council meeting, Lord Dagult's resources have been spread thin between the massive investments he's made in rebuilding Neverwinter and in maintaining dominance in Waterdeep. He strongly supports the members of the Lords' Alliance pooling resources, because he worries that neither of his investments can survive the coming catastrophe without assistance. This changes by the second council. Though losing Waterdeep allows him to consolidate his strength, Dagult resents Laeral for taking his position. He avoids letting his feelings cloud his judgment, however, intent on showing that he is a more fitting leader by backing the adventurers and taking a firm leadership role in the council.

AMBASSADOR CONNERAD BRAWNAVIL

Lawful good male shield dwarf fighter

Ideals: Honor, respect (“A sturdy axe, a strong hand to hold it, and a straight fight are all we dwarves need to end this little problem.”)

Personality Traits: Hot tempered, suspicious

Pledged Resources: Dwarf soldiers and dwarf-forged armaments and siege weapons

Son of Banak Brawnnavil and a former king of Mithral Hall, Connerad has made the long journey from Mithral Hall to act as the Lords' Alliance delegate for the dwarves of the North, including Citadel Adbar and Citadel Felbarr.

Even though Connerad hates dragons, devils, and cultists alike, he is as stubborn as a mule about committing troops anywhere but his homeland. The dwarven kingdoms in the North have lost many people in recent years, and the dwarves that remain are struggling to retain ancient lands only recently reclaimed. He knows the adventurers only by reputation, and desires tangible proof that they have the mettle and wits to lead soldiers and dwarves before he'll make a serious commitment. Like Ontharr Frume of the Order of the Gauntlet, Connerad responds well to bold demonstrations of heroism. However, he is personally and deeply insulted by any slight against dwarves or intrusions by the characters into dwarven affairs. His reactions to the adventurers' exploits determine how he votes in the fourth council.

MARSHALL ULDER RAVENGARD

Lawful neutral male human fighter

Ideals: Responsibility, glory (“I am trusted with protecting thousands of lives, and I will not betray that trust no matter what my personal desires.”)

Interaction Traits: Honest

Pledged Resources: Flaming Fist warriors and expert advisers to train conscript troops

Ulder Ravengard is the leader of the Flaming Fist—the military might of Baldur's Gate. He has the greatest martial acumen of anyone at the council (and probably in the whole Lords' Alliance). He can also muster more soldiers than any other delegate, and he is not bashful about saying so. His place is at the head of the war

council and the front of the battle—but he will take that place only if the party proves worthy of his trust.

Ravengard is a stern warrior dedicated to discipline and results. Having risen through the ranks of the Flaming Fist by the might of his blade and the sharpness of his wits, he sometimes lacks sophistication and tact, but he possesses an unwavering commitment to the law. More comfortable working with soldiers than adventurers, Ravengard is used to giving orders and having them obeyed without question.

Though Baldur's Gate is still recovering from the havoc caused by the resurrection within the city of Bhaal, god of murder, the metropolis remains one of Faerûn's most populous, wealthy, and powerful cities. Ravengard recognizes his duty to protect the city above all else, and the Flaming Fist's tired reserves are desperately needed for reconstruction and policing. However, he would love to see the Flaming Fist take a leading role in the fight against the Cult of the Dragon, if only to give the defenders of Baldur's Gate a stature befitting the greatest city in Faerûn. This opportunity for glory makes Ravengard receptive to the adventurers' overtures, as long as their plans and decisions promise stability and discipline.

KING MELANDRACH

Neutral male wild elf fighter/druid

Ideals: Balance, nation (“We elves were once the greatest civilization to grace Faerûn, and my people are heir to that history. I will not squander our waning strength.”)

Interaction Traits: Quiet, arrogant

Pledged Resources: Elven eldritch knights

The King of the Misty Forest is the delegate for the elves of both the Misty Forest and the High Forest. Whereas his sons Alagarthas and Neronvain always rushed headlong into their own pursuits, Melandrach is more circumspect. He has led the elves of the Misty Forest since before most of their kind abandoned their lands in the Retreat. Despite the years of discussion and meditation that preceded it, Melandrach considered the Retreat a rash decision, and he is understandably hesitant to commit to any sudden course of action.

During meetings of the council, Melandrach consistently argues for caution and more information, and nothing the adventurers say seems to make any difference. That changes when it is revealed that his lost son Neronvain has become the cult's Green Wyrmspeaker.

TAERN “THUNDERSPELLS” HORNBLADE

Lawful good male human wizard

Ideals: Logic, greater good (“Calculated risks are necessary to win this war, and no one is likely to emerge unscathed.”)

Interaction Traits: Ponderous, curious

Pledged Resources: The army of Silvermoon (the Knights in Silver) and Silvermoon conscript troops

Taern Hornblade has lived an unnaturally long life by consuming *potions of longevity*. The wizard led Silvermoon for many years as high mage, but

eventually ceded control to Methrammar, leader of the city's army and son of its most famous ruler, Alustriel. Though Methrammar remains leader of Silverymoon and a member of the Lords' Alliance, he is too forthright and earnest to succeed as a diplomat. As such, Taern was sent to the Council of Waterdeep in his stead.

Silverymoon has a large army and many wizards who would greatly assist in the coming battle, but Taern has not lived this long by being rash. He is one of the most cautious delegates, knowing that Silverymoon's great wards of protection have stood against dragons before. Fearing that committing soldiers to the effort against the Cult of the Dragon might leave the city weakened, Taern needs to know that the party will protect any troops he lends to the coalition. As such, he seeks to gather as much information as possible about the adventurers and other potential allies.

SIR ISTEVAL

Lawful good male human paladin

Ideals: Tradition, honor ("Against Tiamat, we either stand together or fall alone. Who will stand with Cormyr?")

Interaction Traits: Honorable, wise, dour

Pledged Resources: The might of Cormyr, including Purple Dragon Knights and War Wizards

Sir Isteval is a former adventurer and Purple Dragon Knight of Cormyr. Though not an actual member of the Lords' Alliance, he is present at the Council of Waterdeep as the alliance's nominal representative for Daggerford. That small settlement can contribute little to the effort to defeat the Cult of the Dragon, however, and in truth, Isteval has been drafted by Cormyr to gain insight into what looks to be a war brewing on its western border.

Isteval has too much respect for the other delegates to hide this information from them, and he assures those present that his loyalties—to Daggerford, to Cormyr, to the Lords' Alliance, and to all good folk—are not at cross-purposes. This forthright approach nevertheless causes an uproar among other delegates, and the adventurers must take a hand in insuring that Isteval is not expelled from the council meetings.

A veteran dragon slayer, Isteval bears a wound in his leg that resists magical healing, and he walks with a cane made from a bone of the green dragon that dealt him the injury. The paladin can be a helpful source of dragon lore, but his advice is always guarded. He sees his infirmity as a reminder from his god Lathander of the dangers of hubris. As befits his deity's ethos, Isteval has chosen to treat his injury as a reason to encourage the heroics of others even as his own legend fades. Still, at times like these when the world needs heroes, he doesn't like being reminded that he must watch the fight from the sidelines.

Isteval believes in heroes as the spark that can ignite the flames of righteousness in others and the light that chases away the darkness of evil. Seeing this spark in the adventurers makes the paladin one of the party's strongest advocates at the Council of Waterdeep, as long as they pursue a principled path.

Sir Isteval has much in common with Ontharr Frume of the Order of the Gauntlet. The two are potential allies in all things, which worries some of the other Lords' Alliance members.

THE ZHENTARIM

The Zhentarim—also known as the Black Network—is a loose affiliation of merchants, mercenaries, and malefactors. Common folk know the Zhentarim as the people to talk to when you need the best guards or mercenaries money can buy. And if the cargo is shady or the cause you're fighting for is questionable or even unjust, the Zhentarim don't mind.

Affiliation with the Zhentarim can be profitable to sellswords, thieves, and rogues of every stripe. It's plausible that adventurers in your campaign might become members of the organization—but like most residents of Faerûn, they won't know the full extent of the Zhentarim's operations and goals.

Unknown to all but a few, the heart of the Zhentarim is a cabal of evil and sometimes monstrous leaders who seek to extend the Black Network's blood-soaked reach into every assassination, black market, and illegal deal that happens in Faerûn. The order's criminal connections burrow into every major city and thieves' guild in the Western Heartlands and along the Sword Coast. Wherever a city's coinage is disastrously undermined by counterfeiting, wherever an up-and-coming business runs roughshod over its established competitors, and wherever a political struggle turns to widespread intimidation, it's a safe bet that the Zhentarim are involved.

However, engaging in mainstream corruption and wanting to see Tiamat ascendant are two different things. The Zhentarim have no illusions about what the Dragon Queen's return would mean for their plans. Wanting to secretly rule the world from the shadows for themselves, the leaders of the Black Network have no desire to become agents and errand-runners for some petty god and her dragon cohorts.

This viewpoint makes the Zhentarim an interesting addition to the characters' possible allies. Under normal circumstances, the Harpers, the Lords' Alliance, the Order of the Gauntlet, and the Emerald Enclave would shun ties to the Black Network—and possibly arrest its emissaries. However, the crisis created by the Cult of the Dragon is unprecedented. Every resource that can be mustered will be needed in the final showdown against the cult, and the Zhentarim's network of spies, assassins, and mercenary armies cannot be ignored.

Even with the fate of the world and the Zhentarim's own future hanging in the balance, the order demands payment for services—and where need and risk are greatest, the pay is expected to be equally great. This mercenary attitude does not sit well with the Lords'



Alliance, however, and they are the only group with the resources to pay the Black Network's price. The heroes can attempt to sway the opinions of the other factions—and have a chance to buy the Zhentarim's allegiance outright in the follow-up to episode 7.

In the end, too much is at stake to sit this fight out, and the Zhentarim pitch in against the cult regardless of whether their price is paid. However, if the other factions want a voice in how the Zhentarim go to war against the cult, it will cost them. If the Zhentarim fight on their own, they strike when and how they choose.

At least one Black Network mission is carried out regardless of payment. Without the knowledge of anyone outside the Zhentarim, one of their agents has infiltrated the cult and gets close enough to Wyrmspeaker Varram to steal the *White Dragon Mask*. This theft sets off a sequence of events that culminates in Varram's portion of the "Death to the Wyrmspeakers" episode.

USING THE ZHENTARIM

Black Network agents are useful NPCs that you can introduce at appropriate times during the adventure. Characters who played *Hoard of the Dragon Queen* have already met one member of the Black Network—the female gnome Jamna Gleamsilver. If the characters need information or gear they can't obtain any other way, seeking out or being approached by a Zhentarim agent is an easy way for you to provide it.

A typical Black Network agent is a highly capable adventurer with no scruples. Some Zhentarim have winged snake companions that carry messages on scrolls as they fly, allowing agents to keep in contact with one another.

Although the Zhentarim as a whole oppose the cult's plans, not everyone in the Black Network shares that view. A number of Zhentarim agents believe that the cult's victory is inevitable, and that by standing against the cult, the Zhentarim risk losing everything. If events are going too smoothly for the heroes, you can introduce a few rogue Black Network agents to throw a wrench into the characters' plans at the worst possible moment.

RIAN NIGHTSHADE

Lawful evil female tiefling warlock

Ideals: Logic, greed ("I'm certain we can come to an agreement that all parties will favor. But if not, we have other means of settling the issue.")

Interaction Traits: Polite, mercantile, ruthless

Pledged Resources: Assassins and mercenaries

Rian is a member of the Zhentarim and the Black Network's envoy during the third Council of Waterdeep. She is seated at the table as a special adviser to Lord Neverember, and her affiliation with the Zhentarim will not be mentioned. However, neither she nor Lord Neverember try to deny or conceal that affiliation if the characters question why Rian is present.

The Black Network backs any plans that increase the likelihood of defeating the cult. Any and all alliances are fine, as are any outcomes that add to the council's strategic resources. Rian doesn't have any particular interest in morality, and dark acts have no impact on her attitude toward the party. She disapproves of taking

any wyrmspeakers alive, though, fearing the power of such dangerous figures and questioning the chance of success for attempts to turn or interrogate them. She favors discreet execution, interrogation of the corpse with appropriate rituals, and destruction of the body to prevent resurrection.

The Black Network remains uncommitted until the final council when pledges are made. If the party has earned the Zhentarim's respect, they provide their services at only a nominal cost. However, such action almost certainly alienates most of the other factions from the adventurers. Unlike the other factions, the Zhentarim's loyalty can be purchased regardless of their respect for the characters, if the party can negotiate terms to be paid by the other factions.

METALLIC DRAGONS

The good dragons of Faerûn hear the *Draakhorn's* call and know what it portends. With the fate of the world hanging in the balance, the good dragons will take action to oppose the return of Tiamat. However, it remains to be seen whether they do so in concert with the humanoid factions of the Sword Coast, or whether they strike on their own with no thought or concern for the fate of the lesser races.

USING METALLIC DRAGONS

The metallic dragons will strike against the cultists at the Well of Dragons, but they are much more effective if their attacks are coordinated as part of the overall plan of battle. Moreover, if they can be brought into the alliance represented by the Council of Waterdeep, they can help defend humanoid territories from the cult's devastating raids. This is covered in greater detail in episode 6.

GIANTS

Though many giants have thrown their lot in with the Cult of the Dragon, most remember the ancient dragon-giant wars with bitterness and hatred. Tales of feuds, bloodletting, and death fuel the giants' hatred of dragons, but the giant races are their own masters. As such, they don't easily cooperate with the small races. Even when good giants see the need and wisdom in joining forces with lesser folk, they often resist the idea out of pride until someone or something can command their respect.

USING GIANTS

Engaging the giants in an alliance against the Cult of the Dragon can be handled by NPCs (most likely by members of the Harpers or the Emerald Enclave). If the characters completed *Hoard of the Dragon Queen* in possession of Skyreach Castle, offering to return it to the giants (either behind the scenes or in a side trek episode of your own creation) is sure to guarantee their support of the factions against the Cult of the Dragon. The presence of giants at the final showdown will be an enormous advantage for the forces fighting against the cult.



EPISODE 1: COUNCIL OF WATERDEEP

The *Rise of Tiamat* begins immediately after the conclusion of *Hoard of the Dragon Queen*, and assumes that the characters have returned to Waterdeep in the aftermath of that adventure. While in the city, the adventurers are summoned to the first meeting of the Council of Waterdeep. While at that gathering, they hear the sounding of the ancient *Draakhorn* that heralds the next stage of the Cult of the Dragon's plots. (See appendix B for more information on the *Draakhorn*, but be sure to withhold that information until the characters have played through the episode "The Sea of Moving Ice.")

STARTING THE ADVENTURE

The Rise of Tiamat begins in Waterdeep. If you played *Hoard of the Dragon Queen*, the characters might have already made their way back to the City of Splendors after Skyreach Castle crashed at the end of that first adventure. If you didn't play *Hoard of the Dragon Queen*, if Skyreach Castle wasn't crashed, or if the characters went somewhere other than Waterdeep afterward, you need to get the party back to Waterdeep for the start of this adventure.

It's easy enough to simply tell the players that their characters are back in Waterdeep. However, if you

suspect that your group won't find that satisfying, you can avoid playing through a long overland journey by making use of the following scenario.

Wherever the characters are when this session begins, a raven flies up to them. The bird is part of an *animal messenger* relay dispatched by Leosin Erlanthar's allies in the Emerald Enclave.

The raven lands a dozen paces from you, then boldly hops closer, a flat parcel wrapped in oilskin strapped to its belly. It eyes you enigmatically for a few moments, then speaks in a familiar voice. "Leosin Erlanthar sends his heartiest congratulations! Please use the gift this bird brings to meet me in Waterdeep as soon as possible."

The bird waits patiently while the leather parcel is removed from its harness. The parcel contains a carefully folded *teleport* scroll and the sigil sequence of a permanent teleport circle in Waterdeep. The circle can be in a temple, a government building, or any other site of your choice. If the party includes more than six characters, the parcel contains two scrolls. If none of the characters can use a *teleport* scroll, they'll need to seek out an NPC who can. Just don't make it too difficult.

BACK IN WATERDEEP

The most powerful factions of the Sword Coast all recognize the significance of Tiamat's possible return, and they are willing to cooperate with each other to prevent it. Trust doesn't come easily for these disparate groups. But even for orders and organizations that have been in conflict in the past, the "enemy of my enemy" is easily understood.

To coordinate their efforts against the Cult of the Dragon, the factions have sent important delegates for secret meetings in Waterdeep. If the adventurers played through *Hoard of the Dragon Queen*, they now know as much as anyone about the cult's activities, and their heroics have been brought to the attention of powerful leaders and earned them a place at the council table. If you didn't play *Hoard of the Dragon Queen*, a separate group of heroes assaulted Skyreach Castle and bravely gave their lives to crash the fortress. The characters are then invited to the council simply because of their reputation as powerful adventurers, and because the council expects to need their services.

FOUR COUNCILS

When the characters arrive in Waterdeep, they are met by the Harper agent Leosin Erlanthar. The monk explains the purpose of the council and tells the adventurers they are expected to attend the first gathering—both so the council can thank them for their great deeds and to advise the council about the Cult of the Dragon. Four meetings of the council occur at critical points throughout the crisis, right up to the final episode of the adventure at the Well of Dragons.

During the **first session** of the council, all the Sword Coast becomes aware of how the Cult of the Dragon's plots are advancing when the *Draakhorn* sounds. In the aftermath, the characters are given leads to episode 2 or to Varram in the "Death to the Wyrmspeakers" episode.

A **second session** of the council is summoned to address increasingly aggressive dragon activity. The characters are asked to investigate a devastating series of raids in the Misty Forest, leading to Neronvain in the "Death to the Wyrmspeakers" episode. The adventurers are also approached by a representative who wishes to bring the party to a secret meeting with the metallic dragons, leading to episode 6.

A **third session** of the council is called to assess the gains made by the allied factions against the Cult of the Dragon. The party is called on to pursue two leads that might grant even more advantage over the cult—a renegade cultist offering to turn over one of the dragon masks, in episode 7, and an attempt to undercut the power of the exile Red Wizards in episode 8.

At the **fourth session** of the Council of Waterdeep, the adventurers learn that the plots of the Cult of the Dragon and the Red Wizards are nearing fruition. The forces of the various factions must gather in preparation for the assault on the Well of Dragons.

During each new council, the various factions measure the party's actions and achievements, comparing those actions to their own goals. Characters who further the goals of a faction will find that faction

willing to pledge more resources to the fight against the cult. However, gaining the allegiance of one faction might lead to distrust from others. The adventurers must strike a careful balance in their appeal to—and appeasement of—the delegates to gather the strongest force possible to confront Tiamat.

Though it isn't ideal for all attendees, the Lords' Palace in Waterdeep is the designated location of the council meetings. The Lords' Alliance faction is sending the most delegates, and those delegates prefer a civilized gathering place.

GATHERING ALLIES

Though every faction provides some troops and resources toward the final showdown with the forces of Tiamat, the extent of their support—and how much effect that support will have—is dependent on the respect the adventurers garner from each group for their actions. Before committing irrevocably to the fight, a faction must be convinced that the cult presents a danger surpassing all other concerns—and that the adventurers are the right heroes to lead this fight. Moreover, what is worthy of respect in one faction might lose respect from another.

As the adventurers successfully complete episodes of the adventure, you track how they earn or lose respect from each faction on the Council Scorecard (appendix C). See "Scoring the Sessions," below, for more information.

LEADING DELEGATES

Most factions have sent a delegation to the Council of Waterdeep consisting of several important persons and their aides. In general, only the leaders of each delegation are present at the council meetings attended by the adventurers. However, no matter how individual delegates might react to the characters' deeds, they also heed the words of their fellow councilors not present at the council meetings. Brave and heroic feats that individual leaders might approve of could be frowned on by a faction as a whole if those deeds don't line up with the faction's agenda.

SESSIONS OF THE COUNCIL

The format of the four council meetings as described below follows the flow of the adventure as set out in the "Overview" section. If events unfold differently in your campaign, adjust the meetings and their events accordingly. For each council meeting, a brief justification for the different attitudes of the factions is provided. More information on the factions and their delegates is provided under "Allies" in the introduction section.

Each session of the council discusses the setup for episodes meant to be played as a result of that session, and the follow-up for previous episodes whose outcome is resolved in that session. In all cases, see those specific episodes for full details.

Two preliminary events help to set up the first session of the council: news of the assassination of Arthagast Ulbrinter, one of the Masked Lords of Waterdeep, and the sounding of the *Draakhorn*.

DEATH OF A MASKED LORD

Though the leadership of the Cult of the Dragon could not have realized it, one of the key events in the fight to thwart Severin's plans was the cult's assassination of Arthagast Ulbrinter, a Masked Lord of Waterdeep and husband of Remi Haventree of the Harpers. News of Arthagast's recent murder has spread across the Sword Coast, and has galvanized opposition to the cult in Waterdeep.

In her grief, Remi Haventree has sworn to destroy the cult and the threat it presents to the Sword Coast. She has been instrumental in bringing the factions together for this Council of Waterdeep, setting up the potential for alliances that the adventurers must now complete.

THE DRAAKHORN SOUNDS

Shortly after the crash or capture of Skyreach Castle, operatives of the Cult of the Dragon sounded the *Draakhorn* at the distant Well of Dragons. An ancient magic relic, the *Draakhorn* is being used by the cult to summon chromatic dragons to their dark cause.

As the characters are arriving in Waterdeep, read or paraphrase the following.

A sudden shift in the wind brings with it a strange sense of unease. The feeling is akin to the drop in air pressure before the approach of a deadly storm, or faint tremors felt from a landslide or earthquake far away. You're not the only ones who have noticed. The city around you goes unnaturally quiet suddenly. No dogs bark, no birds squawk. Even the street vendors have gone silent.

The silence lasts only a moment before the normal sounds of Waterdeep return to mask the unexplained sensation. If the characters get to a quiet place, they notice the disturbance again, like a rumbling almost too faint to hear. As well, subtle changes in the behavior of animals can be noted. Dogs are nervous and on edge, horses are skittish, cats are more feral than usual, and rats gather in large, bold packs. Sensitive NPCs are also affected, becoming nervous, fearful, and impatient.

During the first session of the council (or earlier if the characters make efforts to investigate the strange phenomenon), the adventurers are approached by Dala Silmerhelve—a Waterdhavian noble. Read or paraphrase the following when the characters speak to Dala.

"The disturbance that's been sensed across the Sword Coast is the *Draakhorn*—an ancient device whose sounding alerts dragons across Faerûn that great events are unfolding. It's impossible to say what the sounding means, but the dragons hear it clearly and will eventually answer its call."

Lady Silmerhelve learned this from her family's secret benefactor, an ancient bronze dragon named Nymmurh. She knows a little more about the *Draakhorn*, but she

waits to reveal it until she attends the first council meeting. She flatly refuses to tell anyone the source of her knowledge if asked. This makes Ulder Ravengard, King Conneerad, and Ontharr Frume suspicious, but others take the secrecy in stride. If Lady Silmerhelve is treated poorly, it might affect how Nymmurh interacts with the characters in "Metallic Dragons, Arise."

FIRST SESSION

Having accepted the invitation to the council meeting, the adventurers are received at the Lords' Palace. Make the introduction to the City of Splendors and the Lords' Palace as detailed or as simple as fits your campaign style.

Once inside the Lords' Palace, the party is escorted to the secret council chambers by Leosin Erlanthar. The outer galleries are packed with nobles engaged in heated debate, and the guards are wearing livery from city-states across the North.

Although Erlanthar is not invited to the council discussions, Remallia Haventree has informed him of the agenda and the reason the party has been summoned. He advises the characters that though the factions are all nominally committed to stopping the Cult of the Dragon, none of the delegates have made substantive pledges yet.

Too much mistrust still burdens the factions, and not enough is known about the situation. Erlanthar thinks the leaders need someone to show them the right path—heroes who will lead the forces of the Sword Coast with certainty into the coming darkness. He believes that the adventurers have a chance to be those heroes. However, he explains that each faction will weigh every word the characters say and scrutinize every one of their decisions. What pleases one group might anger another, and it will be incredibly difficult to make all parties happy.

FOLLOW-UP: HOARD OF THE DRAGON QUEEN

Once introductions are made, Dagult Neverember summarizes the situation if the adventurers did not play through *Hoard of the Dragon Queen*. This includes the plan to summon Tiamat, increased dragon raids led by the cult, the treasure collection system, the crash or capture of Skyreach Castle, and the importance of the wyrmspeakers and dragon masks to the cult.

If the party played through the previous adventure, Dagult explains that the council has heard reports from Ontharr, Leosin, and other witnesses, but that the delegates wish to hear from the heroes at the center of recent events. (At this point, use Neverember to also fill in any information the characters did not gather during *Hoard of the Dragon Queen* that you deem important.)

Most of the factions recognize that Skyreach Castle needed to be stopped, and they are happy if the castle was crashed. However, some members of the Lords' Alliance think it unconscionable that such a resource would be destroyed, intentionally or otherwise. These dissidents believe it would have been better for the characters to have waited for reinforcements, then attacked to secure the castle (regardless of how unrealistic that plan might have been).

The fate of the dragon hatchery divides opinion as well. Most delegates respect a decision to destroy the hatchery, accepting that having fewer dragons to deal with later on is an advantage. However, the Harpers would have preferred the eggs to be kept for ransoming back to their parents, potentially keeping those dragons from cooperating with the cult. Dagult would have sold the valuable eggs to “responsible buyers,” then used that gold to hire more mercenaries. The Emerald Enclave is firmly against any dragon eggs being destroyed, believing that the chromatic dragons are a part of the natural order and that killing their young upsets the balance of that order. Taern Hornblade and Lady Laeral Silverhand think there might have been a way to leverage the eggs as ransom, but both recognize that they would have been dangerous to hold onto—and even more dangerous to return.

When the discussion around the events from *Hoard of the Dragon Queen* is concluded, the council moves on to current matters. It's obvious to all that the adventurers have taken a firm hand in addressing this crisis, and that they have proven their worth. The council deputizes the characters with emergency investigative powers and a writ demonstrating such. This grants the characters access to resources and sites they deem necessary for their investigation, but carries with it the burden of oversight from the council. If the adventurers misbehave or abuse their powers, their actions will be reviewed and the writ will be revoked.

Once the characters have been vested with their powers, the first stages of the adventure await.

SETUP: VARRAM THE WHITE

One of Remallia Haventree's first acts in her fight against the Cult of the Dragon was to encourage the Harpers to focus all their resources on the cult's activities and its most powerful members. Those efforts have been successful, and Leosin Erlanthar reports to the adventurers of the movements of Varram, the cult's White Wyrmspeaker. This leads to “Varram the White,” part of the “Death to the Wyrmspeakers” episode.

SETUP: THE SEA OF MOVING ICE

The sounding of the *Draakhorn* weighs heavily on all the leaders of the Sword Coast. Seeking more information on the horn and its whereabouts leads the party on an expedition to the frozen North, and episode 2.

SECOND SESSION

At the Second Council of Waterdeep, the adventurers see two new faces. Lord Neverember has been replaced as Open Lord of Waterdeep by Lady Laeral Silverhand, who now sits at the head of the council table. Dagult sits to her right, alongside a human female introduced as Elia (see below).

The delegates discuss the raids in their various domains after receiving the characters' report, providing flavor for the ongoing activities of the cult and giving a clear impression that the situation is escalating.

FOLLOW-UP: VARRAM THE WHITE

In response to the fate of Wyrmspeaker Varram, the Harpers and Taern are upset if the dwarf was slain without being interrogated, and Connerad is upset that he was not captured and made an example of in a court of dwarven law. Though most are pleased with capturing Varram, the Emerald Enclave is nonplussed, believing that capturing him only complicates matters. Varram has already demonstrated a willingness to corrupt the natural order, making a trial excessive—and potentially opening the door to a rescue attempt.

FOLLOW-UP: THE SEA OF MOVING ICE

The Arcane Brotherhood are powerful allies, and all are pleased if the party wins their allegiance—with the exception of the Order of the Gauntlet. Ontharr Frume knows that the Arcane Brotherhood does not police its members in what kinds of knowledge they pursue, and that they tolerate many evil wizards in their company. Bringing the Arcane Brotherhood into the alliance doesn't lose Frume's respect, but neither does it earn it.

SETUP: NERONVAIN

Delaan Winterhound of the Emerald Enclave is involved with investigations into recent dragon attacks in the Misty Forest. King Melandrach waves away Delaan's concerns, saying that dragon attacks in the area have stopped since his elves increased their patrols and fortified their positions. Discovering the truth will lead the adventurers to “Neronvain,” part of the “Death to the Wyrmspeakers” episode.

SETUP: METALLIC DRAGONS, ARISE

During the council, the adventurers are introduced to the silver dragon Otaaryliakkarnos, in her human guise as Elia. She bears an invitation from the metallic dragons to a council of their own, and the council delegates ask the adventurers to attend. This leads into episode 6.

THIRD SESSION

The third council features another new face—the tiefling Rian Nightshade, introduced as a special adviser to Lord Neverember. Characters who pay attention notice that some at the meeting—including Sir Isteval, Ontharr Frume, and Ambassador Brawnnavil—are doing their best to ignore the secret Zhentarim delegate, who makes no statements unless addressed by the party.

FOLLOW-UP: NERONVAIN

News that the dragon attacks in the elven forest have ended is gratefully received by all on the council. However, King Melandrach responds with cold fury to news of his son Neronvain's betrayal. He remains hesitant to put elves in the front lines of combat, but no longer acts as a roadblock to negotiations. His pragmatism means that he no longer has any qualms against the adventurers' securing the allegiance of Red Wizards, giants, or even devils in the fight against the Cult of the Dragon—as long as such allies are conveniently arrayed in front of his elves in battle.

FOLLOW-UP: METALLIC DRAGONS, ARISE

All the delegates are impressed if the party has gained the support of the metallic dragons, even if their own faction was asked to make concessions. The good dragons are wise and just creatures, and their acceptance of the party greatly boosts the adventurers' standing in everyone's eyes.

King Melandrach is furious if the characters agreed to an apology for the *Dracorage mythal*. He makes the apology because honor demands it, but he resents the party for forcing his hand. Connerad Brawnnavil is similarly unhappy if a concession was made in response to the ancient dragonmoots of the dwarves. The traditions of the dragonmoot saved many lives in their time, and the fact that one metallic dragon was injured indicates that it was probably misbehaving. Dwarves have no patience for tolerating misbehaving dragons, no matter what their color.

Bartering away portions of the hoard that the cult stole is the only way some factions can make concessions. For every concession that was made for a share, circle a negative (–) icon in the following order: Dagult Neverember, Connerad, Melandrach, Lady Laeral, Ulder Ravengard, Taern Hornblade, the Harpers, Sir Isteval, and the Order of the Gauntlet. The Emerald Enclave is not affected by such concessions, since the order has not been overly affected by the dragon raids.

As an effect of the way in which the adventurers have impressed the dragon council, it now falls to them to allocate the dragons that have pledged their service to the factions. Dragons allocated to a delegate of the Lords' Alliance are assigned to protect the capital city of the delegate's territory. A dragon assigned to the Harpers will be used for intelligence gathering. The Order of the Gauntlet sends any dragons to the city of Elturel, while the Emerald Enclave sends dragons to guard the ancient treant known as the Grandfather Tree. The party can also distribute dragons to specific regions. In such a scenario, a dragon protects a 100-mile-radius area around the point where it is assigned, stopping draconic raids in that area.

SETUP: XONTHAL'S TOWER

At the summit, information comes to the characters revealing that a senior member of the Cult of the Dragon seeks to defect from the group, and that the cultist is offering a dragon mask as part of his plea for aid. Though the offer could be a trap, the council delegates believe that the risk is worth it. The defector is holed up in a fortress known as Xonthal's Tower, recently taken over by the cult. Because a small team has a better chance to successfully infiltrate the tower than a larger force, the adventurers are asked to investigate. This leads to episode 7.

SETUP: MISSION TO THAY

The Red Wizards are integral to the cult's plans for summoning Tiamat, but the Red Wizards allied with the Cult of the Dragon are exiles with no connection to Thay. The Thayan Red Wizards approach the Council of Waterdeep asking for an envoy to be sent to Thay, where they must convince the most reviled wizards in Faerûn to join with the forces of the Sword Coast for the common good. This paves the way for episode 8.

FOURTH SESSION

The fourth council is the final meeting between the faction leaders and the adventurers. Hundreds of chromatic dragons have been sighted near the Well of Dragons, and the time has come to strike. At the end of this council, the delegates make their final decisions of support for the adventurers and their cause, if they haven't done so already.

FOLLOW-UP: XONTHAL'S TOWER

At an appropriate point in the council meetings, Rian Nightshade approaches the characters and asks for a private audience. She explains her position as an emissary of the Zhentarim, and of the Zhentarim's interest in current affairs. She bemoans the dithering of the other factions, stating that the Black Network is willing to act immediately and unflinchingly—if the party can help arrange agreeable terms for the Zhentarim's support.

Rian points out that the Zhentarim have a keen interest in Xonthal's Tower. Ownership of the tower is under discussion by the council, but the tiefling wants to deal directly with the adventurers, who have claim to the tower by right of conquest. The Zhentarim are willing to purchase the adventurers' interest in the tower for 50,000 gold pieces, and Rian can throw in a *potion of greater healing*, a *potion of frost giant strength*, and a *scroll of earthquake* to sweeten the deal. This price could go up considerably if the party negotiates agreeable terms from the other factions for the Zhentarim's support—up to an additional 25,000 gp, at your discretion.

FOLLOW-UP: MISSION TO THAY

Any alliance with the Red Wizards is a mixed blessing. More pragmatic factions and delegates—including the Harpers, King Melandrach, Dagult Neverember, and Taern Hornblade—are impressed by the diplomacy such an arrangement demonstrates, and know that regardless of the Red Wizards' character and previous plots against the Sword Coast, they are a significant asset. Sir Isteval, Ambassador Brawnnavil, and the Order of the Gauntlet object to the idea of even opening dialogue with the Red Wizards, and believe that the Thayans would agree to an alliance only if it furthered their own plots to rule the Sword Coast and all Faerûn. Lady Laeral and Ulder Ravengard both think the Red Wizards unpredictable but necessary, believing that the only important factor is how the Thayans influence the outcome of the final battle.

FOLLOW-UP: METALLIC DRAGONS, ARISE

The outcome of the support of the metallic dragons (as allocated in the third council) is accounted for in this fourth council. Factions that did not receive draconic aid suffer terribly in the cult's raids, and some delegates resent the adventurers for withholding the service of their dragon allies. Only Isteval, Connerad, and the Harpers maintain their respect for the adventurers regardless of how the dragons were assigned. Cormyr remains largely untouched by the cult, whose operations remain focused on the Sword Coast. The Harpers have no strongholds, and so suffer less than other factions. Ambassador Brawnnavil appreciates the value of dragon guards, but his strongholds are deep underground and hard for the cult to reach—and all dwarves know how even good dragons covet dwarven gems and gold.

SCORING THE SESSIONS

Every faction will donate troops and resources to the struggle against the Cult of the Dragon. However, to win the battle requires the full, unconditional support of multiple factions. The outcome of the Council of Waterdeep is tracked on the **Council Scorecard** (appendix C), which determines what resources are available to oppose the Cult of the Dragon during the final confrontation at the Well of Dragons.

Which way a faction leans is determined by the adventurers' actions and accomplishments during the adventure. Successfully completing an episode of the adventure will usually gain support from multiple factions. However, each faction has its own priorities, and sometimes a heroic deed that pleases one faction can anger or disappoint another. In some cases, a faction might even prefer that the characters engage in antiheroic acts—by executing certain enemies rather than taking prisoners, for example. The adventurers might also be seen to be favoring certain factions, if metallic dragon allies are sent to defend the interests and settlements of one faction over another.

Each faction has its own column on the scorecard. Important events that occur during *The Rise of Tiamat* are noted along the side of the scorecard, beginning with events that could have occurred in the previous adventure, *Hoard of the Dragon Queen*. If you didn't play *Hoard of the Dragon Queen*, assume that events marked with an asterisk (*) occurred and that other events did not.

A plus sign (+) for a particular faction and event indicates that the faction approves of the successful outcome of that event, and that the characters gain respect for that outcome. Each + counts as +1 in the final tally. A negative icon (−) indicates that a faction disapproves of an outcome and the characters lose respect for it. Each − counts as −1 in the final tally. A blank means that the faction either doesn't consider the event significant or that there's no consensus within the faction. Some events are especially important to certain factions, and are marked double plus (+/+) or double minus (−/−). They count as +2 or −2, respectively, in the tally.

Whenever an event occurs as noted in the list, circle or highlight the appropriate icons. You can usually mark all the icons in a row at once. Icons that are marked off are counted to determine each faction's attitude, while unmarked icons are ignored.

Three rows on the table have icons that can't be marked all at once. These are the decisions about which factions receive metallic dragon guardians, which factions had to make concessions to secure the metallic dragons' aid, and who takes possession of Xonthal's Tower. Only the factions that are affected have their icons marked. For example, if King Melandrach and Ulder Ravengard had to make concessions to win the support of the metallic dragons, only their entries on that line should be circled or highlighted.

Some attendees are easier to sway toward pledging their full support, including Dagult Neverember. Others are more difficult, such as Connerad Brawnnavil. Additionally, securing Sir Isteval or Laeral Silverhand's full support provides one additional respect for certain of the other factions, since both those senior delegates hold great influence on the council.

The scorecard covers the events and outcomes that are likely to occur over the course of the adventure. However, *The Rise of Tiamat* is an open-ended scenario, such that decisions by the players might trigger events that aren't noted on the scorecard. Excellent diplomacy, good roleplaying, and creative handling of events that have the potential to impress or anger certain delegates can be rewarded with additional respect, at your discretion. Likewise, if the characters tackle episodes in a different order from this list, just mark off icons for events as they happen, then keep track of the subtotals as you see fit.

At the end of each council, add up all the plusses and minuses from that stage of the adventure and write the subtotal in the provided space. At the end of the fourth council, add up the subtotals. You can use the subtotals as feedback to give the players an idea of how the factions are reacting to their exploits and whether the delegates treat them with respect, disdain, or something between.

The scorecard is meant to be used only by the DM, but there's nothing wrong with sharing it with your players if that suits the style of your game. If you don't reveal the specifics of the scorecard, convey the players' and adventurers' goals through description and roleplaying, providing good indications of how effectively the adventurers are winning over the factions.

If a faction's final tally equals or exceeds the "Score Needed For Support," the characters have won that faction's full support in the final battle. If the tally is below the score required, that faction sends only minimal support that won't help in the final confrontation. The benefits of each faction's support are determined in the final episode, "Tiamat's Return."



EPISODE 2: THE SEA OF MOVING ICE

Far to the north, beyond the Spine of the World and above even Icewind Dale, lies the Sea of Moving Ice. Gigantic icebergs wander listlessly through this glasslike sea, or are sent smashing and grinding against each other by bitterly cold winds, the sea spray transformed into fantastic frozen shapes around them. Only creatures adapted to severe cold can survive such frigid extremes, but many beasts—and even people—make their homes in the Sea of Moving Ice. One such creature is the white dragon Arauthator, known as “Old White Death” by those he stalks and terrorizes. In this section of the adventure, the heroes’ battle against the cult leads them to one of Arauthator’s iceberg lairs.

THE DRAAKHORN’S CALL

Each time the *Draakhorn* sounds out, its unearthly call echoes across the Sword Coast. Dragons hear it plainly, even as other creatures hear it only as an indistinct moaning when their surroundings are quiet and the wind blows just right. Creatures that cannot hear the *Draakhorn* can still sense it, like a faint vibration felt subconsciously and interpreted as a sense of dread.

The adventurers were introduced to the *Draakhorn* by Dala Silmerhelve during the first session of the Council of Waterdeep. When they are ready to seek more information on the ancient relic, Dala provides it.

“The Sea of Moving Ice was the last known location of the *Draakhorn*. No one can pinpoint its present location from the sound, or even verify with certainty that the relic is still in the northern sea, but the search must start there.

“The one person who could tell us more is a tiefling sorcerer called Maccath the Crimson. No one alive knows more about the *Draakhorn* than her, but the Arcane Brotherhood, of which she is also a member, hasn’t seen her for three years. She was investigating the Sea of Moving Ice when she disappeared.”

“OLD WHITE DEATH”

The white dragon Arauthator haunts the Sea of Moving Ice like an avenging wind. Personifying the brutality and savagery of his kind, Arauthator is a solid ally of the Cult of the Dragon, and can be counted on to be present at the Well of Dragons when Tiamat makes her triumphant return from the Nine Hells.

Arauthator’s chief lair is beneath a remote peak known as Lonewolf Mountain, but he maintains a number of smaller lairs among the icebergs that drift with the seasonal tides in the Sea of Moving Ice. One of these is known as Oyaviggaton (“island of eternity”)

by the local tribes known as the Ice Hunters, because of the many enemies Arauthator has frozen into the icy walls of the berg's hollowed interior.

In addition to his size, cunning, and ferocity, Arauthator wields spellcasting power that makes him a particularly dangerous foe. More than a century ago, during one of the cyclical periods of draconic violence known as the Rage of Dragons, Arauthator joined with a dozen other dragons in attacking the Hosttower of the Arcane in Luskan. Their assault toppled the west arm of the tower, and Arauthator was seen scooping up numerous items of great magical importance and power, including at least three tomes of rare spells. The possibility of recovering those books is part of what drew Maccath the Crimson to the Sea of Moving Ice.

Arauthator's iceberg lair serves primarily as a meeting ground for him and his mate, the ancient white dragon Arveiatuface ("the White Wyrn"). She is aware of the cult's activity but has been reluctant to join forces with it, and Arauthator seeks a way to gain her commitment. At one time, Arveiatuface served a wizard named Meltharond, whose corpse remains strapped to a saddle on the dragon's back. She has never accepted his death, and still speaks to him as if he were alive. Arauthator hopes that if he provides Arveiatuface with a new wizard to serve, she will recover from her grief and join him in wholeheartedly supporting the Cult of the Dragon. When the proud, ambitious Maccath the Crimson arrived in Arauthator's lair, the dragon enticed her with the prospect of becoming Arveiatuface's master and rider.

MACCATH THE CRIMSON

The Arcane Brotherhood is a league of mages based in the city of Luskan at the fabled Hosttower of the Arcane. The Hosttower is an academy for the best and brightest mages of Faerûn. Only the most promising are accepted as members in the Arcane Brotherhood, and only members of the order can study at the Hosttower.

Maccath the Crimson was one of those best and brightest when she journeyed to the Hosttower seeking admission. Her knowledge of dragon lore and draconic relics was already vast, but she wanted to know more about the dragons' magic. Even though she gained access to the accumulated lore of the Arcane Brotherhood, Maccath concluded that some questions could be answered only by dragons—and that questions about the magic stolen from the Hosttower during the last Rage of Dragons could be answered only by Arauthator. Maccath set sail on an expedition to learn those answers three years ago and hasn't been heard from since.

Dala Silmerhelve provides the characters with all that is known of Maccath's fate.

"Maccath reported her progress to the Hosttower by way of *sending* spells. Her last report spoke of seeing Ice Hunters paddling their sealskin boats toward a huge iceberg, flattened like a plateau across its surface, but ringed by icy peaks. She had intended to follow the Ice Hunters and investigate the iceberg. After that, no more reports came.

"Attempts to find Maccath using scrying and other magical means located only her ship, adrift and heavily damaged. Some of the ship's crew were seen dead, but no sign of the tiefling sorcerer was ever found. However, the lair of a dragon as powerful as Arauthator is no doubt protected against scrying magic. If Maccath is alive, in addition to the lore she can share regarding the *Draakhorn*, the Arcane Brotherhood would be most grateful to get her back."

SETTING SAIL

In Waterdeep, the characters are outfitted with cold weather gear, including snowshoes suitable for traversing deep drifts, and have passage north arranged on a ship specially built for plying the waters of the Sea of Moving Ice. *Frostskimmer* is captained by a human male known as Lerustah Half-face. The right half of his face was left a scarred ruin from severe frostbite suffered years ago on the Sea of Moving Ice. He keeps a leather hood drawn across his face most of the time, both for warmth and so as not to frighten children. Lerustah is a brave explorer and a skilled sailor.

Frostskimmer is a light longship with a shallow draft, driven by a single sail or by oars when necessary. The combination of wind and oar power is needed for picking a course through close-packed ice. Despite the ship's length of nearly sixty feet, it is still light enough to be lifted by its forty crew members if it becomes hemmed in by ice. The ship is open to the air, but the crew rig sailcloth shelters across the deck to keep away the wind and sleet and hold in some warmth.

THE SEA OF MOVING ICE

The journey up the Sword Coast isn't the focus of this episode, so you don't need to dwell on it in detail. With favorable winds, *Frostskimmer* reaches the Sea of Moving Ice in a few days. From that point, the ship must slow down and proceed cautiously.

Captain Lerustah has no strong feelings one way or the other about whether the crew should pull *Frostskimmer* onto an ice floe at night or spend the night on the water. An ice floe is more comfortable and offers safety from certain aquatic creatures. On the open water, the ship is safer from creatures that hunt only on the ice, but sleeping on the deck is colder and less comfortable than in an easily built snow shelter. The decision of where to spend the night is up to the characters.

ICE HUNTERS

The Ice Hunters are nomads that have lived in the North far longer than any other humans. Short, dark-haired, broad-faced, and with light brown skin, they cling stolidly to their culture and their traditions of fishing and whaling on the Sea of Moving Ice, and of hunting for seal, walrus, and polar bears among the ice floes. They travel by dogsled on land and ice, and paddle seal-hide boats called khyeks or oumyeks across the frigid water. They worship totems of animals from the world around them, such as Clever Oomio the gray seal, Grandfather Walrus, Great White Bear, and Pindalpau-pau the Reindeer Mother.

The Ice Hunters came unaware to the dragon's iceberg generations ago. Desiring servants to guard his lair during his long absences, the dragon killed just enough of the tribesfolk to force the rest to obey him out of terror. Using their unsurpassed ability as scouts, they act now as Arauthator's eyes and ears on the Sea of Moving Ice. Living as thralls, they have no doubt that if they ever leave the iceberg, Arauthator will hunt them down and take horrific revenge.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

Searching the Sea of Moving Ice for the plateau-like iceberg described by Maccath is a time-consuming process. Roll a d6 each morning, afternoon, and night. On a roll of 1, an encounter occurs. Roll on the table to determine the specifics, adding +1 for each previous table roll made while the characters were searching from the ship on water by day. Searching by night or searching by day while *Frostskimmr* is on an ice floe doesn't improve the odds of finding Oyaviggaton.

SEA OF MOVING ICE ENCOUNTERS

d6	Encounter or Event
1	Giant octopi
2	Merrow
3	Polar bear
4	Scrag*s
5	Ice Hunters
6	Ice Hunters in fishing boats
7+	Oyaviggaton sighted

*Use trolls with the Amphibious trait and a swim speed of 30 feet.

If combat becomes necessary, Captain Lerustah fights as a **knight** and his crew fight as **40 guards**. If fighting aboard *Frostskimmr*, the characters must be cautious while using area spells that deal fire or force damage. One such spell does minimal damage that can be fixed by the crew at sea after the fight ends. If two such spells are used, *Frostskimmr* must be hauled onto an ice floe for repairs that take half a day. Roll normally for events during that time, but reroll any total of 7 or higher.

Giant Octopi. This event can occur by day or night, but only on water. Two **giant octopi** attack simultaneously, trying to drag characters and crew off the ship into the freezing water. When one octopus is killed, the other withdraws underwater and escapes.

Merrow. This event can occur by day or night, on ice or water. Five **merrow** move as close as possible to *Frostskimmr* before attacking. If the characters are on the ship, the merrow try to swamp it by making a DC 25 Strength check, with a +2 bonus to the check for each additional merrow involved in the attempt. Success means that *Frostskimmr* lurches dangerously and each creature on board must make a DC 15 Strength or Dexterity saving throw. On a failed saving throw, a creature is dumped overboard. (To make things easy, divide the crew into groups of five and make one saving throw for each group.)

A creature that falls into the frigid water is swimming, and must make a DC 12 Constitution saving throw at the start of each turn that it is in the water. On each failed saving throw, the creature suffers one level of exhaustion. Characters in the water are preferred targets for monsters in the water.

Polar Bear. This event can occur day or night, but only on the ice. A crew member aboard *Frostskimmr* spots a **polar bear** stalking a wounded Ice Hunter on an ice floe. If the characters intervene and save the hunter, he is grateful, and converses with them in his own tongue. (If the characters have no means to communicate with him, one of *Frostskimmr's* crew can translate.) Though he is not from the tribe that lives on Oyaviggaton, the hunter knows the iceberg. In response to any questions about Oyaviggaton, he advises the characters as to its distance and direction from their current position, but warns them to keep away from it. Armed with this information, the characters gain a +1 bonus to their next two daytime event rolls.

Scrag*s. This event occurs only at night, and only on the ice. While *Frostskimmr* sits on an ice floe to wait for morning, three aquatic **trolls**, known as scrag*s (swim speed 30 ft., can breathe underwater), attack the ship. If the characters and crew don't intend to haul *Frostskimmr* onto an ice floe for the night, one of the scrag*s swims beneath the ship and wrenches a plank loose, causing a serious leak that requires the ship to be pulled onto the ice for repairs.

Ice Hunters. This event can occur only by day. A hunting party from Oyaviggaton (**12 tribal warriors**) is spotted pursuing seals on an ice floe, whether *Frostskimmr* is on the water or on an adjacent ice floe. The hunters are surly and uncommunicative if approached, knowing that they must return to the iceberg before nightfall or their kin will be punished. Captain Lerustah is puzzled by their behavior, knowing that the Ice Hunter people are shy but never hostile. The hunters quickly paddle their khyeks away to the northeast. If the characters follow the hunters or use that bearing for the next stage of their journey, they gain a +1 bonus to their next daytime event roll.

Ice Hunters in Fishing Boats. This event occurs only during the day. A group of fishers from Oyaviggaton (**12 tribal warriors**) are spotted in their characteristic boats, whether *Frostskimmr* is in the water or on a nearby ice floe. They are unfriendly and uncommunicative if approached, paddling away to the northeast as soon as they are able. If the characters follow the hunters or use that bearing for the next

stage of their journey, they gain a +1 bonus to their next daytime event roll.

Oyaviggaton Sighted. This event can occur by day or night. There's no mistaking the silhouette of this massive iceberg as matching the description given by Maccath the Crimson. With a flattened expanse at one end rising to jagged peaks at the other, the characters' objective is at hand.

OYAVIGGATON

Arauthator's iceberg lair rises from the sea to form a floating island. The portion of the berg above the water appears roughly triangular, with rounded corners. The plateau portion of the iceberg rises more than a hundred feet above the water, and the jagged ice peaks add another two hundred feet above that.

The Ice Hunter village is a collection of snow shelters and tents sitting at the center of the island. The village can't be seen from the sea because of the berg's height, but a large shelf of ice where the Ice Hunters beach their boats is clearly visible from the water. Approximately 60 feet across, the shelf rises a few feet above sea level and is littered with enormous, cracked bones—including ribs that arch taller than a human.

A character proficient in Nature recognizes that the bones are mostly from whales and huge seals (or Captain Lerustah can supply that information). Any character who spends a few minutes examining the bones discovers tooth marks with a monstrous bite radius—evidence that a gigantic predator (Arauthator) ate at least some of these creatures. Examining the bones reveals smaller human bones in the pile as well, all of which show the same bite marks.

An ice chasm splits the cliff face above the ice shelf, rising to the top of the plateau. The chasm is 20 feet wide near the bottom but narrows to 5 feet wide at the top. Steps are cut into the ice, making for an easy climb to the top of the plateau.

Captain Lerustah would like to keep his crew members aboard *Frostskimmr* rather than marching them up to the plateau. He's not at all comfortable with the idea of leaving his ship without the strongest possible complement of guards. If the characters are unable to communicate with the Ice Hunters (who speak only their own language, Uluik), one of the crew members speaks enough Uluik to get by. The translator will accompany the characters onto the iceberg if he's paid a bonus of at least 50 gp, but he returns to the ship as soon as the characters descend into the ice caves.

THE VILLAGE

The top of Oyaviggaton is a plateau, but it's not level. The ground is uneven, fractured by narrow ice chasms and divided by rills, snowdrifts, and ice ridges taller than a human, sculpted by sea spray and wind. The ridges block the view of the village until characters are 200 feet from the nearest shelter.

The first sight that greets the adventurers when they emerge onto the plateau is a row of ten corpses frozen into a wall of ice: three Luskar warriors, a dwarf, and six Ice Hunters. The bodies have been preserved in the ice,

making it impossible to tell how long they've been here. The southerners and the dwarf were some of Maccath the Crimson's companions, killed by Arauthator. The Ice Hunters used the bodies to put up this grisly warning, in the hope that other intruders might fear the same fate and turn back. The dead Ice Hunters tried to flee from the iceberg but were hunted and killed by Arauthator, who forced their kin to add them to the horrid display.

LAYOUT

The village sits in a sheltered spot near the center of the iceberg. When the wind blows—which is most of the time—snow whips off the surrounding drifts and surrounds the settlement in a swirling shroud of white.

Twenty structures make up the village, divided between snow-block shelters similar to igloos and double-walled yurts made from sealskin stretched over whalebone frames. Sixteen of these structures are small, one-room family dwellings. One ice-block shelter is a storeroom used for gear owned in common by the tribesfolk, including fishing nets and heavy ropes used for whaling. One yurt near the center of the village is slightly larger than the others, and is home to the Ice Hunter chieftain, Barking Seal. A yurt standing apart from the rest of the shelters is home to the shaman Bonecarver, as indicated by the many animal totems and whalebone carvings around the hut. The shaman's hut features a lesser-used entrance to the ice caves.

The largest structure in the village is the meeting hall, heavily decorated with whalebone and the skulls of fish and mammals. Consisting of one large room, the hall has a wooden floor made of planks salvaged from ships caught and crushed in the Sea of Moving Ice. Beneath the planks in a back corner is an entrance to the ice caves under the village, which lead to Arauthator's grotto. A long coil of rope hangs on the wall near that corner, and a large iron pulley has been left suspended from a beam above the hole.

No columns of smoke rise above the village to give away its location, since the Sea of Moving Ice features no wood or peat to burn. The only artificial heat comes from lamps and tiny stoves burning whale oil. The villagers live on fish, whale meat, and seal meat, eaten raw or dried on racks scattered around the village. With a successful DC 10 Intelligence (Survival) check, a character examining the racks realizes that the village must produce far more food than the number of villagers alone would require.

VILLAGERS

If the characters approach by the obvious path up the chasm from the ice ledge, they are noticed by the village's 12 sled dogs (treat as **wolves**). As soon as the dogs begin barking and growling, the whole village turns out armed and alert—25 **tribal warriors** (males and females; including the chieftain, Barking Seal), 30 **commoners** (children), 1 **druid** (Bonecarver, tribal shaman, female), and 1 **gladiator** (Orcaheart, village champion, male).

The chieftain and shaman do all the talking for the villagers, who speak only their own language, Uluik. The chieftain also knows a little of a rough Illuskan

MACCATH THE CRIMSON



dialect. The Ice Hunters have two main interests: finding out why strangers have come to Oyaviggaton, and getting them to leave. They lie freely and well, telling tales of sea monsters and ravaging scraggs in the area. If the characters ask about Arauthorator or other dragons, the shaman claims a dragon known as Old White Death was killed a year ago by frost giants. She describes the heap of whale and seal bones on the waterside ice shelf as all that's left of the monster. Otherwise, the bones are described as evidence of monstrous predators in the area.

While Barking Seal and Bonecarver speak with the adventurers, the other members of the tribe circle around the party, frowning and muttering as the dogs growl. Eight warriors lope off with their weapons toward the icy staircase and the ice shelf below, where they keep a cautious eye on *Frostskimmer*. Wizards, sorcerers, and warlocks among the party attract scornful looks. Do your best to communicate an atmosphere of tense hostility to the players.

Any crew member accompanying the characters can point out that this behavior is highly unusual. Though the Ice Hunters avoid contact with outsiders, they are almost never hostile.

During this interaction, allow the characters to attempt DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) checks. A character who succeeds notices several villagers slipping away one by one and disappearing into the meeting hall. From the hall, the villagers descend into the ice caves to warn Arauthorator's servants that strangers have come, then quickly slip back up to the surface.

Encounters in the ice caves assume that the presence of intruders on the iceberg is already known. If the party has maintained stealth since they arrived, they have a chance to surprise creatures in the ice caves.

AN HONORABLE DUEL

The Ice Hunters are determined not to allow the strangers inside the village hall, where they might discover the entrance to the ice caves. They know that letting powerful adventurers get past them into the dragon's lair means torture or death for every adult and child of the tribe.

As they stall for time, Barking Seal, Bonecarver, and Orcaheart are also sizing up the adventurers' strength. If the characters refuse to leave the iceberg, Barking Seal proposes a contest: the village's champion against any warrior among the strangers. If the champion wins, the characters must hand over some of their fine steel weapons and sail away immediately, never to return. If the adventurer wins, the strangers will have earned their place among the villagers. They can spend the night in the village, after which Bonecarver will answer their questions to the best of her ability.

If the characters agree to the duel, one of them must fight Orcaheart one-on-one. No magic is allowed, but if the character possesses a magic weapon or magic armor with no obvious effects, the villagers are unlikely to notice. The fight continues until one contestant is unconscious and dying. (Allow Orcaheart to make death saving throws if he drops to 0 hit points.) At that point, the match ends and each combatant's allies can step in to provide healing and assistance.

During the fight, a combatant forfeits if he or she gains assistance of any kind from allies. Despite this, however, Bonecarver aids Orcaheart during the fight if she can. She positions herself so that when he is struck, he can fall backward and land in front of her. When she helps him back onto his feet, she surreptitiously casts *cure wounds*. If a player states specifically that a character is watching the crowd for signs of interference, that character can attempt a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check. Success means that Bonecarver was spotted in the act, though she denies providing assistance if accused of cheating.

ICE HUNTER HOSPITALITY

If Orcaheart loses the match, the Ice Hunters go through the motions of honoring their pledge. They offer to let the characters sleep in the village storage hut, which barely qualifies as shelter. Bonecarver brings them a platter of slightly spoiled raw fish, explaining (truthfully) that her people prefer the tanginess of meat that's gone past its prime. The fish won't hurt characters who eat it—but the poison Bonecarver added to it will. The sharp tang of the fish covers the bitter poison so

well that a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check or DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check is needed to detect it.

Any character who eats the poisoned fish must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. Failure means the character takes 13 (3d8) poison damage and becomes unconscious for 8 hours. On a successful save, the character takes 9 (2d8) poison damage. If all the characters are rendered unconscious by the poison, they are tied up and carried down to area 1 in the ice caves, where they awaken to see 5 **ice toads** (see appendix A) examining their belongings.

CONVINCING THE SHAMAN

Of all the Ice Hunters, Bonecarver is the only one whose favor the characters have any chance of winning. She does not initially trust the adventurers, and is as keen to see them depart Oyaviggaton as the rest of her people. However, she knows that the Ice Hunters will eventually perish under Arauthator's wrath, and she has long dreamed that the totem spirits will send heroes with the strength to best the dragon.

With effective roleplaying and a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check, Bonecarver will meet privately with the adventurers and speak the truth of her people's plight. A druid, ranger, or some other character who can truthfully express an understanding of the shaman's animal totem-based faith has advantage on this check. Bonecarver is not willing to risk the lives of her tribesfolk in a battle against the dragon. However, she shows the characters the entrance to the ice caves from her hut and explains what she knows about the caves. This includes their general layout, occupants, and the presence of the "horned lady" (Maccath the Crimson).

ICE TOADS

Arauthator has attracted a number of ice toads to Oyaviggaton, where they help to maintain the iceberg and the dragon's many treasures and trophies. The ice toads are good at this job, thanks to their exceptionally intelligent leader, Marfulb.

Feeding on seals, sea birds, and fish caught for them by the Ice Hunters, Oyaviggaton's ice toads are not automatically hostile to strangers. Once characters get inside Arauthator's lair, they might find that these creatures can be helpful to their quest. Ice toads normally speak only their own obscure language. Those in Oyaviggaton know a little Draconic and Uluik (the language of the Ice Hunters), but their accents are thick and their pronunciation atrocious. Marfulb is fluent in Draconic thanks to many hours spent conversing with Arauthator.

When the characters encounter ice toads, their intelligence won't be apparent until they act or attempt to speak. Even then, characters might not recognize the ice toads' croaking as language. Ice toads move on all fours, but their webbed front feet are surprisingly dexterous. Some carry tools and useful items in pouches slung around their necks.

ICE CAVES

Beneath the village lies a network of ice caves inhabited by Arauthator and his minions. Two entrances lead into the caves from the village: one hidden inside the meeting hall and the other inside the shaman's hut. The dragon enters the caves by way of underwater tunnels that connect to his lair chamber, but these are too deep and well hidden to be used by the adventurers.

GENERAL FEATURES

With its caverns carved out of the glacial depths of the iceberg, every surface in Oyaviggaton is made of ice.

Ceilings and Walls. Most passages in the ice caves are at least 15 feet wide, and ceilings are 20 feet high unless noted otherwise. The walls are intricately carved with draconic imagery, pillars, cornices, filigrees, buttresses, leering dragon faces, and other decorative flourishes. This work has been done by kobolds in Arauthator's service, and its quality varies widely.

Floors. The floors inside the iceberg are worn glass-smooth from decades of traffic. Arauthator, the ice trolls, and the ice toads move across the slick ice with ease thanks to claws and bony spurs on their feet that give them traction. The dragon's kobold servants wear spiky crampons made of animal teeth strapped to their feet. Characters without crampons or the ability to walk on ice treat all areas of the ice caves as difficult terrain. A successful DC 10 Intelligence check allows a character to rig a set of crampons from items in a climbing kit, or to convert a pair of kobold-sized crampons to fit a Medium creature. Snowshoes are of no help inside the iceberg.

There are no stairs inside the iceberg; the floor slopes between areas of different elevation. Characters can slide down a one-level ramp with ease. Sliding down a two-level ramp (for example, from area 10 to area 9) is automatic if the character is sitting, but requires a DC 10 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check if the character tries to slide down while standing. Characters equipped with crampons cannot stand, but can treat ramps as difficult terrain. Moving along a two-level ramp with crampons also requires a successful DC 12 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. Characters without crampons can climb a one-level ramp with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check, or can climb a two-level ramp with a successful DC 20 Dexterity check. Acrobatics is of no use to these checks, but using a climber's kit grants advantage on the checks. Any failed Dexterity check to move on a ramp results in the character sliding to the bottom of the ramp and falling prone.

Light. The interior of Oyaviggaton is filled with dim light by whale-oil lamps that are kept filled and lit by the kobolds. The light is for the benefit of the ice toads, who are the only residents of the caves who need light to see.

Temperature. The ice caverns are cold, with the temperature in most chambers hovering around 20 degrees Fahrenheit. The white dragons, the ice trolls, and the ice toads don't mind the cold. The kobolds and Maccath the Crimson bundle up in furs and warm their living quarters with small stoves that burn whale oil supplied by the villagers. As long as the characters wear

proper cold weather gear, they are at no risk from the cold while in the ice caves.

Visibility. The ice caves are open to the sea, creating banks of vapor that roll constantly through Oyaviggaton's corridors and chambers. This fog is more common in the low points of the caverns. In areas noted as +10 feet on the map, visibility is unrestricted unless a patch of random fog is encountered. In areas noted as 0 feet, visibility is limited to 75 feet. In areas noted as -10 feet or -20 feet, visibility is limited to 45 feet.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

In addition to the inhabitants noted in specific areas, the adventurers might run into Arauthator's minions in any corridor or empty chamber. Whenever the characters move from a chamber into the circular corridor, or from the corridor into a chamber with no occupants, roll a d6. On a roll of 1, an encounter occurs. Then roll on the table to determine the specifics.

ICE CAVES ENCOUNTERS

d10	Encounter or Event
1-2	Fog
3-5	Kobolds (3d6)
6-8	Ice toads (1d6)
9	Maccath the Crimson
10	Ice trolls (1d2)

Fog. The air is suddenly filled with roiling vapor. Visibility is reduced to 5 feet for 2 minutes or until the characters move 90 feet away.

Kobolds. Arauthator brought a pack of unwitting kobolds to Oyaviggaton generations ago, and the creatures have been serving him in the frigid cold ever since. In the event of an encounter, a squad of 3d6 **kobolds** is working in or passing through the area. If the characters are dressed as Ice Hunter villagers or are wearing some other appropriate disguise, the kobolds eye them warily but don't immediately sound an alarm. Make a single Wisdom check for the kobolds with a DC equal to the lowest of the characters' checks to disguise themselves. The kobolds' Wisdom modifier is -2, but they have advantage on this check because of their numbers. If the check is successful (or if the characters aren't disguised), the kobolds launch a single volley of sling stones at the intruders, then flee in as many directions as possible to report the intrusion to the ice toads or ice trolls.

Ice Toads. A crew of 1d6 **ice toads** (see appendix A) is working in this area or passing along the corridor. Disguises are ineffective against the ice toads, which know what creatures live in Oyaviggaton at any given time. If they see anything unexpected—even Ice Hunter villagers entering the caves without permission—they stop what they're doing and observe the characters' actions, asking questions if they can. The ice toads flee to the ice trolls if threatened, fighting only if they must.

The ice toads speak their own language, plus enough Draconic and Uluik to communicate with Arauthator, the kobolds, and the Ice Hunters. They work for

Arauthator but have no special devotion to the dragon. If a fight is coming, their loyalty goes to whomever they expect to win. That means the dragon, unless the characters somehow impress them.

Maccath the Crimson. Maccath often wanders the ice caves, deep in thought. On meeting strangers, her reaction is oddly subdued. See area 10 for more details on Maccath's situation.

Ice Trolls. Encountered singly or in small roving gangs, ice trolls are ordinary **trolls** with bluish skin and immunity to cold damage. Unless any ice toads are nearby to intervene, the ice trolls treats any creature not a kobold, an ice toad, Maccath, or an Ice Hunter as an intruder. For more information on the ice trolls working for Arauthator, see area 12.

1. ENTRANCE FROM HUT

Inside the hut of the shaman Bonecarver, old furs heaped atop poles are laid across an opening leading down to the ice caves. Steps are cut into the wall of the chute, creating steep, icy stairs that drop down 100 feet in a tight spiral. Because this entrance is seldom used, the steps become increasingly obscured by frost as the characters descend. At the 40-foot mark, a character must attempt a DC 12 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to maintain a grip on the dangerously uneven footholds. Failure means the character loses his or her footing, sliding and tumbling 60 feet to the bottom and taking 21 (6d6) bludgeoning damage. Characters can mitigate this danger by roping themselves together or using a climber's kit. Past the 40-foot mark, the steps improve again so that no further checks are necessary.

The chute and its icy stairs end at the ceiling. A sturdy ladder then descends into the approximate center of a rectangular chamber. The exit to the corridor is an icy, 15-foot-wide passageway sloping downward.

The chamber is empty except for a dozen baskets woven from leather strips and walrus ribs, stacked in the north corner. These contain frozen fish and a few skin-wrapped bundles of rotting shark meat that the Ice Hunters consider a delicacy.

2. ENTRANCE FROM THE VILLAGE HALL

Hidden beneath the planks in the back corner of the village hall, this entrance to the ice caves consists of a chute carved with icy stairs descending 100 feet in a tight spiral. This route is used regularly to bring supplies to Arauthator's minions, so the steps are clear and easy to climb. Supplies are carried down strapped to villagers' backs, or lowered in baskets with the pulley and rope in the village hall.

This chamber is empty except for three bundles of rolled-up sealskins sitting where the ladder descends from the chute above to the approximate center of the room. Additionally, a bed of piled furs has been arranged in the southwest corner, from which the sound of loud coughing can be heard when the characters enter the chamber. Villagers who suffer disease or injury beyond Bonecarver's limited healing ability are quarantined here in the relative warmth of the

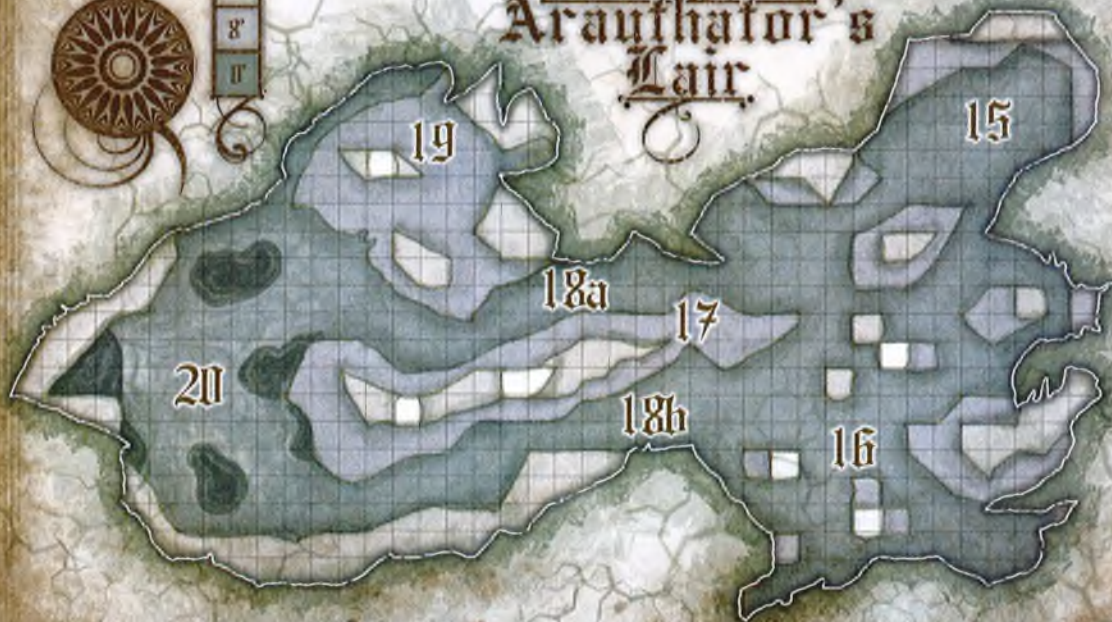
Arauthator's Iceberg "Oyauiggafon"



□ Equals 15 Feet



Arauthator's Lair



• ԸԼՆ ՔԻՆԿ ԱԳ ՈՒՆԻՐԻՆԵՐԿ ԸԼՆ ՆԻՐԼԻ •

Alando

caves. The coughing villager is named Mend-nets (**tribal warrior**).

Mend-nets is naturally suspicious of strangers, but if any character can use *lesser restoration* to cure his disease, he becomes a trustworthy ally. He won't do anything to hurt the village or the tribe, but he hates the kobolds who live in the caves. The ice toads likewise repulse him, though they also ignore him. The ice trolls terrify him, and he has awoken several times to find a troll hungrily peering at him from the tunnel leading to the trolls' lair (area 12). He tells the characters that the creatures of the caves have been warned of their presence, but the only chambers he knows anything about besides this one are areas 1, 3, and 7.

3. LARDER

The supplies that the villagers provide for Arauthator and his minions are stored here—mostly dried and frozen fish, whale, seal, walrus, and giant squid, plus furs that the kobolds fashion into protective clothing. Fish organs, shells, bones, soft stone, and other sundries are stored in smaller quantities, and are used by the ice toads to make ink, brushes, parchment, and other items for their work. A few seemingly inexplicable items are stored away from the other supplies, including a single steel gauntlet, a silver brooch containing a cameo, the brass hilt of a dueling knife, and a decorative belt buckle—bits and pieces that the villagers have pulled from the stomachs of sharks or giant octopi that have fed on explorers lost to the Sea of Moving Ice.

Also stockpiled in this chamber are coils of rope, spikes, and a few pulleys. It's clear at a glance that this gear has come from the south and was not made by the Ice Hunters. The kobolds use this equipment when something—or someone—needs to be lowered down into Arauthator's lair through area 6. The pulley is attached to the iron hook in the ceiling of that chamber.

4. KOBOLDS' DEN

Arauthator's kobold servants live in this chamber.

A dozen kobolds occupy this disheveled and filthy chamber. Half-eaten fish heads and gnawed seal flippers are tossed into corners or carelessly strewn around matted heaps of furs, which would undoubtedly smell as bad as they look if not for the cold.

The chamber holds 12 **kobolds** when the characters enter. A few are sleeping but most are tossing knucklebones, sharpening blades, sewing clothing, carving whalebone, or picking on each other. See "Random Encounters" (above) for guidelines on how the kobolds respond to intruders.

If the characters spend a few minutes searching the area, a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check suggests that approximately two dozen kobolds live in this chamber. Their only possessions of value are a number of walrus tusks carved with draconic imagery, six of which are of sufficient artistry to fetch 200 gp each from a suitable collector.

5. JUNK ROOM

The kobolds throw their litter, food scraps, waste, worn-out boots, and other useless junk into this cavernous chamber. Its pit-like floor is filled to a depth of several feet, courtesy of minions that have been serving Arauthator in this iceberg for centuries. The trash floor of the chamber can be safely traversed, but there is nothing of value here.

6. THE CHUTE

This narrow cavern is the access point to the lair of Arauthator below.

This chamber feels far colder than any area of the ice caves you've explored so far. The cold issues from a yawning pit in the floor that twists down into darkness, and above which a heavy iron hook is anchored in the ice of the ceiling. A five-foot-wide walkway extends around both sides of the pit, connecting this entrance to an exit across the room. Carved into the ice of the walls are images of white dragons in flight.

A visual inspection from either doorway indicates that the walkway looks safe enough—aside from being icy, narrow, and adjacent to an apparently bottomless pit. The walkway that crosses the east and north sides of the chamber is, in fact, safe, and characters can walk along it without difficulty. The walkway that crosses the west and south walls is weakened and dangerous. When a character reaches the bend in the walkway, have the player roll any die. If an odd number is rolled, a portion of the wall crumbles, and any creature on the walkway must attempt a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, the creature is pushed off the walkway into the chute.

The chute drops 60 feet to the top of the ice platform in area 16 in Arauthator's lair. A creature tipped into the chute slides as much as falls, taking only 10 (3d6) bludgeoning damage when hitting bottom. The creature must then attempt a Dexterity saving throw or fall off the ice platform; see area 16 for more information. A creature that jumps into the chute on purpose takes half damage from the descent and has advantage on the saving throw to stay on the ice platform.

7. HALL OF GIANTS

The bodies of some of the frost giants Arauthator has fought and killed over the centuries are on display in this chamber, frozen into crystal-clear ice walls. Visibility at this level is only 45 feet, so characters won't be able to see much from the doorway. As they move into the chamber, the shape of the first frost giant becomes dimly visible at a distance of 60 feet. At 45 feet, the figure is easily mistakable for a living frost giant standing perfectly still. At 30 feet, the characters recognize that the giant is dead and frozen, seeing its torn armor and the awful claw wounds in its pale blue flesh. The hall displays the bodies of eight frost giants, one fire giant, and one cloud giant.

When the characters arrive in this area, **8 kobolds** are working in the chamber, polishing and maintaining the ice. If they recognize the characters as intruders, they try to keep away from them in the fog, then slip out of the chamber when they can.

8. TROPHY HALL

Trophies of Arauthator's many battles are displayed in this chamber. Visibility is 45 feet, so the characters won't be able to see much from the doorway. Among the creatures frozen here in death are two remorhazes, a trio of behirs, five abominable yetis, and a giant squid of jaw-dropping size. A complete longship with sail raised is also on display here. The ship clearly will not fit through any of the iceberg's entrances; it was painstakingly disassembled outside and reassembled here by the kobolds. Characters who know ships can see mistakes in the rigging and hull planking, but it's passably good work for a display.

Of more immediate interest is the open chest of gold and jewels sitting on the ship's deck. The chest contains 375 gp, 1,480 ep, and 495 sp, plus jewelry and precious objects worth another 225 gp. A character examining the chest without disturbing it or the contents can estimate its value at between 1,000 and 1,500 gp with a successful DC 10 Intelligence check.

If the chest or any of the treasure it contains—even a single coin—is removed from the ship, Arauthator senses it immediately and dispatches 2 ice **trolls** (see area 12) to investigate.

9. UNUSED CHAMBER

This chamber is empty, awaiting the day when Arauthator's collection of trophies overflows areas 7 and 8.

10. MACCATH THE CRIMSON

If Maccath the Crimson hasn't been encountered elsewhere in Oyaviggaton, the characters meet her here.

At the top of the ramp from area 9, 1 ice **troll** (see area 12) stands guard over this cavern. It positions itself around the corner so it can't be seen until intruders reach the top of the ramp.

The empty ice floor of this chamber holds a most unexpected sight. A large shelter is seemingly built of scraps, and in the style of the tents used by the desert nomads of Calimshan, some two thousand miles to the south.

Maccath's shelter is made from huge tapestries and carpets draped across a frame of whale ribs, and stands 8 feet tall, 20 feet wide, and 30 feet long. The bottoms of the walls drape down onto the ground, leaving no gaps underneath. The tent has no obvious entrance, but a character can slide between any two overlapping tapestries to emerge inside the shelter.

When the characters step inside, read or paraphrase the following.

The interior of the shelter is surprisingly warm, thanks to a small stove and simple lamps burning aromatic whale oil. Carpets are heaped on the floor in thick layers, and tapestries from every culture in Faerûn hang suspended from a sturdy frame of whale ribs.

Books and scrolls are stacked neatly on tables and reading stands made of hide and whalebone. The only furnishings in the shelter not made from these natural materials are the carpets and tapestries, and a portable writing desk that appears to have been taken from a sailing ship.

If this is the characters' first meeting with Maccath the Crimson, add:

Seated at the writing desk is a female tiefling wearing a blazing crimson cloak over tailored furs. The cloak is fastened with a silver-and-ivory brooch bearing a design reminiscent of a stylized, branching tree—the symbol of the Arcane Brotherhood. Two kobold attendants stand nearby, glancing nervously between you and the tiefling. After a few moments, the tiefling looks up with an expression of pale disinterest and asks, "Have you come to save me or kill me? Not that there will be much difference between the two."

When Maccath arrived at Oyaviggaton three years ago, Arauthator would normally have killed her without a second thought. However, the brooch of the Arcane Brotherhood she wore suggested to Arauthator that the tiefling might present a solution to two problems. First, the dragon possessed numerous items and writings stolen from the Arcane Brotherhood, some of which defied his understanding even after decades of study. Second, Arauthator had long sought a way to help his mate Arveiatrace overcome her grieving over the death of the wizard she once served. Replacing that dead wizard with a living one—and a member of the Arcane Brotherhood at that—seemed a perfect solution.

Maccath was smart enough to convince the dragon that his offer had won her over, expecting that she would eventually be able to seek a means of escape from the iceberg. However, she has so far been thwarted by Arauthator's potent magic—including spells and rituals stolen from the Arcane Brotherhood—which have kept her sealed and helpless in Oyaviggaton, invisible to scrying and unable to use *sending* to call for help. Before he turns Maccath over to Arveiatrace, Arauthator has had the tiefling deciphering his stolen writings, though the work has gone slowly thanks to the inherent complexity and danger of the material. Maccath is studying one of the stolen scrolls when the characters walk in.

If the characters announced their presence by fighting the ice troll, the **2 kobolds** will be visibly agitated, even though Maccath shows little concern. The kobolds have been directed to stay with the tiefling and follow her

orders, which mostly means undertaking errands to the scriptorium (area 11). She also relies on them for cooking, housekeeping, and other mundane chores. The moment the characters make it clear that they are here to rescue Maccath, the kobolds make a dash for area 12. They alert the ice trolls unless they are stopped.

MACCATH'S BARGAIN

Though she is a prisoner, Maccath has become obsessed with completing Arauthator's challenging magical translations. Like most members of the Arcane Brotherhood, she is dedicated to the point of arrogance, believing that even if she is fated to die as a dragon's plaything, she will have accomplished something magnificent first.

As such, the tiefling sets out terms for her rescue, saying that she won't leave Oyaviggaton without bringing along as much of the Arcane Brotherhood's stolen property as she can. If the characters agree, Maccath shares the following information:

- Arauthator is currently in area 20 of his lair, close to the entrance beneath the scriptorium (area 11).
- Most of the material stolen from the Hosttower is in the scriptorium, but a few items might be in Arauthator's lair (see "Arauthator's Treasure" at the end of this episode.)
- If the party seems intent on fighting Arauthator, Maccath offers them a *ring of cold resistance* and two *arrows of dragon slaying* that she has crafted during her captivity. Though these items and her draconic knowledge give the characters an edge, she warns the party that Arauthator has devoured almost every hero he has faced.
- Maccath knows the general layout of the dragon's cavern but not its specific dangers. Arauthator has never allowed her out of his sight in the lair. In particular, she knows nothing of the scraggs in area 15 or the traps in area 18.
- Two entrances lead to Arauthator's lair—one in the adjoining scriptorium and the other in area 6.
- Arauthator moves in and out of the lair using underwater passages.
- The *Draakhorn* was here when Maccath came to Oyaviggaton, but a group of humans wearing distinctive robes came to the iceberg half a year ago. After negotiation with Arauthator, they took the device away. (The characters recognize Cult of the Dragon regalia in Maccath's description of the humans.) In addition to this, Maccath can tell the characters all the information about the *Draakhorn* as it's described in appendix B.
- Trying to escape from the iceberg on a ship would be suicidal while Arauthator is able to attack from the air. The dragon is content to let his minions deal with intruders, but he will be alerted if the characters flee.
- Even if the adventurers have not alerted any of the dragon's servants, Maccath's absence would be reported within a day. When that happens, the dragon will come looking for her and whoever helped her escape.

Maccath knows that surprise is the characters' best weapon for challenging the dragon, and that he will not risk dying over this single lair. Though he hates the idea of abandoning a home with its treasure and trophies, if bested by the adventurers, Arauthator will flee to one of his other lairs.

II. SCRIPTORIUM

Though this chamber is deeper than the adjacent caverns, no mist hangs in the air here.

Three shelves stand in this otherwise empty cavern, cobbled together out of salvaged wood, whale bone, pieces of giants' armor, and even the frozen limbs of yetis. A number of scrolls, books, parchments, and folios are carefully arranged on the shelves, all bearing the markings of magical writing.

If Maccath is with the characters, she can direct them to the items stolen from the Hosttower of the Arcane. She cautions the characters not to read or even peruse the material for their own safety. The writings are laced with diabolical lore that is anathema to the mortal mind.

Characters unable to read magic can't make any headway in the books. A character who can read magic who examines the writings must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. Success indicates that the character recognizes the danger and stops reading. Failure indicates the character absorbs the power of the fiendish lore and suffers a psychic shock. While suffering this shock, the character has disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks, and must attempt a DC 10 Constitution check to cast a spell. On a failed check, the spell cannot be cast, though the spell slot is not expended. The character can make another saving throw to end the effect each time he or she finishes a long rest.

Arcane spellcasters can find much of value in this scriptorium, along with much that's worthless. Arauthator has collected many spellbooks from slain wizards over the centuries. More importantly for the party's immediate benefit, he also collected dozens of scrolls. Though many of those here have deteriorated from dampness or age, characters who spend a few minutes searching can find ten scrolls: *gaseous form*, *haste*, *protection from energy*, *water breathing*, *Evard's black tentacles*, *fire shield*, *wall of fire*, *hold monster*, *chain lightning*, and *disintegrate*.

ACCESS TO ARAUTHATOR'S LAIR

Near the western end of the scriptorium, a 15-foot-wide chute leads down to area 19 of Arauthator's lair. The dragon can clamber up and down this passage without difficulty. Characters trained in Athletics can climb down the chute using crampons or some other device to grip the wall. Other characters can climb down only with ropes, pitons, and other climbing gear. The chute descends 60 feet to the roof of area 19, after which characters must drop 15 feet to the ice platform.

Before the characters head down into the cavern, Maccath tells them they have no easy way back up to these chambers. Old White Death doesn't want anyone—intruders or guests—to be able to easily leave his lair.

12. ICE TROLLS

The ice trolls that Arauthator has gathered to his service use this hall as their residence, and no other creatures are permitted here. An ice troll has bluish, translucent skin and immunity to cold damage; it otherwise has the statistics of an ordinary troll.

A minimum of 2 ice trolls are here when characters first enter, but 3 or more can be placed in this area at your discretion (and depending on whether the adventurers meet conditions that might lead to fighting; see below).

This cavernous chamber is filled with drifting mist that shrouds a field of ice pillars rising from floor to ceiling. The muffled silence beyond is broken only by the sound of running water.

Ice pillars and pressure ridges form razor-sharp crags that loom out of the roiling fog. Streams of crackling water, magically flowing even at subzero temperatures, course thickly through the hollows beneath wind-driven, icy snow.

From the entrance, only swirling fog can be seen and only the wind can be heard. If Maccath or any ice toad is with the party, they advise the characters in the strongest possible terms to stay out of this chamber. Those who venture here are silently surrounded and ambushed by the ice trolls. The trolls hungrily pursue the adventurers if they flee, but they heed the ice toads and refrain from attacking if the toads command them to.

The trolls speak Giant and understand a little bit of the Draconic tongue. They are willing to trade or bargain with characters who prove too difficult to kill. Only the verifiable offer of food and treasure can convince the trolls to turn against Arauthator.

13. ICE TOAD WORKPLACE

Giant ice toads serve Arauthator as overseers at Oyaviggaton. They manage the labor of the kobolds, direct the Ice Hunter villagers to provide the lair with food and other supplies, and have the patience required to deal with the ornery ice trolls.

A bizarre sight greets you in this rough-walled chamber. About a dozen giant toads with thick, mottled white hides are at work here, scribing strange writing into the ice of the walls, or onto weathered parchment and stone tablets. A few toads transfer parchments and tablets into and out of floor-to-ceiling cubbyholes cut into the ice along the entire southern wall.

A total of 11 ice toads (see appendix A) work in this chamber, scribing records and tallies into the ice using sharpened antlers or their own claws. They also maintain rough maps of the Sea of Moving Ice based on reports from the Ice Hunter villagers. At regular intervals, their temporary records are transferred to more permanent form.

See “Random Encounters” (above) for guidelines on how the giant ice toads respond to intruders. The characters' best chance to avoid a fight in this area—and to keep the toads from alerting the ice trolls—is to win the ice toads to their cause by treating with their leader, Marfulb.

The average ice toad is smart, but their leader Marfulb is exceptional (Intelligence 13). Her knack for organization and governance had no outlet until her path crossed Arauthator's on the Sea of Moving Ice, and she has served as the seneschal of Oyaviggaton for the four decades since. Not even Arauthator understands the workings of Oyaviggaton as well as Marfulb, who knows the contents and value of every pack, chest, and heap of coins in the iceberg down to the last copper piece.

MARFULB'S LORE

In addition to data about Arauthator—his treasures, mating habits, and epic battles with frost giants and other monsters—the information amassed by the ice toads includes exhaustive details on the ever-changing Sea of Moving Ice, the weather north of the Spine of the World, and the culture of the elusive Ice Hunters. Marfulb feels great satisfaction in her life's work, but she knows too little about society south of the Spine of the World to sense its full importance.

Characters equipped with a *bag of holding* could take all the parchments and stone slabs with them when they leave Oyaviggaton. The Arcane Brotherhood would regard the lore as one of the most amazing works of natural philosophy in existence (once it is painstakingly translated from the ice toads' unique language), and they would clamor to meet and praise Marfulb. Without a *bag of holding*, the collection is too large to move.

14. ICE TOAD LAIR

This freezing, miserable chamber makes a perfect home for the ice toads, but is presently empty. None of the toads' belongings here has value as loot, but they make a strange and curious collection. Such objects include walrus-tooth wart scrapers, spears fashioned from narwhal horn, oddly shaped furniture sculpted into the icy floor instead of rising above it, writing implements carved from baleen and shaped for a webbed hand, and art objects that combine carved whalebone, driftwood, and mundane items such as silverware and glass stoppers salvaged from shipwrecks.

ARAUTHATOR'S LAIR

The dragon's lair is a single, cavernous chamber with many nooks, crannies, and icy outcroppings.

GENERAL FEATURES

Like the caverns above it, Arauthator's lair is composed entirely of ice.

Ceiling. The rough ceiling of the open cavern rises 40 feet above the varying height of the uneven floor.

Floors. The floor of the cavern is worn smooth and is highly slippery. Arauthator and the scraggs move across the slick ice with ease thanks to their claws, but characters without crampons or the ability to walk on ice treat all areas of the lair cavern as difficult terrain. See the "General Features" of the ice caves (above) for information on crampons. Snowshoes are of no help in the lair.

The terrain levels represented on the map of the cavern show increments of 8 feet. The elevation of the floor results from the ice splitting and splintering, so the ledges are abrupt and have a distinctly step-like appearance. Characters can drop down a level without difficulty. Scrambling up a level requires a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check; the climber has advantage on the check if equipped with crampons or climbing gear.

Light. The lair cavern is normally dark. All description assumes that the characters have a light source or darkvision.

Temperature. The lair cavern is colder than the tunnels and chambers above it. The cavern is a bone-chilling 0 degrees Fahrenheit. Area 20 is even colder.

Visibility. Banks of vapor roll through the cavern, limiting visibility to 60 feet for characters with light.

15. SCRAGGS' LAIR

This corner of the cavern is home to 2 scraggs that Arauthator allows to live in his lair, provided they guard it in his absence. These aquatic **trolls** can breathe underwater and have a swim speed of 30 feet.

If the characters approach, the scraggs duck into hiding places, then attempt to attack from ambush and claim an unexpected meal.

16. ICE PILLARS

Pillars and platforms of ice jut up from the floor in this area of the cavern. Climbing an ice pillar more than 8 feet tall requires a climber's kit and a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check.

A creature dropping down the chute from area 6 lands on the top level of the large ice platform in the southeast part of the cavern, 16 feet above the cavern floor. The creature must then succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw to stay on the platform. (A creature that intentionally jumps down the chute takes half damage from the descent and has advantage on this saving throw.) If the saving throw fails, the creature slides off the top level of the icy platform and hits the second level, taking 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage and falling prone.

Any creature falling to the cavern floor attracts the attention of the scraggs in area 15.

17. THE ICEWOLF'S SPINE

This jagged ridge of ice divides the cavern into sections. Climbing up to at least the 8-foot level and moving along the ridge is the only safe way to get from area 15 or 16 into area 19 or 20 without encountering the traps in areas 18a and 18b.

Unlike other ledges in the cavern, the horizontal surfaces of the Icewolf's Spine aren't level. The denizens of the lair can traverse the ledges without difficulty, but any other creature that moves more than 15 feet during a round must make a DC 12 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. Failure indicates that the creature loses its footing and falls to the next level below, taking 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage and landing prone. Wearing crampons grants advantage on this check.

18A. THE GULLET

This narrow passage is rigged with a magic trap. When the first character passes through the narrowest point of the passage, the entire area of the passage fills with a *stinking cloud* for 1 minute.

Arauthator immediately becomes aware of intruders if the *stinking cloud* is triggered. The dragon does not set off the trap if it moves through the area.

18B. THE THROAT

This narrow passage is rigged with a magic trap. When the first character moves through the narrowest point of the passage, a *slow* spell is triggered, targeting every creature in the area. Creatures affected by the spell suffer its effects for 1 minute.

Arauthator immediately becomes aware of intruders if the *slow* spell is triggered. The dragon does not set off the trap if it moves through the area.

19. THE PERCH

Arauthator sometimes sleeps on this vast ice shelf, but more often he spends his time lounging in area 20. Much of the treasure the dragon keeps at Oyaviggaton is stashed here and on the ledges above. See "Arauthator's Treasure," below.

20. ARAUTHATOR'S ABYSS

The western end of the lair cavern is where Arauthator (an **adult white dragon**) spends most of his time at Oyaviggaton. Gold, jewels, and other treasure lies scattered on the floor and frozen into the walls of this vast chamber.

It is noticeably colder here than anywhere else in the iceberg, reaching -10 degrees Fahrenheit. Any character in an area where the temperature is below 0 degrees Fahrenheit must make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw at the end of each hour. Characters without cold weather gear automatically fail this save. On a failed saving throw, a character suffers one level of exhaustion.

When the characters face off against Arauthator, the dragon roars so loudly that the whole iceberg reverberates with his rage. This calls the ice trolls from area 12, which arrive 5 rounds later.

Pools of slush spread across the floor of the cavern, prevented from freezing by the seawater's high salt content. One such pool, in the westernmost angle of the cavern, conceals a flooded passage connecting to the Sea of Moving Ice. This is Arauthator's customary entrance and exit. When the dragon is reduced to 100 hit points or fewer and facing three or more foes, he dives for this exit and escapes into the frozen sea. If the dragon flees, the ice trolls retreat as well.

DEVELOPMENTS

If the characters defeat Arauthator, the reactions of Oyaviggaton's other inhabitants are dependent on whether the dragon is killed or driven off.

If Arauthator is killed, the ice toads grieve, but they won't take any action against the characters. In contrast, the kobolds are furious with grief, throwing themselves at the characters in frenzied, suicidal attacks. The ice trolls' reaction will likely be influenced by whatever interaction the characters had with them earlier. The trolls might flee without a word, or they might decide they like Oyaviggaton and make it their permanent home.

The Ice Hunters are elated over the dragon's death. When the characters emerge from the iceberg, the normally reserved villagers greet them with cheers and offers of the choicest fermented fish. The villagers then begin packing their few belongings into their hide boats and prepare to leave immediately.

If Arauthator is wounded and driven off, Maccath or Marfulb know enough of the dragon to predict that he will spend months recovering at one of his other lairs before returning to Oyaviggaton. The Ice Hunters believe that this gives them enough time to lose themselves in the vast expanse of the Sea of Moving Ice and find a new home where Arauthator can't track them. The dragon is vengeful, but with everything else going on, Maccath believes Arauthator won't put any real effort into seeking out his former thralls. The Ice Hunters have no contact with civilization, so they can't possibly spread word of his humiliating defeat.

With the dragon's disappearance, the kobolds hide if they can, while the ice toads demonstrate the same impassive stoicism they show if the dragon is killed. The ice trolls shy away from Arauthator's treasure as long as he is alive, knowing better than to come between a dragon and its hoard. They don't really care if someone else plunders items from the dragon's hoard, and they're too stupid to think they might be blamed for any such thefts.

LEAVING OYAVIGGATON

The characters have no chance to sail away from the iceberg aboard *Frostskimmer* while Arauthator is free to attack. The dragon can strike just as easily from the sky or from beneath the water, freezing or capsizing the ship, then picking off the crew at his leisure. If the adventurers try to sneak away with Maccath, the sorcerer's absence is noticed by the kobolds and ice toads within a day.

If Arauthator was beaten in combat and forced to retreat, he will not pursue *Frostskimmer* as the characters sail away. The adventurers and the crew might see the dragon shadowing them in the far distance, but Arauthator is too proud and fearful to face the party again.

ARAUTHATOR'S TREASURE

If Old White Death is killed or driven away, he leaves his iceberg lair's treasure hoard behind. (Because Oyaviggaton is just one of a number of minor lairs maintained by the dragon, the treasure here represents only the smallest part of his total wealth.)

Areas 19 and 20 contain a total of 700 gp, 1,000 sp, and 20 precious stones (five each worth 200 gp, 400 gp, 600 gp, and 800 gp). In addition, add potions, scrolls, and magic items at your discretion. Alternatively, use the treasure tables in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* to generate a hoard whose value is in line with your campaign.

To claim this treasure, it must be hacked out of the ice in the lair cavern. Doing so takes half a day (and is thus impossible if Arauthator is still in the lair).

Marfulb's four decades of data on Arauthator is priceless to the Arcane Brotherhood (a fact Maccath will recognize if the characters don't) or to other collectors of draconic lore. If the dragon is dead, Marfulb can be talked into letting this material be transported south, provided she gets to come along. If Arauthator still lives, the ice toad would prefer to stay and continue her work with her records intact.

CONCLUSION

Arauthator is a strong ally of the Cult of the Dragon, and the adventurers deal a solid blow to the cult by defeating him. Additionally, by returning Maccath and the stolen lore of the Hosttower, the characters can earn the allegiance of the Arcane Brotherhood in the fight against the cult's plans.

The characters gain a level at the end of this episode.



EPISODES 3 AND 4: DEATH TO THE WYRMSPEAKERS

From their first discovery of the dragon masks in *Hoard of the Dragon Queen*, the characters will have recognized the importance of the masks to the Cult of the Dragon.

Over the course of the adventure, the heroes have two chances to come face to face with the wyrmspeakers of Severin's inner circle, perhaps claiming their dragon masks and hindering Severin's plans.

This section comprises two distinct episodes. In the first episode, the characters track Varram, keeper of the *White Dragon Mask*, to an ancient crypt overrun by yuan-ti in the Serpent Hills. In the second episode, the adventurers go up against Neronvain, wyrmspeaker of the *Green Dragon Mask*, in a hidden stronghold and dragon lair in the Misty Forest. These episodes play out at different points during the first and second sessions of the Council of Waterdeep, but are presented together because they form two halves of a single mission—taking the fight to the wyrmspeakers as a means of thwarting Severin's plots.

Three of the five wyrmspeakers of the cult—Galvan the Blue, Rezmir the Black, and Severin himself, who wears the *Red Dragon Mask*—are already at the Well of Dragons and beyond the party's reach. However,

the white wyrmspeaker Varram is forced to leave the security of his stronghold after losing possession of the *White Dragon Mask*, while the green wyrmspeaker Neronvain engages in raids against the elves of the Misty Forest with his draconic ally, Chuth. When word comes to the Council of Waterdeep that two of the five wyrmspeakers might be at large, the adventurers seize the opportunity to strike.

EPISODE 3: VARRAM THE WHITE

Varram the White is a close ally and confidant of Severin, but the Cult of the Dragon leader is unaware of how his old friend's actions have threatened the cult's plans. Varram's *White Dragon Mask* has gone missing, stolen by a thief allied with the Zhentarim and now hidden from normal scrying magic. Varram is desperate to retrieve the mask before Severin discovers it is missing, and so he has created the pretense of taking a group of trusted followers to seek out a site of ancient magic in the Serpent Hills, which he claims will help the cult in its plans to summon Tiamat. In truth, Varram is seeking the Tomb of Diderius—site of an ancient

divination pool that he hopes will show him the location of the lost mask.

Harper agents have heard rumors of the theft of the *White Dragon Mask*, and Leosin Erlanthar has recently learned that the dwarf Varram was seen in the trade settlement of Boareskyr Bridge, near the Serpent Hills. With the Harpers already spread far and wide on their intelligence-gathering missions, the adventurers are a perfect choice to pursue the wyrmspeaker.

FOLLOWING THE TRAIL

Leosin Erlanthar contacts the party during a council session in Waterdeep. After filling them in on the rumors that Varram has lost the *White Dragon Mask* and gone abroad in search of it, he sends the characters to Boareskyr Bridge, instructing them to seek information on Varram's recent movements and probable destination.

This episode sees the characters journey from Boareskyr Bridge to a forgotten Anaurian ruin in the Serpent Hills. The divination pool that Varram seeks is there—but so too is a clan of yuan-ti that are a threat to the wyrmspeaker and the adventurers alike.

BOARESKYR BRIDGE

Boareskyr Bridge bears the name of a now-vanished realm north and east of the Trade Way. The bridge provides access across the Winding Water and is a major landmark. Constructed of black granite, it bears sculpted images of the deities Cyric and Bhaal, commemorating the legendary battle they fought on the bridge during the Time of Troubles.

This way station settlement is little more than a collection of tents, wagons, and caravans providing food, fresh mounts, and other services to travelers. A contingent of paladins from the theocracy of Elturgard maintains watch over the bridge in a newly built keep.

BOLO'S TENTSIDE INN

Bolo's Tentside Inn is a rough-and-tumble establishment set up in a large pavilion near the center of Boareskyr's tent city. When the characters make inquiries about Varram, they are directed to Bolo's and its female halfling proprietor.

"A dwarf in purple robes? Oh, I saw him. He was asking about escorts into the hills, when this hooded fellow starts asking him his business. The dwarf looked him straight in the eye, then pulled out his dagger and stabbed the tall fellow dead! He was one of the scaled folk of the Serpent Hills, come down to spy on us! That dwarf's a hero, make no mistake. But he and his entourage took off straight away for the hills then, quick as cats!"

Varram's only goal in killing the yuan-ti spy was stopping word of his movements from reaching the Serpent Hills before he got there, but it has made him something of a local hero. Bolo is happy to share what she knows as long as the characters don't let on that they intend to harm the dwarf.

Varram traveled with more than a dozen other companions, including a handful of cloaked and hooded warriors. She assumed them to be barbarian mercenaries, but Varram is actually traveling under the protection of a force of bearded devils. The dwarf headed into the Serpent Hills after killing the yuan-ti.

THE SERPENT HILLS

Good weather and the fact that Varram and his large party were moving with haste makes their trail into the hills easy to follow. From Boareskyr Bridge, the adventurers pursue the dwarf into the Serpent Hills—a swath of badlands, mesas, and rocky plateaus sprinkled with trees and tall grass. Varram's trail leads some sixty-five miles north-northeast.

Lizardfolk and nagas, trolls and giants, and the treacherous yuan-ti all lurk in the Serpent Hills, amid the tombs and ruined settlements of more than one fallen civilization. As the characters pursue Varram, roll a d20 every 6 hours of travel; an encounter occurs on a roll of 17–20. Determine the encounter by rolling on the table below.

SERPENT HILLS ENCOUNTERS

d8	Encounter
1	Humanoids (1d6)
2	Herd mammals (5d6)
3	Hill giants (1d2)
4	Unmarked grave
5	Shrine
6	Vultures (3d6)
7	Ruined settlement
8	Lizardfolk (2d8)

Humanoids. Humanoids ranging into the Serpent Hills might be treasure hunters, escaped slaves from the monstrous land of Najara, or scouts from Elturgard keeping watch on yuan-ti activity.

Herd Mammals. Packs of goats, antelope, and other herd mammals range across the Serpent Hills. They avoid other creatures, but can become fierce if threatened or cornered.

Hill Giants. The party comes across one or two hill giants gorging on a fallen herd animal. When the giants notice the adventurers, they see the opportunity for another meal. A hill giant retreats when reduced to half its hit points or fewer, preferring prey that does not fight back.

Unmarked Grave. A low rise covered in hastily collected rocks marks the resting place of one of the many explorers to have fallen in the Serpent Hills. At your discretion, an unmarked grave at night could become an encounter with a ghost or other restless undead.

Shrine. An isolated shrine to one of the many lost gods of Netheril or Anauria rises up out of the desert. Many such sites show signs of having been used as campsites by travelers in the hills.

Vultures. Flocks of vultures might be seen circling at a distance, or could harass the characters if they mistake them for lost travelers on their last legs.

Ruined Settlement. Crumbling stones and dry wells are all that remain of the many lost settlements of the Serpent Hills.

Lizardfolk. Lizardfolk regularly hunt and gather food for their yuan-ti masters, grabbing humanoid settlers along the fringes of the hills when they can.

TOMB OF DIDERIUS

The Tomb of Diderius and its magic pool are hidden within a complex of chambers carved into a towering cliff. Originally part of the manse the wizard Diderius built around the mystical divination pool, the complex was converted to a crypt only after his death. The crypt looks down over the ruins of the town that grew up around the magic pool to cater to those who came seeking Diderius's wisdom.

The town once nestled into a canyon between two bluffs, but only a few ruined stone structures and the slab foundations of administrative and temple buildings now remain. Cave entrances dot the bluffs, marking former residences and simple tombs. None of the ruins hold anything of value or interest, but the caves offer safe places for the party to rest.

Knowledge of the settlement that once stood here has been lost to all except Ilda, a ghostly librarian in area 9 of the crypt, who has answers to many forgotten questions. As well, though few seek the pool these days, a small yuan-ti colony known as Ss'tck'al has arisen behind the crypt. The yuan-ti use humanoid sacrifices to power the divination pool's magic, learning dark secrets that fuel their insidious plots.

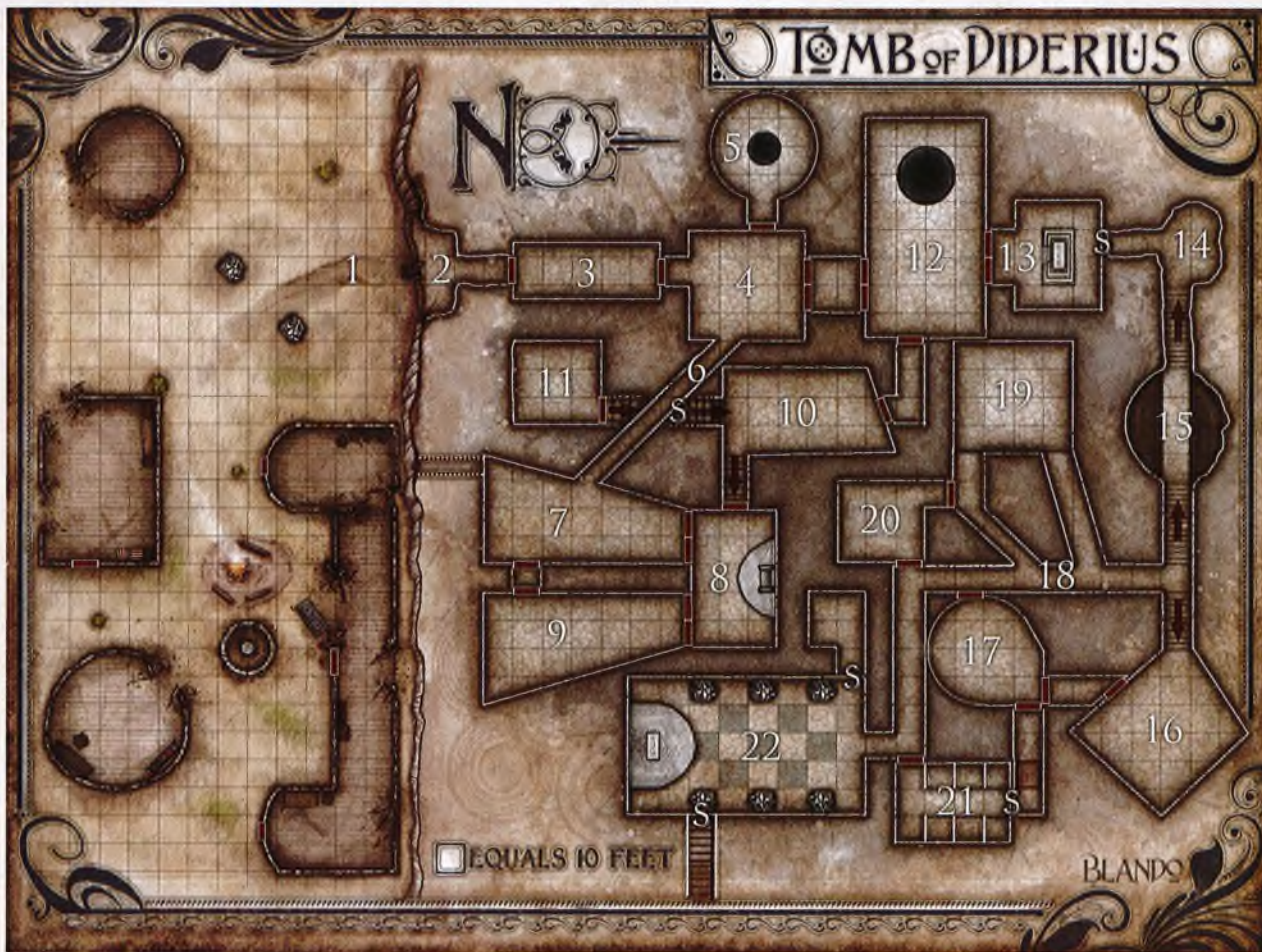
GENERAL FEATURES

Unless otherwise specified, the floor and walls of the dungeon are sandstone blocks and flagstones. The walls are cool to the touch and the air is cold.

Ceilings. 10 feet high unless otherwise noted.

Light. None, unless outdoors or otherwise specified.

Regional Effects. When Diderius died, those who honored him in life transformed him into a special **mummy lord** whose magic pervades his tomb. Since Diderius is neutral rather than evil, the area lacks dark magic common to other mummy-lord tombs. A few chambers of the tomb have the appearance of opulent and well-kept rooms suitable for a noble archmage. This effect is an illusion, however, failing to cover the rank scent of dust and decay. Diderius's magic also guides those who show proper respect.



1. ENTRANCE PLAZA

The entrance to Diderius's tomb stands in what was once a large paved plaza. The remains of a fountain are now little more than a stone circle set around a crumbling hole in the ground leading to a well deep below. Two stone statues stand in the courtyard, rising twenty feet high. Behind them, a forty-foot high edifice is carved into the cliff side, dominated by relief columns carved with strange, otherworldly scenes.

The left-hand colossus is a bearded human male wearing exotic clothes, but its face is smashed beyond recognition. It holds a balance in its right hand and a cudgel at its side, its left hand raised as if in warning. The colossus to the right of the entrance is a young human male wearing similarly exotic clothing, the left half of its head cracked off and lying at its feet. The statue holds a shepherd's crook in its left hand and a sword at its waist, its right hand raised in warning as well.

The relief-carved scenes around the entrance depict things Diderius glimpsed in the divination pool, including other worlds and planes that never came to be. Use your imagination when describing these scenes. The entrance to the crypt is 30 feet up atop a stone stairwell that stops 10 feet short of a platform jutting out from the cliff face. Varram's cultists (see below) have left a ladder leaning against the edifice that allows characters to climb up to the entrance.

CULTIST CAMPSITE AND RUINED FOUNTAIN

Varram's cultists have made camp in the plaza near the ruined fountain. A campfire is burning down here, and three bedrolls show where the rearguard cultists are camped. Seven shallow graves have been dug east of the campsite—casualties from the cultists' exploration.

The guards are dead, having been dragged off and eaten by trolls living in the tunnels beneath the well. Those sewers remain largely intact, and the 3 trolls that dwell there have discovered that using them to move between the crypt and the plaza makes for good foraging in the area. If the party rests here or in area 5, the trolls attack in the night. A troll fights until reduced to one-third or fewer of its hit points before retreating to the safety of the well.

The entrance to the tunnels is too narrow for even a Small character to squeeze through. The trolls dislocate their hips and shoulders to pass through, taking 10 bludgeoning damage that they quickly regenerate.

APPROACHING THE STATUES

When the party approaches the statues, read the following.

As you approach the statues, you hear the sudden sound of grinding stone. The colossal figures turn their massive heads, their shattered features staring down at you. Two voices issue forth in unison, booming out as though erupting from the deep earth.

"Halt. You come before Diderius, ether walker and conduit of clairvoyance. Behold ye now his wondrous triumphs. Diderius extends wisdom, and Diderius offers knowledge. Which do you seek?"

If a response of "We seek wisdom," or "We desire knowledge" is given, or the characters roleplay an obsequious or self-deprecating response that might please an egotistical wizard, the statues respond. They say, "Diderius shall grant you what you seek, but only if you heed him and continue to show proper respect!" They then revert to their original positions.

The adventurers' positive response earns them beneficial warnings, courtesy of the magic of Diderius. Warnings are detailed in the areas to which they apply.

Any response other than "knowledge" or "wisdom" that is not in some way flattering to Diderius—including questions for clarification—results in the statues reverting to their initial positions. The characters are free to continue on into the complex, but they receive no benefit from this interaction.

2. ANTECHAMBER

While an illusion still shows a tomb with gilded carvings and silver censers, these are mere shadows. Looters have defaced and ruined the relief-carved walls, and the censers are long gone. Set between the carvings are a dozen alcoves recognizable as funerary niches, though these contain only splinters of bone. At the far end of the chamber, a stone door hangs ajar. Marks on the door and frame indicate that it was recently forced.

3. WATCHFUL STATUES

Six statues stand here, all of cowed wizards leaning on staffs, their faces obscured by deep hoods. The hollows the hoods form are particularly dark. Niches between the statues once held skeletal guardians that fought the cultists. The bones of more than a dozen humanoids now litter the ground.

Characters who chose well when speaking with the statues in area 1 are struck by a sudden thought when they enter this area: "Some secrets are not meant for mortal minds to know. Look away from the darkness in which such knowledge hides."

Statue Trap. When the first adventurer passes the halfway point of the room, the sound of grinding stone announces the statues turning their cowed heads to follow the characters' movements. The characters must not look into the darkness in the statues' hoods. Any character who does must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving

throw against a *suggestion* spell. Success indicates that the character shrugs off the statue's magic, while failure indicates the character is held by the dark gaze within the stony cowl for 1 round. During this time, the statue whispers impossible secrets to the character, which carry both benefit and burden.

The character must then make a DC 15 Intelligence saving throw. On a failed save, the character cannot grasp the secrets it was shown, and there is no effect. On a success, the character understands the world more accurately, gaining advantage on Intelligence checks for the next 24 hours. However, the character is also driven temporarily insane for 1 minute. An insane creature can't take actions or reactions, can't understand what other creatures say, can't read, and speaks only in gibberish. You control the creature's movement, which is erratic.

4. MOSAIC CHAMBER

This chamber is a high vaulted dome with a deep inset ledge circling the room, 10 feet wide and 15 feet up. The floor here is set with a beautiful tile mosaic showing a knight in plate armor wielding a glowing sword against a chimera. The word "SAFE" is written in chalk on the door leading to area 5, marking that chamber as a resting place used by the cultists.

When the first character enters this room, the tile chimera begins to slowly shift. With a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check, a character notices this movement and is not surprised as the tiles shoot up and the chimera seemingly claws its way out of the mosaic.

The tile chimera acts as a normal **chimera** magically animated and customized per the sidebar. It makes a clacking noise as it moves, and when injured, it sprays tiles instead of bleeding. It is thin in one dimension and can use that fact to its advantage in combat. The creature flies up to the ledge to use its fire breath at range, flying down to attack in melee until it can breathe again.

CUSTOMIZATION: ANIMATED TILE CREATURE

An animated tile creature acts like the creature it resembles, except it is a construct that has no need to breathe, drink, eat, or sleep. The creature also gains the following features.

Damage Resistances piercing

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

A tile creature gains the following trait.

Rejuvenation. If destroyed, the tile creature regains all its hit points and becomes active again in 24 hours unless at least half its tiles are collected and kept separate from the rest of the creature's tiles.

A tile creature gains the following reaction.

Narrow Dodge. When targeted by a melee attack, the tile creature can take a reaction to turn its narrowest aspect toward the attacker. The attacker has disadvantage on the attack roll.

Mosaic Sun. The sun is depicted in the mosaic near the hallway that is area 6—and is actually a sliding circular plate that reveals the bone boulder trap in that area. The plate is only apparent with a successful DC 24 Wisdom (Perception) check or a DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check.

Door Hazard. The double doors leading to area 12 are plated in corroded copper engraved to depict a group of wizards peering over a pool of water. The oversized figure of a male wizard at the top of the image raises his hands as if summoning a creature from the pool.

The doors bulge out noticeably from their frame, pushed out by the weight of stone where the ceiling of the corridor between area 4 and area 12 has collapsed. Pulling on either door unleashes enough force to break the hinges and send the doors and a wall of rubble crashing into the room. Any creature within 10 feet of the doors must make a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw to jump out of the way. On a failure, the creature takes 28 (8d6) bludgeoning damage, or half damage on a successful save. The fall of rubble leaves the hallway filled with stone and impassable.

5. WELL CHAMBER

The divination pool used water to create a mirror-like surface for its powerful rituals, which was replenished from this well. The well holds water still, but the regional effects Diderius imposes on his lair causes it to evaporate within a few rounds of being hauled up into this area. A bronze bucket on a rope sits near the well, while an empty basin stands 8 feet up along the north wall, with stone steps leading up to it. A brass lever protrudes from the wall near the basin. When water is poured into the basin and the lever pulled, it feeds the sluice in area 12.

The sides of the well and the floor next to it are covered in bright red mushrooms. They are slick with a watery sheen that resembles blood, and have the taste and texture of raw liver if picked and eaten before the lair effects spoil them. They are safe to consume, however.

The cultists used this room as a forward campsite during their short expedition. Sleeping rolls and camping gear are scattered around. As with the door leading into this area, "SAFE" is scribed on the wall in chalk in case anyone became lost or disoriented.

Trolls. The well here connects to the reservoir that feeds the fountain in the plaza outside. The trolls in that area sometimes come here when their hunting goes poorly and feed on the liver mushrooms. Though the cultists did not encounter them before being taken by the yuan-ti, the trolls attack in the middle of the night if the party uses this area for resting. As on the plaza, the trolls flee down the well if badly injured.

6. HALLWAY

This hallway slants down sharply, dropping 15 feet over its full length. Any character who takes a moment to poke around and succeeds on a DC 17 Intelligence (Investigation) check notices a secret panel halfway down the hallway, large enough for a Small creature

to fit through, or a Medium creature that is squeezing. The panel reveals a narrow shaft that once housed a dumbwaiter, which drops down 30 feet to the stairwell leading to area 11. (The cultists discovered this shaft and used it to enter areas 10 and 11, though no sign can be found of their passage.)

Bone Boulder Trap. At 15 feet beyond the shaft entrance, a mechanical plate installed in the floor triggers a rolling boulder trap. A successful DC 22 Wisdom (Perception) check by one of the characters in the first rank of the marching order is required to notice this trigger without activating the pressure plate.

If the plate is activated, the circular mosaic pattern that appears as the sun on the floor in area 4 slides back and a 7-foot-diameter sphere made of hundreds of skeletal bodies rises magically from the floor. This bone boulder tilts toward area 6 and rolls down the sloping hallway before crashing against the wall in area 7.

As it rolls through, the bone boulder crushes and slashes at any creature in area 6, dealing 18 (4d8) bludgeoning damage and 18 (4d8) slashing damage, or half damage with a successful DC 17 Dexterity saving throw. Any creature that fails this first save is grabbed by skeletal hands and pulled into the sphere, which continues to roll over any other creatures in the hallway.

A creature trapped in the bone boulder can attempt a DC 17 Strength or Dexterity check to break free before the boulder slams into the wall in area 7. Any creature that fails to escape is inside the boulder when it hits, and is caught in an explosion of bones and stone, taking 14 (4d6) bludgeoning damage and 14 (4d6) slashing damage.

7. THRONE ROOM ANTECHAMBER

The smell of incense fills this room, and rich tapestries cover the walls. On the south wall, a chute large enough only for a Small character to squeeze through lets in light from outside.

If the characters spoke properly to the statues in area 1, an unfamiliar voice is heard to whisper as they enter this area: "Humility proffered in the manner of Mystril shelters those opening the way to seeking knowledge." A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Religion) check reminds a character of a holy gesture among adherents of the fallen goddess Mystril, involving turning the head downward and raising the hands as if holding a lamp. Characters who make this gesture while opening the double doors to the north can pass without difficulty.

Sarcophagi. Six sarcophagi are embedded in the walls behind the tapestries, holding the mummified remains of Diderius's household guards. A character who opens the north double doors without making the proper gesture, or who tampers with a sarcophagus, awakens the 6 **mummies**, which lurch forth and attack.

8. THRONE ROOM

A throne on a massive dais resembles a floating cloud concealing a golden sun. Seated on the throne is a twelve-foot-tall, regal and well-muscled humanoid male with a flowing white beard and purple toga—in reality, a **clay golem** that Diderius used to receive favored

guests in this area. The unnatural appearance of the throne and the golem are the result of a *permanent image* spell. At the foot of the throne is a pile of treasure containing 250 sp, six fine silver necklaces worth 50 gp each, and a *potion of fire breath*. Even with a quick glance, characters can see that the pile also contains hundreds of copper pieces and worthless bits of jewelry and pottery.

In addition to the illusion covering it, the golem has been imbued with castings of *magic mouth*. When any character first approaches it, the creature speaks in a soothing, magnificent voice, saying, "Ye who seek Diderius's insight must first furnish tribute, that Diderius might work his mighty magic. Lay such tribute at my feet or depart."

Diderius was not a greedy wizard, and he accepted even meek offerings from the poor in the town. As long as each party member places something more valuable than a clay cup in the treasure pile, the characters are allowed to pass. If the adventurers attempt to steal any of the treasure or to use the door to area 10 without leaving treasure, the golem attacks.

9. STUDY AND LIBRARY

The room east of the throne room antechamber was Diderius's study and library, in which he would meet with sages and travelers. Its dusty shelves and tables are now empty, the scrolls and tomes once held here having been looted long ago. However, the area's unwitting guardian remains.

Ilda is a neutral good **ghost** who was once one of Diderius's apprentices. She worshiped her master, but was mistakenly banished as a thief when one of his prize tomes was misplaced. Ilda died not long after Diderius, and her spirit returned here to act as caretaker to his great stores of knowledge.

Ilda is not violent except to those who would steal from Diderius. She manifests when the characters enter this area, demanding to know why they have come and threatening them if they plan to loot the library. If the characters point out that there's nothing left in the library to steal, Ilda is overcome by a fit of misery as she agonizes over her failures. A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Religion) check reveals that Ilda can be released from her sojourn here if any volumes from the lost library are returned (see area 11).

Ilda knows that yuan-ti dwell in the innermost parts of the complex. She knows nothing about the cultists, who have not entered this area. If the characters gain her confidence, she can also offer up the following information:

- Diderius's passion was powerful divination magic, which is how he discovered the mysterious pool in this cavern complex. He excavated these chambers around the pool, and kings and wizards came bearing tribute. When he died after many centuries of life, this underground manse became his crypt.
- The divination pool allows those using it to peer past many magical protections that block lesser divination magic.

GHOSTLY ROLEPLAYING

Even a confrontation with a good ghost should be harrowing. This is a creature whose spirit is tied to the world out of anguish, and any interaction with Ilda should be a precarious process of talking to a character who might fly off the handle at any moment. She might vanish into thin air for no reason, then return in a fury if the characters try to call her back.

- The pool's revelations could drive a user insane unless the questions asked were specific and dealt only with the physical world, avoiding metaphysical concerns. Gazing into the pool without first offering a sacrifice was exceedingly dangerous.
- Using the divination pool required a personal sacrifice, but over time, the pool's demands grew steeper. If others have been using the pool since Diderius died, as Ilda suspects the yuan-ti do, its current price must be dark indeed.

10. DINING HALL

Two long tables of plain stone stand at the south end of this dining hall, while a long marble table stands to the north. The door up the stairs leading to area 8 has "? DANGER" written in chalk on it. The door down the southern stairs is spiked shut, and has "DANGER" scrawled on it in chalk.

Five **bearded devils** are seated at the marble table—the last survivors of Varram's expedition. When his cultist followers were routed investigating area 11, Varram left the devils here with instructions to guard against any creatures coming out of that area. The devils take their orders seriously, which means they all but ignore the adventurers unless the characters attack.

If the devils are questioned politely, they tell the characters only that they were ordered to remain here. They admit that their master is Varram, and speak of great treasure down the stairs to the south. The dwarf has been gone for some time, but they have no idea what happened to him.

If the devils are offered 100 gp or more in gems, they also tell the characters that they have fought and killed undead in the complex; that the dwarf lost something important to his cult and needs the divination pool to get it back; and that they are working for the cult on the orders of their lord Zariel, Archduchess of Avernus, who wants Tiamat out of the Nine Hells.

The characters are free to pass through this room, including entering area 11—but they will be attacked with glee by the devils when they leave that area.

11. TREASURE VAULT

While Diderius lived, this area was his bedchamber, and it still contains an elegant bed, sets of bookshelves, a large wooden chest, and a side table set with ewer and goblets. The cultists sealed this room after a disastrous run-in with its undead guardians.

On the Stairs. The dumbwaiter shaft from area 6 to the stairwell in front of the vault was once used to bypass the long walk from the bedchamber to the upper parts of the complex for Diderius's servants. The

dumbwaiter's ropes and rotted wooden platform are strewn across the stairs.

This area is guarded by 2 **wraiths** and 4 **specters**. The wraiths are the spirits of warriors who pledged their souls to Diderius in exchange for the wizard's exotic knowledge. They can be defeated in combat, but their spirits are bound to the room by ancient magic, causing them to manifest again 24 hours after being destroyed. The specters are the reanimated souls of three cultists who died here and of three yuan-ti that died exploring the ruins. They do not manifest again if destroyed.

A successful DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals a loose brick in the wall opposite the door. Pulling the brick out reveals magic runes carved into the wall that bind the wraiths that guard this area. Marring the runes prevents the wraiths from manifesting again if they are destroyed.

TREASURE

The bookshelves contain magical treatises and notes on divination that have withstood the ravages of time. They detail the spellcasting practices of ancient Netheril, and will fetch 750 gp if sold. If the characters search the room, they find a crumbling book titled *Transubstantiality across Potentialities* stuck between the bed and the wall. If it is returned to the library (area 9), the ghost is free to move on from this world.

The silver ewer and four goblets next to the bed are magical. If a character pours from the empty ewer into an empty goblet, a fuming gas flows between both vessels. A character who "drinks" from a gas-filled goblet receives advantage on saving throws against poison and resistance to poison damage for 3 hours. Each of the goblets can be used to produce this effect once per seven days.

The airtight chest holds seven silk robes kept free from rot, and worth 50 gp each if sold.

The chest also holds an amethyst-set *ring of poison resistance* and two scrolls of *protection from energy*.

12. DIVINATION POOL

This long gallery holds the magic pool that was the source of Diderius's power. The double doors to the south have no markings on them, but they feature the same hazard as the doors in area 4.

Broken arrows, bloodstains, and a dead cultist are strewn across the floor of the chamber. A DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals that the arrows were shot from the north doorway leading into area 13. The arrows are carved of stone and their heads are in the shape of fangs, set with the symbol of a cobra with a crown above it. A DC 18 Intelligence (Religion) check recognizes the symbol of the yuan-ti god Merrshauk.

If a character inspects the body, it is revealed that the cultist died not from arrows but from a dagger wound. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals that a *dragontooth dagger* was the killing weapon. This was the unlucky cultist the duplicitous Varram sacrificed when he used the pool.

The Pool. The pool is currently empty. Varram had only just completed the pool's divination ritual when

the yuan-ti attacked and hauled him off. A stone sluice runs from the southern wall to empty into the pool. If the characters can fill the basin in area 5 and release the sluice quickly enough, the water pours into the pool before it has a chance to evaporate. Alternatively, the pool can be activated with a flask of holy water, which is not subject to the mummy lord's lair effects.

When any water hits the pool, it spreads out and flares with a black light. Any character who received Ilda's warning (or who remembers the statues in area 3) will hopefully declare that he or she looks away from the pool. Otherwise, a character must make a DC 20 saving throw against a *suggestion* spell. On a failed save, the character gazes into the divination pool unless another character immediately pulls the curious victim away from the pool (and avoids gazing into it as he or she does so). If not pulled away, a gazing character is driven temporarily insane for 1 minute (see area 3). A character pulled away from the pool does not suffer insanity but is stunned for 1 minute.

USING THE POOL

The divination pool has always required that a user make a personal sacrifice to gain its secrets. However, the pool's magic has grown considerably hungrier over the long years of its isolation. In response to the cruelty of the yuan-ti, using the pool requires the sacrifice of all or a significant part of a sentient creature.

13. CRYPT OF DIDERIUS

Diderius's final resting place is a 20-foot-high chamber lit by braziers imbued with *continual flame*. A massive stone sarcophagus sits atop a stepped stone dais at center. The walls are decorated with life-sized frescoes showing the lost gods of Netheril and Anauria. If the party benefits from the boon granted in area 1, all the characters sense it would be disrespectful to disturb anything here—everything should remain as it is.

Frescoes. Characters who examine the frescoes can attempt a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check to discover thin plaster on four of them. If any such fresco is broken open, a **mummy** hidden behind it attacks. The other three hidden mummies, all once Diderius's advisers, smash free to attack thereafter.

Sarcophagus. Diderius, the **mummy lord**, rests within the sarcophagus. When the characters approach within a few paces of it, a deep, clear voice issues from the coffin, saying, "You approach Diderius in repose. I know what you seek."

If the adventurers spoke well to the statues in area 1, the voice says, "Yuan-ti have taken the one called Varram beyond their portal in the northern wall. Be prepared, for I shall open the way to peril." Unless the characters ask Diderius to wait, a moment later, with a chiming sound, the secret door opens to area 14. The party gains a surprise round to act against the guards there.

Those who didn't speak well in area 1 must ask Diderius about Varram to gain information about his whereabouts. Failure to do so respectfully causes Diderius to say, "Leave me to my rest or face your

doom." Diderius opens the way only for those who are particularly decorous in this exchange.

If the adventurers try to open the sarcophagus, Diderius warns them. If they persist, he attacks. The mummies behind the frescoes also smash free and attack. None of the monsters pursue those who flee this room, which soon returns to its original state.

Diderius can use mummy lord legendary actions, but he is unusual because he casts wizard spells. He uses his 18 Intelligence as his spellcasting ability (his Wisdom remains 18) and has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *minor illusion*, *ray of frost*

1st level (4 slots): *charm person*, *detect magic*, *shield*, *thunderwave*

2nd level (3 slots): *cloud of daggers*, *hold person*, *see invisibility*

3rd level (3 slots): *animate dead*, *dispel magic*

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

5th level (2 slots): *cloudkill*, *wall of stone*

A canopic jar in the sarcophagus contains Diderius's withered heart.

Secret Door. In the northern wall is a secret door (Intelligence [Investigation] DC 20 to find). Knocking on the stone wall reveals a hollow echo beyond, but the mechanism for opening the door is on the other side. A *knock* or *stone shape* spell can open it, or the door can be forced with a successful DC 20 Strength check.



SS'TCK'AL

Long after Diderius's death, the yuan-ti discovered the crypt and claimed it as their own. A small group of yuan-ti now lives here, backed up by lizardfolk slaves. They are the caretakers of the divination pool, which high-ranking yuan-ti use to seek magical insight for their far-reaching plots. The yuan-ti have avoided moving into the original chambers of the complex, fearing the undead there. Instead, they have expanded the complex by excavating deeper into the cliff side.

The yuan-ti capture and sacrifice those who visit the tomb of Diderius. They are not above cutting a deal to save themselves, however.

GENERAL FEATURES

It is noticeably warmer here than in the crypt, and the air is uncomfortably humid throughout.

Walls. The walls of the yuan-ti enclave are worked slabs of dark green stone, slick with slime and moisture.

Ceiling. 10 feet high unless otherwise indicated.

Light. None unless otherwise indicated.

14. ENTRYWAY

This rough natural cavern holds the winch system for raising the stone slab secret door between area 13 and area 14. The doorway is guarded by 6 **lizardfolk**, which attack at the first sign of the door rising between this area and area 13. One lizardfolk runs to warn the yuan-ti while the others move into position near the door.

If it takes the characters more than 10 rounds to open the door, 4 more **lizardfolk** and 3 **yuan-ti malisons** (type 1) show up. The door is then opened from this area and the enemy forces attack. The malisons retreat if one of them is killed. The lizardfolk retreat when half of them are dead.

The eastern stairs descend 30 feet before coming to the bridge in area 15.

15. BRIDGE

The steep stairs from area 14 lead to an uneven stone bridge extending over a dark pit. The bridge slopes downward 40 feet to another stairwell leading down.

Moisture drips down from the high ceiling, covering the bridge in slick moss that hangs over the edge in green cascades. Any creature moving along of the bridge must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or fall. On a failed saving throw, a creature can attempt a DC 10 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to cling to the bridge rather than fall off into the darkness.

The pit over which the bridge extends is 120 feet deep at the top of the bridge (to the west) and 80 feet deep at the foot of the bridge (to the east). The area below the bridge is a feeding chamber for the snakelike yuan-ti young (see area 19), which crawl between the two areas through holes in the wall. Any characters or lizardfolk that fall off the bridge take appropriate falling damage, then are attacked by the yuan-ti young. Climbing back up to where the bridge meets either set of stairs requires three successful DC 15 Athletics checks.

Any lizardfolk that retreated from area 14 attempt to hold the party off here. In addition, 6 more **lizardfolk** crouch on the bridge to reinforce the area, hoping that characters trying to fight their way past fall off into the darkness below. They are supported by 2 **yuan-ti malisons** (type 1) armed with bows, which attack from the eastern stairs. The malisons also use *suggestion* spells to tell characters that a fellow party member has been replaced by a yuan-ti spy and should be attacked.

16. MEDITATION CHAMBER

In this large chamber, the yuan-ti meditate in the name of their dark gods and discuss their own plans and schemes. The northeast and southwest walls of this chamber feature statue shrines to the yuan-ti deities Merrshaulk and Sseth. The other two walls have statues of yuan-ti high priests carved into them, with suits of plate armor arranged as offerings at their feet.

When the characters arrive here, hundreds of snakes begin to slither out of holes in the statues and the corners of the room. Though they are not a threat by themselves, the snakes fill the suits of armor, which rise up to attack as 2 **helmed horrors** and a poisoned longsword attack. The target of a snake horror's successful longsword attack must make a DC 12 Constitution saving throw, taking 9 (2d8) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. The horrors won't leave this room.

TREASURE

Four rubies worth 1,000 gold pieces each are set in the eyes of the statues and can be pried out.

17. YUAN-TI QUARTERS

A dozen cylindrical shafts 3 feet wide and 7 feet deep are cut into the stone floor here, and are used as sleeping holes by the lesser yuan-ti. Two totems stand here, both in the form of asps rising up with their mouths open. These totems radiate magic that negates some of the regional effects of a mummy lord's lair in this area, allowing the yuan-ti to store food and water here that does not evaporate or spoil.

This room is presently guarded by 3 **lizardfolk** and 1 **yuan-ti pureblood**, unless those creatures have already been encountered in area 18.

Dart Trap. The secret door in the hallway leading to area 21 is marked by an archway scribed into the wall. However, a pressure plate is set 10 feet before the archway, revealed by a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check. When any creature steps on the pressure plate, darts shoot out from the walls along the length of the hallway, targeting all creatures in the area: +8 to hit, 3 (1d6) piercing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or take 10 (3d6) poison damage and be paralyzed for 1 minute.

TREASURE

Characters who search the sleeping holes can find 600 copper pieces, 200 silver pieces, and 150 gold pieces, as well as a *potion of poison*.

18. LONG HALLWAY

The walls of this long hallway seem to undulate, moving back and forth as though the corridor is slithering in the manner of a giant snake. This is only a *permanent illusion* effect, but it is unsettling all the same.

When the characters reach the turn in the hallway, 4 **lizardfolk** charge from the direction of area 22, followed by 2 **yuan-ti malisons** (type 1). If the characters moved past the door to area 17 without checking that room, the 3 **lizardfolk** and 1 **yuan-ti pureblood** in that area come charging out.

19. HATCHERY

The floor of this room is 20 feet below the floor of the adjoining hallways, which are reached by tall ladders. The walls of this yuan-ti hatchery drip with slime, and the floor literally writhes with the room's occupants. Yuan-ti produce copious young, which are consumed by their siblings so that only the strongest survive. A swarm of these young (use the a **swarm of poisonous snakes**) crawl through piles of eggs and crushed egg shells littering the floor, and are watched over by 1 **yuan-ti abomination** and 3 **yuan-ti purebloods**.

At the first sign of the party, the yuan-ti use *suggestion* as they apologize for any previous strife, stating that their kin meant no harm to the characters. As a show of good faith, the abomination invites the characters to descend the ladders and join the yuan-ti for a feast.

If the characters are completely swayed, the yuan-ti wait until they descend, then they and the swarms attack. If the characters flee, the yuan-ti pursue. If they are attacked from above, the yuan-ti ascend the ladders to fight. The abomination flees any fight if reduced to half its hit points or fewer.

20. LIZARDFOLK DEN

This foul-smelling chamber is piled high with trash and filth. The yuan-ti's lizardfolk slaves are kept here. The area is presently empty, with all its residents accounted for in other areas.

TREASURE

Hidden throughout the lizardfolk's filthy nests are 22 gold pieces and 125 silver pieces in loose coin.

21. PRISON

The yuan-ti use humanoid sacrifice to power the magic of the divination pool. Their unfortunate victims are held here until needed, but the prison is presently empty.

22. TEMPLE

The heart of the yuan-ti settlement, this huge chamber features giant stone serpents along the east and west walls, their open mouths guttering green flames. The leaders of the yuan-ti are here—3 **yuan-ti purebloods**, 2 **yuan-ti malisons** (type 2), and 1 **yuan-ti abomination** priestess—along with any yuan-ti and lizardfolk that retreated from previous encounters.

The yuan-ti and lizardfolk stand in the shadows of the flickering green flames, ready to attack but

understanding that the adventurers are a serious threat if they've made it this far unscathed. At the back of the room, near an altar carved with the form of a giant openmouthed cobra, the comatose Varram has been beaten and bound.

DEALING FOR THE DWARF

If the characters have made any mention of their search for Varram during their previous battles with the yuan-ti or lizardfolk, the yuan-ti abomination priestess holds Varram's *dragontooth dagger* to the dwarf's neck. The priestess has heard of the characters' mission, though she does not know or care why they seek the dwarf.

If the yuan-ti have no idea why the characters have attacked, the priestess knows only that Varram has been begging for his life by promising the yuan-ti great wealth if he is freed. The priestess plans to bargain with the characters by offering them the hypothetical wealth the dwarf has promised her.

Either way, if the characters want Varram alive, the priestess demands that the party leave the complex without killing any more yuan-ti. She is willing to turn over the dwarf, but explains that his soul has been temporarily drawn from his body by powerful yuan-ti magic. When the characters have left the enclave, it will be returned. (The priestess is lying—Varram is in his present semiconscious state because of the brutal treatment he's received at the hands of the yuan-ti.)

If the characters refuse her offer, the priestess attempts to use *suggestion* to sway whomever she perceives as the party's leader. If that fails and combat breaks out, she slays Varram (he has only 3 hit points remaining), then attacks with her followers.

DEVELOPMENTS

A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals a secret space and a passage beneath one of the serpent statues in the temple. Within the space is the enclave's treasure hoard, comprising 800 gold pieces, 100 platinum pieces, 2 cloudy emeralds worth 500 gp each, a necklace of 22 crysoprase beads worth 20 gp each, and 2 scrolls, one of *levitation* and the other of *call lightning*. The passage leads to the exit the yuan-ti use to leave the complex without passing through the crypt. The exit is carefully hidden behind a screen of rocks and scrub trees a hundred yards away from the plaza entrance to the ruins.

CONCLUSION

Varram remains incoherent until he receives healing magic or finishes a long rest. Once his health is restored, the fallen wyrmspeaker is quick to accept his status as the party's prisoner—if only because he knows that Severin will kill him if he makes any attempt to return to the cult. Varram can offer detailed insight into the cult's hierarchy and plans, and can reveal secret sympathizers and traitors within the factions of the Council of Waterdeep, at your discretion. Taking the dwarf alive earns the party significant respect among the factions, though bringing back word of his death is nearly as impressive.

If he is asked about the *White Dragon Mask*, Varram grudgingly admits that he saw it in the pool—and that it has already been found and reclaimed by the cult, and is presently at the Well of Dragons.

The characters gain a level at the end of this episode.

EPISODE 4: NERONVAIN

With the loss of Skyreach Castle at the end of *Hoard of the Dragon Queen*, the Cult of the Dragon's efforts to gather Tiamat's tribute were badly compromised. To compensate, the cultists launched several raids against the elves of the Misty Forest, led by Wyrmspeaker Neronvain and his companion, the green dragon Chuth.

Having fulfilled their quota for the cult, wyrmspeaker and dragon retreated deeper into the Misty Forest, leaving the elven enclaves ruined behind them.

However, the survivors of those cult raids would have been astonished to learn that the green wyrmspeaker is Neronvain—King Melandrach's exiled son, believed to have died many years before.

On one of his raids, Neronvain won the fealty of an elf named Galin—a warden of the forest who pledged his service to the wyrmspeaker in exchange for ending the attack on his home village. Neronvain accepted, using Galin's knowledge of the Misty Forest to help plan raids against other settlements. Galin has so far kept secret his oath to Neronvain, though he feels tremendous guilt over his actions.

Under King Melandrach's command, the elves of the Misty Forest have stepped up their defenses, and the cult attacks have ceased. Melandrach believes the threat has ended, though his son Alagarthas disagrees. Prince Alagarthas used the Emerald Enclave to search for clues to the source of the raids, and they have learned that an elf seen with the green dragon appeared to command the beast. Both Prince Alagarthas and Delaan Winterhound of the Emerald Enclave believe that more attacks are imminent, and that the green dragon's master might be one of the cult's wyrmspeakers. But what neither realize is that the Green Wyrmspeaker is actually Alagarthas's own half-brother Neronvain—the disgraced second son of King Melandrach, exiled by his people and long thought dead. They now seek the adventurers' help to find this dragon master.

CALL FOR AID

Delaan Winterhound comes to the adventurers during the Council of Waterdeep or while they are returning to the city after completing another episode. He speaks of the draconic incursions in the Misty Forest mentioned at the council, and says that the Emerald Enclave's agents have been working with the support of Prince Alagarthas to prevent a new round of attacks. With his agents already scattered throughout the Misty Forest, he wants the adventurers to travel to one of the few dragon-raided settlements left standing in the aftermath—a village called Altand. If Delaan's belief that the mysterious master of the green dragon was one of the cult's wyrmspeakers is true, the survivors of Altand might know something that will help find him.

THE MISTY FOREST

This episode takes place within the Misty Forest—a vast woodland concealed by thick mist and rain. Enormous spruce trees dominate the northern end of the forest where Altand is found—and where Neronvain and Chuth have established their stronghold.

GENERAL FEATURES

Mist. The mist in the forest is omnipresent. Though it can be ignored inside buildings, all outdoor areas of the forest are lightly obscured.

INVESTIGATION AT ALTAND

Altand is primarily a wood elf settlement, blending almost seamlessly into the forest around it. The village exists on two levels, with a few structures built on the ground around an ancient monument to an elven ranger. Residences and the village temple are built into the upper boughs of the forest. The elves string rope bridges between these sites and construct circular walkways around the trees.

Like many other settlements raided by the dragon, pulley-operated platforms connect the two levels of the village, and provide an excellent defense against the orcs that occasionally enter the forest as an alternative to raiding human settlements along the Trade Way. However, those defenses proved a deathtrap against the flying green dragon, leaving many elves unable to reach the ground quickly enough to escape.

SURVIVORS' TALES

Of the three hundred residents of the village, more than half survived the raid—a different outcome than at other raided settlements, where the dragon hunted and killed the elves to the last adult and child. Many of the residents of Altand were on the ground when the attack came. Of the elves in the upper level of the village, many died of the dragon's poisonous breath while waiting to descend, or fell to their deaths as bridges and walkways collapsed under the weight of panic.

Most survivors fled and saw little of what ensued. However, by asking careful questions of a number of villagers, the characters can learn the following:

- The dragon swooped down and attacked on the ground first. Nearly half of the village's victims died during that first assault.
- Humans in the regalia of the Cult of the Dragon followed the dragon, killing all those they found. The village's priest stepped out to lead others in fighting the dragon, but the beast swallowed him whole.
- Some survivors claim to have seen a cultist riding atop the dragon. Most of those refer to the dragon rider as human, like the other cultists. However, a few people report that the figure moved with the grace of an elf.
- With the priest dead, the village's warden, Galin, has become the leader of Altand. Though he was in the thick of the fight, he survived unscathed, and has been a potent force for rallying the survivors.

- The attack lasted only a short while, then the dragon unexpectedly retreated. The cultists followed, but as they fled, they took nothing of value from the village. This is a stark contrast to the dragon's other raids, which were focused on capturing treasure.

THE WARDEN'S STORY

Galin the warden is a nervous-looking elf with a dark secret. The folk of the village describe him as suffering from the weight of his new leadership role and the deaths of more than a hundred villagers—including his own wife.

In response to any question about Galin, the characters are directed to his residence in the upper boughs of the village.

Stepping into a modest dwelling suspended among iron-strong boughs, you enter a cozy sitting room. A slim elf sits at a desk, standing to greet you with a forced smile as a raven perched in a nearby cage caws hideously.

"Welcome to our village," the elf says. "How can I be of service?"

Galin answers any questions the characters put to him, but his responses echo only what the other survivors know. He claims to have not seen the dragon rider and disbelieves those who say they did, dismissing such reports as the result of fear and chaos during the raid. A successful DC 18 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals that the elf warden is withholding information. If he is pressed on this, he admits that he saw the dragon kill his wife and is wracked by guilt that he could not save her. A follow-up successful DC 16 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals that even this isn't the whole truth, but Galin takes umbrage if the character ply him with any more questions.

SILENT WITNESSES

Where the humanoid witnesses to the attack are limited in their knowledge, the characters have other potential resources to draw on. By using *Speak with Plants*, the characters can draw on the impressions and memories of the trees themselves. Though the spell allows only for impressions of the previous 24 hours to be recalled by its subjects, the trees of Altand can report that late the previous night, they witnessed Galin sneaking out of the village and disappearing into the woods, accompanied by his pet raven. Galin has been making this sojourn most nights since the attack, giving Neronvain information on other elven settlements, which the wyrmspeaker is using to plan his next round of assaults.

If the characters use *Speak with Animals* to question the raven, they learn that Galin walked a mile or more into the woods and came face to face with the green dragon Chuth and his rider the previous night. Remember that an animal intelligence is not as articulate as a humanoid, and it might take subtle coaxing to get the raven to describe a scene that likely frightened it.

The characters might also choose to watch and follow Galin on one of his late night excursions. Neronvain does not show up that night, but the warden's prearranged meeting place is a spot of flattened brush where a dragon has clearly landed more than once.

CONFRONTING GALIN

If confronted with evidence against him gained by spellcraft or subterfuge, Galin accuses the adventurers (publicly if necessary) of being in league with the cult and attempting to break the resolve of Altand's survivors. If the characters have access to *zone of truth* or similar magic, he flatly refuses to take part in any further questioning.

Galin will not respond to intimidation. However, effective roleplaying can be used to tap into his guilt. If he is offered commiseration for his wife's death—as opposed to accusations—the warden eventually breaks down. He confesses that after seeing his wife killed, he found himself face to face with Neronvain in the thick of battle and begged for his life, offering anything in return. Neronvain took the warden up on his offer, agreeing to spare Galin and leave Altand intact in exchange for information on other settlements that would become the targets of the cult's next round of raids.

NERONVAIN



Galin does not know the identity of the green wyrmspeaker, or the location of Neronvain and Chuth's lair. However, from the meeting place, he has watched the dragon flying off on a course due southeast and he has noticed that the wyrmspeaker's clothes and hair are often wet.

INTO THE FOREST

Neronvain's stronghold lies thirty miles from Altand through dense, fog-filled forest. As they seek the wyrmspeaker and his dragon, the characters meet an old druid who can help or hinder their quest, and must deal with the spidery guardians Chuth has set outside his lair.

A TIMELY RESCUE

As the characters travel through the forest, they hear the crunch of a large tree breaking, followed by a female voice crying out. If they investigate, they see a venerable woman with her leg trapped under a heavy fallen tree. She calls out for help when she sees the party. This **druid** is the caretaker of this part of the forest.

Three **awakened trees** are hidden among the other trees nearby—one of which has intentionally and harmlessly fallen across the druid, allowing her to feign injury and draw the characters to her. She guesses correctly that the group are seeking the dragon, and wishes to give them a boon to aid their fight against this scourge of her forest, but she wishes to test their strength of character first. She will not help those who do not help others.

If the characters help the druid without reservation, read the following.

It takes all your effort to lift the tree, knowing that you put yourselves at risk if it shifts against you. But then even as you are close to freeing the woman, the tree begins to rise on its own. Two other trees standing nearby shift back along the ground as the elf stands and smiles, showing no sign of injury.

"Heroes at last!" she says. "How many might fall back in fear at the sight of a stranger in the woods, or think first of their own safety before helping another? I grant you my blessing. May your hearts prove true where others fear to tread."

The woman picks flowers from her hair that you swear were not there a moment ago, then twists her fingers to weave them into garlands as if by magic. She lays a garland around each of your necks, then suddenly transforms into an owl. Her awakened tree servants stomp after her into the forest.

As long as the characters wear these garlands, they are invisible to Chuth's animal spies (part of the magic imbued into the area around the dragon's lair) as they approach Neronvain's stronghold. In addition, the first time a character wearing a garland is confronted by Chuth, he or she feels a stirring warmth from the

garland and automatically succeeds on the saving throw against the dragon's Frightful Presence.

If the characters ignore the druid, she calls out pitifully for help as they move away, offering a last lament against their cowardice as they disappear. If the adventurers attack the druid, the awakened trees attack. They fight to the death as the druid turns into an owl and flies away.

SPIDERS' HAUNT

A quarter of a mile from Chuth's lair, thin strands of spiderweb begin to be seen, hanging nearly invisible in the misty air. The webs mark the overlap between the dragon's lair and the hunting grounds of a brood of spiders. The webbing combines with the dense mist of the forest to make the area around the lair heavily obscured and difficult terrain, up to when the party reaches the pool (area 1). Because the webs are moist, they do not burn away easily. The direct application of fire destroys webs, but fire doesn't spread among them. A character with a torch can use an action to clear the webs within reach.

As the characters advance, the webbing becomes thicker and shows birds and animals trapped within it. Any movement through the webbing alerts the 3 **ettercaps** and 7 **giant spiders** lurking nearby. The ettercaps attack with web garrotes, while the spiders use the webs to drop into the party's midst. If two ettercaps or five spiders are slain, the rest flee.

NERONVAIN'S STRONGHOLD

The Green Wyrmspeaker has established a stronghold for himself and Chuth within a cave complex in the Misty Forest, its entrance hidden behind a waterfall that tumbles down a high cliff. The green dragon has taken over the largest cavern of the stronghold as one of its many lairs.

Neronvain is served by a group of cultist bodyguards, while Chuth has won the service of a number of ettins to help guard the stronghold. The dragon also controls a terrified group of elf prisoners Neronvain brought back from one of their raids, who fight for the dragon and the wyrmspeaker unless they can be convinced to flee.

Chuth is an **adult green dragon**. See appendix A for **Neronvain**.

GENERAL FEATURES

Secret Doors. Secret doors inside the stronghold are little more than cracks between chambers, just large enough for Medium creatures to squeeze through. They are obscured behind loose rocks or other cover, and require a DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check to notice.

Light. The stronghold is dark except where otherwise noted.

1. POOL

The pool at the foot of the waterfall is 20 feet deep at its center, its surface obscured by an emerald haze that marks this place as a green dragon's lair.



A steep slope descends from the cave behind the waterfall to the entrance to area 2, its surface slick from billowing mist. A character must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check or a DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check to climb or crawl down the slope. Failure indicates that the character tumbles 40 feet down the slope, taking 9 (2d8) bludgeoning damage. Characters using a rope to descend the slope can do so safely.

DRAGON ATTACK

If the characters wear the garlands given to them by the druid, Chuth has no idea of their approach, allowing them to safely pass through this area and into the caves.

If the adventurers did not receive the garlands, or if they took them off for any reason while within a quarter mile of Chuth's lair, the dragon's many animal spies alert him to the party's approach. He waits at the mouth of the cave, clinging to the wall near the entrance. A character who succeeds on a DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check notices movement inside the cave but can't tell what it is (or how large a creature it might be).

Chuth uses his blindsight to detect when the characters are approaching the entrance to the cave. He then dives through the waterfall, soaring above the characters as he uses his Poison Breath, attacking with surprise if no one in the party noticed him. Characters not wearing the garlands are also exposed to the

dragon's Frightful Presence. Characters who fail their saving throws against Frightful Presence likely flee back into the woods, where spiders might be waiting. On the dragon's next turn, it retreats back to area 2 to await the heroes' next move.

2. ISLAND CHAMBER

This large chamber has a 40-foot-high ceiling set with massive stalactites, with smaller stalagmites set across the ground. A pool with a small island in the southeast corner of the cavern is fed by streams of water dripping down through the rock. The southwest face of the cavern is a 25-foot-high bluff, part of which is area 4.

NO ONE HOME

When the characters approach the stronghold, there might be a chance that Chuth has left the caves to hunt, or that he and Neronvain are out scouting future raids. You can determine this randomly as you see fit, or allow the characters to hole up within sight of the stronghold and simply wait for the dragon and the wyrmspeaker to leave.

Removing Chuth and Neronvain from the stronghold for an initial foray allows the characters to explore and eliminate the guards without the pressure of an imminent dragon attack. This dungeon is a tough adventure even for higher-level characters, especially with the legendary actions Chuth can use in his lair. Attacking head-on if the dragon is aware of the adventurers' approach is likely a suicide mission.

The pool is 50 feet deep, and the island is a column of stone rising from its bottom. To the southeast, 25 feet below the surface of the lake, a 20-foot-wide underwater passageway leads to Chuth's lair in area 10.

If the characters did not alert Chuth to their approach, a group of elf guards (3 **commoners** and 1 **noble**) stand at the northwest entrance to this area, driven by fear into serving the dragon (see area 4). They are expecting more cultists to arrive at the lair, and savvy characters might be able to bluff or roleplay past them. The elves demand the characters' names and ask questions they believe only true cultists would know the answers to, including knowing the identities of the cult's leaders and the structure of its ranks.

Even if they are fooled initially, the elves become suspicious if the characters begin to ask any questions that cultists should know (including questions about Neronvain, Chuth, or the stronghold). In this event, the elves call out for help and attack at once.

Any fight here draws the creatures in areas 3, 4, and 5, which fight as described below. Chuth emerges from the pool and joins the fight 3 rounds later.

DRAGON ATTACK

If the characters were attacked by Chuth at the pool, the dragon clings to the ceiling in this area, using his breath weapon on the characters as soon as they enter the caves. He then crashes down on the party, focusing on elves over any other humanoids with his melee attacks. Chuth refrains from using his breath weapon if doing so might hurt or hinder his allies.

The dragon's roar signals the start of the fight for the servants of Chuth and Neronvain lying in wait for the adventurers. The elves fire bows from atop the bluff of area 4, while the ettins and cultists wade into melee beside their master. See areas 3, 4, and 5 for creature stats and information. Neronvain attacks at range from behind the cultists, staying close to the entrance to areas 5 and 6.

If the characters kill or incapacitate all of Neronvain and Chuth's servants, the dragon hides in the pool and emerges each time his breath weapon recharges. While hiding in the water, the dragon is heavily obscured.

If Neronvain is reduced to 54 hit points, he summons Chuth to his side and consumes a *potion of healing*. If Chuth is reduced to 78 hit points, he likewise seeks out Neronvain in the fight. The two then fall back to area 10 through the pool.

NICE DAY FOR A SWIM

If the characters follow Chuth and Neronvain into the pool, don't forget that the dragon is amphibious. Chuth can use any of his attacks underwater, as well as his lair actions. Characters swimming through the underwater passage might be suddenly restrained by underwater vines, making them easy targets for the dragon's Poison Breath, or putting them at risk of drowning if they cannot free themselves.

3. ETTIN LAIR

This filthy chamber features only three huge trash mounds piled against the west walls. This place is home to 3 **ettins**, all of which hate each other. If the adventurers make it this far undetected, the ettins assume them to be more stupid human cultists doing stupid human things. They ignore the characters as they go back to pushing each other around for "touchin' me stuff."

With a bit of clever roleplaying, the characters might be able to incite the ettins to fight one another. This costs each ettin 21 hit points and keeps them busy for 10 minutes as they wrestle and shout.

The leader of the ettins is a female named Grunda-Gurga. She has a *belt of hill giant strength* but wears it improperly as a sash, receiving none of its benefits and having no awareness of its magical potential.

4. ELF QUARTERS

The tunnel leading to this area rises 20 feet to end in a rickety wooden door, constructed by the elves to keep some of the ettin smell out. This area sits atop an open bluff, with its northeast edges looking out over area 2.

Neronvain and Chuth brought a dozen elves back from their raids in the Misty Forest as prisoners—8 **commoners**, 3 **nobles** with whom Neronvain converses on occasion, and a **knight** and **mage** who are Chuth's playthings.

If the characters have entered the caverns undetected, any elves not on guard duty (see area 2) are here. As long as no alarm has been raised, the elves are hesitant to attack possible guests of Neronvain or Chuth, but they remain suspicious.

The elves are terrified of Chuth, and the cunning dragon has convinced them that he will free them in time if they are loyal. It takes convincing roleplaying and a DC 17 Charisma (Persuasion) check to convince the elves to flee rather than wait around for the dragon to eventually tire of and eat them. If the characters received the garlands from the druid and place them on the elves, this automatically convinces them to safely flee.

FORGOTTEN SHRINE

An ancient shrine stands in the southwest corner of the cavern, showing a young female human holding a basin. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Religion) check recognizes the shrine of Eldath, goddess of waterfalls. Water flows from cracks in the ceiling and onto the statue's head, then into the basin. The long years have etched thin white lines resembling the tracks of tears across the statue's face.

The goddess Eldath still listens at this shrine. Characters who pray for her assistance in fighting the dragon can receive a boon at your discretion, including *water breathing*, *bless*, or other useful spells.

5. CULTIST COMMON ROOM

This area is brightly lit by torches set into roughly carved wall sconces. Long tables made of split logs are where the cultists sit to eat or entertain themselves. A

cooking fire burns in the center of the room, its smoke rising out to the central cavern and then out of the caves.

If the alarm hasn't been raised, 5 **dragonclaw** and 1 **dragonfang** cultists (see appendix A) are at leisure here. Unless the characters are wearing cult garb and can roleplay effectively, the cultists immediately recognize them as intruders and attack.

6. CULTIST QUARTERS

Rough bunks, bedrolls, and backpacks fill this area. If the alarm hasn't yet been raised, 5 **dragonclaw** and 1 **dragonfang** cultists (see appendix A) are asleep here.

TREASURE

Hidden under the mattresses in the bunks are a total of 30 gp, 120 sp, 23 ep, and 200 cp, plus a single 5 pound silver trade bar from Baldur's Gate (20 gp).

7. STOREROOM

The cult keeps considerable quantities of food and alcohol here. Judging by the volume of these stores, Neronvain is planning a long series of assaults against the elves of the Misty Forest.

TREASURE

The food is mostly common fare, but Neronvain's personal stock includes 8 bottles of Evermead, each worth 100 gp. Since contact with the elven island of Evermeet is so rare, it is easy to find a buyer.

8. NERONVAIN'S CHAMBERS

Neronvain has created a lush living space in this rough-walled cavern, decorating it with select art and craftworks from his raids. Rich carpets and tapestries cover the floor and walls of the cavern, which features a hewn-log bed, a large mirror, and a trunk.

The entrance tunnel to this chamber is protected by a *glyph of warding* attuned to Neronvain. A DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check notices the glyph. If anyone but Neronvain steps within 5 feet of the glyph, it erupts to deal 22 (5d8) acid damage to all creatures within 20 feet of it.

A secret door is hidden behind a tapestry.

If Neronvain is in the stronghold, he is found in this area only if the characters have managed to come this far without engaging in any combat or causing any alert to be sounded. He is otherwise encountered when he enters the fight against the characters.

TREASURE

If the characters can collect all the furniture, carpets, tapestries, and art objects from this area, the lot is worth a total of 1,500 gp. However, it should occur to the characters that these goods are the rightful property of the elves they were stolen from.

The trunk is protected by a poisoned needle trap, which can be detected with a successful DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check. If the trap is triggered, it makes an attack: +10 to hit, 1 piercing damage, and the character is subject to an unusual poison and must attempt a DC 16 Constitution saving throw. On a success, the affected area (usually the hand struck by

the needle) becomes numb in 30 minutes, then becomes transparent 1 hour later. After another 2 hours, the affected area painfully returns to normal as the victim takes 27 (6d8) poison damage. If the saving throw is failed, the effect progresses as above but the victim takes 54 (12d8) poison damage.

9. SECRET PASSAGE

This secret room is for Neronvain's personal use only. A small shrine to Fenmarel Mestarine—the elven god of outcasts, scapegoats, and solitude—resembles a pair of white eyes peering out from the dark wall above a small basin.

Also present here is a journal that reveals Neronvain's relationship to King Melandrach, whom Neronvain refers to frequently as "my poor father." The journal also reveals that the *Green Dragon Mask* is already at the Well of Dragons, under Severin's protection and ready to be assembled into the *Mask of the Dragon Queen*.

10. CHUTH'S LAIR

No one but the dragon and Neronvain are allowed in this area. Along the east wall is Chuth's portion of the hoard collected from the elves of the Misty Forest, though this pales in comparison to what the cult claimed for Tiamat and what the dragon possesses in his other lairs. The vaulted ceiling is 60 feet high here.

If Chuth is in the stronghold, he is initially found here only if the characters have come this far without engaging in any combat or sounding any alarm, or if he and Neronvain have retreated to the lair. If Chuth is encountered here, he uses his breath weapon, legendary actions, and lair actions indiscriminately. He tries to push powerful melee combatants back to the walls, then creates a wall of thorns to fence them in.

Because this is only a small portion of his total hoard, Chuth has no interest in dying to protect it. He flees when he is reduced to half his hit points or fewer. Neronvain fights until similarly reduced, then makes his way to Chuth and convinces the dragon to flee the caverns.

TREASURE

Chuth's small hoard contains ten gold trade bars from Baldur's Gate worth 50 gp each, plus 10 pp, 120 gp, 2,400 sp, and 8,000 cp. Feel free to add a couple useful potions or scrolls to the hoard as well.

CONCLUSION

This episode can end either with one or both of Chuth and Neronvain dead or escaped from the stronghold. If either survives, they retreat to the Well of Dragons and report the adventurers' actions to Severin. (If appropriate, you might let either Chuth or Neronvain seek revenge as part of the force that attacks the adventurers in the episodes of "The Cult Strikes Back.")

In any event, the threat against the Misty Forest is ended. King Melandrach hears of the party's actions and is grateful for the heroes' bravery. However, the discovery that his lost son Neronvain is a wyrmspeaker fills him with shame and rage.

The characters gain a level at the end of this episode.



EPISODE 5: THE CULT STRIKES BACK

During the course of this adventure, the heroes undertake various activities to thwart the plots of the Cult of the Dragon. The cult's awareness of the characters' opposition to their goals will have started even earlier if the characters played *Hoard of the Dragon Queen*. Either way, it doesn't take long for the cult to target the characters as a threat that must be eliminated.

Like the "Council of Waterdeep" episode, this episode is played out as separate encounters. However, these attacks work best if they are incorporated into other episodes, rather than played out between episodes.

Think about the pacing of other episodes and the placement of these encounters so that the cult's attacks can be spaced out over time. In particular, the third attack should be placed for maximum effectiveness.

The cult's attacks can happen anywhere, but the characters are at greatest risk while on their home ground. The cult wants its enemies to know that they aren't safe anywhere. If the characters ever split up to pursue separate missions in what seem like safe environments, the cult is almost certain to strike.

CHARACTER DEATH

Character death should always be handled carefully, but don't be afraid to kill party members in this adventure. The characters should be high enough level to cast *raise dead*, or to seek out such magic from their allies. Especially if they played through *Hoard of the Dragon Queen*, the characters have had ample opportunity to prove their worth to the Harpers, the Order of the Gauntlet, and the other factions.

FIRST ATTACK

The cult's first attack against the heroes is a measured assault designed to deliver a warning.

LOCATION AND TIMING

This attack can occur anywhere. The cult has no concern for innocent bystanders, but the encounter will be easier for you to run without a panicking crowd to deal with. This combat encounter should occur after a previous combat encounter has drained some of the characters' resources, but before they can finish a long rest.

CULT FORCES

The assailants the cult throws against the characters should be adjusted for the strength of the party. Using foes from the First Attack Cult Forces table, construct this first attack as a hard encounter using the guidelines in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

FIRST ATTACK CULT FORCES

Creature	XP Value
Dragonclaw	200
Dragonwing	450
Dragonfang	1,100
Half-blue dragon gladiator*	1,800
Young blue dragon	5,000

*Use the **gladiator** statistics but add resistance to lightning damage and the breath weapon of a blue dragon wyrmling.

PLAN OF ATTACK

The cultists try to attack with surprise, using one of two different plans outlined below. Feel free to adapt one of these plans or devise a plan of your own. Assume that the cultists have either observed the characters for a few days or have been briefed about their targets by other spies.

Option 1: Attack at an Inn. If the characters are staying at an inn, the cultists might opt for a direct assault, crashing through the front door. A more subtle approach sees them enter the inn a few at a time disguised as customers, then attacking when they have the characters outnumbered and surrounded. The dragon is unlikely to enter the inn building, opting to use its breath weapon through the windows or attacking any characters or bystanders who step outside.

Option 2: Attack on the Road. As the characters are traveling, the cultists can get ahead of them and lay an ambush. Alternatively, cultists might follow the party at a distance by day, then move closer when the characters stop to rest for the night. A surprise attack in the dark or at dawn is particularly dangerous, granting the dragon complete freedom of movement and creating the possibility that some party members will be asleep or unarmored.

CONCLUSION

Because the cult has underestimated the heroes' strength, this first assault is doomed to fail. However, try to ensure that at least one cultist escapes to report what happened. If no one gets away alive, leave signs that other cultists were hanging back as reinforcements, but fled when the original force was overwhelmed.

Make sure the characters understand what this attack was about. If it makes sense for the circumstances of the attack, the cultists will be dressed in full regalia, complete with masks and dragon-wing capes. With their last breaths, dying cultists should curse the characters and exclaim, "The dragons rise! You cannot stop us!"

The characters gain a level at the end of this episode.

SECOND ATTACK

The first attack established that the heroes are an even more dangerous threat than the cult believed. In this second encounter, a stronger cult force attacks to kill.

LOCATION AND TIMING

Place this encounter at a point when the characters are not at their strongest or most well prepared. Wait until they are scattered, their spells and features are depleted by previous fighting, or they are injured and low on healing. In particular, if the attack comes during a long rest but before the characters have finished that rest, they won't yet have recovered full hit points, spells, and other resources. Such an attack puts the characters at a huge disadvantage, but reinforces that the Cult of the Dragon wants the adventurers dead.

A dramatic location works best for this attack. The cultists not only want to eliminate a threat, they want to send a message to all others who oppose them. Attacking at an important public building such as a major temple or a palace declares that no place is safe from the cult, while an assault at a large marketplace or a royal garden guarantees a maximum number of witnesses.

CULT FORCES

The second attack force comprises a team led by a **dragonsoul** cultist (see appendix A). If this is an isolated fight with the characters at or near full strength, choose adversaries that create a deadly encounter. If the adventurers are weakened from earlier encounters, aim for a hard encounter instead.

Don't be reluctant to use forces that are likely to kill one or more characters. The destruction of the heroes is the goal of this attack, and if the risk of death doesn't feel real, the players won't take the threat of the cult seriously.

SECOND ATTACK CULT FORCES

Creature	XP Value
Dragonwing	450
Dragonsoul	1,800
Mezzoloth	1,800
Nycaloth	5,000
Adult black dragon	11,500

PLAN OF ATTACK

These attackers know more about their targets than the first group did, thanks to the survivors from that battle.

Option 1: Indoor Attack. The attackers launch their assault while the characters are visiting an important location crowded with innocent bystanders. The black dragon begins by tearing off a section of the roof to incite as much terror as possible. While the characters are distracted by that assault, invisible nycaloths move in and attack with surprise. The mezzoloths use *cloudkill* to surround the characters, unconcerned about NPCs caught up in the attack.

Option 2: Outdoor Attack. An attack in a marketplace, garden, or some other outdoor location opens with the black dragon and one or more flying nycaloths appearing overhead to create a panic. The cultists are hanging on to the dragon, but they drop down to engage the party in melee while the dragon circles above, attacking with its breath weapon and using its Frightful Presence on rounds when its breath is still recharging. While the crowd inhibits the characters' movement, mezzoloths can easily and rapidly teleport through it.

DEVELOPMENTS

Don't be afraid to engage in some triumphal monologuing by the dragonsoul cultist leading the attack. Whether the attackers are winning or losing, the cultist fights with cries of "The dragons rise!" and "We are unstoppable!" At some point, the leader lets important information slip: "The Masks are joined, the call has sounded! Soon the Gates of the Nine Hells shall swing wide and She shall return!"

As with the first assault on the adventurers, try to ensure that if the attackers are defeated, at least one escapes to report the outcome of the battle. Most easily, the dragon can fly away if the battle turns against it.

The yugoloths were summoned by Red Wizards and paid by the cult to kill the adventurers, but they have no loyalty to their benefactors. If a yugoloth takes damage from a single attack that deals more than half its remaining hit points, it withdraws from combat on its next turn. If it hasn't already tried to summon another yugoloth, it does so immediately. If it's already used that power, it simply flees, intending to regroup with other survivors later.

Because the yugoloths are mercenaries, the characters can attempt to buy them off with a better offer—one that not only exceeds what the cult is paying but covers the damage to reputation that comes from changing sides in the middle of battle. A good starting offer is 10,000 gp, or 2,000 gp per yugoloth if more than five of them are in the fight.

In addition to damaging bystanders, this encounter can easily destroy buildings and great landmarks. This formidable assault should provide a sense of the destruction that will wash over the Sword Coast if the Cult of the Dragon is successful in its plans.

CONCLUSION

The attackers might win this fight and kill all the characters. However, that doesn't need to end the adventure. Healers in the Order of the Gauntlet, the Harpers, and the Emerald Enclave can restore the characters to life so they can continue waging war for the forces of good. Surprisingly, dying in this battle might give the characters an advantage. When the attackers report to Severin that the meddling adventurers are dead, they'll be written off as a threat. If the raised characters make an effort to keep out of sight of the cult's spies, their next blow against the cult could come as a complete surprise.

The characters gain a level at the end of this event.

THIRD ATTACK

The second attack was meant to finish off the heroes. If a third attack proves necessary, the cult escalates to the highest level.

If nothing else, the second attack should impress on the characters that the first attack wasn't a fluke or a one-time event. They have a price on their heads. Additionally, the potency of the second attack should make the characters understand that if a third strike is even more powerful than the second, they won't survive. If it doesn't occur to the players that the characters should take steps to protect themselves, a concerned NPC can make the suggestion.

LOCATION AND TIMING

This attack can occur in any settlement the characters are staying in or passing through. Ideally, use a location where one or more characters have homes or family.

After the second cult attack, allow the characters to complete one or two episodes of the adventure before the cult makes this final attempt on their lives. Because this attack is an all-out assault, the characters should have full access to spells, healing, and other resources.

CULT FORCES

Enough chromatic dragons have responded to the *Draakhorn's* call that a full flight of young red dragons can be dispatched to deal with the heroes once and for all. For this final assault, the cult bolsters the red dragons with a handful of cultists, half-dragons, and Red Wizards (mages) who are members of Rath Modar's splinter sect. The cultists and Red Wizards arrive on the backs of the red dragons.

Make this a deadly encounter—and not just by the numbers prescribed in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. By now, the cult knows how the characters fight, and so do you. Sometimes players can make a group of characters tougher than their basic game statistics indicate. If that's the case for your group, take that into account when selecting the attacking force.

THIRD ATTACK CULT FORCES

Creature	XP Value
Dragonwing	450
Dragonfang	1,100
Half-red dragon gladiator*	2,300
Mage	2,300
Half-green dragon assassin**	3,900
Young red dragon	5,900

* Use the **gladiator** statistics but add resistance to fire damage and the breath weapon of a red dragon wyrmling. These changes increase the gladiator's challenge by 1, increasing its XP value.

** Use the **assassin** statistics but add the breath weapon of a green dragon wyrmling. This change doesn't affect the assassin's challenge.

PLAN OF ATTACK

This encounter should challenge the adventurers in every way. The characters should be no easy match for the attacking force, such that retreat and escape might be their best option if they hope to survive. However, if the characters haven't made escape plans ahead of time, the attackers will have taken steps to make retreat impossible. The specifics are up to you, but should be based around any obvious features of the encounter area. Standard escape paths such as back doors and known sewer entrances will be watched, and tactics the characters have used before will be known. Only a special escape route—a secret passage known only to a palace's most trusted servants, for example—should come as a surprise to the cultists and Red Wizards.

Frontal Assault. Because clever ruses and ambush have failed in previous attacks, the cult's third assault opts for overwhelming force. The dragons attack the characters from the air, attempting to draw them outside if they are indoors. When they finally face off against the adventurers, the attackers fight to kill. If the characters try to stay inside and under cover, the dragons attack whatever building they hide in, setting it ablaze. Half-dragons, cultists, and mages watch all known exits, including underground ones, to prevent the characters from slipping away.

DEVELOPMENTS

This battle will likely be a challenge to run. It is designed to create an emotional low spot in the adventure, during which overall defeat for the forces of good looks like a real possibility. Character death—even if temporary—can crush some players' spirits.

For those players, don't make this battle just a relentless slog toward death. Give the adventurers opportunities to save innocent townsfolk from being slaughtered and turn dragons away from fleeing crowds. The characters can clear burning buildings, use magic to douse flames or save the dying, and stand up for those who cannot defend themselves. Let their sacrifice during this fight mean something.

CONCLUSION

Great heroes rebound from losses to fight even harder for the cause they believe in. Thanks to *raise dead*, a lost battle is a setback, not a defeat. It's a wake-up call to any players who assumed that the characters' victory was assured. The Cult of the Dragon is committed to its goal and will stop at nothing to achieve it. The characters must be even more committed to theirs.

The characters gain a level at the end of this event.

SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

Depending on how the adventure unfolds, feel free to alter the forces and tactics in the second and third attacks as you see fit. For example, you might want to hold off with the yugoloths until the third attack, or you might want Red Wizards showing up in the second attack rather than the third.

DRAGON CULTIST





EPISODE 6: METALLIC DRAGONS, ARISE

When the Cult of the Dragon sounded the *Draakhorn*, its tremors were felt across the North. In response, many metallic dragons began to investigate what the sounding meant, and to gather what information they could on the cult from nearby humanoid cultures.

One of those dragons, an ancient gold wyrm named Protanther, invoked an ancient draconic rite of council, summoning ambassadors from among the metallic dragons. Meeting in the Nether Mountains, the council will determine what metallic dragons should do in the face of the looming threat of Tiamat.

The council includes representatives from each of the five metallic dragon races, who will spread word to their fellows of the council's decision. Of specific importance to the factions of Waterdeep is the question of whether the dragons should aid the civilized humanoid races in their fight against the cult, or whether they will act on their own.

During the council, the adventurers have a chance to engage and debate some of Faerûn's wisest and most powerful creatures. They must convince the dragons that the cause of the humanoid folk of the Sword Coast is just, and that dragons and non-dragons need to support each other in this conflict.

To broker such an alliance, the characters might need to promise concessions on behalf of different factions—whether they have those factions' permission to offer concessions or not. If they are successful, the adventurers can gain not only the support of the dragons as a whole but also the specific favor of certain councilors, including valuable magic items from those dragons' own hoards.

UNLIKELY AMBASSADORS

By ancient tradition, the draconic council includes ambassadors from the diminutive humanoid races. The silver dragon Otaaryliakkarnos—in the guise of the human Elia—comes to the Council of Waterdeep to extend the invitation to the draconic council, at which point, the delegates discuss who should be sent as ambassadors for the humanoid factions of the Sword Coast. As a group not aligned overall with any specific faction or cause, the party is deemed to be the best fit.

JOURNEY TO THE NETHER MOUNTAINS

The journey from Waterdeep to the Nether Mountains is more than six hundred miles. Otaaryliakkarnos is willing to grant the characters the special boon of flying them there on her back in only two days. However, this offer is extended only if the adventurers leave directly from the council, rather than first pursuing any other business.

The journey takes the characters through areas suffering under the cult's attacks. Whether from horseback or by air, they see the ruins of isolated settlements and smoke hanging on the horizon. If the characters travel overland, they might pass through some of these ruined settlements, or encounter cult marauders, brigands, refugees, and chromatic dragons bent on destruction. Use your own discretion when choosing how many combat encounters the journey should encompass.

COUNCIL OF DRAGONS

Five ancient dragons make up the council charged with deciding their metallic kin's response to the cult. Though they are not necessarily the wisest or most powerful specimens of dragonkind, all are well respected. Any decision made by these dragon councilors will be accepted by the metallic dragons as a whole.

The dragons have no need to judge the different factions of the Sword Coast, for they know of their reputations and actions already. The dragons' attitudes are effectively fixed in that regard. However, they know also that among all the humanoid races, leaders often determine the character of societies. Though they understand that the adventurers are not the nominal leaders of any faction, the dragons already know that the heroes' actions have set the course of the factions' battle against Tiamat. As such, if the dragons side with the humanoids, it will be as a statement of personal faith in the party—and in the party's ability to bring all the factions into the fight.

Attitudes. Each dragon councilor has one of four attitudes in this episode, ranging from **unfriendly** to **cautious**, **neutral**, and **friendly**. To secure the cooperation of the metallic dragons as a whole, the party must conclude this episode with at least three dragon councilors having a friendly attitude and with none unfriendly. If the characters make a promise or perform an act aimed at a specific dragon, they gain a two-step improvement in the attitude of that dragon (for example, from unfriendly to neutral, or from cautious to friendly). A general concession grants a one-step improvement to a single dragon of your choosing.

Metallic dragons are exceedingly wise, but they sometimes have difficulty distinguishing individual humanoids from each other. As such, an individual dragon's initial attitude depends on the party's racial makeup—and on ancient interactions and past wrongs.

See the "Council of Waterdeep" episode for information on the effects of the concessions offered by the adventurers to secure the metallic dragons' allegiance.

PROTANTHER

Male Gold Dragon

Protanther is the leader of the council. A former King of Justice—a royal title among the gold dragons—he does not care for humanoids, particularly humans and elves. Though he sees both good and bad in the lesser races, he believes that their capacity for attaining great power despite their physical limitations makes them dangerous. For all their capability, humanoids have little time to learn the wisdom to direct that capability.

The gold dragon knows that many of the world's most blighted creatures descend from humans who bargained with dark forces for power, including yuan-ti and tieflings. He considers the cycle of failed human civilizations across Faerûn as a sign of a quintessential flaw in human nature. Moreover, he is quick to point out that humans make up the majority of evil archmages and liches—including Sammaster, who founded the Cult of the Dragon, and Szass Tam's Red Wizards. Even the current leader of the Cult of the Dragon, Severin, and a majority of the cult's members are human.

Protanther can at least appreciate that the crimes of the humanoid races are usually directed against each other. He knows that the short lives of many humanoids means they might not even recognize their own evil. The elves, however, live for long years and possess great knowledge—and have used that knowledge to the detriment of dragonkind in the past. It was the elves who shaped the magic of the *Dracorage mythal*, causing dragons across Faerûn to go mad with rage. Convincing Protanther to trust humanoid factions that include elves is a difficult task.

Desire. Protanther would prefer that the dragons rally their forces with no regard for the humanoid factions, striking immediately and decisively before the cult and its chromatic dragon allies can muster their full strength. If this puts the humanoids at risk, so be it.

Attitude. Neutral. If there are humans or tieflings in the party, Protanther is instead cautious. If there are elves in the party, he is unfriendly.

Concession. Protanther wants a formal apology from one who speaks for elvenkind for the abomination that was the *Dracorage mythal*. He is willing to trust that the adventurers can wring such an apology from King Melendrach on the council.

ILEUTHRA

Male Brass Dragon

Ileuthra is an ancient brass dragon who travels the planes in search of knowledge and ever more challenging games. Legend has it that he resides with Oghma, god of knowledge, but the dragon is cagey on that point.

Seeing good and bad in equal measure among the lesser races, Ileuthra recognizes that helping the humanoids is less a case of deciding whether they are worthy of aid, and more about deciding whether these adventurer ambassadors can be trusted to properly lead the factions.

Desire. Ileuthra has no preconceived sense of what might be the best course, and he is willing to hear all sides of the discussion.

Attitude. Neutral. Ileuthra has watched the lesser races for long centuries from the planes, and he understands that every individual humanoid possesses the potential for good or evil in equal measure. He is truly undecided, and will weigh all options for action against the cult.

Concession. Ileuthra believes that the dragon masks are too dangerous to remain in the world if the humanoid races are aware of where they're hidden. If the characters agree that all dragon masks will be handed over to the metallic dragons as soon as they are found—including any masks captured after the final battle—his attitude can be improved.

OTAARYLIAKKARNOS

Female Silver Dragon

The representative of the silver dragons believes that among the lesser races, neither good nor bad is ever absolute. The humanoids are in need of protection and guidance, and should be shown Bahamut's righteous way of living rather than ignored and treated as children. If the dragons refuse to engage the humanoids and focus only on their own advancement, the humanoids will persist in making the same mistakes again and again.

Otaaryliakkarnos's faith in the potential of humanoids has something of a blind spot when it comes to dwarves, however. She resents the dwarves for their Dragonmoots of old—great hunts during which clans would come together to end the perceived threat of a particular dragon. Centuries before, Otaaryliakkarnos's niece was killed in a Dragonmoot, and with the long ancestral memory of the metallic dragons, she holds all dwarves responsible.

Attitude. Neutral. If the party includes one or more dwarves, Otaaryliakkarnos is instead unfriendly.

Desire. Otaaryliakkarnos would like the metallic dragons to strike now as Protanther suggests, but she does not know if they can succeed alone. An alliance

would reduce casualties for all parties, but the dragons must be certain of the intentions of the factions and their leaders.

Concession. Otaaryliakkarnos knows that the skin of her slain kin was used to make armor for the dwarf lord who slew her. She demands the remains be returned and that Ambassador Brawnnavil make an apology on behalf of all dwarves for the wrongful deaths the Dragonmoots have caused.

NYMMURH

Male Bronze Dragon

Of all the dragons on the council, Nymmurh disagrees most strongly with Protanther. He knows that the metallic dragons are made in the image of Bahamut, and have no choice in the matter of being good or evil. Thus, how much greater and more precious is good when it is freely chosen by the humanoids, who must consciously turn away from villainy?

Nymmurh's belief in the potential of humanoids is partly driven by his affection for and protection of the noble Silmerhelve human family in Waterdeep (including Dala Silmerhelve; see the "Council of Waterdeep" episode).

Desire. Nymmurh would like to help the factions, looking to the Harpers and the Order of the Gauntlet as epitomizing the best traits of humanoid aspiration.

Attitude. Unless the party has engaged in problematic behavior in his presence (or where he would hear of it), Nymmurh is friendly. He knows that the characters come to the council on the recommendation of those he respects and loves.

Concession. Nymmurh needs no concession unless the characters have somehow offended him. In such a scenario, the adventurers must prove their worth and goodness in a way you deem suitable.



THE DRAAKHORN

TAZMIKELLA

Female Copper Dragon

Tazmikella is fond of humans and has spent a great deal of time living among them, but she has reservations about supporting the factions. Her lair and hoard have been the target of cunning thieves and fast-talking swindlers more than once, and she perceives betrayal as a humanoid trait. She fears what might happen if one or more factions turn against the metallic dragons to demonstrate loyalty to Tiamat.

The copper dragon also believes that unrestricted interaction between humanoids and dragons has been disastrous for both races. The *Dracorage mythal* serves as a sore reminder of the animosity that has often arisen between the two peoples.

Desire. Tazmikella agrees with Protanther that the metallic dragons could strike against the chromatic dragons themselves. However, she is not convinced they would succeed, and having humanoid allies would reduce casualties for both sides.

Attitude. Neutral. If any character is a dragonborn, Tazmikella is instead cautious. If the party contains any character with a personal reputation for shady dealings (particularly a rogue or bard), she is unfriendly.

Concession. Pick one magic item owned by a member of the party, and which was found during a previous adventure. That item turns out to have once belonged to Tazmikella, and was part of a hoard she took from an ancient black dragon she defeated. (*Legend lore* or similar magic used on the item confirms this story.) The item holds sentimental value to her—or it did until a thief stole it from her hoard. Returning the item to her with an apology improves Tazmikella's attitude.

HAVE WE MET BEFORE?

The dragons on the council have lived for centuries. Given how quickly humanoids build up progeny, it is possible that one of the dragons encountered a particular character's ancestors and recognizes the character by smell. Perhaps the dwarf who killed Otaaryliakkarnos's relative was the long-lost grand-uncle of the party's dwarf cleric. Or perhaps Tazmikella's stolen magic item is not something currently possessed by one of the adventurers, but she recognizes an ancestor of a party member as the sweet-talking bard who stole it generations before. The character can recognize the item as a family heirloom, and will need to make arrangements to have it returned.

GENERAL CONCESSIONS

The party can make general concessions to the dragons to appease them as a group, rather than make personal concessions to individual dragons. A general concession improves the attitude of a single dragon of your choice by one step.

Wealth. Even good dragons love treasure, and bestowing a share of the hoard the cult has collected for Tiamat goes a long way toward improving the attitudes of the council dragons. The party can effectively treat the dragons as another faction receiving an equal portion of the hoard, granting one share of the total treasure divided among eleven factions. Doing so

improves the attitude of a single dragon by one step. For every additional share the dragons are promised (two shares among twelve factions, three shares among thirteen factions, and so on), the party improves the attitude of another dragon by one step.

The attitude of the dragons is improved by wealth in the following order: Tazmikella, Otaaryliakkarnos, Ileuthra, Protanther, and Nymmurh. Promising one-third (five shares among fifteen factions) or more of the treasure improves the attitude of all five dragons.

Other Promises. The dragons do not prompt the party with options, but the characters can potentially sway them with other offers. Reward player ingenuity for options such as the following:

- A promise to turn over Severin as a prisoner if he is captured, or to deliver his body to the dragons if he is slain.
- Consecrating a major monastery or temple to Bahamut.
- Dedicating a historical plot of land as belonging to the dragons.

A RELIC FOR JUST SUCH AN OCCASION

Metallic dragons are known to bestow magic and treasure from their hoards to help heroes from time to time. If the characters do an excellent job impressing the dragons—for example, bringing all five dragons up to an attitude of friendly—or if they roleplayed the encounter well, the council dragons might grant one or more characters with a token of their esteem. This is likely a set of 3 *arrows of dragon slaying*, or *plate armor of lightning resistance*. Either will prove useful against the cult, especially if the characters have yet to play the Xonthal's Tower episode. Tazmikella can even return the item the characters gave to her as a concession. (She does not covet it when it might do others good, but simply resents having had it stolen.)

CONCLUSION

When the characters have reached a satisfactory agreement with the dragons, Otaaryliakkarnos offers to return to Waterdeep to let the council know an agreement has been reached. The details and terms—including any concessions promised by the characters—can be discussed during the next council session. If the characters do not reach an agreement because they cannot or will not meet the dragons' demands, Otaaryliakkarnos flies them back but departs Waterdeep at once.



EPISODE 7: XONTHAL'S TOWER

Though Severin's hold on the Cult of the Dragon is strong, there remain traditionalist elements within the cult that long for the old ways of reverence for the dracoliches. Many such elements center around scholars and academics, for whom the cult's new focus has made their knowledge and research irrelevant. Others think that Severin is being taken in by devils and that Tiamat will play him for a fool—a notion fairly close to the truth.

Two of the leading dracolich traditionalists—a dragonsoul named Jorgen Pawl and his trusted lieutenant Iskander—have been most vocal in their objections. As the time of the summoning ritual approaches, Severin understands that he can't risk losing loyal troops to infighting and insurrection. He has thus agreed to give Jorgen Pawl and his followers a dragon mask to examine, allowing them to determine whether Severin's understanding of the masks' power is correct. If Severin is wrong, he will know before risking everything on a do-or-die gamble. If he is right, the traditionalists will give their support to Severin's plans.

What Jorgen does not know is that Severin asked his Red Wizard allies to create a false mask, supplying the scholar with a duplicate of the *Blue Dragon Mask* that appears both powerful and inscrutable, though it

holds little in the way of real magic. Severin knows the scholars will discover the deception eventually, but he hopes that the false mask will keep the traditionalists occupied while he completes his plans.

The Cult of the Dragon recently took control of Xonthal's Tower—an ancient and mysterious wizard's tower on the southern slope of Mount Hlim. Although not all the cult members at Xonthal's Tower are dracolich traditionalists, Jorgen Pawl and Iskander are in command there, and they have drawn many likeminded individuals under their sway.

ISKANDER

Neutral evil male human wizard

The young second-in-command at Xonthal's Tower stands an impressive 6-feet-5-inches tall. Iskander is not overly brave, but he is observant. One fact that hasn't escaped his notice is the number of rising stars in the Cult of the Dragon who meet mysterious ends before reaching their full potential. The suspicion that some cultists practice "advancement through assassination" or eliminate ambitious underlings to safeguard their own positions preys heavily on Iskander's mind.

Four tendays past, Iskander came down with a stomach affliction that left him critically weak. During

the illness, his suspicions blossomed into full-blown paranoia. He is convinced that someone at Xonthal's Tower poisoned him, and he now trusts no one. To save himself, Iskander has decided to betray the cult and seek safety elsewhere. Having heard the exploits of the adventurers, he has decided that the cult's most effective enemies are his best bet as allies—and that a dragon mask should be more than enough to attract their attention.

AN UNEXPECTED MESSAGE

Iskander's message to the party can arrive in any manner you see fit, including through contacts in the Zhentarim. Whether it comes directly to the characters or to an NPC on the Council of Waterdeep, the message could be a hastily scribbled note, an eloquent appeal delivered by bonded messenger, or a whispered plea in a dark corridor.

"You don't know me, but we can help each other immeasurably. My name is Iskander, and I made a terrible mistake in joining the Cult of the Dragon. The cult's horrifying plans are sure to bring doom to all, but I can stop those plans with your help. Rescue me from the cult's clutches, and I will deliver to you the prize of prizes: the *Blue Dragon Mask*. Without it, Severin faces an insurmountable setback in his effort to call Tiamat back to our world. The mask is here in Xonthal's Tower, being studied and guarded by only a handful of wizards, including myself.

"The danger of my treason becoming known grows with every passing day, and if I'm discovered, I'll surely be killed. Please hurry, for the sake of everyone and everything you value."

The adventurers are likely to be suspicious of Iskander, intuiting that his offer is motivated more by concern for his own survival than by concern for the world. If divination spells are used to assess the situation, give the characters a strong sense that Iskander is on the level, and that the *Blue Dragon Mask* is in his possession.

If the characters ask the members of the Council of Waterdeep their opinions, the NPCs are unanimous: the risk is enormous, but the potential payoff is even greater. Losing one of the five dragon masks will be a huge setback for Severin's plans.

XONTHAL'S TOWER

Xonthal's Tower is legendary among the wizards and tale-spinners of Faerûn for its unusual magical defenses, including a magical hedge maze that surrounds it. The cultists avoid the hedge maze by accessing a portal inside the tower that they use to travel in and out.

The wizard Xonthal was an extraordinary figure. Beginning as a lowly adventurer, he traveled across Faerûn and beyond, reaching distant Zakhara, Kara-Tur,

and even Maztica. His work focused on conjuration and elemental evocation, so he often kept elementals and genies for company.

Xonthal prized solitude, so he designed his tower and its surrounding hedge maze to deter intruders and unwanted visitors. Over a century ago, the wizard kicked his apprentices out and sealed the tower. No one knows what Xonthal has been up to in the intervening decades, or whether he's even still alive. Some think he must have become a lich, while others believe he's just dead. All that's certain is that the hedge maze remains a frustrating barrier, and the spells and wards protecting the tower against entry remain as powerful as ever.

THE VILLAGE

Spreading out along the edge of the hedge maze is a village, also called Xonthal's Tower. The settlement began as a place where Xonthal's many apprentices established homes of their own. As years passed, more settlers were drawn to the area as word spread that the wizard and his apprentices offered excellent protection against marauding orcs and monsters. The village is smaller now than in the tower's heyday, but about three hundred people still live there.

The locals are friendly enough, but they're wary of strangers who ask too many questions about the tower. Things were quiet there for a long time, but for almost a year now, the villagers have seen lights through the windows at night and heard unearthly sounds. A few claim to have seen a blue dragon lingering in the sky high above. Some villagers scoff at that idea, but everyone agrees that the tower has been reoccupied.

Once the villagers are satisfied that the adventurers haven't come to lay waste to the tower (fearing that an all-out battle would likely destroy the village too), they're interested in talking of little else besides who could be inside. The most popular theories are that Xonthal has returned or has awakened as a lich, or that one of the genies and elementals he once imprisoned finally broke free of its restraints but remains trapped inside the tower.

The villagers warn the characters sternly about the danger of entering the maze. Few who enter it ever come back out, and those who do come out are much worse for wear. Even animals and birds avoid the maze.

The tower and the maze are protected by brilliantly crafted *wishes* cast by Xonthal. The tower is impervious to all scrying and divination, and invulnerable against all forms of attack and alteration. Approaching through the maze and overcoming the puzzles designed by Xonthal is the only way to get inside.

THE MAZE

The hedge maze surrounding the central tower is an astounding work of magical construction. In certain regards, it's even more impressive than the tower because of the powerful ways it manipulates space.

A gently curving path leads into the maze from the edge of the village. The villagers built a low fence across the entrance to keep young children and animals from wandering in. Fear of the maze is hammered into all

other residents of the village from the time they're old enough to appreciate its dangers, and they shun it diligently.

Seen from above—either by a flying character or from nearby rooftops—the maze appears to be an overgrown, tangled mess with no discernible paths longer than a dozen yards. It looks exactly like what it is: a hedge maze left untended for more than a century, grown into a nearly solid mass of hedge and thorn.

Seen from ground level, however, the maze appears to be a pleasant, hedge-ringed garden with no resemblance to a maze at all. Villagers are quick to point out this anomaly, to prove to the characters that the maze is nothing to take lightly. The view from above reveals the maze as it exists in the real world. The view up the path from ground level looks into the extradimensional space that Xonthal crafted as a barrier around his home.

The tower's entrance exists only within this extradimensional space. Entering the maze any other way than walking up the main path quickly leads characters into densely tangled brush that is all but impassable, and that doesn't physically connect to any tower entrance. Characters who cut their way through to the tower, fly across to it, or tunnel beneath the maze to the outside wall find only smooth, unbroken stone that cannot be breached or bypassed by any means. A balcony juts out from the top level of the tower, but it is surrounded by an invisible, impenetrable barrier that deflects all objects and effects. The only way to reach the tower's entrance is through Xonthal's extradimensional maze.

GENERAL FEATURES

Because the maze doesn't exist in normal space, it cannot be traditionally mapped. Instead, it is shown here as a set of seven nodes where encounters occur. Moving between two nodes takes 2d6 rounds regardless of whether characters walk or run. Characters experience such movement as if walking down a well-groomed path in a hedge garden. The path curves so that characters can't see more than 15 feet ahead, exactly as if they were in a circular garden with concentric paths. Cutting through hedges has no effect on how long it takes characters to get from one node to the next. Characters who return to look for a spot previously cut through will never find it.

The hedge walls are 8 feet tall, allowing the adventurers to see the tower above them from many locations. This view provides no clue to direction, however. Characters who see the tower to the left one moment might spot it to the right, or behind, or closer or farther away a moment later. When trying to focus on the tower's new location, characters suddenly find that they can't remember its old location clearly, or begin to wonder if it was in its current spot all along.

If a character who entered the extradimensional maze along the path tries to fly above it once inside, the tower immediately fades from view, and the view becomes endless hedge-lined paths stretching to the horizon in every direction. Alternatively, characters who fly above the maze are shunted back into the real world, emerging above the hedge tangle with their companions nowhere

in sight. The only way for them to rejoin the party is to enter the maze again and retrace their steps, dealing with all encounters along the way. (Use this option carefully if you're not a fan of splitting the party.)

If the characters enter the maze at night, starlight from a clear sky is bright enough for them to find their way through—and even bright enough for the sundial in area 1 to cast a shadow. However, anyone with a passing familiarity of the sky notices that the constellations are completely unfamiliar.

Area 1 is the heart of the maze, and characters will return there many times as they seek the entrance to the tower. If they do things correctly, they won't need to face any of the maze's dangers. That's unlikely, though.

Although the maze is devilishly hard to get through, it's easy to leave. All the characters need to do is express a desire to leave the maze while they're in area 1, and whatever route they take next leads them back to the entrance and the path at the edge of the village. They can turn around and come back in again, and they'll wind up in area 1, at the start of the maze.

RESCUE MISSION

Unless the characters took extreme measures to hide their approach to the maze, they are spotted by the cultists in the tower. (The cultists watch the village closely, and immediately recognize any stir caused by the adventurers' arrival.) The cultists don't know the adventurers' plans, but with the *Blue Dragon Mask* on hand, they don't intend to take chances. Their preparations alarm Iskander, who sees his chance for escape dwindling. In a panic, he grabs the *Blue Dragon Mask* and dashes to the tower balcony.

As the characters prepare to enter the maze for the first time, or if they are spending too long in the village, read or paraphrase the following.

As you prepare to step onto the garden path, you notice movement high up on the tower. A human male dressed in black robes stands on the balcony, waving something over his head. It's hard to make out details from this distance, but it might be a blue mask.

"Heroes," the figure screams, "they saw you in the village! I've taken the mask, but they'll realize it's missing within minutes! Look for me beneath the tower, for it's the only place I have a chance to hide. This is the key that will let you teleport into the dungeon." As he speaks, the figure holds aloft a second item—some sort of white, glimmering hourglass. "I will leave it behind after I use it, but others may find it before you do."

The speaker looks over his shoulder as another figure suddenly dashes out onto the balcony. A flash of blades and spell-fire erupts. Then the figure who spoke pitches his attacker over the railing before dashing back inside.

XONTHALS TOWER



□ EQUALS 10 FEET



BLANDO

1. THE SUNDIAL

After walking up the entrance path into the maze, this is the first area the characters arrive at, entering along pathway E.

You've entered an intersection where eight paths converge symmetrically. You can see Xonthal's Tower dead ahead above the hedge wall, but the way the paths curve, there's no telling which one might lead to it.

A sundial stands in the center of the intersection, the shadow from its gnomon pointing straight toward the tower—which is highly odd, because the sun isn't behind you. Your shadows point in the proper direction. Only the sundial's shadow points ahead.

The sundial is anchored to the ground and cannot be moved or shifted. The eight paths leading out of this area are identical. If the characters try to make any identifying marks on the ground or leave items in this area, the marks and items are gone the next time they arrive here. The adventurers shouldn't know whether they're coming back to the same spot each time or whether more than one identical sundial intersection exists in the maze.

The sundial's shadow indicates the correct path. If the characters follow one of the paths not indicated by the sundial, it leads them to one of the other areas of the maze (your choice). There is no turning back from a wrong path. Once the last character has gone out of sight of the sundial (15 feet along the curving path), reversing direction delivers all characters to the same area they would have reached if they'd kept going forward.

If the characters take the correct path, they return to area 1 after 2d6 rounds. Each time they return, the sundial points toward a different path, in the order presented below. However, each time the characters enter this area after the first, the gnomon casts more than one shadow. The adventurers must deduce the correct path from among multiple shadows, but those solutions aren't obvious or even fair. Xonthal was trying to keep enemies and curiosity-seekers out—not just to present them with an enjoyable mental challenge.

SUNDIAL SHADOWS

Sundial	Shadows Point At	Correct Path
1	A	A
2	A, C	B
3	A, D, F	E
4	B, D, F, H	Sundial
5	A–H	Edge of hedge

The **first three sundials** are straightforward, even if the solutions are not always obvious.

The **fourth sundial** casts four shadows in an "X" shape. As the characters examine them, the shadows start slowly rotating around the face of the sundial, spinning faster and becoming shorter until they shrink

into the gnomon and the sundial shows no shadow at all. The correct path in this case is the sundial itself. A character who jumps or climbs onto the sundial is drawn into its stone surface, then is suddenly dropped out of the sky to land harmlessly around sundial 5.

The **fifth sundial** casts eight shadows that point at every possible pathway. No path is the right one. To correctly bisect the shadows, characters must move between the paths, straight into the end of any hedge. As soon as a character steps, runs, or dives headlong into a hedge, he or she emerges safely at the foot of the tower.

Each time the characters choose a wrong path, they emerge at one of the other maze areas described below, which you can use in any order you like. If the characters make the wrong choice more than six times, you can reuse areas, create new ones of your own, or let the characters wander down a path much longer than usual before encountering the sundial again.

Characters always return to the same sundial puzzle they most recently departed (sundial 1 through 5), so that they do not need to retrace their steps from the very beginning after each wrong turn. However, they have no way to tell whether they have returned to the same specific sundial, as noted above.

COMPLETING THE MAZE

When the characters complete the maze by successfully entering the hedge at the fifth sundial, they emerge within sight of a teleportation circle at the foot of the tower. The body of a dead cultist lies sprawled on the ground (the one Iskander threw off the balcony earlier). Behind them, the characters see a straight path that leads directly to the sundial intersection. Another path extends thirty yards beyond the sundial, ending at the exit to the village.

A few seconds after the first character steps onto the circle, all creatures in the circle are teleported to area 8 of the tower. Alternatively, the characters can walk out of the garden from the foot of the tower without any detours or difficulties. However, any gems they collected in the maze (see below) will mysteriously vanish from their possession.

SPLITTING THE PARTY

Some parties are going to try splitting up in the hope of outwitting the maze. No matter how the characters attempt to do so, however, they always wind up back together. If groups take separate paths, they meet at the same destination. If one character stays at the sundial while others take a path, that path leads back to the sundial where the character is waiting. Moreover, that character swears that the others have been gone for 1d6 hours—long enough to gain the benefit of a short rest (though taking a long rest is impossible in the maze). As usual, any identifying marks made in the area vanish during those hours without anyone noticing.

2. CHUUL POOL

Filling the center of this eighty-foot-square courtyard is a circular pool of water sixty feet across. The water is dark and murky, reducing visibility to about one foot. A garnet gemstone hovers one foot above the center of the pool. Another path leaves the area through the hedge wall on the far side of the pool, directly opposite where you entered.

Four **chuuls** dwell in this dark water. They stay hidden as long as the characters remain in the courtyard, but attack any creature that enters the pool or touches the gem. Attacking chuuls try to paralyze characters, then drag or throw them into the 50-foot-deep pool to drown them. They are fascinated by magic, though, and if any magic item is dropped into the pool, the chuuls are distracted for 5 rounds. They won't attack during that time, and if they were already attacking, they stop and dive to the bottom of the pool to inspect their new treasure.

If the characters attempt to leave the area without retrieving the garnet, both paths curve away and bring them back here after a short walk. If the characters leave any marks, items, or companions behind in this area, all the same conditions apply here as in area 1.

If the garnet is carried out of this area, either path leads the characters back to the sundial.

TREASURE

The bottom of the pool holds the treasure that's been dropped in by various visitors: six *potions of healing*, one *potion of growth*, one *potion of fire breath*, a *wand of fear* (3 charges), three *+1 daggers*, a *driftglobe*, and an *elemental gem* (clear sapphire/air elemental).

3. CYCLOPES' PASTURE

You emerge from the path into an area far larger than any open area you expected to encounter in the maze garden. This rectangular space must be ninety feet across, with its far side almost 150 feet away. It looks like a boulder-strewn pasture, with a large pond to one side and a fenced vegetable garden and oversized cottage on the other. Sheep graze in the pasture, tended by a pair of cyclopes, but none of them are moving. They all appear frozen in time.

As soon as any character advances into the area, the creatures here spring to life, with the sheep grazing and the cyclopes chatting idly with each other. When the cyclopes notice the characters, they exchange a few unheard words, then play some sort of game analogous to rock/paper/scissors. One loses, and both cyclopes approach the characters. They don't appear to be carrying weapons.

When the cyclopes are within 20 feet of the characters, the one that lost the game scoops up a small boulder from the ground and gestures toward the party. He then looks downfield and heaves the boulder 100 feet, where it bounces and rolls another 20 feet. Both cyclopes then turn and look at the characters expectantly.

The boulders at this end of the field are all at least 2 feet in diameter and weigh 500 pounds or more.

The cyclopes speak only Giant. If any character addresses them in that language, they ignore any questions but explain the rules of their game: the characters' boulder must fly farther than the cyclops's. How the characters accomplish this is unimportant to the cyclopes, but the boulder can't be dragged or carried—it must fly at least part of the distance.

The characters can beat this challenge in several ways. The most straightforward solution is to reduce the boulder with an *enlarge/reduce* spell, then use the same spell to enlarge a strong character to throw it. Other solutions might involve casting *levitate* on the rock and giving it a push, digging a trench for the rock to roll down the length of the field, or propelling it with magic in some other way. The cyclopes will accept any solution the characters attempt, as long as it propels the stone farther than the cyclops did.

Each **cyclops** defends itself if attacked, and killing them changes nothing. The characters still need to propel a stone farther than the cyclops did to get back to the sundial.

When the characters beat the challenge, the stone that the cyclops threw splits in half, revealing a topaz gemstone inside. If the topaz is carried out of this area, either path leads the characters back to the sundial.

If the characters attempt to leave the area without winning the contest, both paths curve away and bring them back here after a short walk. If the characters leave any marks, items, or companions behind in this area, all the same conditions apply here as in area 1.

4. CARNIVOROUS GARDEN

Ahead, you see a bubbling fountain filling the pathway. Large bright flowers grow in the hedges on both sides of the fountain, each blossom shimmering in the light. The air smells particularly fresh and sweet here.

A large flower grows on each northern and southern side of each square on the map except the square with the fountain. As the characters get closer, they can see that the shimmering of the flowers comes from a large pearl set into each one. However, if any of these carnivorous flowers is attacked, or if a character tries to remove a pearl from a flower, all twelve flowers attack any enemy they can reach. Use the statistics of an **otyugh** to represent each flower, except they have speed 0, and they have the plant type.

Once a flower is killed, its pearl can be removed. If a pearl is carried out of this area, either path leads the characters back to the sundial.

If the characters attempt to leave the area without a pearl, both paths curve away and bring them back here after a short walk. If the characters leave marks, items, or companions behind in this area, all the same conditions apply here as in area 1.

5. PAGODA

A placid pond fills the center of this open space. A stout pagoda rises from a huge boulder that stands in the water like an island. An arched bridge crosses the water to the pagoda, whose red roof is held up by six sturdy pillars and capped with carved fish. A human male wearing yellow silk robes embroidered with red and gold fish stands in the pagoda. You hear exotic music being played on a stringed instrument.

When the characters arrive, the robed figure bows to them, moves into the pagoda, and sits down on the boulder where it protrudes through the floor of the pagoda. He waits patiently for the party to join him. Around the boulder, the floor of the pagoda is not wood, but rather is a rock garden of decorative stones and brushed sand. A charcoal pit smolders beside the boulder where the man sits.

The master of the pagoda does not speak, and he waits as long as it takes for the adventurers to follow him. When they enter the pagoda, he gives a brief smile and proffers silk cushions. He then waves his hand and an iron tea kettle rises up from beneath the embers. The kettle resembles a scowling face with thick features, and a character who studies it may recognize it as a dao with a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Arcana) check. The man pours clear water from a clay jug into the kettle and adds tea leaves. He bows to the kettle and shows great reverence to the vessel, then lowers his head in meditation. Soon steam rises from the kettle.

The tea brewer is a **dao** magically disguised as a human, and the pot brews not tea but a deadly gaseous poison. The tea kettle is also the dao's *magic jar* (described below).

With a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check, a character realizes that an innate ability lifted the teapot from the coals (*move earth* acting on a small clay column). Characters who watch the leaves going into the kettle can attempt a DC 13 Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Medicine) check. Success indicates the character recognizes drakeswort, a potentially lethal herb.

If characters do nothing, the steeping drakeswort fills the pagoda with poisonous vapor, and the dao encloses the pagoda in a *wall of stone* (including the roof), trapping the poison and the characters inside. He uses Earth Glide to sink into the boulder. With his body safe beneath the ground, his soul jumps into the tea kettle, and he monitors the characters' escape attempts and enjoys watching their suffering. For the next 3 minutes (30 rounds), creatures inside the pagoda (except the dao in his *magic jar*) must make a DC 13 Constitution

saving throw against poison at the start of each of their turns. On a failed save, a creature takes 14 (4d6) poison damage, or half damage on a successful save. Three successful saving throws in a row confer immunity to the poison.

Trapped characters have several options for escape:

- The stone walls are AC 5, 6 inches thick, and have 15 hit points per inch of thickness (90 hp total). Motivated characters can create air holes in the walls.
- Dumping the kettle into the fire reduces damage to 7 (2d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half damage on a successful save. Smoke from burning drakeswort is less dangerous than steam.
- Plugging the kettle's spout or extinguishing the fire reduces the saving throw DC to 8.
- Damaging the tea kettle forces the dao to return to the pagoda. When the dao's soul inhabits the kettle, the face is slightly animated. Anyone touching the kettle notices the eyes looking around the pagoda. The kettle has AC 5 and 20 hit points. If it takes more than 10 points of damage, the dao returns to his body, emerges from the stone, drops the *wall of stone* (because he can't breathe the poison either), and attacks.

If characters attack the dao before his trap is sprung, he fights back, making full use of *invisibility*, *move earth*, and his other abilities. He shifts the odds in his favor by killing the weakest characters first. The dao fights to 45 hit points or fewer, then retreats into the earth.

A jade gemstone sits inside the teapot. If it is carried out of this area, either path leads characters back to the sundial.

If characters leave the area without the jade gemstone, both paths curve away and bring them back here after a short walk. If the characters leave marks, items, or companions behind in this area, all the same conditions apply here as in area 1.

6. STATUE GALLERY

Six suits of ornate plate mail stand in this area as if on guard. Battered and bashed pieces of armor and weapons are scattered across the carpeted floor before them. Moss and lichen cover the armor, though it remains free of rust. Another pathway opens up at the far side of this area.

When the characters begin exploring the area, two suits of **animated armor** swing into motion and attack. Each time a suit of armor is destroyed, two more activate. When there are no more suits of armor to activate, the suits reassemble themselves from the components littering the ground as long as any character remains in this area.

Each time a suit of armor is destroyed, roll a d6. On a roll of 6, a large bloodstone rolls out of the armor as its pieces fall to the ground. If the bloodstone is carried out of this area, either path leads the characters back to the sundial.

If the characters leave the area without a bloodstone, both paths curve away and bring them back here after a short walk. If the characters leave marks, items, or

companions behind in this area, all the same conditions apply here as in area 1.

7. GORGON MAZE

As they follow the path, the characters are drawn into a maze within the larger maze of the magical garden.

The curving path you follow suddenly twists to reveal a proper maze cut out of the surrounding hedges. Moments later, the pounding of hooves rings out, and a gorgon charges out of the greenery toward you.

This area is ringed by unbroken hedge walls that make it impossible to escape. The characters won't know this until they explore the area fully, and they won't have time to do that with a **gorgon** on the loose.

The maze permits the gorgon to move freely through the hedges when it uses its Trampling Charge attack. As it races after the adventurers, it attacks with its Petrifying Breath as often as it can. Each time it does so, a diamond crystallizes from its breath and drops to the ground. A character can spot the gem with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check. A character can pick the diamond up before the start of the gorgon's next turn, but if not picked up, it dissipates to mist.

When a character picks up the diamond, a pathway opens up in the middle of each of the four sides of this area, any of which lead the characters back to the sundial.

The gorgon won't follow the characters out of the maze. If the gorgon is killed, another gorgon materializes somewhere in the area 1 minute later.

THE TOWER

After making their way through the dangers of the hedge maze, the adventurers can enter Xonthal's Tower. Once inside, they learn that Iskander's fellow cultists have discovered his treason and are trying to kill him. The characters must figure out the tower's magical teleportation system, then defeat both the cultists and some of Xonthal's original defenses to rescue Iskander and claim the dragon mask he promised them. Before the characters can leave, however, they must deal with the blue dragon summoned to protect the mask.

Though the tower appears square from the outside, its chambers and walls are circular when seen from inside. This strange incongruity is another manifestation of Xonthal's ability to manipulate space.

GENERAL FEATURES

Ceilings. Chambers in the tower have 10-foot-high ceilings.

Light. Areas 8 to 13 are brightly lit by narrow windows and magic lamps.

Sound. The structure of the tower muffles sound between levels. Only the loudest shouting or noise can be heard on an adjacent level, and nothing short of an explosion or a *thunderwave* spell can be heard more than one level away.

Teleport Circles. The aboveground levels of Xonthal's Tower contain no stairs. The only way to pass from one level to another is by using teleport circles built into the tower (marked "T" on the map). Because they aren't climbing up or down, characters have no way to know which level they're on after teleporting except by looking out the windows. The tall windows in the tower are too narrow for any creature more than a few inches wide to pass through.

On the wall behind each teleport circle is a metal panel inscribed with symbols. Touching a symbol causes it to glow softly. A few seconds later, all creatures standing in the circle teleport to the area selected by the symbol.

TELEPORT SYMBOLS

Symbol	Destination
Chair	Audience chamber (area 8)
Two Chairs*	Audience chamber balconies
Upside-down "L"	Closed chambers (area 9)
Rectangle	Shrine (area 10)
Flame	Lounge (area 11)
Star	Observatory (area 12)
Square	Bedroom (area 13)
Hourglass	Dungeon teleporter (locked—area 14)
Right Triangle	Sundial area of the hedge maze (area 1; not accessible from the dungeon)

*Appears in the audience chamber (area 8) only. The specific balcony is determined by which chair is touched.

Characters who touch the right triangle return to the sundial seen from the foot of the tower, allowing them to return to the tower along the straight path or to exit the maze to the village (see "Completing the Maze," above).

To teleport down to the dungeon level, the symbol must be touched by the hourglass-shaped key that Iskander waved from the balcony. Xonthal conducted many dangerous experiments in the dungeons, and he didn't want anyone getting into that level—or getting out of it—without his approval.

The key is a representation of an hourglass made of ivory and crystal. Iskander used the key to escape into the dungeon from the observatory, but tossed the key back into the room after using it so the adventurers could follow him down. Jorgen Pawl found the key and has it now. The characters must take the key from him to reach the dungeon level.

8. AUDIENCE CHAMBER

The walls of this chamber bear exotic geometric designs representing feathers, eagles, and snakes, all rendered in a style you've never seen before. To one side of the room, a human female is sprawled face down in a pool of blood. She is dressed like a high-ranking member of the Cult of the Dragon.

The dead cultist was slain by Iskander. They argued, the dead cultist turned to step onto the teleport circle, and Iskander stabbed her before stepping through the teleporter himself.

A character who inspects the body and makes a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Medicine) check can tell that the cultist was killed by a *dragontooth dagger*.

The balconies are set 8 feet above the floor and can be easily reached by climbing. The floor of each balcony is a teleport circle similar to those found throughout the tower. The controls are located beneath the railing of the balcony, and can be found with a DC 8 Intelligence (Investigation) check. These controls can take characters only back to the main circle in this area.

The decorations in the room are reminiscent of a Maztican style of architecture. Xonthal studied the culture of Maztica extensively and incorporated many Maztican motifs into his home.

9. CLOSED CHAMBERS

What use Xonthal put these rooms to is unknown. Empty when the cultists arrived, they were quickly repurposed as barracks. Bedrolls scattered about show that between four and six cultists use each room.

The teleporter on this level is located inside a circular chamber with a closed door. The door and the walls of the room are made of thin, unpolished steel. The door swings outward if a simple latch is turned.

When the characters arrive, one **cult fanatic** and four **cultists** are searching the floor for Iskander. The cultists quickly realize they can't defeat the adventurers, and they make a dash for the teleport room. They try to escape to the lounge (area 11), where they expect to find reinforcements.

10. SHRINE

When Xonthal lived in the tower, this shrine was dedicated to Oghma. The cult traditionalists turned this chamber into a laboratory for their studies.

Painted renditions of dracoliches line the walls of this chamber, and a stone altar in the center of the area features the skeletal limbs and claws of a dragon. A half-dozen cultists look up in surprise at your appearance.

The skeletal forelimbs of a black dragon have been mounted to the altar and enchanted with a permanent *animate objects* spell. When the characters enter, it won't be apparent that the limbs are connected to the altar or that they can be animated. Each limb has AC 10 and 50 hit points and can make one melee attack per round at a creature within 5 feet of it: +4 to hit; 6 (1d10 + 1) piercing damage.

The room is occupied by two **mag**es and five **cult fanatics** who attack at the first sign of intruders. As an action, one of the mages screams the command word to activate the skeletal dragon limbs. If the cultist who activated the limbs is killed, the limbs stop attacking, but both mages know the command word. The cultists all fight to the death.

This room contains many notes and scrolls about dracoliches but nothing of value.

11. LOUNGE

This chamber was Xonthal's combination living room, office, and den, used for studying, relaxing, and writing. When they took over the tower, the cultists turned this chamber into another dracolich laboratory.

A large fireplace in the center of the room keeps this chamber warm and cozy, its smoke magically vented outside. About two-thirds of the skeleton of an adult dragon is laid out on the floor, curled around the fireplace. Before you have time for further assessment, however, a half-dozen black-cloaked figures move to attack you.

The six **cult fanatics** in this room move in as soon as anyone appears in the teleporter. If they can, the cultists try to reach the teleport circle and activate it while one or more characters are still on it. The teleport circle takes only a few seconds to activate, so characters standing in the circle won't be able to move away unless they have the ability to move as a reaction. The cultists select the shrine level as the adventurers' destination.

When the characters have time to examine the skeleton (a black dragon), they can see that the bones are disconnected and placed roughly, and that the creature's forelimbs are missing. They also see signs that the cultists do their cooking here, finding a collection of simple dishware stacked along the north wall, along with sacks containing potatoes, turnips, jerky, and flour.

Aside from the lovingly cleaned skeleton and notes that a scholar might find interesting, this level holds nothing of value.

12. OBSERVATORY

Jorgen Pawl (**mage**) and 3 **cult fanatics** are outside this chamber on the balcony when the characters teleport in. All four wait to ambush the first character who steps onto the balcony. If the characters explore the observatory before investigating the balcony, the cultists rush into the room, hoping to attack with surprise.

This chamber is clearly the workplace of a wizard. A pair of voluminous tomes on astronomy and astrology lie open on a table. A massive telescope of brass, crystal, and polished mahogany rests on an intricate stand in the middle of the chamber. A ladder rests against one wall, and an immense crystal lens is embedded in the ceiling.

Xonthal used this chamber for making observations of the starry sky. The ladder is for reaching the ceiling-mounted lens, which looks upward from the tower. Little can be seen through it during daytime, but at night, the lens gives the telescope a view of the entire sky from horizon to horizon.

Jorgen Pawl has the hourglass-shaped key that allows access to the dungeon level of the tower. Touching the key to the hourglass symbol on any teleport circle control panel activates the circle for a jump to the teleport circle in area 14.

13. BEDROOM

Jorgen Pawl and Iskander share this presently empty chamber, which might have been luxurious before being subjected to the ravages of time. A table assembled from planks laid across barrels is covered in notes and scrolls, all pertaining to dracoliches and having no bearing on the current crisis.

DUNGEON

Though the cultists have claimed the upper levels of Xonthal's Tower, they have no control over the dungeon beneath it. The secrets and ancient guardians of this area remain a mystery to them. Xonthal performed most of his experiments here, and the dungeons once included numerous extradimensional spaces accessible from the main corridor (area 17).

When the first two groups of cultists sent down here to explore were killed by the elementals in area 15, Jorgen Pawl quickly declared the dungeon off limits. Iskander understood the risks of fleeing here, but he knew it was the one place where Jorgen's fanatical followers would be reluctant to pursue him.

GENERAL FEATURES

Ceilings. Chambers in the dungeon have 10-foot-high ceilings unless otherwise noted.

Light. Unless otherwise noted in the area description, areas 14 to 23 are unlit until a creature steps into the room. Magic lamps then activate and provide bright light.

Sound. Sound carries well through these rooms and corridors. The sound of fighting or other loud noises in one area can be heard through a closed door in an adjacent area.

14. DUNGEON TELEPORTER

The bodies of three dead cultists lie on the floor here. A successful DC 13 Wisdom (Medicine) check determines that two of them were killed by bolts of magical force (Iskander's handiwork). No check is needed to see that the third was stabbed to death. A trail of blood runs into this room from area 15.

Iskander was waiting in this chamber for pursuers to appear. He killed two immediately but the third chased him into area 15, where the elementals attacked both of them.

The teleporter here can reach any teleport circle in the tower above, but its controls do not allow characters to return to the sundial.

15. ELEMENTAL CHECKPOINT

Blood streaks the floor here, including the smeared trail leading back to the teleport chamber and a second trail of bloody boot prints heading up the corridor to the north. Standing amid the gore are three humanoid figures—two that look like misshapen statues of clay and stone and one appearing as a humanoid made of flame.

The creatures are 2 **earth elementals** and a **fire elemental** Xonthal called forth to guard his workshops. In the absence of new orders, the elementals eternally follow Xonthal's last command to slay intruders. When any character enters the room, the elementals attack. They fight until destroyed, or until the party flees back to area 14 or moves further into the dungeon. The elementals do not pursue outside this area unless attacked from a distance.

A large, round table with four chairs sits in one corner of the room, with shelves and workbenches arranged along the walls. Books and papers are scattered on the table, along with a locked wooden chest about the size



of a shoebox. Opening the lock requires thieves' tools and a successful DC 15 Dexterity check. A failed check sets off a magic *glyph of warding* trap that triggers a *slow* spell affecting all creatures in the area except elementals. Creatures affected by the spell can attempt the saving throw again at the end of each of their turns. Otherwise, the effect ends after 1 minute.

The chest contains three scrolls: two *scrolls of protection against fire elementals* and one *scroll of protection against earth elementals*. Characters who claim these scrolls can use them to move safely past the elementals, if they bunch tightly together to keep everyone inside the effect's five-foot radius from the caster. With only one *scroll of protection against earth elementals*, characters will probably be forced to deal with the earth elementals at least once.

The writing on the papers and books in the room has become illegible, and the paper is so brittle from the fire elementals' heat that it crumbles at a touch.

16. LABORATORY

It's obvious at a glance that this area was once a wizard's workroom. Worktables are covered with notes, alchemical flasks, beakers, braziers, and other arcane apparatus. More startling is the whirlwind occupying the center of the room. Ten feet across and stretching from floor to ceiling, it swirls endlessly, revealing a number of sparkling gems within it.

The whirlwind is not a creature, but one of Xonthal's experiments. The gemstones swirling inside it are *elemental gems*. If a hand or any other material object is pushed into the whirlwind, it disrupts the perfect balance of the airflow, causing an *elemental gem* to spin out and smash on the floor, summoning an angry **elemental**. You can choose the elemental's type or determine it randomly. The whirlwind contains eight gems, two of each elemental type. Every time the whirlwind is disturbed, another gem is ejected and breaks.

The equipment here is now useless, and any reagents or components have long since dried up, decayed, or lost their potency. A character who spends a day poring over the notes can attempt a DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana) check to understand that Xonthal was involved in a complex attempt to create elementals that fused the best traits of earth, air, fire, and water.

17. COSMIC HALLWAY

Steps descend to a walkway that appears to stretch across infinite space. Thousands of stars twinkle in unfamiliar constellations, and meteors streak through the vastness above and below the path. Just past the base of the stairs, a door framed by nothingness rises from the path. Fifty feet beyond that, the path meets an intersection, with another door straight ahead.

This corridor is a relic of Xonthal's experimentation with extradimensional space. The path is formed by the floor of the corridor, which is perfectly solid and secure despite appearing to extend into the void. Reaching beyond the edge of the walkway confirms the absence of walls or ceiling. The atmosphere is thin and cold, but not uncomfortably so.

At an opportune moment when one or more characters are moving along the path, a swarm of tiny meteors shoots past, threatening to knock them off the walkway. All creatures on the path must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw to dodge the meteors. On a failed save, a creature is struck, takes 9 (2d8) bludgeoning damage, and is knocked off the walkway.

A creature knocked off the walkway appears to fall into infinite space. Unless the creature can fly or teleport back to the walkway, it quickly vanishes from sight. Roll 1d4 + 17; the number rolled is the number of the room where the character materializes and crashes to the floor on the following round, taking 14 (4d6) bludgeoning damage from the fall.

Though having a character fall off the walkway is dangerous (and potentially exciting), it makes it less likely that the adventurers can be tricked by the efreeti in area 22.

18. STUDY

This circular room is obviously a library or study, its walls lined with bookshelves that extend from the floor to the gently domed ceiling twenty feet overhead. A wheeled ladder is connected to a rail that runs around the curved wall, allowing access to the upper shelves. A delicate, ornate desk stands at the center of the room, surrounded by piles of blank paper. A large map sits on the desk, its corners held down with stones.

The two secret doors in this area are concealed behind swinging bookshelves, and can each be found with a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check. The door to the spellbook study (area 20) is opened by shifting a book at floor level. The door to the observation room (area 19) is located 10 feet above the floor. It is opened by positioning the rolling ladder in front of the door and pushing on the shelf 15 feet above the floor.

If anyone but Xonthal opens either secret door, the papers piled throughout the room begin to ruffle as though a breeze blows through the area. Thousands of sheets of heavy paper then fly into the air in a great whirlwind, slashing at any creature in the area. One distinct storm of paper forms around each character on the first round. Every round after that, two more cyclones form, to a maximum of three per character.

Treat these paper whirlwinds as **swarms of ravens**, but they are constructs instead of beasts, and they have vulnerability to fire. When the paper swarms form, they remain on guard in the study for 30 minutes, then collapse to piles of paper once more. They won't pursue characters into the hallway, but will chase them into the two adjoining rooms.

TREASURE

The contents of Xonthal's library are as valuable as they are voluminous. The wizard's collection includes nearly five thousand books, pamphlets, folios, quartos, scrolls, and tablets with a combined weight of more than a ton. The entire collection would be worth 50,000 gp if it could be moved. Alternatively, the characters can pick out a few especially valuable volumes.

A character trained in one of the following skills can make a check to search the library for a work on that subject: Animal Handling, Athletics, Arcana, History, Medicine, Nature, Performance, Persuasion, Religion, or Sleight of Hand. Multiply the total of the check by 10 to get the gp value of the single most valuable book a character can find on that subject. Each skill check takes 10 minutes, but many characters can be searching at the same time. Characters who search for more books take a cumulative -10 penalty to subsequent checks.

The map shows the region of the Elemental Plane of Fire surrounding the fabled City of Brass. The map cannot be harmed by fire, and is worth 500 gp to a planar scholar or explorer.

19. OBSERVATION ROOM

The floor of this room is 10 feet higher than the floor of area 18.

A circular pane of crystal ten feet in diameter hangs vertically in this chamber, anchored to the ceiling, walls, and floor by chains. A scene of roiling fire can be glimpsed within the crystal. In front of the crystal, an ornate rod is set into the floor.

The scrying crystal allowed Xonthal to peer into other planes, and is currently set to view the Elemental Plane of Fire. The view is controlled by the rod set into the floor, and moving it shifts the scene. Doing so properly is challenging, however. A character can attempt a DC 20 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check to move the rod. Success indicates that the crystal displays a brief glimpse of a stunning fiery vista near the City of Brass. Failure indicates that the crystal shows only flames.

20. SPELLBOOK STUDY

A large, simple desk with several ink pots, quill pens, and a single chair occupy the center of this otherwise empty room.

Xonthal used this room for writing his spellbooks, but those books went with him when he vanished. The ink pots are dried up, but any character trained in Arcana will recognize the specific type of ink used for magical writing. The quill pens are exquisitely fashioned and still usable.

21. STORAGE CLOSET

This area is lined with shelves holding hundreds of mundane and exotic reagents and components used by Xonthal in his experiments. Most of the supplies have evaporated, congealed, or decayed over long years, but any spellcasting characters can find enough useable materials here to replenish their material components if necessary.

22. TARAZ THE FAIR

Where the hallway bends to the northeast, it once again takes on the appearance of a stone corridor.

Light shines out ahead as the corridor opens into a room set with comfortable-looking oversized furnishings. In the center of the room, a red-skinned creature wearing armor of flame, bronze, and volcanic stone sits cross-legged on the floor, studying a chessboard.

The creature is an **efreeti** named Taraz the Fair. The name has nothing to do with his sense of justice or fair play, however, but refers to the light hues of his fiery hair. Xonthal trapped Taraz and was trying to bend or trick the efreeti into service when he disappeared. The trapped creature has had over a century of solitude to rue its fate.

Taraz is held in this area by a thin line of magical salt. Imbued with potent wards by Xonthal, the salt rings the bases of all four walls and extends across the doorway in the joints between paving stones. A character with a passive Perception of 18 or higher notices the salt automatically. Otherwise, a character who looks carefully spots the salt with a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana or Investigation) check.

Taraz greets the adventurers with a fiery smile. He assumes correctly that the characters' arrival so soon after Iskander's appearance is no coincidence, and he uses the missing mage as leverage for negotiating. Taraz's only concern is escape, and he will do anything to win his freedom.

Taraz's conversation with the adventurers covers the following points—many of which are utter lies designed to help him gain the characters' trust:

- Xonthal stripped Taraz's power to grant wishes when he trapped the efreeti here, to prevent him from escaping. He will recover his power only when he is freed. (Both false.)
- Xonthal warded the chamber to prevent the efreeti from harming anyone, so that the wizard and the genie could play chess. Xonthal promised to set Taraz free if he ever won a match. (False on all counts. Xonthal never entered this area, because Taraz can and will harm creatures in his chamber.)
- The characters are perfectly safe in the corridor. (True, as long as Taraz is confined to area 22.)
- Taraz has no desire to harm the characters, and couldn't even if he wanted to, thanks to Xonthal's protective magic. (False. Xonthal's wards confine the efreeti and its magic to area 22, but they don't protect other creatures in that area.)

- Taraz saw a human (Iskander) come down the corridor ahead of the adventurers. He was carrying a mask that resembled a dragon's face, and he looked badly wounded. (All true.)
- Iskander stumbled and fell off the walkway with the mask into the infinite space beyond, where he undoubtedly is still falling. To rescue him and recover the mask, the characters will need Taraz's help, for the only way to get the mask back from the cosmic well around the walkway is with a wish. The efreeti will bestow this powerful magic on the party in exchange for his freedom. (False on all counts, including the efreeti's ability to bestow a wish.)
- Freeing Taraz is as simple as breaking the line of salt across the entryway. (True.)

In the end, Taraz is desperate to escape the dungeon, and he will promise almost anything—short of continued servitude—to win his freedom. Unless the terms of the deal are ironclad, however, the efreeti will seek a way to weasel out of any bargain once he is free, and to attack the characters out of sheer malice. Because he can fly, Taraz has no fear of falling off the walkway, and he will push characters off it.

23. TIME CHAMBER

Two massive hourglasses occupy this irregularly shaped chamber. Their glass globes are nearly fifteen feet across, with each hourglass rising almost to the ceiling thirty feet overhead. Each is suspended by chains, pulleys, and gears in such a way that it can be turned over to set its sand running.

Slumped against the wall at the far side of the chamber is the cultist who called to you from the balcony of the tower. His dark robes are charred and torn, and a blue dragon mask is clutched in his red-stained hands.

In addition to his mastery of spatial magic, Xonthal dabbled in the manipulation of time. These hourglasses were part of his attempt to control the flow of time, though he abandoned that research. The hourglasses can be rotated by pulling on their chains, but the only effect is a hideous, ear-grating groan. The sand runs, but but the hourglasses' magic has long since dissipated.

Casting a *detect magic* spell reveals faint auras of transmutation magic within the sand of each hourglass. An hourglass has AC 5, 25 hit points, and vulnerability to bludgeoning and thunder damage. An hourglass that drops to 0 hit points shatters, spilling its sand onto the floor. Sifting through the pile reveals 1d4 + 2 tiny diamonds amid the grains of sand. Each diamond has an apparent value of 100 gp, and a character in possession of a diamond can use a bonus action to teleport to a space it can see up to 30 feet away, whereupon the diamond disappears.

Iskander has been dead since shortly after he arrived here, slain by the wounds inflicted by the elementals. The (false) *Blue Dragon Mask* is bloody but undamaged.

EXITING XONTHAL'S TOWER

The teleport circle in area 14 can take the characters back to any level of the tower (areas 8 to 13). The teleport circles in those areas can take them back to the sundial, from which they can exit the maze. The characters are not yet in the clear, though.

However much Jorgen Pawl opposed Severin, he remained loyal to the Cult of the Dragon. As soon as he understood that the traitorous Iskander was somehow in league with the adventurers, he used *sending* to call an **adult blue dragon** from its nearby lair, telling it of Iskander's theft of the dragon mask.

When the characters teleport to the sundial, they are greeted by the terrible sound of villagers screaming, a dragon roaring, and lightning bolts tearing houses to splinters. When they reach the edge of the garden, they see the dragon swooping over the village and terrified villagers fleeing in every direction. A character with passive Perception of 14 or higher recognizes this dragon as Lennithon, the adult blue dragon the party faced in the *Hoard of the Dragon Queen*.

Like any smart foe, Lennithon tries to fight on its terms, not the enemy's. It stays in the air and uses its breath weapon to maximum effect. If the characters refuse to face it, Lennithon is happy to wreck the village and murder innocents in an effort to bring the heroes into the open.

When the characters face the dragon, read or paraphrase the following.

"The mask, fools! The mask is what I've come for. Give it to me, and I'll leave these crawling ants with their miserable lives. The Queen is returning! Who are you to hope to stop her? Give me the mask!"

This dragon is loyal to the cult, but it has no intention of getting killed before Tiamat's glorious return. It fights until it is reduced to 75 hit points, then flies away to recuperate.

CONCLUSION

If any of the cultists in the tower are left alive for questioning, or if the characters use *speak with dead* to converse with either Jorgen Pawl or Iskander, they learn nothing new of Severin's plots. The cultists here are motivated primarily by self-interest.

The fact that the *Blue Dragon Mask* is a forgery is quickly discovered by experts at Waterdeep. It becomes a cause for much concern among the members of the council, some of who see it as a sign that the cult might have placed spies within the council. *Speak with dead* used to contact either Iskander or Jorgen Pawl can shed some light on why a false mask might have been supplied to the cultists at Xonthal's Tower, but the false mask might otherwise remain a troubling mystery.

The characters gain a level at the end of this episode.



EPISODE 8: MISSION TO THAY

Early during his rise to power, Severin enlisted the aid of a group of Thayan exiles in his scheme to return Tiamat to the world. He needs the Red Wizards' expertise in the rituals that will open the portal between Tiamat's home on Avernus and the Well of Dragons. Without the Red Wizards, Severin's plan can't succeed.

The Red Wizards enlisted by Severin are among the many exiled Thayans who have fled the rule of Szass Tam, the lich lord of Thay, and his council of undead zulkirs. So great is the lich lord's wrath that all such exiles are under a sentence of death. The leader of the Red Wizard exiles allied with Severin is Rath Modar, a human illusionist.

Though he has no particular bond with dragons, Rath Modar believes that when Tiamat returns, she will be willing to do favors for those who supported her. In comparison to the feeble members of the Cult of the Dragon, who offer Tiamat devotion but little else, the Red Wizards who opened the gate for her can wield great magical power in her name. All Modar plans to ask in return is the Dragon Queen's aid in overthrowing the hated Szass Tam and restoring Thay to its former glory. Rath Modar and his splinter sect refer to their movement as "the Thayan Resurrection."

THE ENEMY OF MY ENEMY

At the start of this episode, the characters are summoned to a secret meeting by someone they trust on the Council of Waterdeep. At the meeting, they learn that the council has been approached by a Red Wizard of Thay named Nyh Ilmichh. Ilmichh has extended an invitation to the council to send an envoy to Thay, to discuss ways in which Thay and the Sword Coast might aid each other during the current crisis. The adventurers have been specifically requested to represent the Sword Coast at this meeting, after which the characters will be returned to Waterdeep unharmed.

The visit to the embassy will last only a few days, but the location of the meeting is not negotiable. The duties of the tharchion (a Thayan governor) the characters will meet precludes her leaving her post. The characters' council contact tells them that Ilmichh has been carefully questioned and subjected to a *zone of truth*, and that all she said has been confirmed.

The characters should understand that without the Red Wizards, Severin's plans are severely compromised. Moreover, it is common knowledge that Szass Tam wants all exiled Red Wizards dead in the worst possible way. Despite reservations from some on the council, most believe that since the factions

and Szass Tam have a common goal, the invitation is worth accepting.

The final decision is up to the characters, of course. No one will compel them to go to Thay. But in the council's estimation, the potential to delay or even undo Severin's plan at a single blow is too much to pass up.

A DARK AND FORBIDDING LAND

Thay is an isolated and arid windswept plateau some twenty-five hundred miles east of Waterdeep, its dark skies constantly clouded by volcanic ash. This land is defined by the prevalence of undead within its borders. The supreme leader of Thay is the lich Szass Tam, whose council of advisers—the zulkirs—are powerful liches themselves. Everyone of consequence in Thay is a spellcaster, and necromancers are common there. Undead servants are everywhere, and many of the commanders in Thay's armies are the free-thinking undead soldiers (use the **wight** statistics).

Travelers to this land must be wary of its dark politics—rampant paranoia, a police-state mentality, and necromancers commanding the top of the social order—as much as the threats of the undead and Red Wizards that dwell here. Thay is a place filled with extraordinary danger.

PREPARATIONS AND DEPARTURE

The Harpers keep a close watch on developments in Thay, and they are the characters' best resource for current information on that land. If the characters don't seek advice from the Harpers, Leosin Erlanthar approaches them.

In addition to providing the characters with the information about Thay above, Erlanthar arranges for them to receive sealed warrants indicating that they are acting on behalf of the Lords of Waterdeep and the Lords' Alliance. The party is under the protection of both groups, though such warrants are no guarantee of safety in Thay. Erlanthar advises the characters to address anyone of importance deferentially and by title, never by name only. As well, characters who know any necromantic magic should feel free to show it off.

When the adventurers are ready to depart, Nyh Ilmichh teleports with them to Nethwatch Keep in the Tharch of Lapendrar, just inside the Thayan frontier.

RECEPTION AND AUDIENCE

Nethwatch Keep is under the command of Tharchion Eseldra Yeth. She has been tharchion of Lapendrar for nearly a century—long enough to have firsthand memories of the past rebellion.

At the fortress, the characters are assigned to luxurious individual rooms, though the doors have no locks. Nyh Ilmichh tells anyone who asks that they are utterly safe in the tharchion's keep. The adventurers see no other living creatures until their audience with Eseldra Yeth. All the servants and staff are undead, but the food and comforts of the fortress are of excellent quality and entirely safe.

Tharchion Eseldra Yeth is a female human **vampire** spellcaster. In the audience chamber where the meeting

takes place, she is accompanied by 10 Red Wizards (use **mage** statistics if necessary) and 5 **wights**. Eseldra Yeth reviews the characters' warrants briefly, then delivers a prepared message.

"We find ourselves bound in common cause against common enemies. Those who sought to destroy us in ages past now seek to destroy you. Our thirst for vengeance is strong, as is your thirst for continued life.

"Our enemy has become your enemy. We know their weaknesses and the ways of destroying them forever, without destroying their usefulness. You have the opportunity to discover their hiding places in your struggle against their cult allies. Together, we can remove them as a threat to us both.

"Our agent, Nyh Ilmichh, will return with you to your city of Waterdeep, there to serve as our liaison to your council. What you learn of the enemy, she will relay to us by means of our own. You need only find the enemy. We will deal with them, as is our custom.

"I am authorized by our eternal master, Szass Tam, to say these things, for I act in his name."

The tharchion waits for the characters' response, and engages them in a discussion of what is known of the plot to release Tiamat and the Red Wizards aiding that plot. Her questions are straightforward and intelligent, and offer little opportunity for sly or clever responses. If a character is less than truthful, Eseldra Yeth probes for more information. She addresses questions to specific characters, never to the group in general. If she detects a lie (see below), she never addresses that character again.

Toward the end of the audience, each character must make a DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check. (To maintain an aura of menace, ask for the check without revealing the DC.) The following modifiers apply to the check:

- Arcane spellcasters gain a +6 bonus.
- Characters who openly worship a deity associated with death gain a +4 bonus.
- Clerics and paladins of good-aligned deities take a –6 penalty.
- Other characters wearing visible signs of worshipping any good-aligned deity take a –4 penalty.
- A character takes a –4 penalty each time he or she addresses Eseldra Yeth without using her title of tharchion.
- Any character who lies to Eseldra Yeth takes a –8 penalty, unless he or she succeeds on a DC 18 Charisma (Deception) check for each lie. (Don't reveal the DC of this check.)

Feel free to introduce additional modifiers based on specific arguments the characters present and their overall behavior. Sincere (or at least convincing) praise for necromancy and for Thay's twisted social order might earn a +2 or +4 bonus. Insincere praise,

obvious hollow flattery, or outright hostility should invoke a penalty.

Make note of which characters succeed at the saving throw and which fail. The outcome determines what happens to them that night.

At the end of the audience, the characters are dismissed. Before being returned to their rooms and fed a sumptuous evening meal, Nyh Ilmichh tells them they will meet again in the morning.

DREAMS AND NIGHTMARES

That night, each of the adventurers are targeted by a customized version of the *dream* spell, cast and crafted by Red Wizard illusionists. Each character is confronted in a vision by a pale Red Wizard who says, "We have further questions for you." Elves and other creatures that do not sleep are not subject to this effect.

Each character must make a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw with disadvantage. On a successful save, a character remembers vague, disturbing dreams in the morning, but suffers no other effects.

Each character who fails the saving throw experiences a similar nightmare. He or she is paralyzed and magically bound within a mystic cauldron among animated chains and tentacles. A dozen Red Wizards observe placidly while three more Red Wizards subject the helpless character to agonizing tortures. The character is questioned about why the party came to Thay, about Severin's plots, about Rath Modar, about his or her own past and the lives of the other adventurers, about the party's attitude toward Szass Tam, and anything else you care to ask.

Each answer the character gives must be accompanied by a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check if the character answers truthfully, or a DC 15 Charisma (Deception) check if the response is even partially false. A character who succeeded on the Charisma (Persuasion) check made during the audience has advantage on each of these checks. On each failed check, a character suffers excruciating pain as a Red Wizard shouts out a tally of the character's failed answers. Refusing to answer is treated the same as failing the check.

A character who struggles against the bonds or who tries to cast a spell or use some other ability not hindered by physical restraint is struck by pain so severe that he or she is briefly incapacitated. That character's next Charisma check made within the dream takes a -2 penalty.

The nightmare ends when a character answers five questions successfully or eight questions in total. If the last question was answered successfully, the character sleeps fitfully the rest of the night. If the last question was answered unsuccessfully, the character wakes up screaming and drenched in sweat. Blood stains the bed sheets, though the character has no visible wounds. The character also takes 10 (3d6) psychic damage and does not gain the benefit of a long rest from the night's sleep.

In the morning, any character who underwent this questioning has a deathly pallor and dark, hollow-looking eyes. The character's appearance returns to normal when he or she finishes a long rest.

OUTCOME

In the morning, after another delicious meal, the characters are ushered back to the audience chamber. Eseldra Yeth is not there. Instead, they're greeted by Nyh Ilmichh and one of the Red Wizards present at the audience the previous day. Only Nyh Ilmichh speaks.

What she says is determined by the number of characters who answered five questions successfully during the dream. If that number accounts for more than half the non-elven party (that is, elves don't count toward the party total, because they cannot be affected by the Red Wizards *dream* spell), Nyh Ilmichh informs the characters that the Red Wizards have agreed to aid the factions of the Sword Coast, and that she will accompany them as Thay's ambassador to the council. When the characters have gathered their belongings, the Red Wizard teleports with them back to Waterdeep.

If the tally is half the number of non-elven characters in the party or fewer, Nyh Ilmichh states that Tharchion Yeth thanks them for their information, but that Thay's attention is commanded by matters within its own borders and the Red Wizards cannot help. Before the characters can react, the other Red Wizard waves his hand and a previously invisible magic circle on the floor around the characters flares to life. A moment later, the adventurers are standing in an abandoned and ruined farmhouse a mile north of Waterdeep. The barely visible outline of a Thayan teleportation circle fades around them and their neatly packed belongings.

CONCLUSION

If the mission to Thay was a success, it benefits the factions during the "Tiamat's Return" episode. Additionally, hidden in a backpack or pocket, each character finds a human finger bone tied to a loop of dried gut. Each bone acts as a *scroll of protection (undead)* that is activated and spent by snapping it in half.

If you choose, the characters gain a level at the end of this episode. See "Advancement" in the introduction section.



EPISODE 9: TIAMAT'S RETURN

T*yranny of Dragons: The Rise of Tiamat* reaches its conclusion at the Well of Dragons, where dragons, giants, spellcasters, and armies clash spectacularly around the risen Temple of Tiamat. As they do, the adventurers take on the crucial assignment of infiltrating the temple and making a final stand against the servants of the Dragon Queen and their dark goddess.

The climactic finale of *The Rise of Tiamat* should be played only after all the other episodes of the adventure are complete and the characters have reached 14th or 15th level. In the episodes leading up to this one, both the Harpers and the Zhentarim have spies among the Cult of the Dragon. As such, both organizations can report that the cult's preparations are nearing completion. That same information could also come from prisoners questioned directly by the characters during any of the incidents in "The Cult Strikes Back."

However it happens, from the moment this episode kicks into action, events escalate rapidly. There is no turning back from that point onward, and characters who hesitate risk losing everything.

THE FINAL BATTLE

The battle between the factions of the Sword Coast and the Cult of the Dragon plays out as a huge clash between armies and monstrous forces. The manner in which that battle plays out depends on the outcome of the "Council of Waterdeep" episode, and on how successful the heroes have been bringing the various factions together. See "Enemies and Allies," later in this section, for more information.

Before or during the final battle, the adventurers have a chance to reconnoiter the Well of Dragons and undertake a stealthy infiltration of the cult's redoubt and the Temple of Tiamat.

THE DRAAKHORN

Since it began sounding, the *Draakhorn's* mournful tones have been an ever-present reminder of the threat rising in the Sword Coast. When Severin's plan swings into its final stage, the *Draakhorn's* call shifts from being barely perceptible to a clear and distant sound that gives a sense of impending doom to all who hear it.

See area 8 in "The Well of Dragons" for more information on the *Draakhorn*.

SEVERIN'S TRIUMPH

Severin's plan to bring Tiamat back to the world has been set up in five distinct stages:

- Assemble a treasure hoard worthy of Tiamat.
- Gather an army of dragons and other evil creatures to defend the Well of Dragons against interference.
- Capture hundreds of prisoners whose souls will power the magic that draws Tiamat to Faerûn.
- Perform the ritual that raises Tiamat's Temple in the caldera of the Well of Dragons.
- Sacrifice the prisoners while performing the ritual that guides Tiamat from the Nine Hells to the world.

The first three stages of Severin's plan are complete. Stage 4 will be completed by the time the characters arrive at the Well of Dragons. Stage 5 begins soon after the heroes and their factional allies arrive, and becomes the focal point of this final battle against the cult.

STOPPING SEVERIN

The heroes' goal is to thwart Severin's plans and prevent Tiamat from passing from the Nine Hells into Faerûn. The characters' accomplishments up to this point have frustrated Severin and slowed his plans. But the only thing that can truly stop him now is ending the ritual performed by the cult's Red Wizard allies inside the Temple of Tiamat.

APPROACHING THE WELL

As the characters and the forces commanded by the factions of the Council of Waterdeep approach the Well of Dragons, they should have no doubt that they are moving deep into enemy territory. The landscape for a hundred miles in all directions is a grim harbinger of what Tiamat's rule would mean for the world.

Little remains in the territory surrounding the Well of Dragons, and the constant drone of the *Draakhorn* has forced the local animals to flee or driven them mad. A handful of villages in the area are bloodstained ghost towns, and every farmstead is a charred ruin. The few survivors you encounter are headed in the opposite direction, all of them watching the sky for the telltale shape of a dragon on the wing.

Chromatic dragons patrol the area by day and night. You can call for DC 12 Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Survival) checks to determine whether the characters find shelter or camouflage themselves in time to avoid a passing dragon. Alternatively, simply ask what precautions the characters are taking against being spotted and judge for yourself whether that will keep them safe. Sticking to wooded areas, following ravines, spending as little time as possible on open ground, and even dressing as cultists are all useful ploys.

Flying to the Well of Dragons is problematic. Whether they're on metallic dragons or flying under their own power, the characters will be attacked by chromatic dragons long before they reach their destination.

THE WELL OF DRAGONS

The Well of Dragons is the caldera of an extinct volcano at the northern end of the Sunset Mountains. For reasons no mortal understands, many dragons reaching the end of their lives come to the Well of Dragons to die, and have been doing so for millennia.

The caldera of a long-dead volcano rises from an ashen plane ahead. Along the cinder cone's steeply sloped sides, thousands of creatures mill about or are lining up into ordered infantry ranks. In the air above, dozens of chromatic dragons wheel and shriek like a flock of immense crows, awaiting the bloodshed of the battle to come.

The Cult of the Dragon discovered the Well of Dragons long ago. Lava tubes snaking beneath the now-dormant volcano formed natural corridors connecting caverns that the cult enlarged for their own use. Within the central caldera, they raised a ritual space for creating dracoliches from dragons drawn to the site knowing they would soon die. Under Severin's leadership, the caldera and the catacombs beneath it have been repurposed as the site where Tiamat's vast temple will be raised and the Dragon Queen's new reign begun. The floor of the caldera is blanketed with the bones of dragons, mounded into immense, tangled heaps.

The caldera of the Well of Dragons is roughly oval-shaped, with high, steep walls. The dragons flying above it are not scouting for infiltrators, thankfully, but are quarreling and posturing for each other before the battle.

In the past, the number of cultists at the Well of Dragons seldom exceeded one hundred. Now, with ultimate victory near at hand, their numbers have swelled. Only cultists live and work in the warrens beneath the caldera. The thousands of mercenaries, giants, devils, and monsters serving the cult are camped chiefly along the north and east slopes.

THE TEMPLE OF TIAMAT

The map of the caldera shows the outline of where the Temple of Tiamat will appear when it is raised by the Red Wizards' magic. That job will be finished by the time the characters and their allies arrive to do battle with the cult.

The caldera is blanketed beneath the bones of hundreds of dead dragons, but that's not its most arresting feature. A mind-numbing structure has pushed up from beneath the tangled bones to tower above the blasted volcano. Partly volcanic ash fused with dragon bones and partly stone imbued with the dark magic of the Nine Hells, the Temple of Tiamat is all chaotic angles and jutting buttresses. Within that snarl of cornices and soaring angulation, you make out five asymmetric towers topped by twisted steeples.



□ EQUALS 20 FEET



THE WELL OF DRAGONS

BLANDO



LAVA TUBES AND WARRENS

Lava tubes form natural pathways beneath the caldera of the extinct volcano. Over the decades since the Cult of the Dragon claimed the Well of Dragons, cultists enlarged the natural caverns connected by the lava tubes and excavated new ones.

Most of the lava tube entrances are marked by visible paths along the slopes of the volcano. Entrance 2A sees little use, so the characters are likely to overlook it without a careful search. Entrance 3 is never used; the cult believes that this tunnel is still blocked after a collapse sixty years before.

GENERAL FEATURES

Corridors. The lava tubes range from 15 to 25 feet in diameter. They are large enough for dracoliches and dragons to move through easily.

Light. The lava tube corridors are dimly lit by lamps or torches hung on the walls at wide intervals. Chambers within the Well of Dragons are brightly lit by lamps unless otherwise noted.

Sound. The low moan of the *Draakhorn* is ever-present within the Well of Dragons, originating from area 8. Combined with the cult's activity in and above the caverns, it creates a constant thrum of background noise transmitted through the stone. Sounds of combat go unnoticed if a fight is over in 3 rounds or fewer, or if the combat is more than 200 feet away from creatures that might hear it. Especially loud noises, such as a *thunderwave* spell, are easily heard.

WITHIN THE WELL OF DRAGONS

As the time for the ritual draws near, the Well of Dragons is crawling with cultists and their allies. Whether using stealth or disguising themselves as cultists, the characters can easily survey the entrances to the lava tubes or see the risen temple from the edge of the caldera. However, once the adventurers enter the Well of Dragons, disguises prove ineffective. The cultists working in and patrolling the caverns are on high alert, and use a complex system of checks and passwords as proof against spies and enemy agents.

The advanced state of the ritual means that all cultists have been ordered to patrol or prepare for battle. If the characters tarry too long in one place or wander around the Well of Dragons without purpose, add additional guard patrols based on existing encounters.

1A, 1B, 1C. NORTH ENTRANCES

Entrance 1A sees the heaviest use of all the tunnel entrances along the north side of the caldera. All the treasure brought to the Well of Dragons passes through it on the way to area 6 or area 7. Each of these entrances is guarded by 3 **dragonwings**, 3 **dragonclaws**, and 2 **guard drakes** (see appendix A for these creatures).

Entrances 1B and 1C are within sight of each other, but 1A is hidden from the other two by the curve of the mountainside.

2A, 2B, 2C. EAST ENTRANCES

Of the tunnel entrances on the east side of the caldera, only 2C is heavily used. All the prisoners held in the warrens are brought through that tunnel on their way to areas 16, 17, or 18. Entrance 2A is seldom used.

Entrance 2B is used by the cultists who live in areas 12 and 13, but by no one else.

Entrances 2A and 2B are guarded by 1 **dragonwing** and 3 **dragonclaws** each. Entrance 2C is guarded by 1 **dragonfang**, 3 **dragonwings**, 5 **dragonclaws**, and 3 **guard drakes**. See appendix A for these creatures.

3. FORGOTTEN ENTRANCE

No cultist has used this entrance since the tunnel collapsed at the three-way intersection sixty years ago, rendering the passageway useless. Recently, an umber hulk burrowed by accident into these tunnels, reopening the passage in all three directions. As a result, this tunnel offers an unguarded entrance into the caldera and the warrens.

A character who scouts the mountain before charging in notices this entrance with a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception) check. Any exploration of the entrance reveals that it is used by bats but shows no sign of cult activity.

A thin wall of rubble still standing to the east of the three-way intersection makes the cultists believe the passage remains completely blocked. However, the wall can be carefully taken down to allow movement in that direction. Characters at the three-way intersection can feel air moving along the northern part of the tunnel, suggesting open space beyond.

4. NAERGOOTH BLADELORD'S CHAMBER

Before Severin assumed control over the Cult of the Dragon, the Well of Dragons was used to transform dying dragons into dracoliches. **Naergoth Bladelord** (see appendix A) is a wight who commanded this site for centuries in the name of the Cult of the Dragon. After devoting many lifetimes of selfless service to the cult, he was shunted aside in favor of the new order. Though his loyalty remains unshakeable, Naergoth fears that Severin will succeed in his plans, and that Tiamat will destroy the cult that freed her.

As a wight, Naergoth has little use for quarters, but the presence of objects that belonged to him in life make this a pleasing spot for him. The chamber looks like the home of a noble knight that was abandoned centuries ago, its contents now covered in dust and hung with cobwebs and pathos.

Intruders skulking through the warrens can run into Naergoth anywhere. Use him as a roleplaying encounter or add him to a battle that is going well for the party at a time of your choosing.

5. UNUSED CHAMBER

Whatever purpose this empty chamber served during the years of the dracoliches is long forgotten.



6. MAIN TREASURE CHAMBER

The well-traveled entrance to this chamber is guarded by 1 **dragonfang** (see appendix A) who is in command of 2 **flesh golems**.

The treasure that the cult has stolen from across the Sword Coast to create a hoard for the Dragon Queen is stockpiled in this chamber, creating a sight beyond even the greediest character's dreams.

You see gold—mountains of it. And jewels . . . and pearls . . . silver plate and gilded mirrors . . . jeweled swords and the armor of kings . . . caskets and boxes and barrels filled to overflowing with the treasure of the Sword Coast, packed into a cave the size of a cathedral and stacked to the height of a giant! Pathways wind through a glittering mass whose reflected light dazzles your eyes, like a million twinkling stars close enough to touch.

Prowling through the narrow paths between the heaped treasures are 4 **guard drakes** (see appendix A). They are used to the vaults being unoccupied (rank-and-file

cultists are not allowed here), and attack intruders or move to join fighting at the entrance at once.

This cavern holds treasure beyond counting. If the characters seek a particular item and have hours to spend searching, they can probably find it here. A *detect magic* spell is blocked by the metal of the coins, so only items on the surface can be easily found. Place whatever common or uncommon magic items you wish on the surface, but finding something rare should take a long and noisy search.

7. SECONDARY TREASURE CHAMBER

Art objects, valuable books, fine linen, crystalware, and especially fragile magic items are stored here less haphazardly than in area 6, piled carefully on shelves and tables.

8. THE DRAAKHORN

As the characters advance up the lava tube toward this chamber, the tones of the *Draakhorn* become noticeably louder. Within 50 feet of the entrance to area 8, the air begins to shimmer from the sound. Any character within 20 feet of the doorway must succeed on a DC 12 Strength check to continue pushing against the pressure of the sound. A failure indicates the character can advance no farther toward area 8.

For any character entering area 8, the sound fades to silence—because any creature that enters the chamber is temporarily deafened and must make a DC 12 Constitution saving throw. Success indicates the deafness ends 2 minutes after the *Draakhorn* ceases to sound. Failure indicates the character remains deafened for 1 hour after the *Draakhorn* ceases to sound.

After the din of the tunnel, this chamber seems preternaturally silent—until you realize you are completely deafened in the presence of the fearsome *Draakhorn*. Carved from the massive horn of an ancient red dragon, it hangs suspended by chains from the ceiling of this chamber, blasted with fire to a dark ebony hue and bound by thick bands of bronze. Draconic runes etched into its surface glow with a purple eldritch fire.

An **air elemental** sounds the horn with its endless breath, guarded by a **stone golem**. If the characters interfere with the horn or the air elemental, the golem and the elemental attack.

The *Draakhorn* hangs in the northern half of the room and is pointed toward the southwest corner. While the horn is sounding, a creature must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw the first time on a turn the creature enters a 150-foot cone in front of the horn or starts its turn there. On a failed save, the creature takes 27 (6d8) thunder damage and is knocked prone. On a successful save, the creature takes half damage and isn't knocked prone. The horn can't be turned or aimed at a specific target.

If the horn's sound ceases for more than 1 minute, 1 **dragonsoul**, 1 **dragonfang**, and 4 **dragonwings** arrive to investigate. See appendix A for these cultists.

9. PLANNING ROOM

In this currently empty chamber, Severin meets with his inner circle and other cult leaders to make plans and issue orders. A long table is flanked by several benches and chairs, with a few small writing tables along the walls for scribes who keep notes.

10. LEADERS' QUARTERS

This well-appointed dormitory houses the most important Wearers of Purple staying at the Well of Dragons. Rows of beds line the north and east walls, with locker-style wardrobes holding mundane gear along the west wall. As the activity at the Well of Dragons reaches its peak, this chamber is empty.

11. SEVERIN'S QUARTERS

This chamber is the personal quarters of Severin, and contains a bed, a trunk holding mundane personal belongings, a wardrobe for robes and regalia, a large writing desk, and a wood-and-iron display stand for the dragon masks. The stand's construction allows for the masks to be displayed separately or combined into the single *Mask of the Dragon Queen*. The combined mask is presently with Severin.

12, 13. HIGH-RANKING CULTISTS' CHAMBERS

Cultists of dragonsoul and dragonfang rank stationed inside the warrens use these quarters. The chambers are arranged like barracks, with cots for sleeping and trunks for storing personal belongings. With so many strangers presently in and around the Well of Dragons, the cultists who use these chambers have arranged for 4 **guard drakes** (see appendix A) to watch the area.

14. PRISONERS' EFFECTS

Personal items taken from prisoners are tossed into this chamber. Nothing of value can be found among the odds and ends, but daggers, darts, and shortswords here can be used to equip prisoners still capable of fighting.

15. LOW-RANKING CULTISTS' CHAMBER

The cultists who stand guard over the prisoners in areas 16 to 18 sleep here. The chamber contains only straw mattresses spread on the floor, a few tables made of planks laid over barrels, and roughly made benches. When the characters enter, the room contains 3 **dragonwings** and 9 **dragonclaws** eating a quick meal before the battle. See appendix A for these cultists.

16, 17, 18. PRISONER PENS

Prisoners captured by the cult have been held in these dark, filthy chambers pending the day of the ritual and their eventual sacrifice. Two groups of guards patrol these areas while the prisoners are here, each consisting of 1 **dragonwing**, 2 **dragonclaws**, and 1 **guard drake**. See appendix A for these creatures.

If the characters pass this way while the sacrifices are taking place, area 16 is empty except for a dozen corpses of prisoners who died of starvation. However, a half-starved fifteen-year-old human male named Stirleng is hiding within the corpses. Stirleng can tell the characters that cultists started ushering prisoners toward the caldera a few hours ago, but he knows little else.

With area 16 empty, a prisoner escort consisting of 5 **dragonclaws** has begun to move prisoners from area 17 up to the temple. Additionally, a **dragonfang**, 5 **dragonclaws**, and 2 **guard drakes** working nearby arrive within 2 rounds if a disturbance breaks out. (See appendix A for these creatures.) The prisoners aren't shackled or roped together, but most of them are weak from starvation. Ten human **commoners** can fight alongside the characters if they can acquire weapons. The characters are free to make use of these allies any way they see fit, but will be aware that if sent into combat, they will quickly perish.

19. DRAKE PENS

The drakes that patrol the lava tunnels are kenneled in this chamber, which reeks of blood and spoiled meat. When the characters investigate this chamber, 4 **guard drakes** (see appendix A) are present, fighting over hunks of meat that are best left unidentified. Gnawed humanoid bones are scattered throughout the room, along with belt buckles, tattered boots, and scraps of blood-soaked clothing.

20, 21. RED WIZARDS' QUARTERS

The Red Wizards whose magic raises the Temple of Tiamat in the caldera and who will perform the ritual that draws the Dragon Queen into the world are housed in these two caverns. Both areas are luxuriously furnished, but the Red Wizards keep their belongings packed in trunks and ready to teleport away at a moment's notice. The larger and even more well-appointed area 20 is the residence of Rath Modar. All the Red Wizards are presently in the Temple of Tiamat.

22. SINKHOLE

This portion of the caldera collapsed into an underground cavity ages ago to form a large sinkhole. The only current member of the Cult of the Dragon who is aware that a branch of a lava tunnel exits into this sinkhole is the wight Naergoth Bladelord (area 4), and he believes the tunnel is still blocked.

The sinkhole is 30 feet deep. The sides are steep but composed of rough volcanic rock that's easy to climb. Dragon bones cover the bottom of the pit to a depth of 5 feet, making the floor of the pit difficult terrain. Cultists never come to the sinkhole; the only creatures that might spot infiltrators in this area are flying dragons.

23. NORTHERN EXITS

The dragon bones that blanket the caldera have been pushed away from these exits to create a bleak open plaza connecting both tunnel exits to the entrance to the temple. This space extends 250 feet from east to



west and 100 feet north from the temple gate, and is the scene of horrendous slaughter during the sacrifice ritual. Prisoners are ushered from the temple into the plaza, where five waiting dragons (one of each color, and of any age category you choose) tear into them with teeth and claws.

Though these exits are not normally guarded, during the prisoner sacrifice, the each tunnel is blocked by 2 **barbed devils** and 4 **guard drakes** (see appendix A). The devils' attention is focused toward the plaza, however, not down the tunnels or on what the guard drakes do. The guard drakes might notice approaching characters before the devils do, but they attack only if the fiends give the order. Therefore, the party might get the drop on these guards.

For characters who move beyond the cleared plaza, or who approach this area from the sinkhole, the piles of bones are difficult terrain.

24. TEMPLE EXIT

The main lava tunnel of the southern warrens exits inside the black chapel (area 5) of Tiamat's temple. Prisoners intended for sacrifice are brought up to the black chapel, marched to the temple entrance, and forced out into the plaza for the waiting dragons to feast on. This exit is unguarded.

TIAMAT'S TEMPLE

The temple in the caldera of the Well of Dragons is the same temple that marks the center of Tiamat's realm on Avernus. The Red Wizards' ritual has brought it here to act as a beachhead and beacon for the Dragon Queen, melding it into the caldera floor in the process. The main gate into area 1 (the blue chapel) is the only apparent entrance, but a lava tube corridor from the cult's subterranean warrens leads into area 5 (the black chapel).

When the ritual begins, the temple is the focus of the cult's activity, with Severin's Red Wizard allies (use **mage** statistics) at the center of the action. The souls of sacrificed prisoners are sent to Avernus to provide the magical power that will open a pathway between the Nine Hells and the Material Plane. The Red Wizards will then guide Tiamat as the Queen of Dragons claws her way back into the mortal realm.

TEMPLE LAYOUT

The interior of the temple is a single open expanse. Though divided into distinct areas, the cathedral-like space has no interior walls or upper floors. Five chapels are devoted to one of the five aspects of Tiamat and the matching branch of chromatic dragons, all surrounding a central apse. The apse and all five chapels rise into separate spires, culminating in the sanctuary at the pinnacle of the central spire. Level 2 as shown on the map is a zone 50 feet above ground level; level 3 is a zone 100 feet above ground level, both of which can be reached only by flying.

Once your eyes adjust to the stunning chaos of Tiamat's Temple, you see that its interior is a single, cathedral-like space that towers far overhead. Five distinct vaults branch off the central gallery. Though the overwhelming color of the place is a lifeless, ashen gray, each of the side vaults shimmers dimly blue, green, red, white, or black—the hues of the evil dragons and their world-consuming queen.

Red Wizards stand in each of the five vaults, chanting and channeling magical force into the central apse. There, a kaleidoscopic whorl of arcane energy rises above the blackened floor, stretching up into the twisting recesses of the temple's central spire.

The numbered areas on the map are identified in the table below, which also identifies key NPCs during the ritual that will bring Tiamat to the Well of Dragons.

KEY TO TIAMAT'S TEMPLE

#	Name	Occupant and Activity during Ritual
1	Entrance/blue chapel	Red Wizard performing ritual
2	Least apse	
3	White chapel	Red Wizard performing ritual
4	Green chapel	Red Wizard performing ritual
5	Black chapel	Red Wizard performing ritual; also the exit from the warrens
6	Red chapel	Rath Modar performing ritual
7	Great apse	Portal through which Tiamat emerges from Avernus
8	Blue spire	Red Wizard (flying) performing ritual
9	White spire	Red Wizard (flying) performing ritual
10	Green spire	Red Wizard (flying) performing ritual
11	Black spire	Red Wizard (flying) performing ritual
12	Red spire	Red Wizard (flying) performing ritual
13	Sanctuary	Severin (levitating) wearing the <i>Mask of the Dragon Queen</i>

Any free wyrmspeakers the characters have previously interacted with can be present in their respective chapels in the temple if you wish, but their presence isn't required. Wyrmspeakers not here are outside leading the Well of Dragons' defense.

PERFORMING THE RITUAL

To successfully bring Tiamat from the Nine Hells into the world, the Red Wizards must successfully focus the summoning ritual for 10 rounds after the adventurers enter the Temple of Tiamat. Each round, at least five

Red Wizards must use an action to perform the ritual in order for it to be successfully focused for that round, helping guide Tiamat across the planes.

At the end of the Red Wizards' turn, if fewer than five Red Wizards used an action to perform the ritual, the portal floating in the great apse (area 7) wavers and no progress in the ritual is made. If fewer than five Red Wizards perform the ritual for 2 rounds in succession, the portal collapses and the count of successfully focused rounds is reset to 0.

The *Mask of the Dragon Queen* is essential to the ritual, and Severin cannot leave the sanctuary. His *levitate* spell will last the duration of the ritual, and it keeps him floating in the sanctuary even if he is incapacitated or killed. Severin can attack and defend himself while he wears the *Mask of the Dragon Queen*. He need not even be alive for the ritual to continue, as long as his body wears the mask and remains in the sanctuary.

ENEMIES AND ALLIES

By consulting the scorecard filled out during the four sessions of the Council of Waterdeep (see appendix C), you can assess the strength of the forces brought to bear against the Cult of the Dragon. The alliances forged by the characters during the adventure are essential to stopping the cult.

The Final Battle Assets table lists the creatures and forces fighting on both sides. "Factional Assets" covers the main possibilities for alliances created during the adventure, but you can modify the list as needed depending on events in your campaign.

ASSIGNING ASSETS

When you've noted which assets are fighting against the cult, it's time to decide how those forces of good attack. The characters are key figures in the allied force marching on the Well of Dragons, and their voices carry tremendous weight. As such, make sure the players know they have a key role to play in planning the battle.

The simplest approach is a one-to-one matchup, with specific good assets canceling out cult assets. Give the players free reign on matching assets, but weigh in on whether a specific plan has merit if you feel the need. For example, the players might decide that assassins provided by the Zhentarim should counter the sacrificial prisoners by infiltrating the cult complex and escorting those prisoners to freedom. In that case, you might remind the players that the Black Network's expert killers can be put to better use against the cult leaders of Severin's inner circle, while Harper agents or forces of the Lords' Alliance help in the tunnels beneath the caldera.

Certain matchups are obvious. The metallic dragons are instinctive foes of the chromatic dragons, and those two forces can be expected to keep each other occupied during the battle. More importantly, the metallic dragons will keep the chromatic dragons from interfering with the adventurers' plans.

FINAL BATTLE ASSETS

Cult Assets	Factional Assets
Severin	Order of the Gauntlet
Rath Modar	Emerald Enclave
Cult leaders*	Zhentarim assassins
Cultist troops	Harper agents
Chromatic dragons	Metallic dragons
Devils	Devils
Giants	Giants
Evil mercenaries	Lords' Alliance army
Temple of Tiamat	Skyreach Castle**
Red Wizards	Arcane Brotherhood
<i>Mask of the Dragon Queen</i>	

* Including any free wyrmspeakers the adventurers have interacted with.

** If it survived the previous adventure and remains in control of the player characters or was returned to the giants.

CULT ASSETS

Severin. The head of the cult remains in the temple sanctuary (area 13), wearing the *Mask of the Dragon Queen* while the Red Wizards weave their magic. He can fight defensively or offensively as needed, and rank-and-file cultists fight to the death as long as they know Severin is alive. See appendix A for Severin's statistics.

Rath Modar. Rath Modar leads the ritual of guidance, but any Red Wizard can take on that role. When the temple is attacked, he hands over his part in the ritual and leads the attack against the adventurers. See appendix A for Rath Modar's statistics.

Cult Leaders. Wearers of Purple are venerated leaders among the cultists, and most of them are powerful combatants in their own right.

Cultist Troops. The Cult of the Dragon has thousands of combatants at the Well of Dragons, all armed and dedicated to the glory of the Dragon Queen.

Chromatic Dragons. The exact number of chromatic dragons present at the Well of Dragons is up to you, and could range from a few dozen to a hundred or more.

Devils. Devils fighting for the cult have been summoned by the Red Wizards, and serve fiendish masters dedicated to seeing Tiamat leave Avernus.

Giants. The few giants who fight for the cult believe that Tiamat's return is inevitable, but they are sullen and uncooperative. They fight when they see easy victory but withdraw when they sense defeat.

Evil Mercenaries. Mercenary companies form the backbone of the cult's army. Better trained than the cultists, these mercenaries are capable of standing against the best warriors in Faerûn.

Temple of Tiamat. The temple is necessary as the site of the ritual. Damaging it can help weaken Tiamat if the ritual is successful.

Red Wizards. Red Wizards not performing the ritual are embedded with mercenary units and troops of armed cultists to provide extra firepower.

Mask of the Dragon Queen. The magic of the mask is central to the ritual's success. If it is claimed or destroyed, the ritual fails, but Severin uses all the power of the mask to keep it in his possession.

FACTIONAL ASSETS

Order of the Gauntlet. Troops of the Order of the Gauntlet are among the toughest, most steadfast soldiers on the Sword Coast. Besides serving in their own units, their leadership bolsters other troops.

Emerald Enclave. Druids and rangers of the Emerald Enclave answer the call to arms by bringing their treant and griffon allies from the forests and mountains of the Sword Coast.

Zhentarim Assassins. These silent killers stalk and kill enemy leaders and messengers. Though only a handful of Zhentarim assassins have joined the fight, they can paralyze an enemy unit at a decisive moment or prevent a crucial order from reaching its destination.

Harper Agents. Intercepting intelligence during battle is a Harper specialty, and Harper agents can provide key information about cult plans and deployments. As well, Harper archers, infantry, and spellcasters can have an enormous impact on the battle.

Metallic Dragons. The metallic dragons will be outnumbered by their chromatic cousins. However, they cooperate with allies better than the evil dragons do, giving them a greater impact on the battlefield.

Devils. Certain powerful devils don't want to see Tiamat unleashed on Faerûn, knowing that their own power will be curtailed in a world in which humanoids no longer rule. Agents of the Nine Hells are ferocious fighters, but their presence in the battle makes many other soldiers uneasy.

Giants. If the factions of Waterdeep secured the allegiance of giants, they delight in squaring off against the chromatic dragons. Trouble might arise between giants and metallic dragons, however, if the two contingents aren't given assignments of equal importance and kept apart.

Lords' Alliance Army. The massed forces of the separate members of the Lord's Alliance are second only to the Order of the Gauntlet in fighting power, and far more numerous. These form the backbone of the attacking force.

Skyreach Castle. If it's available, the flying castle could prove a great boon in the battle. Skyreach will be assaulted by chromatic dragons the moment it appears above the Well of Dragons, drawing those powerful combatants away from defending the caldera.

Arcane Brotherhood. Members of the Arcane Brotherhood are a match for the Red Wizards fighting for the cult. However, the spellcasters of the Arcane Brotherhood don't take orders from anyone except other powerful spellcasters—which almost certainly means another member of the Arcane Brotherhood.

THWARTING THE DRAGON QUEEN

The process of bringing back Tiamat involves four key components—the treasure amassed by the cult, the *Mask of the Dragon Queen*, the sacrifice of prisoners, and the ritual that is the culmination of all Severin's mad plans. The crashing or capture of Skyreach Castle has already set back the cult in its goal of collecting suitable treasure for the Dragon Queen, making the other three stages of the process that much more important.

The mask, the sacrifices, and the ritual can all be targeted by the characters. Doing so effectively might actually end the ritual and prevent the appearance of Tiamat. Even if the heroes cannot manage to end the threat before it begins, however, disrupting any part of the ritual process weakens the Dragon Queen.

FACING TIAMAT

When the forces of good have been deployed and the battle begun, the characters will take on the most important goal of assaulting the Temple of Tiamat. Making their way through the caverns beneath the caldera provides a number of options for reaching the temple.

Whether the characters fight Tiamat directly or prevent the summoning ritual from being completed depends on their actions during the final battle. But when the characters see Tiamat's heads forcing their way through the Red Wizards' portal, they will understand that this is no mere monster they face. As should be clear from her statistics in appendix A, **Tiamat** is a god. If she manifests through the portal at full strength, she can demolish multiple 15th-level parties with ease. A huge battle against Tiamat while her temple collapses to ash and bone is a memorable way to wrap up a campaign—but the characters might not survive as anything more than memories.

During the battle in the temple, read the following text aloud after 10 rounds of the summoning ritual have been successfully focused by five or more Red Wizards.

The magical maelstrom filling the central apse of the temple suddenly splits open with a crack of thunder. The gargantuan heads of five dragons begin to tear and gnash their way out of the rune-lined pit of fire that forms there. Tiamat the Dragon Queen is about to burst bodily from her confinement in the Nine Hells and enter the world.

TIAMAT'S APPEARANCE

Tiamat's heads enter the battle starting on the second round after the ritual is completed, in the following order: white, black, green, blue, and red. Her red head announces the Dragon Queen's full appearance in the sixth round after the ritual is completed. Until that round, Tiamat can make use only of her bite attacks and breath weapons. This gives the characters a last chance to try to weaken the Dragon Queen before she appears.

Once Tiamat appears in full, she spends as many rounds as necessary to laughingly devour her hapless servants five at a time—Rath Modar, any remaining Red Wizards, then Severin (or his corpse, as long as it is wearing the *Mask of the Dragon Queen*). The following round, she turns her wrath on the adventurers.

WEAKENING THE DRAGON QUEEN

The actions of the heroes in and prior to this final battle can reduce Tiamat's power before she appears. Make a note if any of the following events occurs:

- The count of rounds over which the ritual is successfully focused is reset to 0 because the ritual is interrupted for two successive rounds.
- The *Mask of the Dragon Queen* is destroyed, or is removed from Severin's body and taken from the temple sanctuary (area 13).
- The characters hold any of the dragon masks, or can otherwise prevent one or more masks from being used in the ritual. (The *Black Dragon Mask* might have been claimed by the characters in the previous adventure.)
- Severe damage is inflicted to the Temple of Tiamat, as from an *earthquake* spell.
- The sacrifice of prisoners in front of the temple is stopped. This might have been previously accomplished by attacking the dragons or by cutting off the flow of prisoners to the area.

When any of the previous events occurs, the following penalties are applied to Tiamat, in this order:

- Tiamat's attack and breath weapon damage is reduced by 15, and her hit points drop by 75.
- Tiamat loses her Regeneration trait, her hit point maximum is reduced by 75, and her immunity to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from non-magical weapons becomes resistance instead.
- Tiamat loses Limited Spell Immunity, and her hit point maximum is reduced by 75.
- Tiamat takes a -5 penalty to attack rolls, saving throw DCs, and to her AC, and her hit point maximum is reduced by 75.
- Tiamat can take only three legendary actions, and her hit point maximum is reduced by 75.

If all the above penalties are successfully applied, Tiamat is effectively reduced to a challenge rating 18 foe—but that's still a deadly fight for four 15th-level characters. Without all five reductions, the characters stand little chance of surviving a battle against the Dragon Queen, much less winning it.

Banishing Tiamat. If the characters reduce Tiamat to 0 hit points, her Disincorporation trait kicks in. The portal collapses as the shrieking Dragon Queen disintegrates and is dragged back to Avernus. She will remain trapped there until someone else can recreate the conditions of the ritual and try again to free her.

Ruthless Play and High Stakes. Except as noted above, Tiamat should not be arbitrarily weakened in the interest of a fair fight. Presenting the Dragon Queen as anything less than a deity undercuts the whole adventure. Characters who tangle with Tiamat must know that they are in the fight of their lives.

No individual's survival matters against the goal of stopping the Dragon Queen's return, and heroes sometimes die for the greater good. Certainly, fallen characters can be raised again if Tiamat is defeated. And if she's not defeated, dying might not be the worst option.

VICTORY OR DEFEAT

The fate of the world hangs on this final battle. Whether the heroes and their allies win or lose, the consequences will be felt across Faerûn.

THE HORROR OF DEFEAT

A victory for the Cult of the Dragon is a real possibility in this adventure, and would be catastrophic for Faerûn. With Tiamat ascendant, the age of mortals comes to an end and the age of dragons begins. Nations and kingdoms shatter, civilization collapses into bloody war, and chaos reigns supreme.

None of the Dragon Queen's mortal agents receive the rewards they expected. The Red Wizards who freed her are devoured or driven away, hunted by the forces of Szass Tam. The cultists who orchestrated Tiamat's return fare little better, with the Dragon Queen not caring which mortals her draconic subjects hunt, consume, and enslave. The glorious reign of dragons that Severin hoped to usher in and rule becomes a brutal world where evil dragons dominate all.

Such dark times need not mean the end of your campaign, however. The characters have lost a crucial battle, but they might survive to continue the war. Their new goal is to find a way to banish or destroy Tiamat for good, bringing peace to the world once more.

AFTERMATH OF VICTORY

Tiamat's threat ends if she is sent back to the Nine Hells, but the aftermath of victory can create challenges the adventurers must deal with. This includes helping the hundreds of prisoners remaining in the Well of Dragons. Severin's fall also leaves hundreds of unrepentant cultists still loose in the world, hungering for power and revenge in light of their recent failure.

Moreover, much of the wealth of the Sword Coast is sitting in the Well of Dragons. Along with dealing with vengeful cultists, the characters might take a lead role in getting the treasure back to its original owners or their next of kin, while dealing with con artists, thieves, and treasure hunters looking to exploit what has suddenly become the richest dungeon in Faerûn.

Among the cult's former allies, the vindictive chromatic dragons scatter back to their lairs, but only after many of them try to claim choice pieces of treasure or barrels bulging with gold and gems from the cult's hoard. Furious at having their queen vanquished, the chromatic dragons might engage in sprees of destruction not seen in Faerûn for centuries.

Even victorious, the armies of good will have paid a steep cost in the fight against Tiamat. In addition to soldiers, leaders representing the ruling nobility of countless regions and houses will have fallen in the fight. The situation is not all bleak, however. Stirring instances of generosity and cooperation will stand out amid the darkness—and none of those will be greater than the legend of the adventurers. For generations, folk will look to the exploits and sacrifices of the heroes for inspiration as they rebuild and set their sights on better days.

APPENDIX A: MONSTERS

DRAGONCLAW

Medium humanoid (human), neutral evil

Armor Class 14 (leather armor)

Hit Points 16 (3d8 + 3)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (-1)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Wis +2

Skills Deception +3, Stealth +5

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Common, Draconic

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Dragon Fanatic. The dragonclaw has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened. While the dragonclaw can see a dragon or higher-ranking Cult of the Dragon cultist friendly to it, the dragonclaw ignores the effects of being charmed or frightened.

Fanatic Advantage. Once per turn, if the dragonclaw makes a weapon attack with advantage on the attack roll and hits, the target takes an extra 7 (2d6) damage.

Pack Tactics. The dragonclaw has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the dragonclaw's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dragonclaw attacks twice with its scimitar.

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

DRAGONFANG

Medium humanoid (human), neutral evil

Armor Class 15 (studded leather)

Hit Points 78 (12d8 + 24)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Saving Throws Wis +3

Skills Deception +4, Stealth +5

Damage Resistances one of the following: acid, cold, fire, lightning, or poison

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages Common, Draconic, Infernal

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Dragon Fanatic. The dragonfang has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened. While the dragonfang can see a dragon or higher-ranking Cult of the Dragon cultist friendly to it, the dragonfang ignores the effects of being charmed or frightened.

Fanatic Advantage. Once per turn, if the dragonfang makes a weapon attack with advantage on the attack roll and hits, the target takes an extra 10 (3d6) damage.

Limited Flight. The dragonfang can use a bonus action to gain a flying speed of 30 feet until the end of its turn.

Pack Tactics. The dragonfang has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the dragonfang's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dragonfang attacks twice with its shortsword.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) damage of the type to which the dragonfang has damage resistance.

Orb of Dragon's Breath (2/Day). *Ranged Spell Attack:* +5 to hit, range 90 ft., one target. *Hit:* 22 (5d8) damage of the type to which the dragonfang has damage resistance.

DRAGONSOUL

Medium humanoid (human), neutral evil

Armor Class 16 (studded leather)

Hit Points 110 (17d8 + 34)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Wis +4

Skills Deception +6, Stealth +7

Damage Resistances one of the following: acid, cold, fire, lightning, or poison

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages Common, Draconic, Infernal

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Dragon Fanatic. The dragonsoul has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened. While the dragonsoul can see a dragon or higher-ranking Cult of the Dragon cultist friendly to it, the dragonsoul ignores the effects of being charmed or frightened.

Fanatic Advantage. Once per turn, if the dragonsoul makes a weapon attack with advantage on the attack roll and hits, the target takes an extra 10 (3d6) damage.

Limited Flight. The dragonsoul can use a bonus action to gain a flying speed of 30 feet until the end of its turn.

Pack Tactics. The dragonsoul has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the dragonsoul's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dragonsoul attacks twice with its shortsword.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage plus 10 (3d6) damage of the type to which the dragonsoul has damage resistance.

Orb of Dragon's Breath (3/Day). *Ranged Spell Attack:* +7 to hit, range 90 ft., one target. *Hit:* 27 (6d8) damage of the type to which the dragonsoul has damage resistance.

DRAGONWING

Medium humanoid (human), neutral evil

Armor Class 14 (leather armor)

Hit Points 33 (6d8 + 6)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Saving Throws Wis +2

Skills Deception +3, Stealth +5

Damage Resistances one of the following: acid, cold, fire, lightning, or poison

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Common, Draconic

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Dragon Fanatic. The dragonwing has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened. While the dragonwing can see a dragon or higher-ranking Cult of the Dragon cultist friendly to it, the dragonwing ignores the effects of being charmed or frightened.

Fanatical Advantage. Once per turn, if the dragonwing makes a weapon attack with advantage on the attack roll and hits, the target takes an extra 7 (2d6) damage.

Limited Flight. The dragonwing can use a bonus action to gain a flying speed of 30 feet until the end of its turn.

Pack Tactics. The dragonwing has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the dragonwing's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dragonwing attacks twice with its scimitar.

Scimitar. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) slashing damage plus 3 (1d6) damage of the type to which the cultist has damage resistance.

GUARD DRAKE

Medium dragon, unaligned

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 52 (7d8 + 21)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	11 (+0)	16 (+3)	4 (-3)	10 (+0)	7 (-2)

Skills Perception +2

Damage Resistances lightning

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages understands Draconic but can't speak it

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

ACTIONS

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

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

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

ICE TOAD

Medium monstrosity, neutral

Armor Class 12 (natural armor)

Hit Points 32 (5d8 + 10)

Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	8 (-1)	10 (+0)	6 (-2)

Skills Perception +2

Damage Immunities cold

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages Ice Toad

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Amphibious. The toad can breathe air and water.

Cold Aura. Any creature that starts its turn within 5 feet of the toad takes 3 (1d6) cold damage.

Standing Leap. The toad's long jump is up to 20 feet and its high jump is up to 10 feet, with or without a running start.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 5 (1d8 + 1) piercing damage plus 4 (1d8) cold damage.

If the target is a Medium or smaller creature, it is grappled (escape DC 11). Until this grapple ends, the toad can't bite another target.

NAERGOOTH BLADELORD

Medium undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 18 (plate)

Hit Points 135 (18d8 + 54)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Dex +5, Wis +6

Skills Perception +6, Stealth +5

Damage Resistances necrotic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons that aren't silvered

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages Common, Draconic

Challenge 11 (7,200 XP)

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

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Naergoth makes three attacks, either with his longsword or longbow. He can use Life Drain in place of one longsword attack.

Life Drain. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 20 (5d6 + 3) necrotic damage. The target must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or its hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. This reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0.

A humanoid slain by this attack rises 24 hours later as a

zombie under Naergoth's control, unless the humanoid is restored to life or its body is destroyed. Naergoth can have no more than twelve zombies under his control at one time.

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d8 + 5) slashing damage, or 10 (1d10 + 5) slashing damage if used with two hands, plus 10 (3d6) necrotic damage.

Longbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d8 + 1) piercing damage plus 10 (3d6) necrotic damage.

NERONVAIN

Medium humanoid (elf), neutral evil

Armor Class 17

Hit Points 117 (18d8 + 36)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	17 (+3)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Constitution +6, Wisdom +5

Skills Arcana +7, Perception +5

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages Common, Draconic, Elvish, Infernal

Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Draconic Majesty. Neronvain adds his Charisma bonus to his AC (included).

Fey Ancestry. Magic can't put Neronvain to sleep.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Neronvain makes two attacks, either with his shortsword or Eldritch Arrow.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage plus 13 (3d8) poison damage.

Eldritch Arrow. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +7 to hit, range 120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d10) force damage plus 9 (2d8) poison damage.

Poisonous Cloud (2/Day). Poison gas fills a 20-foot-radius sphere centered on a point Neronvain can see within 50 feet of him. The gas spreads around corners and remains until the start of Neronvain's next turn. Each creature that starts its turn in the gas must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

RATH MODAR

Medium humanoid (human), lawful evil

Armor Class 13 (16 with *mage armor*)

Hit Points 71 (11d8 + 22)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws Int +7, Wis +5

Skills Arcana +7, Deception +3, Insight +5, Stealth +6

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages Common, Draconic, Infernal, Primordial, Thayan

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Special Equipment. Rath has a *staff of fire* and three scrolls: *dimension door*, *feather fall*, and *fireball*.

Spellcasting. Rath is an 11th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). He has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *fire bolt*, *minor illusion*, *prestidigitation*, *shocking grasp*

1st level (4 slots): *chromatic orb*, *color spray*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*

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

3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell*, *fireball*, *major image*

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

5th level (2 slots): *mislead*, *seeming*

6th level (1 slot): *globe of invulnerability*

ACTIONS

Quarterstaff. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage, or 4 (1d8) bludgeoning damage when used with two hands.

REACTIONS

Illusory Self (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). When a creature Rath can see makes an attack roll against him, he can interpose an illusory duplicate between the attacker and himself. The attack automatically misses Rath, then the illusion dissipates.

SEVERIN

Medium humanoid (human), neutral evil

Armor Class 16

Hit Points 150 (20d8 + 60)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	17 (+3)	12 (+1)	20 (+5)

Saving Throws Dexterity +5, Wisdom +5

Skills Arcana +7, Religion +7

Damage Immunities* fire

Damage Resistances* acid, cold, lightning, poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons

Condition Immunities* charmed, frightened, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft.,* passive Perception 11

Languages Common, Draconic, Infernal

Challenge 11 (7,200 XP)

*Severin has these features while wearing the *Mask of the Dragon Queen*.

Special Equipment. Severin has the *Mask of the Dragon Queen*.

Draconic Majesty. Severin adds his Charisma bonus to his AC (included).

Ignite Enemy. If Severin deals fire damage to a creature while wearing the *Mask of the Dragon Queen*, the target catches fire. At the start of each of its turns, the burning target takes 5 (1d10) fire damage. A creature within reach of the fire can use an action to extinguish it.

Legendary Resistance (5/Day). While wearing the *Mask of the Dragon Queen*, if Severin fails a saving throw, he can choose to succeed instead.

ACTIONS

Burning Touch. *Melee Spell Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 18 (4d8) fire damage.

Flaming Orb. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +5 to hit, range 90 ft., one target. *Hit:* 40 (9d8) fire damage.

Scorching Burst. Severin chooses a point he can see within 60 feet of him. Each creature within 5 feet of that point must make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw, taking 18 (4d8) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

If Severin is wearing the *Mask of the Dragon Queen*, he can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. Severin regains spent legendary actions at the start of his turn.

Attack. Severin makes one attack.

Fiery Teleport (Costs 2 Actions). Severin, along with any objects he is wearing or carrying, teleports up to 60 feet to an unoccupied space he can see. Each creature within 5 feet of Severin before he teleports takes 5 (1d10) fire damage.

Hellish Chains (Costs 3 Actions). Severin targets one creature he can see within 30 feet of him. The target is wrapped in magical chains of fire and restrained. The restrained target takes 21 (6d6) fire damage at the start of each of its turns. At the end of its turns, the target can make a DC 17 Strength saving throw, ending the effect on itself on a success.

TIAMAT

Gargantuan fiend, chaotic evil

Armor Class 25 (natural armor)

Hit Points 615 (30d20 + 300)

Speed 60 ft., fly 120 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
30 (+10)	10 (+0)	30 (+10)	26 (+8)	26 (+8)	28 (+9)

Saving Throws Strength +19, Dexterity +9, Wisdom +17

Skills Arcana +17, Perception +26, Religion +17

Damage Immunities acid, cold, fire, lightning, poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

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

Senses darkvision 240 ft., truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 36

Languages Common, Draconic, Infernal

Challenge 30 (155,000 XP)

Discorporation. When Tiamat drops to 0 hit points or dies, her body is destroyed but her essence travels back to her domain in the Nine Hells, and she is unable to take physical form for a time.

Innate Spellcasting (3/Day). Tiamat can innately cast *divine word* (spell save DC 26). Her spellcasting ability is Charisma.

Legendary Resistance (5/Day). If Tiamat fails a saving throw, she can choose to succeed instead.

Limited Magic Immunity. Unless she wishes to be affected, Tiamat is immune to spells of 6th level or lower. She has advantage on saving throws against all other spells and magical effects.

Magic Weapons. Tiamat's weapon attacks are magical.

Multiple Heads. Tiamat can take one reaction per turn, rather than only one per round. She also has advantage on saving throws against being knocked unconscious. If she fails a saving throw against an effect that would stun a creature, one of her unspent legendary actions is spent.

Regeneration. Tiamat regains 30 hit points at the start of her turn.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Tiamat can use her Frightful Presence. She then makes three attacks: two with her claws and one with her tail.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +19 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 24 (4d6 + 10) slashing damage.

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +19 to hit, reach 25 ft., one target. *Hit:* 28 (4d8 + 10) piercing damage.

NELVIK THE PSEUDODRAGON

Severin has a neutral evil **pseudodragon** companion named Nelvik. The pseudodragon is never far from its master. During the ritual to summon Tiamat, it cowers on a ledge in the central spire of the Dragon Queen's temple. If Severin is slain, Nelvik attempts to befriend Severin's slayers, waiting for an opportune time to exact revenge.

Frightful Presence. Each creature of Tiamat's choice that is within 240 feet of Tiamat and aware of her must succeed on a DC 26 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to Tiamat's Frightful Presence for the next 24 hours.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Tiamat can take 5 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. Tiamat regains spent legendary actions at the start of her turn.

Tiamat's legendary action options are associated with her five dragon heads (a bite and a breath weapon for each). Once Tiamat chooses a legendary action option for one of her heads, she can't choose another one associated with that head until the start of her next turn.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +19 to hit, reach 20 ft., one target.
Hit: 32 (4d10 + 10) slashing damage plus 14 (4d6) acid damage (black dragon head), lightning damage (blue dragon head), poison damage (green dragon head), fire damage (red dragon head), or cold damage (white dragon head).

Black Dragon Head: Acid Breath (Costs 2 Actions). Tiamat breathes acid in a 120-foot line that is 10 feet wide. Each creature in that line must make a DC 27 Dexterity saving throw, taking 67 (15d8) acid damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Blue Dragon Head: Lightning Breath (Costs 2 Actions). Tiamat breathes lightning in a 120-foot line that is 10 feet wide. Each creature in that line must make a DC 27 Dexterity saving throw, taking 88 (16d10) lightning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Green Dragon Head: Poison Breath (Costs 2 Actions). Tiamat breathes poisonous gas in a 90-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 27 Constitution saving throw, taking 77 (22d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Red Dragon Head: Fire Breath (Costs 2 Actions). Tiamat breathes fire in a 90-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 27 Dexterity saving throw, taking 91 (26d6) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

White Dragon Head: Cold Breath (Costs 2 Actions). Tiamat breathes an icy blast in a 90-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 27 Dexterity saving throw, taking 72 (16d8) cold damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

APPENDIX B: MAGIC ITEMS

DRAAKHORN

Wondrous item, unique

The *Draakhorn* was a gift from Tiamat in the war between dragons and giants. It was once the horn of her ancient red dragon consort, Ephelomon, that she gave to dragonkind to help them in their war against the giants. The *Draakhorn* is a signaling device, and it is so large that it requires two Medium creatures (or one Large or larger) to hold it while a third creature sounds it, making the earth resonate to its call. The horn has been blasted with fire into a dark ebony hue and is wrapped in bands of bronze with draconic runes that glow with purple eldritch fire.

The low, moaning drone of the *Draakhorn* discomfits normal animals within a few miles, and it alerts all dragons within two thousand miles to rise and be wary, for great danger is at hand. Coded blasts were once used to signal specific messages. Knowledge of those codes has been lost to the ages.

Those with knowledge of the *Draakhorn's* history know that it was first built to signal danger to chromatic dragons—a purpose the Cult of the Dragon has corrupted to call chromatic dragons to the Well of Dragons from across the North.

See area 8, "The *Draakhorn*," for the item's game effects.

DRAGONTOOTH DAGGER

Weapon, rare

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

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

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



DRAGONTOOTH DAGGER

BRYAN SYME

MASK OF THE DRAGON QUEEN

Wondrous item, unique, requires attunement

Individually, the five dragon masks resemble the dragons they are named for. When two or more of the dragon masks are assembled, however, they transform magically into the *Mask of the Dragon Queen*. Each mask shrinks to become the modeled head of a chromatic dragon, appearing to roar its devotion to Tiamat where all the masks brought together are arranged crown-like on the wearer's head. Below the five masks, a new mask shapes itself, granting the wearer a draconic visage that covers the face, neck, and shoulders.

While you are attuned to and wear this mask, you can have any of the properties from any one mask. Additionally, you gain the Damage Absorption from each of the five dragon masks, and you gain five uses of the Legendary Resistance property.

Severin's stat block incorporates properties from the *Red Dragon Mask*. You can find statistics for the five dragon masks in the online supplement available at DungeonsandDragons.com.

MASK OF THE DRAGON QUEEN



APPENDIX C: COUNCIL SCORECARD

	Fourth Council					Third Council					Second Council				First Council (<i>Hoard of the Dragon Queen</i>)										
5	+	+	+	-	+/+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+/+	Harpers	
7	+	+	-	-	+/+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+/+	Order of the Gauntlet	
5	+	+	-	-	+/+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	Emerald Enclave	
7	+	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	Lady Laeral Silverhand	
5	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+/+	Dagult Neverember		
7	+	+	-	-	+/+	+	+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	Connerad Brawnvanil	
6	+	+	-	+	+/+	+	+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	King Melandrach	
7	+	+	-	-	+/+	+	+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	Ulder Ravengard	
6	+	+	-	+	+/+	+	+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	Taern Hornblade	
6	+	-	-	+	+/+	+	+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	+/+	Sir Isteval	
	Final Tally					Subtotal After Third Council					Subtotal After Second Council				Subtotal after First Council										
	Score Needed For Support																								
	Supported by Laeral Silverhand					Metallic dragons aid faction territory					Arcane Brotherhood joins alliance				Kept possession of Skyreach Castle										
	Supported by Isteval					Made concessions to metallic dragons					Arauthator killed or driven from lair				Skyreach Castle returned to giants										
	No draconic aid gained at second council					Rallied metallic dragons					Arcane Brotherhood joins alliance				Ontharr Frume supports characters*										
	Brought Thy to the table					Rallied metallic dragons					Arauthator killed or driven from lair				Leosin Erlanhar supports characters*										
	Donated Xonthal's Tower to faction					Made concessions to metallic dragons					Arauthator killed or driven from lair				Smashed dragon hatchery*										
	Sold Xonthal's Tower to Zhenlarim					Metallic dragons aid faction territory					Arauthator killed or driven from lair				Left dragon hatchery intact										
	Defeated cultists at Xonthal's Tower					Metallic dragons aid faction territory					Arauthator killed or driven from lair				Killed Rezmir*										
	Donated Xonthal's Tower to faction					Metallic dragons aid faction territory					Arauthator killed or driven from lair				Captured Rezmir										
	Captured Rezmir					Metallic dragons aid faction territory					Arauthator killed or driven from lair				Killed Rath Modar										
	Supported by Isteval					Metallic dragons aid faction territory					Arauthator killed or driven from lair				Captured Rath Modar										
	Supported by Laeral Silverhand					Metallic dragons aid faction territory					Arauthator killed or driven from lair				Captured Rath Modar										

Downloadable scorecard available at DungeonsandDragons.com



WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

LIVE OR DIE, YOU NOW HAVE A STORY ALL YOUR OWN. Care to start another? Unravel the secrets of the Cult of the Dragon in the new Tyranny of Dragons module for the Neverwinter free-to-play MMORPG.

See what Tiamat's draconic devotees have in store for Baldur's Gate in the *Legends of Baldur's Gate* comic series.

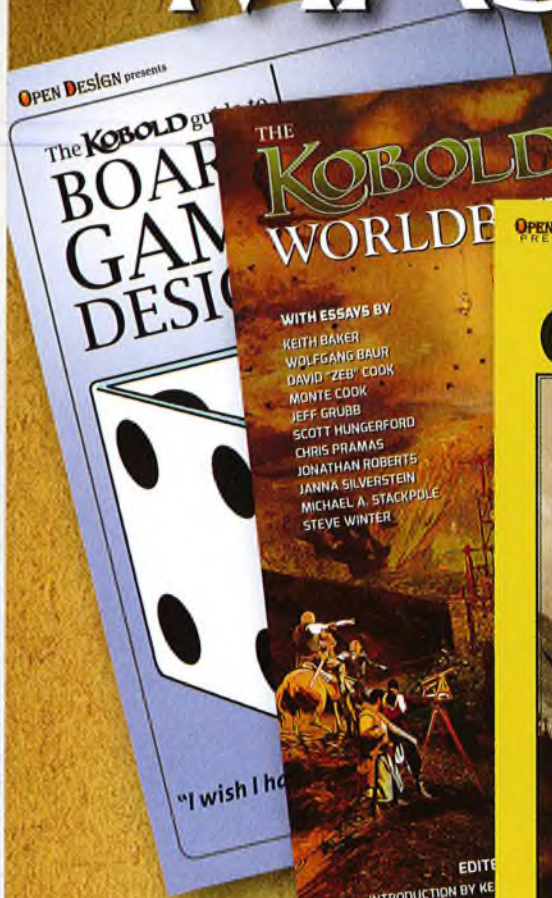
Join a regular D&D game at your local store to experience more adventures from the Tyranny of Dragons story line. Check the Store & Event locator on **DungeonsandDragons.com** to find a store near you.

Accessorize your tabletop roleplaying game with Tyranny of Dragons miniatures, vinyl play maps and Dungeon Masters Screens. And while you're at it, accessorize your wardrobe with the latest dragon-inspired apparel. You'll find details about these products and more on the D&D website.

YOU'VE STOOD BEFORE
THE FIREY GATES AND FACED
DOWN THE COMBINED POWER
OF THE CULT OF THE DRAGON
AND THE RED WIZARDS
OF THAY.

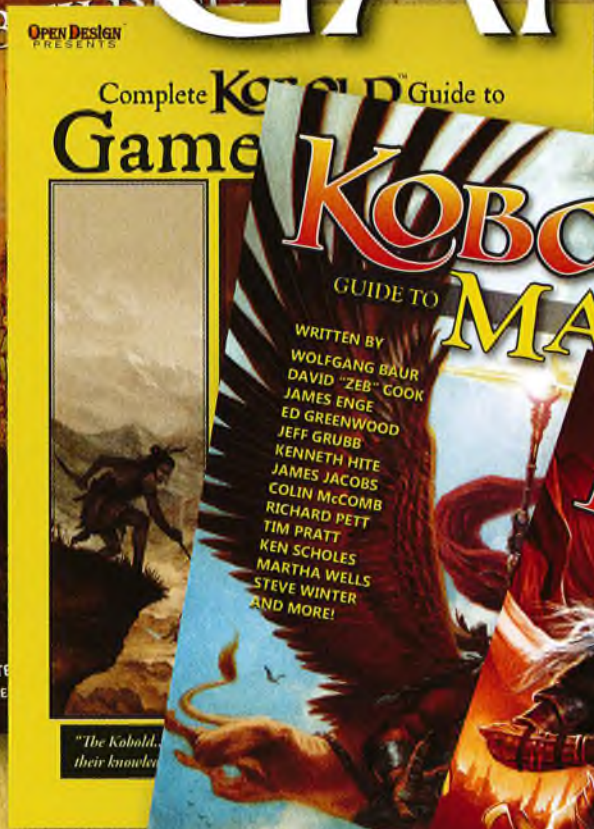
TIAMAT, THE QUEEN
OF EVIL DRAGONS WILL NOT
SOON FORGET YOUR PART IN
THIS FIGHT.

MASTER THE GAME!



THE KOBOLD GUIDE TO THE WORLD OF BOARD GAMES

WITH ESSAYS BY
KEITH BAKER
WOLFGANG BAUR
DAVID "ZEB" COOK
MONTE COOK
JEFF GRUBB
SCOTT HUNGERFORD
CHRIS PRAMAS
JONATHAN ROBERTS
JANNA SILVERSTEIN
MICHAEL A. STACKPOLE
STEVE WINTER



Complete Kobold Guide to Game Design

WRITTEN BY
WOLFGANG BAUR
DAVID "ZEB" COOK
JAMES ENGE
ED GREENWOOD
JEFF GRUBB
KENNETH HITE
JAMES JACOBS
COLIN MCCOMB
RICHARD PETT
TIM PRATT
KEN SCHOLES
MARTHA WELLS
STEVE WINTER
AND MORE!

INTRODUCTION
EDITED BY



KOBOLD GUIDE TO MAGIC

WRITTEN BY
WOLFGANG BAUR
DAVID "ZEB" COOK
JAMES ENGE
ED GREENWOOD
JEFF GRUBB
KENNETH HITE
JAMES JACOBS
COLIN MCCOMB
RICHARD PETT
TIM PRATT
KEN SCHOLES
MARTHA WELLS
STEVE WINTER
AND MORE!



KOBOLD GUIDE TO COMBAT

WOLFGANG BAUR
KEITH R. A. DECANDIDO
ED GREENWOOD
JEFF GRUBB
ROB HEINSDO
RICHARD PETT

CHRIS PRAMAS
ELIZABETH ANN SCARBOROUGH
KEN SCHOLES
STEVE WINTER
AND MANY MORE

EDITED BY JANNA SILVERSTEIN

The award-winning Kobold guides take you behind the scenes of your favorite games!

You'll get how-to advice, tips, and tricks from some of today's top game designers and genre authors.

Whether you're a designer, a gamemaster, or just love games, there's something here for you.



www.KoboldPress.com



amazon.com

The Kobold Press, Open Design, and Kobold logos are trademarks of Open Design.

THWART THE QUEEN OF EVIL DRAGONS

The Cult of the Dragon leads the charge in an unholy campaign to bring Tiamat back to the Forgotten Realms. With the race against evil moving from Waterdeep to the Sea of Moving Ice to Thay, the situation grows more perilous with each passing moment.

The heroes must succeed, or Faerun will succumb to draconic tyranny. In the end, the world will never be the same.

A DUNGEONS & DRAGONS adventure for characters of levels 8-15, following the events of *Hoard of the Dragon Queen*™

For use with the fifth edition *Player's Handbook*®, *Monster Manual*®, and *Dungeon Master's Guide*®

TYRANNY of DRAGONS™



DUNGEONSANDDRAGONS.COM



ISBN 978-0-7869-6565-6



5 2 9 9 5



EAN

9 780786 965656

Sug. Retail: US \$29.95 CAN \$35.00

Printed in USA A96070000