

DUNGEON VAULT MAGAZINE

The Amber Expanse

Prowling Feral Gnolls

No. 48



HIGH RESOLUTION MAPS
VTT - ROLL20 MAPS

Designed for use with

ShadowDark RPG



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Prowling Gnolls

Upon the Amber Mountain's crest so high,
Where ancient fires in slumber lie,
A dread awakening, shadows rise,
Beneath the silent, ashen skies.

From molten heart and cavern deep,
Foul gnolls from their dark nest did creep,
With eyes ablaze and fangs agleam,
They rend the night with howls that scream.

Their claws, like iron, rend and tear,
Bringing death to the peaceful lair.

The villages, once full of life,
Now echo with the sounds of strife.

Through vale and glen, their terror spreads,
As embers dance where life now dreads.

The Amber Mountain's curse unfolds,
In blood and fire, its tale is told...

THE AMBER EXPANSE

A vibrant tapestry of ancestries forms the expanse. Amidst diverse cultures and shared traditions, our beautiful land flourishes with unity and rich heritage.

Amber Expanse's Precept



The expanse is a land of diverse cultures and rich history, nestled around the imposing Amber Mountain. This region thrives with the co-existence of various ancestries including humans, dwarves, halflings, elves, and even small groups of gnomes and kobolds. Grambury and Brilshire, the two largest settlements, serve as the bustling hubs of trade and governance, while numerous smaller towns and hamlets such as Amber Plateau, Green Halls, Limen Keep, Letterton, Camworth, Mudfoot, and Stone Belly, among others, dot the landscape. Each settlement contributes its unique traditions and strengths, fostering a spirit of unity and collaboration among its inhabitants.

A NASCENT THREAT

THE HARMONY OF the Amber Expanse has recently been shattered by the incursion of savage, aggressive gnolls. Driven from their desolate homelands by the lure of richer territories, these ruthless marauders descend upon the region like a plague. In a few short months, their relentless raids have left a trail of devastation, claiming most of the smaller towns that surround Amber Mountain. The gnolls' savage tactics and unbridled ferocity have struck fear into the populace's hearts, as they witness their homes and loved ones falling prey to the invaders' insatiable hunger for conquest and plunder.

As the gnoll threat continues to grow, the urgency for a united defense becomes ever more critical. The larger towns and cities, once beacons of safety, now stand at the precipice of danger. If the gnolls are not swiftly repelled, their burgeoning strength may soon overwhelm even the formidable defenses of Grambury and Brilshire. The fate of the Amber Expanse is in jeopardy.

THE GNOLLS

LED BY THE fearsome Gnashra, the Devourer, a hulking gnoll chieftain known for his brutal strength and tactical acumen, these marauders employ guerrilla tactics and hit-and-run assaults to devastating effect. Gnashra's troops strike under the cover of the night, using their nocturnal adaptation to ambush and overwhelm unsuspecting settlements. Their tactics are brutal and merciless: swift, coordinated attacks followed by systematic looting and burning. The gnolls' mastery of intimidation and psychological warfare ensures their enemies are often broken in spirit long before they clash in battle.

ADVENTURE HOOK

► **Heroes.** A desperate plea for aid echoes across the Amber Expanse, carried by refugees fleeing the gnoll onslaught and reaching the ears of potential heroes far and wide. The leaders of Grambury and Brilshire, aware of the impending doom, have offered a handsome reward and the promise of land and titles to those brave enough to stem the tide of destruction (1,450 gp, 8 XP).

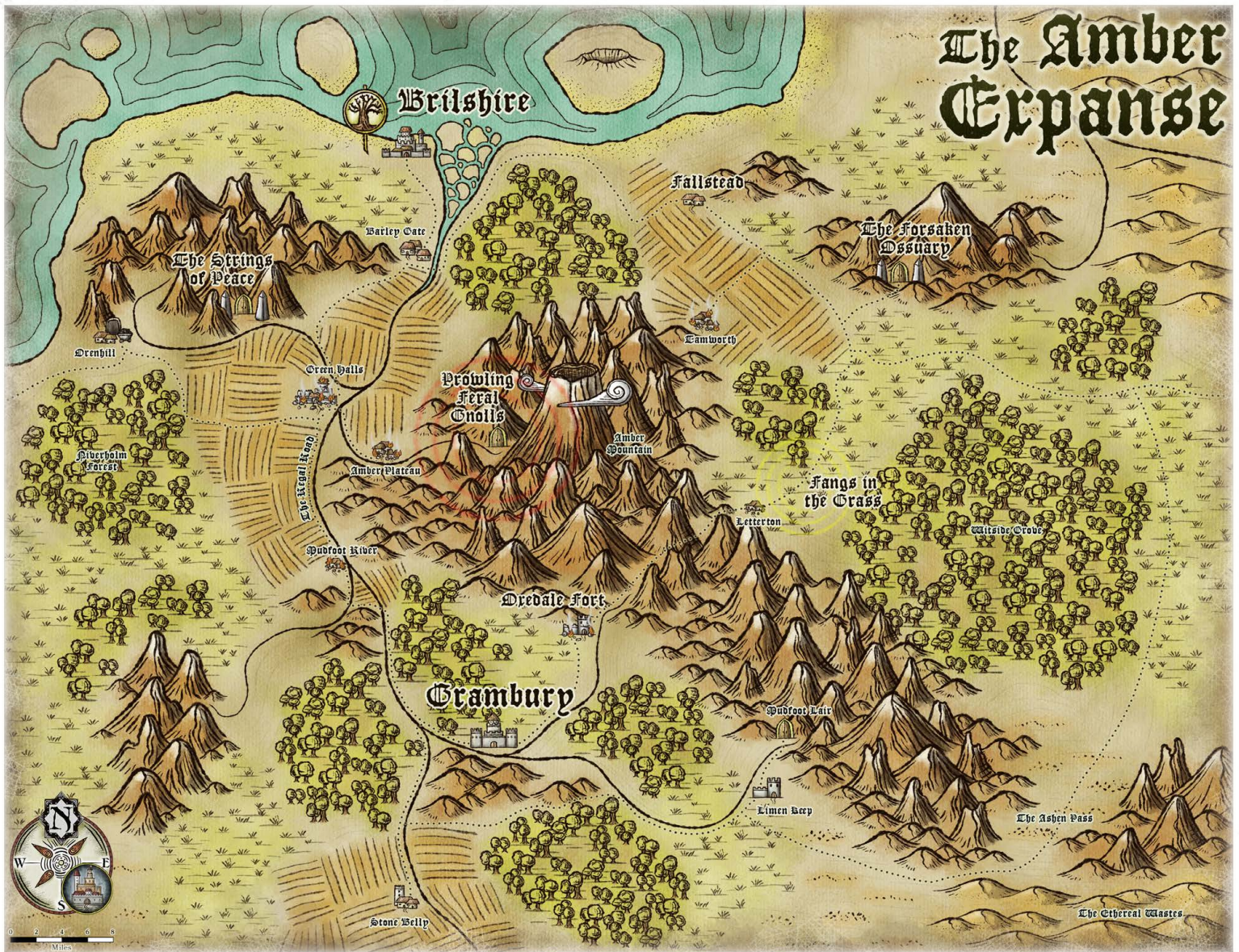
Level 1-4 Region

► **Current Situation.** The heroes find themselves in the Amber Expanse. Their past quests brought them here, or perhaps this is where their life as heroes begins. Either way, Brilshire is their starting location.

► **Danger.** Gnolls roam the plains and stalk the roads, making traveling a dangerous task (see **Exploration Encounters**). Earning gold as escorts will be possible each time the heroes move from one place to another.

RUMORS

d6	Details
1	It is whispered that a secretive mage with great power lives in the depths of the northwestern mountain range.
2	Locals claim that Oxedale Fort, now overrun by gnolls, may still keep its hidden vault, filled with treasure, untouched.
3	Rumors circulate that a council member in Brilshire is in league with the gnolls, feeding them information in exchange for a share of the spoils. There are no direct proofs, but perhaps the gnolls may be interrogated for the truth.
4	Some believe the ruins of Green Halls are haunted by restless spirits, seeking vengeance on those who desecrated their home.
5	It is said that Gnashra the Devourer made a dark pact with an ancient demon, granting him unnatural strength. Plus, the few survivors and refugees of past attacks claim that the gnolls are not alone. They say a great evil accompanies them.
6	There are tales of a secret, hidden oasis in the southern desert, the Ethereal Wastes, where people found sanctuary.



EXPLORATION ENCOUNTERS

Roll 1d6 when the characters travel to a new location in the expanse. Roll twice if they travel during the night, or if they fail to spot the signs of danger on the ground and in their surroundings (DC 9 WIS check).

1. Four **gnolls** and a **gnoll brute** try to ambush the heroes. In their blood-thirst, they fight to the death.
2. A pair of **gnollish hyenas** pounces on the heroes. The demonic beasts fight until slain.
3. Two **gnolls** and **gnollish hyena** fight until slain.
4. Three **thugs** and one **thief** exploit the situation and rob unaware travelers when the sun sets.
5. Three **gnoll skirmishers** hide in the tall grass (DC 12 WIS to spot). On a fail, they ambush the heroes.
6. Six **gnolls**, a **gnoll brute**, and three **gnollish hyenas** march 100 feet from the characters. Leaving the area unseen may be best (DC 12 DEX). Failure means the enemies spot the party.

BRILSHIRE

Brilshire is a bustling trade city known for its grand markets, great stonework, and cultural festivals. Ruled by Lady Elara Windrider, a wise and just leader, the city thrives on its commerce and crafts. However, whispers of treachery taint the air, as Councilor David Clint is rumored to be conspiring with the gnolls for personal gain.

► **Barley Gate.** A quaint town south of Brilshire, named for the golden barley fields that surround it, provides a staple for the region's finest ales and bread. Visitors often stop by to sample the renowned Barley Brew, a homemade ale praised throughout the Amber Expanse.

OXEDALE FORT

A once-mighty bastion now overrun by gnolls. The fort's stone walls are scarred by battle, yet whispers persist that its hidden vault, filled with military treasures, remains untouched. Adventurers come enticed by the promise of untold riches and the challenge of reclaiming this fallen stronghold from the gnoll menace.

THE RAIDED TOWNS

What remains of these places is the proof of the gnolls' relentless ferocity. Visiting these places triggers a random encounter (see **Exploration Encounters** above).

▶ **Green Halls.** The lush gardens and elven architecture lie in eerie silence. The once beautiful greenery was trampled and burned, leaving only charred remnants.

▶ **Amber Plateau.** Perched atop a mesa with great views, it is now the gate to the gnoll's hideout. Its location made it a prime target for the gnolls' initial assault.

▶ **Mudfoot River.** The wreckage of boats and the remnants of abandoned homes litter the riverbanks.

▶ **Letterton.** The gnolls showed no mercy in this small town, and its many libraries are now ashes in the wind.

▶ **Camworth.** The once thriving market is a ghost town now. Its once-bustling streets are now empty and silent.

THE STRINGS OF PEACE

The heroes may hear vague rumors about this place: a mage, a magical dungeon, and a great treasure. They may choose to come, motivated by curiosity and greed.

▶ **Orenhill.** The mining operations in this hamlet have been halted since the gnoll attack on Green Halls.

▶ **Riverholm Forest.** Home to a few fey creatures and wild beasts. The gnolls have not dared cross paths with them. The elusive fey do not like strangers or intrusions.

FALLSTEAD

Nestled in the northern reaches of the expanse, Fallstead is famous for its autumnal festivals and scenic apple orchards. However, talks of mutant vegetables and monster apples have reached the larger towns.

GRAMBURY

The heart of the Amber Expanse is a bustling city renowned for its grand citadel and extensive trade networks. Ruled by Duke Alaric Stormrider, Grambury stands as a beacon of resilience and unity amidst the turmoil. The city's formidable walls and vigilant guards have thus far kept the gnoll threat at bay.

▶ **Stone Belly.** This town is hidden behind tall trees and a small mountain range, still unseen by the gnolls.

▶ **Limen Keep.** This place serves as both a historical site and a haven. A safe spot for anyone seeking refuge.

THE FORSAKEN OSSUARY

This is a labyrinthine catacomb said to house the restless spirits of ancient warriors. Many have ventured into its depths lured by tales of hidden wealth, only to find nothing but eerie silence and spectral apparitions.

AMBER MOUNTAIN

Towering at the heart of the expanse, the inactive volcano now serves as the foreboding stronghold for the gnoll invaders. Its craggy peaks and shadowy caves offer the perfect refuge for these relentless marauders, who fiercely guard their lair. The path to Amber Mountain is treacherous, winding through the ruined Amber Plateau, where the gnolls' presence is most heavily felt.

OTHER LOCATIONS

▶ **Witside Grove.** The ancient forest to the east is famed for its towering trees, magical fauna, and hidden secrets, drawing brave scholars and adventurers every so often.

▶ **The Ethereal Wastes.** To the south, a massive barren wasteland. There are endless shifting sands, hiding ruins of civilizations amidst its treacherous beauty.



GNOLL VARIANTS

GNASHRA'S PACK IS a band of aggressive, rabid gnolls. Due to their leader's dark pact with an ancient demon, they now bear infernal traits that enhance their savagery. Their eyes glow with a hellish red light, and their claws sear flesh with demonic fire. These fiendish warriors possess unnatural strength and resilience, making them formidable foes on the battlefield. Gnashra himself wields demonic power, instilling fear and chaos wherever his horde strikes.

Gnoll Brute

A humanoid hyena with massive muscles. Its claws are the size of sharp butcher knives.

AC: 12 (leather)

HP: 18 LV₃

ATK: 2 claw +5 (1d8+2)

MV: Near

S:+3 D:+1 C:+2 I:-1 W:+1 Ch:+0

Rage. 1/day, immune to morale checks, +1d4 damage (3 rounds).

Bloodlust. +2 damage with melee weapons (included above).

Gnoll Skirmisher

Fur black as night and swift like the wind. Slender hyena-folk with deadly speed and precision.

AC: 14 (leather)

HP: 9 LV₂

ATK: 1 longbow (far) +4 (1d8) or 1 claw +1 (1d6)

MV: Near

S:+0 D:+3 C:+0 I:+1 W:+1 Ch:+1

Sniper. 1/day, attack with advantage. On a hit, add 1d6 to the damage dealt.

Gnollish Hyena

A large canine with a brown, spotted pelt, glowing red eyes, and otherworldly strength.

AC: 11

HP: 12 LV₂

ATK: 1 bite +5 (1d6)

MV: double near

S:+2 D:+1 C:+2 I:-2 W:+1 Ch:+0

Pack Hunter. Deals +1 damage while an ally is within 20 feet.

Gnollish Blood. 1/day, attack with advantage if an ally gnoll is within 20 feet.

Demonic Howl. All enemies within 10 feet of hyena, DC 12 WIS. On a fail, their next check is made with disadvantage.



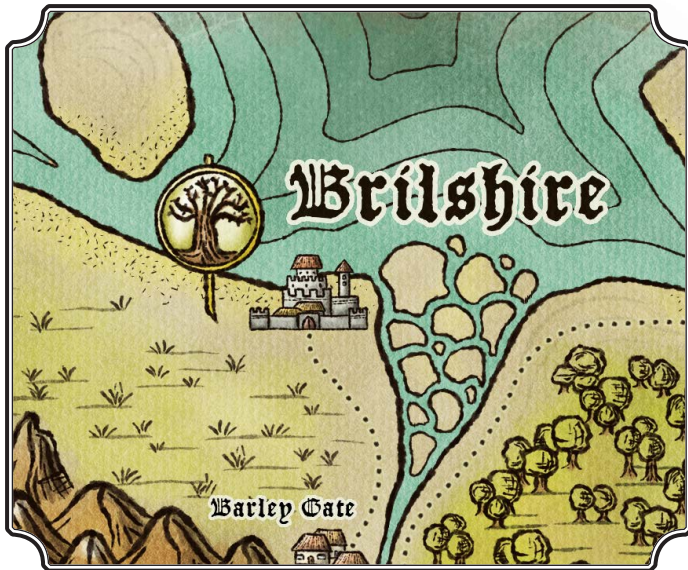
BRILSHIRE

“We must strive for unity. We cannot allow inner turmoil to cloud our judgment. One among us has conspired against their brethren. We must root this evil out.”

Lady Elara Windrider

Brilshire, the second largest settlement in the Amber Expanse, is located by the Sapphire River delta, northwest of the Amber Mountain. The cursed hyena-folk emerged from the dormant volcano 3 weeks ago. In that time, they have laid waste to many settlements south of Brilshire. But something odd unfolds now. Barley Gate, a small farming settlement south of Brilshire has not yet been attacked but two gnoll raiding parties have already found their way into Brilshire; it remains unknown how they bypassed the city's formidable walls. People suspect that the gnolls were led into the city by someone.

Lady Elara Windrider, a vassal of Grambury's duke, covertly looks for the traitor. A councilor named David Clint is her prime suspect as he would benefit the most from her utter failure. Unfortunately, Lady Elara does not have enough evidence to proceed with an arrest.



Level 1-2 Settlement

► **Special Events.** Check for a **Random Event** in every other area the characters visit (3-in-6 chance).

► **Economy.** Brilshire's most profitable endeavors are fishing and trading with upstream and foreign settlements. The city is vassal to Grambury and sends a monthly stagecoach with tax tithes for the duke.

► **Gnoll Raids.** The gnolls came from the docks. In their rampage, they killed civilians, burnt down houses, and weaved unrest in the survivors. A total of twelve gnolls were eventually slain by the city guards. The relentless hyena-folk fought savagely to the death.

1. STORMHEAD STEEDS

Ragan Stormhead breeds the finest mounts. He is committed to having fresh mounts for Lady Elara's cavalry if a military engagement occurs. A detachment of the city guards stays in his home to secure him and the mounts in case the gnolls attack from the south.

► **Steeds.** If the characters aid Lady Elara and decide to travel south to Grambury, the ruler orders Ragan to lend the party four of the finest horses for this journey.

2. BERK'S APOTHECARY

A senior gnome, well-versed in botany and medicine, crafts wondrous potions and salves. Even the nobles in Brilstone Keep send their servants to secure ointments from the gnome apothecary. Characters looking for healing potions may find them here. There are even rumors that Berk knows how to heal more permanent conditions like debilitating diseases and petrification. Years ago, there was a rumor that he could revive the dead but Berk swiftly put a stop to that baseless allegation.

RANDOM EVENT

d6

Details

- 1 Six soldiers (**guards**) march on the streets conscripting people of fighting age. All able-bodied people are sent to the barracks in the keep for basic training. If they see foreign warriors or mercenaries, they swiftly inform them of possible jobs in the keep.
- 2 A raiding party of eleven **gnolls** and one **gnoll brute** comes from the docks. They kill anyone on their path to Brilstone Keep. The characters are aided by six **guards** and one **knight**. This event may occur only once.
- 3 A storm hits the harbor, marooning all ships for 1d3 days. Four gnoll corpses are found by the piers when the storm dissipates.
- 4 Dozens of refugees from Barley Gate arrive at the city. The small town was left guarded by a small garrison of Brilshire soldiers.
- 5 A man is hanged at dawn before Brilstone Keep. A herald claims that he infiltrated the keep and tried to murder Lady Elara.
- 6 A merchant caravan wants to travel to Grambury. No escort dares accompany them though they offer 100 gp (1 XP) as payment.



Brilshire

Seat of Lady Elara Windrider



1. Stormhead Steeds
2. Berk's Apothecary
3. Ginner's Home
4. The Lonely Griphon
5. Town's Docks
6. Adventurers' Hall
7. Brilshire Library
8. Keep's Bailey
9. Keep's Courtyard
10. Brilstone Keep

3. GINNER'S HOME

Old Ginner is a retired soldier (**knight** with half HP) who served Lady Elara's father. He is often at the barracks overseeing the training of recruits in his free time. Ginner is on the lookout for mercenaries as he now sees the need to return to action as his family is in danger. If he spots the characters on the streets, he invites them to his home for tea and attempts to join them.

► **The Daughter (3 XP).** Ginner explains that his daughter Anna lives in Fallstead. The town remains untouched by the gnolls but there are wild tales of mutant apples and dire pumpkins. Ginner needs the characters to get there, he offers 150 gp if they can help him rescue her.

► **The Son (4 XP).** Ginner's son, Adam, lives in Letterton with his wife and children, south of Fallstead. It is known that the town was torched by gnolls and few survived. Ginner harbors hope that his family and other survivors might hide nearby. This scout and rescue mission is partially funded by Lady Elara, whose nephew Eric lived in Letterton. They offer a hefty reward of 350 gp.

4. THE LONELY GRIPHON

Arlo, Magana, and Virken, three middle-aged halflings, own and work at this establishment. It is a tavern and inn; and the place-to-be for merchants, travelers, and adventurers. The three halflings are more than well-informed and gladly share rumors and information, for a suitable fee. Each bit of information is worth 10 gp:

- They say marvelous treasure awaits those willing to visit the strange, rune-inscribed door southwest of Barley Gate. They say a wizard created it.
- Oxedale Fort, north of Grambury, fell a few days ago. A rescue mission from the capital is said to set out in the following days. A great reward is offered.
- The shunned Forsaken Ossuary, east of Fallstead, is said to be the resting place of a hero of yore. Their fabled sword is rumored to be there still.
- A hooded man was seen by the docks before each of the gnoll raids in the city. Some have ventured to say that his gait, one of a man with a weak leg, is eerily similar to that of Councilor David Clint.

5. TOWN'S DOCKS

The docks bustle with activity as merchants load and unload barges. These barges brought the gnolls. Those who know have been paid off or threatened to stay silent.

► **Tracks.** Careful observers see the gnoll footprints coming from the east piers, not the beach (DC 12 WIS).

► **The People.** Thorough questioning and bribing of dock laborers quickly reveal that some know more than they let on (DC 15 CHA). A hooded man with a strange, rhythmic gait came before each gnoll attack to oversee the unloading of two barley-grain barges.

► **The Barge.** One of the vessels is anchored at the piers. In its hold, there are gnoll droppings, fur, and enough evidence to prove their willing participation. The docks' admiral reveals under duress that the barges belong to Councilor David Clint (DC 12 CHA check).

6. ADVENTURERS' HALL

Normally a bustling place to meet other mercenaries, the adventurers' hall has been closed temporarily by Lady Elara's decree. She suspected the involvement of adventurers in the gnoll raids. Now, all fighting people are sent directly to the keep to receive instructions from her.

7. BRILSHIRE LIBRARY

Characters can research the history of the Amber Expanse, heraldry, and local wildlife at the library. Each day of research yields a piece of information valuable for their quests in the realm (DC 12 INT check, per day).

8. KEEP'S BAILEY

Beyond the main gate, a closed bailey, surrounded by watchtowers spells a deathly trap for would-be invaders. The walls are 25 feet tall and feature murder-holes and crenelations with mounted crossbows and oil cauldrons.

9. KEEP'S COURTYARD

Artisans and nobles have their residences and sites of work here. Councilor David Clint lives in one of the small manors. Few people, corrupt and loyal to him, know that there is a secret tunnel that leads to the docks.

10. BRILSTONE KEEP

The characters are admitted to Brilstone Keep along with three other mercenaries (**thugs**) for a private audience with Lady Elara Windrider. The noblewoman explains her suspicions of an inside job to allow the gnolls into the city. Lady Elara informs the party of the hooded suspect seen by the docks. She commands the characters to investigate the city and find evidence.

There is a 3-in-6 chance the characters spot Councilor David Clint in the keep, before the audience. He uses a cane to walk because of a horse-riding injury years ago.

OUSTING THE COUNCILOR

The evidence found in the Town's Docks is enough to convince Lady Elara Windrider that Councilor David Clint is a traitor to the realm. She commands the characters to break into his residence in the courtyard and take him into custody. The three **thugs** (see area 10), four **guards**, and the characters, are sent to do this. The court wizard, Harveng (**apprentice**), is summoned to aid the characters in arresting Councilor Clint.

The councilor's small manor is the image of opulence and decadence. It is truly the abode of someone who has taken every advantage of his position of power to enrich himself beyond the commoner's imagination.

Councilor David Clint (**peasant**), four **guards**, and two ravenous **gnoll brutes** are in the manor hall. The councilor would become the ruler of Brilshire if Lady Elara failed to protect the city from the gnolls. Even when confronted directly, Councilor Clint remains confident and calm that he will assuredly rise to rule the city. He believes that the massive gnolls' presence tips the scale in his favor. Alas, if the battle turns south, the councilor attempts to leave the manor through the secret tunnel to the docks where his ship awaits him.

Arresting, killing, or driving off Councilor Clint earns the friendship of Lady Elara. She rewards the characters with 400 gp (4 XP) and a promise of land and titles if they aid the realm with the cursed gnoll threat.



JOURNEY THROUGH THE AMBER PLAINS

“You must spear through the plains of our realm and reach our brothers in Grambury. You must not fail, we are counting on your heroic resolve”.

Lady Elara

The Amber Expanse plains stretch out in golden waves, a once serene landscape now marred by the threat of gnom attacks. The Regal Road, a vital trade artery, runs parallel to the sparkling Sapphire River, connecting Brilshire in the north to Grambury in the south. This route, crucial for exporting and importing goods, has become perilous as the gnolls have seized most settlements, threatening the future of the expanse. Travelers now face constant danger, with ambushes and raids turning the once peaceful journey treacherous. Despite the threats, brave caravans still traverse the road, desperate to keep the lifeline between the two cities alive. The gnolls' presence has cast a shadow over the plains, challenging the resilience and courage of all who dare to journey through.

THE EXPEDITION

IN BRILSHIRE, THE heroes gather in dimly lit taverns and bustling marketplaces, piecing together rumors and firsthand accounts of gnom activity. They consult with local leaders, including Lady Elara Windrider, and pore over maps marked with recent attacks. Armed with this knowledge, they set out on an expedition across the treacherous plains, their mission clear. They aim to reach Grambury while scouting the ruins of attacked settlements for valuable intelligence on the gnolls. Their objectives include recovering the remains and valuables of fallen leaders, and, most critically, searching for survivors and providing guidance and refuge to the displaced.

The checkpoints toward Grambury are Green Halls, the Amber Plateau, and Mudfoot River. But looking closely at the maps, the heroes notice smaller locations like Brownleaf Tavern and Merchants' Pass.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

SEVERAL QUESTS AND jobs may be taken in Brilshire. The heroes have the option to do all of the following:

► **Main Mission.** The heroes are hired by Lady Elara Windrider to transport supplies, food, and the due taxes to Grambury. Three civilians are in charge of the large cart and must reach Grambury safe too. The heroes are lent a horse each. All the steeds belong to Ragan Stormhead, the best breeder in the expanse (600 gp, 5 XP).

► **Guards.** The heroes accept to escort a merchant caravan from Brilshire to Grambury. Felligris, the elf who owns the four fully loaded carts, travels with six men, two women, and four cargo mules (100 gp, 1 XP).

► **Other.** Each area the characters visit features more NPCs and people in need. The heroes may meet new allies, obtain more gold, and earn a greater reputation throughout their journey. Some people happily surrender their jewelry or little gold they have left for a chance to a safe passage to Grambury. Alternatively, they can also consider raiding a gnom's camp themselves or even retrieve a battle trophy to boost the caravan's morale.

► **Family Business.** The retired **knight** (with half HP) hired the heroes to rescue his daughter. He is willing to accompany them on this journey as long as they promise to visit Fallstead after reaching Grambury. Talks of monster vegetables make the man worry about her (150 gp, 3 XP). Additionally, Old Ginner's son, Adam, and Lady Elara's nephew, Eric, were both in Letterton when the gnolls attacked. The heroes are tasked to look for them and any other survivors. These jobs, however, cannot be part of the expedition toward Grambury (350 gp, 5 XP).

RANDOM EVENT

d6	Details
1	As the sun rises, the heroes are ambushed by four gnolls and one gnoll brute , forcing them into a swift and fierce skirmish.
2	A cloaked figure approaches the group at night, it is a woman (acolyte). She wishes to travel with the group and offers her help.
3	The heroes stumble upon a wrecked caravan next to Regal Road, its goods scattered and survivors hiding, greatly needing an escort to safety. It takes half a day to repair the carts so they can travel again. Ten more peasants join the southbound expedition.
4	While resting by the river, a skiff approaches. Eight gnolls , one gnoll brute , and four gnoll skirmishers jump off and attack.
5	A sudden and violent storm strikes as the heroes traverse the Amber Expanse, testing their survival skills and forcing them to seek shelter in a nearby cave (DC 15 WIS). On a fail, all members of the expedition have disadvantage on their next check.
6	The heroes see a desperate man (guard), the only survivor of a scouting party. He needs to eat and rest but can help and fight.



Level 2 Region

► **Regal Road.** A vital artery of commerce that stretches alongside the Sapphire River, linking Brilshire to Grambury. The road now lies perilously close to gnoll-occupied territories. Despite the danger, this well-paved route remains crucial for trade and communication.

► **Sapphire River.** Renowned for its clear blue waters, this stream winds gracefully through the Amber Expanse, nourishing the land and its inhabitants.

► **Events.** Traveling the expanse has become perilous since the gnolls took over, with ambushes and raids turning them into treacherous passages. Travelers face constant threats from lurking gnoll scouts and traps, making every journey a gamble with their lives. Check for a **Random Event** (see above) each time the heroes travel from one place to another, or if they commit imprudent acts like traveling during nighttime (4-in-6 chance).

THE DESTROYED TOWNS

GREEN HALLS

Once a serene haven of lush gardens and elegant elven architecture now stands in haunting silence. The grand elven structures, with their intricate designs and graceful arches, are crumbling, cloaked in a sad stillness.

► **Refugees.** Hidden in the ruins are scared survivors in makeshift shelters. They offer all they have (147 gp worth of coins and jewelry) in exchange for safe passage. If the party accepts, nine **peasants** join the caravan.

► **Encounter.** The heroes must fight and get rid of the gnolls occupying the area to save the survivors. There are eight **gnolls**, three **gnollish hyenas**, two **gnoll skirmishers**, and one **gnoll brute** surveying the area.

► **Allies.** Six **elf** rangers and one **druid** join the fight in the second round of combat. They are glad to see friendly faces that can bolster their resistance.

► **Outcome.** The elves refuse to leave their home even though they are grateful to the characters for their help. However, an **elf** warrior wishes to join them, Thialin.

AMBER PLATEAU

The great plateau, known for its golden fields and landscapes, is now marred by scorched earth and crude gnoll encampments. Jagged rocks and makeshift barricades line the pathways toward the Amber Mountain.

► **Scouting.** It is too dangerous to delve into the ravaged town without a decent military force. The destroyed settlement is now the entry path to the gnoll's main hideout, the dormant volcano. The heroes can take advantage of this opportunity to gather crucial intelligence for Duke Alaric Stormrider in Grambury, who prepares for war.

► **Outcome.** High risks, high rewards. The heroes' investigation grants them the locations of outposts, mostly accurate numbers of the gnolls' camps and troops, and a possible route to take in open warfare for conquest. However, the gnolls' scouts spot the intruders' caravan and their large group of travelers with ease.

CHASE SCENE PROCEDURE

The real challenge begins when the heroes hear distant war horns and see more than two hundred hyena-folk approach. The gnolls are so numerous that the only option for survival is to get on the carts and flee south. The caravan outruns the foot soldiers but the mounted gnolls and hyenas can still pursue. This chase lasts from the bifurcation near the Amber Plateau to Mudfoot River. For this skill challenge, consider the following:

1. One of the heroes must lead the way and shout orders (DC 12 INT/CHA). If the party has already a designed leader, roll with advantage.
2. Another hero is in charge of the main cart or wagon. Using every muscle in their body to drive the horses at high speed (DC 12 STR).
3. A skirmisher shall repel enemies that get too close. Roll three separate ranged attacks (AC 13).
4. A hero must act be the tank of the caravan on the rear. Roll three separate melee attacks (AC 12).
5. The most perceptive hero must keep their eyes open for large boulders, holes, gnoll traps, and avoid a couple of gnoll barricades (DC 12 WIS).
6. Lastly, the heroes may make use of a weaving banner or flag, play war drums or horns, and try to intimidate their enemies (DC 12 CHA).

CHASE DEVELOPMENT

The heroes reach their destination regardless of their results, however, each check failed translates into the loss of 10% of their food, gold taxes, supplies, and even refugees. For the melee and ranged attacks, they must succeed in at least two out of the three rolls made. This means that they could lose up to 60% of their caravan.

MUDFOOT RIVER

The former agriculture hub is now a desolate ghost town. The gnolls' raid left only smoke and debris.

► **Enemies.** The last obstacle of this journey. There are four **gnolls**, four **gnoll skirmishers**, and two **gnoll brutes** occupying the wrecked town. They must be dealt with to protect the smaller settlements to the south.

MUDFOOT CRAGS

This is a natural barrier with its steep, jagged terrain. The crags are a perilous route for any traveler.

MERCHANTS' PASS

This small settlement serves as a crucial checkpoint for trade caravans. Its cozy inns offer respite and commerce. The gnolls' invasion has not yet reached this place.

ORCHID HAMLET

Known for its blooming flower fields and serene atmosphere, this tiny thorp offers a tranquil haven amidst the turmoil. It has remained untouched by the gnolls.

GRAMBURY

The heroes reach their destination at last. They either arrive as triumphant heroes or as traumatized survivors. Duke Alaric welcomes them and appreciates their help nonetheless. The war against the gnolls is coming...

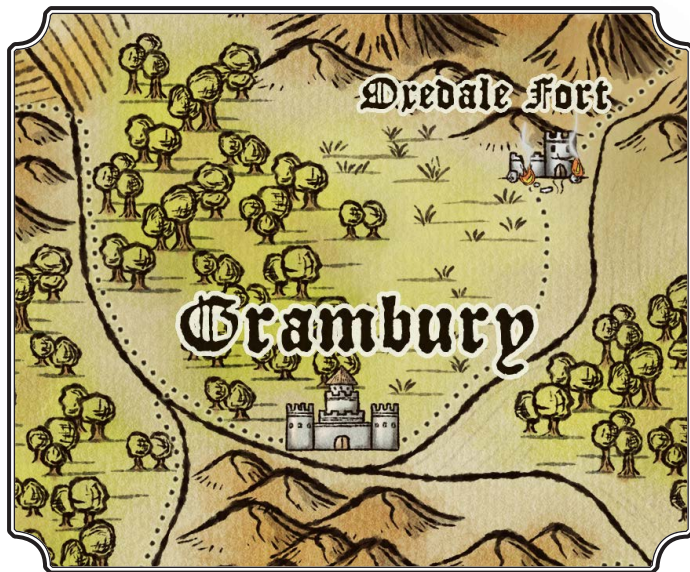


GRAMBURY

“Fear not, my brothers, for Grambury shall not fall! The blood of heroes flows through our veins. The hell-spawn hyenas shall not storm our proud walls.”

Duke Alaric Stormrider

The capital of the Amber Expanse, Grambury, is ruled by Duke Alaric Stormrider. He is the descendant of great warriors but has yet to try his blade in a true battle. After decades of relative peace, the gnolls threaten to be more than he can manage. Still, resolute to prove to his kin and subjects his valor, Duke Stormrider is slowly moving the machine of war to prepare an army. He believes that hiding behind their walls is a cowardly approach. The duke wants to march into the Amber Mountain caverns and root out the evil of gnolls once and for all. Growing his numbers is not easy as hundreds of his subjects have died in gnoll raids; their towns torched and left destroyed. The characters’ arrival from Brilshire with trade goods, refugees from the destroyed towns, and the northern tithes breathes hope into the duke’s plans. He believes that swift expeditions to local dungeons may prove useful too.



Level 2-3 Settlement

► **Special Events.** Check for a **Random Event** in every other area the characters visit (3-in-6 chance).

► **Economy.** Grambury’s most profitable endeavors are tanned hides, leather products, and ironwork. Trade cycles through barges and caravans with settlements downstream are taxed well and provide good income.

► **Gnoll Raids.** Since the fall of Oxedale Fort five days ago, gnoll guerrilla packs have attacked the city walls three times. A few guards have been caught by the gnoll skirmishers’ arrows but the attackers have been successfully repelled. The tall walls are an impassable deterrent.

1. GUILD OF MERCHANTS

All merchant caravans are thoroughly inspected by the duke’s tax-men and the guild of merchants. The guild collects a 2% due for all trade transactions in Grambury.

► **Reward (2 XP).** If the characters arrive in Grambury escorting merchants and the tradesmen speak highly of the characters’ deeds. The guild pays a reward of 120 gp for their valuable services protecting the caravan.

2. HOUSE OF WORSHIP

A crudely carved effigy of a tall, slender woman holding a vase is the figure of adoration in this church. The entity is known as Yenna. She is the goddess of the sun and verdant prairies and is revered by most humanoid ancestries in the Amber Expanse. High Priestess Marcille recently decreed that the gnolls are hell-spawn and that their eradication constitutes no crime, nor carries any penance. The priestess, through the use of divination magic, detected that the gnoll chieftain has bolstered his army through a cursed pact with a demonic entity.

RANDOM EVENT

d6

Details

- 1 Four men (**thugs**) from Mudfoot River, traumatized by the horrible ordeal of the gnoll attack that killed everyone they knew, slowly descend into insanity. The four thugs become aggressive and start attacking passers-by and other pariahs from the north.
- 2 Eight **gnolls** and four **gnoll skirmishers** swim covertly and manage to infiltrate the city from the southeast. They move toward Grambury Hall killing innocents and setting buildings on fire. The characters are aided by six **guards** and two **soldiers**.
- 3 Thick mist covers the land one morning. The duke orders all fighting people to man the walls and prepare for an attack.
- 4 A survivor from Letterton arrives in town claiming that many survivors still hide near the ruins of Letterton.
- 5 City guards parade a caged gnoll, caught on a night patrol, through the streets. The bloodthirsty beast is stoned to death.
- 6 A wealthy merchant wants to visit Fallstead but he plans to take the long way through the Ashen Pass, because of the gnolls.

Grambury

Seat of Duke Alaric Stormrider



1. Guild of Merchants
2. House of Worship
3. Sword-Sellers Hall
4. Grambury Docks
5. Sir Laniston Home
6. Ruby Prospectors
7. Red Flag Couriers
8. Dire Pumpkins Farm
9. Nobles' Courtyard
10. Grambury Hall



3. SWORD-SELLERS HALL

The adventurer's guild is a hub for would-be adventurers and mercenaries. It is managed by Aerens, an elf scholar and mage. Aerens is affiliated with Duke Stormrider and has promised to sway the mercenaries' to join the war effort at a discounted price. All for the chance to earn glory and perhaps the option to acquire lands in Grambury.

To be admitted, the characters must sign a contract stipulating their affiliation to the duke. This allows them to board at the hall and access two starter missions:

► **The Green Threat (5 XP).** Ralph, the owner of Dire Pumpkin Farm, revealed that his daughter stole magical fertilizer and moved to Fallstead to start a business. Now there are rumors of flesh-eating pumpkins scourging the area. The guild offers 400 gp to stop her.

► **The Harp (0 XP).** A dungeon to the north known only as the Strings of Peace remains the dream of would-be plunderers. An old legend speaks of a mythical stringed instrument that has the power to calm down even the most unruly beast. It could be useful in the coming war.

4. GRAMBURY DOCKS

Most vessels have been anchored at the piers for a few weeks as sailing toward Brilshire is too dangerous because prowling, feral gnolls have attacked many ships.

► **Sailing (5 XP).** A wealthy merchant of silk and spices wants to reach Brilshire to leave the realm and sell his goods. The opulent man offers the characters 600 gp to safely escort him to Brilshire through the river.

5. SIR LANISTON HOME

A renowned **knight** in Grambury Hall, Sir Laniston, has an oath of allegiance to Duke Alaric. The knight has been ordered to delve into the Forsaken Ossuary to finally unearth the hidden wealth or power that many have sought to retrieve. Alas, the knight might soon find his fate.

► **Dark Secret.** Sir Laniston was cursed by a witch a decade ago. Since then, he must eat raw meat and drink blood to stay alive, something he has kept a secret. The witch's last words to him were: "A *gnoll* chieftain by the name of *Gnashra* shall raid these lands. On his blood you must bathe, and only that shall set you free".

6. RUBY PROSPECTORS

Ten gnomes work here. They run a prospecting and mining company that is currently frozen since access to the mountain range is too dangerous because of the gnolls. Valrug Walketig is in charge of the Ruby Prospectors.

► **Important Data (3 XP).** Valrug explains that his latest prospecting reports are in Oxedale Fort, to the north. His associates, six gnome friends of his are presumed dead after the fort fell to gnoll attacks. But Valrug offers 200 gp for retrieving his team's remains and journal. Valrug says that the journal must be in the fort's vault since the duke allowed Valrug to make use of it for protection.

7. RED FLAG COURIERS

Owned by a halfling businessman named Tarlan, the Red Flag Couriers are a team of halfling messengers, mailmen, and coureurs des bois. Business has slowed down to a crawl because the Amber Expanse on this side of the Amber Mountain has become a truly dangerous place.

► **Diversification.** With the goal of staying on the duke's good side, three halflings (**peasants**) are willing to join the characters as scouts and porters. Tarlan spends his time choosing the best headline for such an effort.

8. DIRE PUMPKIN FARM

This farm features enormous pumpkins, some as large as a stagecoach; and apple trees with fruits as large as dogs, hanging by the floor from the weight. The owner, Ralph, is a botanist and an alchemist who specializes in growing oversized produce. He also sells watered-down variants of his alchemical fertilizers to farmers and gardeners. His daughter, Fiona, stole away a few months ago with the recipe for the high-end fertilizer. Somewhat disappointed in her behavior, Ralph heard that she set up shop in Fallstead to run a similar business as her father. Alas, word on the street is that flesh-eating produce has become a veritable threat.

► **Family Legacy (3 XP).** Ralph inherited a *+1 longsword* from his father, who once was a great soldier. He offers this heirloom to the characters in exchange for helping Fiona deal with the overgrown, aggressive produce so that she can keep doing what she does in peace.

9. NOBLES' COURTYARD

A small citadel behind the tall castle walls enjoys the most protected location in Grambury. Blacksmiths, artisans, nobles, and court followers stay here. Many of these nobles are from Brilshire and meant to only visit. They have been stranded here for over a week.

► **Sailing Home (4 XP).** A pleasure barge has been readied for the eight nobles to return to Brilshire. They offer 350 gp to the characters to escort them home after hearing of their valiant arrival from the north plains.

10. GRAMBURY HALL

The characters' journey through the plains from Brilshire is noted by the nobles and catches the attention of Duke Alaric Stormrider. The duke promptly sends envoys to summon the characters to an audience in Grambury Hall. The characters are given ample accommodations and a chance to eat, bathe, rest, and get ready for the audience. The castle's chamberlain, an elf named Terathiel, is at the characters' disposal to tend to their needs. Fine attire is provided if the characters do not have it.

► **The Audience.** Terathiel brings the characters to a large audience hall. At the far end, a large dais with a throne-like seat rests. Duke Alaric Stormrider sits on the throne; an ornate, sheathed greatsword leans on the seat's armrest. The duke wastes no time to congratulate the party for their valor and resolve as so few people dare use the Regal Road since the gnolls prowl the realm. He inquires about Lady Elara and is concerned about the recent attacks in Brilshire.

► **Expedition Funding (6 XP).** The duke informs the characters of the war preparations and his plan to march to the Amber Mountain. He expects the characters to be there too. But now, the duke is interested in retrieving two powerful artifacts. One is a magical harp that is said to be hidden in a dungeon southwest of Brilshire. The place is known as the Strings of Peace as some runes in the entrance read so. The second artifact is the fabled blade of a long-gone ancestor of his. This blade is said to vanquish evil. Legend says it is in the Forsaken Ossuary. The duke offers 500 gp to retrieve each item for the war.



Hereditary Wickedness

Here rest the valiant Fey Knights, whose spirits guard the threshold between worlds.

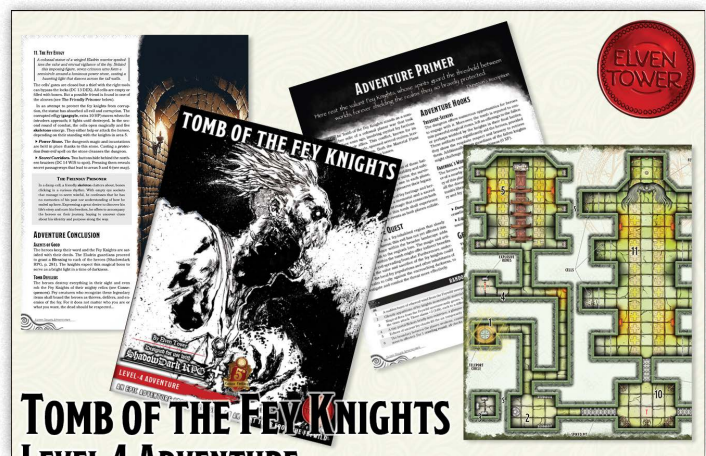
Featured Product



In *Tomb of the Fey Knights*, the characters take a short detour from the points of interest in El-Un-ore Reaches and visit a place rumored to be the resting place of valiant warriors of an intraplanar war long ago. The characters have heard that there may be mighty magic artifacts in the tomb. Or else, the possibility to earn a blessing or boon from the strange, forsaken ghosts.

In this perilous adventure, the characters visit the tomb and soon realize that most of the spirits remain passive thanks to a marvelous effigy that has absorbed the evil that assails the region. If the characters agree, they must seek the main tomb and cleanse the statue from evil by destroying the possessed spirit within. Are the characters brave enough to do this?

This adventure is published for the D&D 5e and Shadowdark systems. Pick your game of choice and have fun exploring amazing adventures!



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FANGS IN THE GRASS

“We’ve hidden here for days but the gnolls are out there in the tall grass. The cursed hyenas move like wolves, prowling unseen before pouncing for the kill.”

Eric Windrider

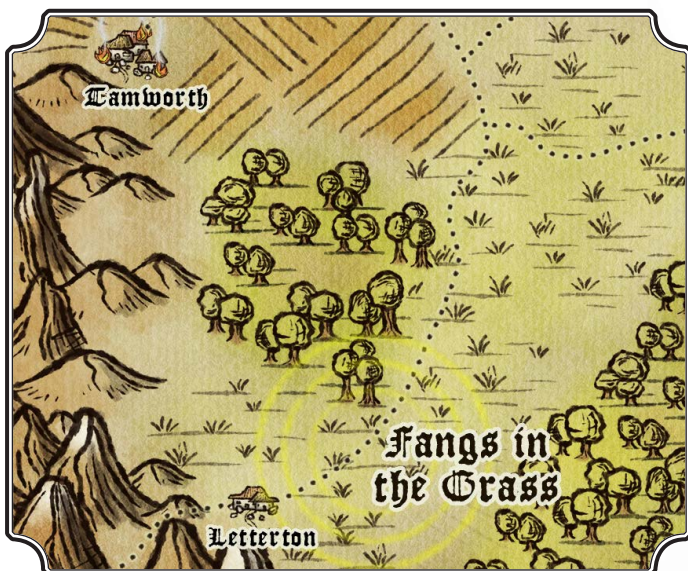
The small town of Letterton was raided by gnolls a week ago; charred remains and a few stone foundations are all that remain. However, refugees escaped to a farmstead half a mile away, fifteen of them. The area is surrounded by tall grass and wheat plantations. Gnashra ordered his gnolls to dig tunnels around the area to employ the hiding villagers as bait for whoever dares to rescue them.

ADVENTURE HOOK

► **Rescuers.** Lady Elara’s nephew and Old Ginner’s son are the targets. After witnessing what became of Letterton, the heroes follow the tracks available and reach the small farmstead where the survivors hide. Adam, the old knight’s son, and his children are inside. Sadly, Adam’s wife perished in Letterton’s raid. Eric Windrider, the lady’s nephew, is alive but in critical condition. He lost a leg and may succumb to his wounds unless he receives medical attention soon or if he is healed by magic (4 XP).

Level 2-3 Encounter

► **Tall Grass.** The farm is covered in 6-foot tall grass; the wheat plantations are of similar height. It hinders movement and reduces visibility. In addition, the gnolls use it to move closer to their prey and attack. Burning the grass deals a ruinous strike against the gnolls but may cause the death of the villagers (see **Prowling Gnolls**).



PROWLING GNOLLS

The ravenous gnolls have waited for days for someone to come. The ravenous gnolls are fearsome warriors but also act erratically and impulsively; it is their nature.

There are four **gnolls** in random locations on the map, hidden under the tall grass. Two **gnoll skirmishers** rest in the narrow tunnels below (see area 4). A **gnoll brute** sits behind the farmhouse. It is too large to get in the tunnels and taller than the grass. It awaits for a conflict to begin before coming out of its makeshift hiding place.

Encounter. Both parties, the characters and the gnolls, start hidden from each other. During the first **crawling round** of exploration, they roll an opposed DEX check to move silently. The gnolls roll with advantage because of the tall grass, unless the characters first circle around the house and spot the large gnoll brute. The characters roll with advantage too if they move through the tall grass. If, instead, they move through the narrow path (area 1), they make the check with no advantage. The group with the best result ambushes their opponents. The frenzied gnolls fight fiercely to the death.

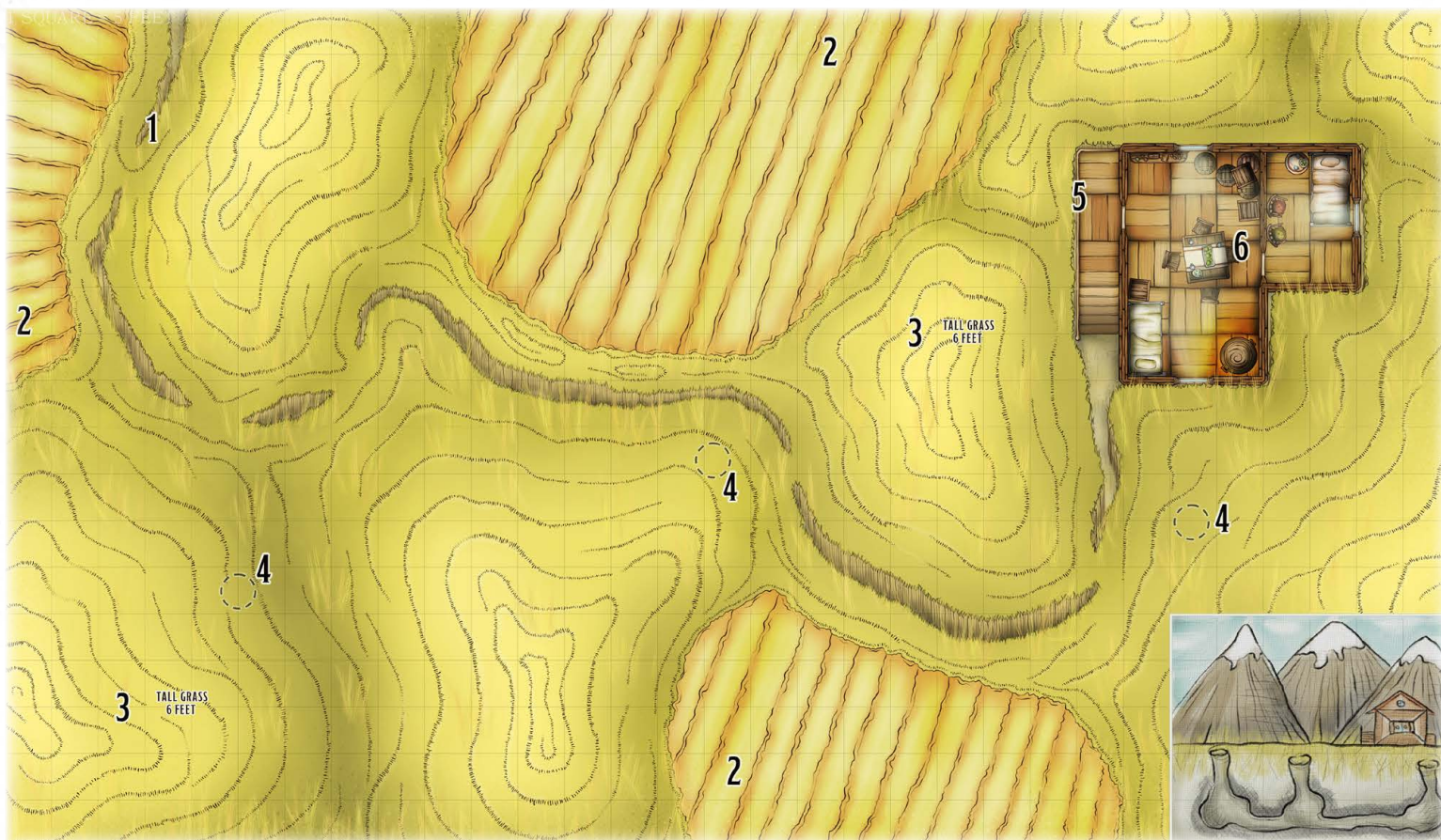
Fire. Flames spread fast in this area and cover the farmland in fiery flames in seconds. Creatures in the area take 2d6 damage per round of exposure while it burns. This might kill most gnolls at once. Alas, it also burns the house and kills everyone hiding inside.

1. NARROW PATH

The road from Letterton, marked with the footprints of the few survivors of the raid, leads to this plantation. The unkempt farm is covered by 6-foot tall grass but a slithering, 3-foot-wide path meanders through the area and reaches the farmhouse (areas 5 and 6). From afar, the characters see smoke emerging from the house’s chimney but no one can be seen from here. If the characters shout or call out to the house, the gnolls become aware of their presence and set up for an ambush.

2. WHEAT PLANTATIONS

The wheat has been ripe for harvest for a week but the plantation remains untouched. Due to the row pattern of the wheat stalks, it is easier to spot creatures located in this area if both creatures’ locations follow the linear pattern of the plantation. The gnolls avoid these areas.



3. GRASS FIELDS

Characters moving through the grass have advantage in DEX checks to move unseen (see **Prowling Gnolls**). Four **gnolls** hide in random locations of these fields. All gnolls are aware of any character who engages in open combat. Characters in other areas remain hidden. Retreating from combat to hide is possible but requires a DC 18 DEX check. The heroes momentarily outrun the gnolls and hide in the tall grass once more.

► **Exploration.** Inspecting the grass fields for 1 **crawling round** reveals the presence of hyena-folk droppings and the three entrances to the underground tunnels.

4. THE TUNNELS

Three holes are hidden in the grass fields. The narrow burrows descend 15 feet and are interconnected by tunnels. The tunnels are 5-foot-tall: the gnolls crawl on all fours to move around. Two **gnoll skirmishers** rest here. If the gnoll skirmishers are alerted, they crawl to the tunnel entrance near the house, climb to the roof, and use their bows to snipe the characters moving through the area (disadvantage if the characters are in the tall grass).

If the characters descend without being detected, they find the two gnoll skirmishers sleeping. They can be slain in their sleep without alerting any others.

► **Treasure (3 XP).** Spoils of war, taken from Letterton and hidden in the tunnels. A leather bag contains 300 gp, 840 sp, a *potion of healing*, and a silver quiver (50 gp).

5. HOUSE SURROUNDINGS

Knocking on the front door or calling out for someone alerts the **gnoll brute** behind the house. He attempts to jump onto the porch and attack whoever is there.

► **Windows.** If a character looks into the south window, they see Ginner's son, Adam, accompanied by a dozen more survivors. Adam tries to alert the character non-verbally of the gnoll brute's presence on the north side of the house. Through the east window, a character can see Eric agonizing in the bed with a missing leg and a badly bandaged, bloodstained stump. A middle-aged peasant woman cleans his brow with a wet rag.

6. FARMHOUSE

Fifteen people have endured the close proximity and hunger in this place for a week. They are malnourished but have subsisted by rationing barreled wine.

The Wounded. Eric Windrider is in a critical state. Healing magic can restore him on the spot. Otherwise, only a doctor can clean his gruesome leg wound (DC 18 INT). If Eric (**peasant**), survives the ordeal, he must be escorted back to his aunt in the city of Brilshire.

Adam (2 XP). After the battle, Adam arranges for his children and the other peasants to be transported to Grambury. A good friend offers to care for the children for a few weeks. Adam (**thug**) is overcome by grief over his diseased wife. He wishes to join the characters and his father in whatever path leads to slaying gnolls.

In ancient glade where moonlight weaves,
A harp of gold in twilight breathes.
Forged by fey in mystic night,
Its strings imbued with stars' own light.

Its melodies, a subtle siren's call,
Could calm the rage and tears forestall.
The fiercest hearts, by sorrow worn,
In music's spell were gently borne.

By elfin hands it once was played,
Now lost in time, in twilight's shade.

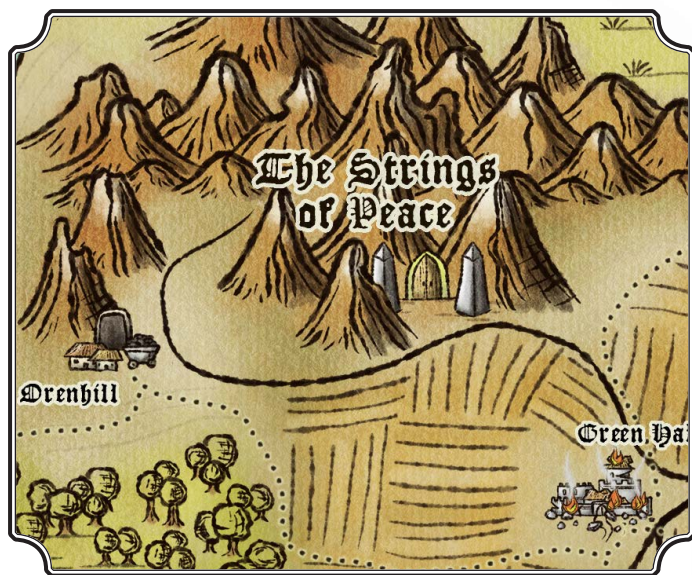


STRINGS OF PEACE

“A celestial harp of golden chords resonates with the power to heal and harmonize. Its melodies hold the key to tranquility, serenity, and calm”.

Dungeon's Inscription

Nestled deep within the heart of the Amber Expanse, this unexplored location in the northern mountains is shrouded in mystery and ancient magic. Eons ago, the dungeon was once the grand sanctum of Lyrianth, a powerful elven mage and bard who sought to harness the harmonizing power of music to bring lasting tranquility to the land. Centuries ago, Lyrianth crafted the *Strings of Peace*, a magical harp said to possess the ability to calm the fiercest storms, numb the strongest feelings, and even soothe the hearts of brutal warriors. To protect this powerful artifact from falling into the wrong hands after his passing, he hid it deep within a magically-warded dungeon, surrounded by intricate traps and enchanted guardians. Over time, the precise location of Lyrianth's sanctum was lost to history, but vague rumors and ancient tales continue to surface among scholars and adventurers.



RUMORS

SOME SPEAK OF a hidden entrance near a secluded grove, marked by ancient runes and guarded by mystical creatures. Others mention spectral melodies heard on moonlit nights, believed to be the lingering essence of Lyrianth's enchanting music. The dungeon itself is said to be an artificial compound of arcane origin. It was filled with enchanted puzzles and trials designed to test the worthiness of any who dared seek the *Strings of Peace*.

ADVENTURE HOOK

► **The Artifact.** Curiosity and the promise of a great treasure may draw the heroes to this enigmatic dungeon. Only those with keen minds, brave hearts, and pure intentions shall stand a chance of unlocking the true potential of the powerful *Strings of Peace* and bringing its harmonious magic back to the Amber Expanse (0 XP).

Level 3 Dungeon

► **Special Events.** Check for a **Random Event** every 2 crawling rounds and after loud noises (4-in-6 chance).

► **Demiplane.** The entrance and main door of the dungeon are the only things that exist in the Material Plane. Beyond its threshold, the characters travel to an artificial plane of existence. Within, the world outside cannot interact with the characters, and vice versa.

► **Secret Doors and Traps.** The letter 'S' (see map) shows where the heroes may spot hidden levers or buttons that reveal secret passageways (DC 12 WIS). The pitfall traps feature the letter 'T'. A perceptive character might see them before stepping on them (DC 15 WIS).

RANDOM EVENT

d6

Details

- 1 The heroes hear hauntingly beautiful melodies. The ominous music confuses their senses (DC 12 CHA). On a fail, the heroes have disadvantage on their next check or attack. Failing by 5 or more makes them violent with their allies for 2 rounds.
- 2 The heroes encounter two **animated armors**. The immortal guardians attack immediately and cannot be reasoned with.
- 3 A swinging blade descends from the tall ceiling and strikes a random hero (DC 12 DEX, on a fail they take 1d10 damage).
- 4 The heroes disturb a nest of arachnid insects. The **swarm of spiders** attacks intruders but flees if reduced to half its Hit Points.
- 5 The heroes enter a new room within the dungeon and see four **skeletons** standing before them. The undead feature canine skulls. A perceptive hero realizes they are gnolls (DC 9 INT) — Former dungeon delvers who met their end here, perhaps.
- 6 A hidden pressure plate is pressed. Poison darts hit everyone (DC 9 CON). On a fail, their next check has disadvantage.

Strings of Peace



1. DUNGEON'S ENTRANCE

An ornately carved stone door covered in ancient elven runes. As the heroes push it open and cross, they are enveloped by a shimmering aura, feeling as though they are being pulled through a vortex of time and space.

2. ANTECHAMBER

This area, bathed in a soft, golden light, features a beautifully crafted shrine adorned with delicate carvings dedicated to the gods of music and art.

Intricate mosaics depicting legendary bards and musicians line the walls, while a serene, melodic hum fills the air, inviting reflection, meditation, and reverence.

► **Shrine.** The heroes may spend 1 **crawling round** meditating to be granted a magical boon. They have advantage on their next check made within the dungeon.

3. HIDDEN CELL

The characters must fall from area 4 or find the lever that reveals this area to enter (see **Secret Doors and Traps**).

► **Cell.** Creatures that fall from the pitfall trap in area 4 take 1d8 damage. A **zombie** in the cell attacks any living creatures that fall with it. The cell's door can be easily opened by anyone but only from the outside.

► **Treasure (2 XP).** A chest in a corner contains 287 gp, a pair of shiny pearls in a lock-box (90 gp), an oil painting of a famous bard (85 gp), and one *potion of healing*.

4. MAIN HALL

This is a grand chamber with vaulted ceilings and ornate columns, illuminated by flickering magical sconces. A majestic elevator crafted from polished brass and enchanted wood stands at the far end, glowing with arcane energy. Two doors lead to different wings of the dungeon.

► **Trap.** Whoever fails to spot the trap and approaches falls 20 feet into the cell in area 3 (DC 12 DEX).

► **Elevator.** This magical platform magically ascends and descends at a slow pace. It is the only means to reach the upper level of the dungeon. However, the command word to activate it is hidden in area 5 (see below).

5. STUDIO

Several shelves filled to the brim with books, scrolls, and tomes are here. Spending 1 **crawling round** reading the documents reveals the elevator's command word. The search also unearths some scrolls (three random Tier-1 Wizard spells, and four random Tier-1 Priest spells).

6. OFFICE

This chamber features a wooden desk well-lit by a candle lamp. A subtle magic incantation fills this chamber with soft, lute, and harp music to ease one's work.

7. STORAGE

This chamber contains crates, boxes, and barrels. The bard wizard who created this place kept spices, dried meats, and other magically-preserved foods.

8. UPPER LEVEL

The upper level is an opulent chamber, adorned with tapestries depicting legendary musical feats. Artificial sunlight streams through stained glass windows, casting vibrant, shifting patterns on the stone floors. There is a beautiful stringed instrument on a pedestal. It is a trap.

► **Trap.** A person who fails to spot the trapdoor falls 30 feet into area 9 and takes 2d8 damage (DC 12 DEX).

9. ETERNAL GUARDIANS

Two **wights** attack anyone who falls from area 8. The objective of these undead guardians is to chastise those who tried to take the Lyriant's harp. The bones in the room shift and move in the second round of combat. Three **skeletons** attack intruders until destroyed.

10. CAVERN

The double door is adorned with musical notes, clouds in the shape of pentagrams, and harp-playing angels. It opens into a vast, dark cavern. Inside, a beautiful harp melody comes from each of the illusory harps placed on beautiful stone arcs.

The door's art, the dark cavern, and the melody are all a trick to fool intruders or would-be robbers. The source of the music is not the artifact they seek. It is a musical box that reproduces the same tune over and over.

► **Challenge.** When all the heroes cross the threshold and enter the cavern, the gate behind them shuts closed. Ten **darkmantles** descend from the dark ceiling. They extinguish any light source and fight until slain. The gate unlocks after the enemies are defeated.

11. STRINGS OF PEACE

A breathtaking sanctuary, illuminated by a soft, ethereal glow emanating from the ceiling. The beautiful golden-stringed harp rests on an intricately carved pedestal, radiating a serene and powerful aura.

The antechamber features dozens of musical instruments hung on the walls, a piano and silver bells.

► **Last Challenge.** The tapestries portray people performing with the beautiful harp as sole witness. It is easy to infer what they must do (DC 9 INT check). A character must play the instrument of their choice before the harp (DC 15 CHA). The right performance shall grant them the right to wield it. On a fail, or taking it by force summons a **clay golem** guardian. Defeating the guardian makes them worthy of the harp's power too.

Oxedale Fort



n the midsts of an inhospitable territory of sharp crags and mountainous paths is a fortress with a long history of war and violence. Oxedale Fort, north of the capital, is built on a rocky plateau. It patiently endures the inclement winds and erosion. North of this fort lies a mountain range with a dormant volcano, the Amber Mountain. This cursed place is connected through meandering tunnels to the uncharted underworld. Monsters of all kinds find their way to the surface and slowly crawl through the crags and chasms, threatening the peace and safety of the realm's peasantry. The valiant soldiers of Oxedale Fort have stood against these forces of evil in the past. The fort has always withstood attacks. But its walls, stained with the blood of hundreds of soldiers, could not hold back the demonic horde of gnolls.

A New Threat

A DEMONIC CULT of gnolls, hyena-folk, emerged from the dormant volcano a month ago. They have raided and torched many small farming settlements north of the capital. A week ago, the gnolls attacked Oxedale Fort and murdered everyone behind the sturdy walls. The ravenous, merciless gnolls now claim this fortress for their demon-summoning leader Gnashra. In the quiet of the night, wicked laughter pierces the untold silence as the gnolls plan their eventual march toward the capital. Alas, the gnoll chieftain must wait for a celestial alignment to occur. Bolstered by a demonic pact, Gnashra shall soon summon forth an evil entity into the Material Plane. The gnoll chieftain has used the dead's blood to paint execrated runes and circles in the old keep in Oxedale Fort. Soon, a demon shall be brought from its world of shadow and flames.

Adventure Hooks

- **For Glory.** For their valorous deeds, the characters are chosen to lead an attack on Oxedale Fort and retake the fortress from the demonic gnolls. Scouts report that the gnolls lack the discipline to hold the fort as their patrolling and guarding are lackluster; they dismount easily and do not keep a constant watch on the bridge. There are rumors of a vault in the old keep that may be filled with treasure.
- **Document Recovery.** A halfling prospector named Valrug offers 200 gp to recover a prospecting journal his associates left in the keep's vault. The halflings are presumed dead but Valrug cares for nothing but the journal.

Approaching the Fort

AFTER A 2-HOUR ride from the capital, the characters and their entourage reach the rocky, barren territory of the mountain range. Twenty soldiers are sent with the characters to retake the fort. These warriors follow the party's commands but may become demoralized if instructed to act carelessly.

A patrol of eight gnolls moves slowly through the crags, they hunt mountain hares and pay little attention to their surroundings. If the characters are stealthy, they can evade the gnolls and leave them behind without being spotted. Otherwise, a bloody battle ensues.



Random Events

Roll 1d6 for a random event in Oxedale Fort every 20 minutes.

1. Two **rust monsters** burst through a wall, hungry for the characters' metal armor.
2. A pulse from the old keep dispels auras and deactivates magic items for 10 min.
3. The floor quakes. To the north, black smoke spouts from the Amber Mountain.
4. Four **gnolls** approach after catching the party's smell. They are alert.
5. Hellish flames surround the old keep. The gnolls shall soon finish the ritual.
6. A **wyvern** flies above looking for prey. 3-in-6 chance it swoops down to attack.

1. The Bridge

The limestone bridge crosses a 40-foot-wide chasm and leads to the only gate into the fortress. Footprints and droppings of hyena-folk are present in the area.

2. Fort Gate

Four **gnolls** can be heard laughing atop the gatehouse as they play dice. The incompetent gnoll scouts are not aware of the characters' approach unless they are purposely noisy or reckless. The reinforced wooden doors are not locked. Instead, they are ajar. The characters can walk into the fort unimpeded.

3. Ramparts

The 20-foot tall walls are easy to climb. Apart from the gnolls on the gatehouse, there are six more inept **gnoll** scouts in the ramparts.

► **Time Vortex.** Within the walls, the buildings and land have aged, as if at least 100 years had passed. This time conflagration is the result of the demonic spells that the gnolls conduct. It only affects inanimate objects.

4. Courtyard

The anachronism caused by the time vortex (see area 3), has caused this area to be retaken by vegetation and erosion. The paths between buildings can still be discerned, though.

► **Remains.** Buried among dirt and rubble are the aged remains of the fort's garrison. The crumbling bones of twenty men and three halflings lie scattered across the courtyard. Due to the time vortex, only the most advanced resurrection magic can bring them back.

► **Combat.** If the characters are reckless, they attract the attention of all gnolls in areas 3, 5, and 6. A bloody melee ensues as the gnolls in area 7 attempt to finish the ritual.

5. Barracks

This building crumbles in its state of erosion and disrepair. Splinters litter its interior; all that remains of wooden items and furniture.

► **Treasure.** A skeleton keeps its grasp on a dusty blade. The sword is of great craftsmanship and magical. It is a +1 *longsword*.

6. Storage Room

This chamber is empty but for scattered splinters and metal fixtures. It was once a storage chamber and larder but it is empty.

7. The Old Keep

The floor and walls are painted with blood. The demonic runes speak of a narrow path between worlds; a way to summon a creature of great power into the world of mortals.

► **The Ritual.** Five **gnoll** celebrants chant and cackle in a bloody rune circle. The characters have 1 minute to interrupt their chanting. Otherwise, a **smoke-spouting demon** steps forth into the Material Plane, dooming the party's efforts. This entity of flames and smoke is a formidable opponent. Its hide is impervious to common weapons; harmed only by magic.

► **Guards.** The gnoll celebrants are guarded by twelve **gnolls** and four **hyenas**. They fight to the death to protect the evil summoners. If the celebrants are stopped in time, the rest of the hyena-folk becomes demoralized and flees.

8. The Vault

The vault, hidden under a floor slab, remains untouched. Its lock is a marvel of engineering that only dexterous locksmiths can pick.

► **Treasure.** A coffer with 300 gp, two *potions of healing*, six vials of poison, and *Valrug's Journal*. There is also an elvish quiver with six *slaying arrows*. They fly true and deal killing blows to extraplanar creatures.

Smoke-Spouting Demon



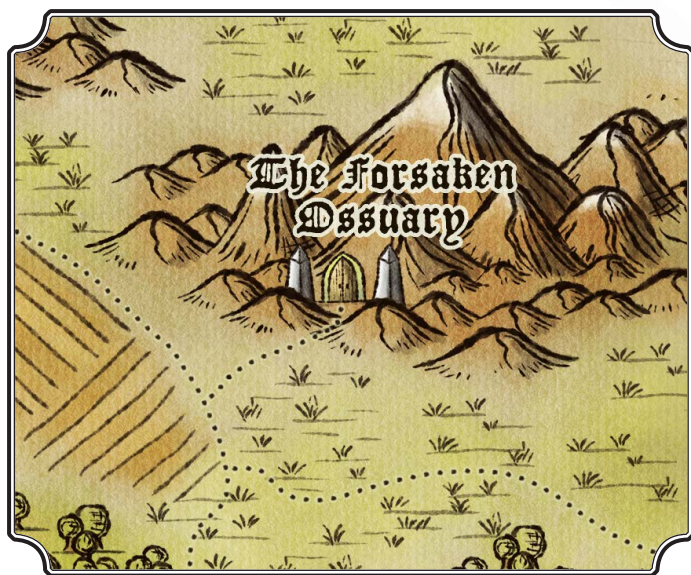
THE FORSAKEN OSSUARY

Here lie the honored remains of dozens of great warriors. They lived by the sword and found glory and eternal remembrance through death in battle.

Eroded Inscription

This ancient tomb, east of Fallstead, is the source of countless myths, stories, and cautionary tales. In modern times, few know of this burial site as it fell to disuse many generations ago due to its distance from the capital. The bones and ashes of a regiment of valiant soldiers, instrumental to winning a war that no one remembers, are buried in this dungeon. The regiment's commander, Sir Marlon Stormrider, occupies the place of honor in this tomb. Many stories speak of this hero and his fabled, legendary blade. This weapon artifact is a coveted treasure that many seek. Unfortunately, the blade was stolen a long time ago; but no one knows it is missing.

With determination and resolve, the valiant characters may yet find something of value in the restless tomb. As long as they are strong enough to resist its wards and guardians, they shall emerge victorious and stronger.



ADVENTURE HOOK

Stormrider Relic (3 XP). The duke, Alaric Stormrider, has sent the characters to this place to retrieve a fabled sword that belonged to one of his ancestors. The duke offers 500 gp for the retrieval of this family heirloom.

Level 3 Dungeon

► **Danger.** Unsafe. Check for a **Random Event** every 3 **crawling rounds** and after loud noises (3-in-6 chance).

► **Light.** Some rooms are lit by braziers with *light* spells, flame jets, or arcane barriers. The rest of the dungeon is in complete darkness. All denizens are **dark-adapted**.

► **Traps and Guardians.** All triggered traps or defeated monsters within the dungeon reform or reset at dawn.

1. HALL OF FIRE

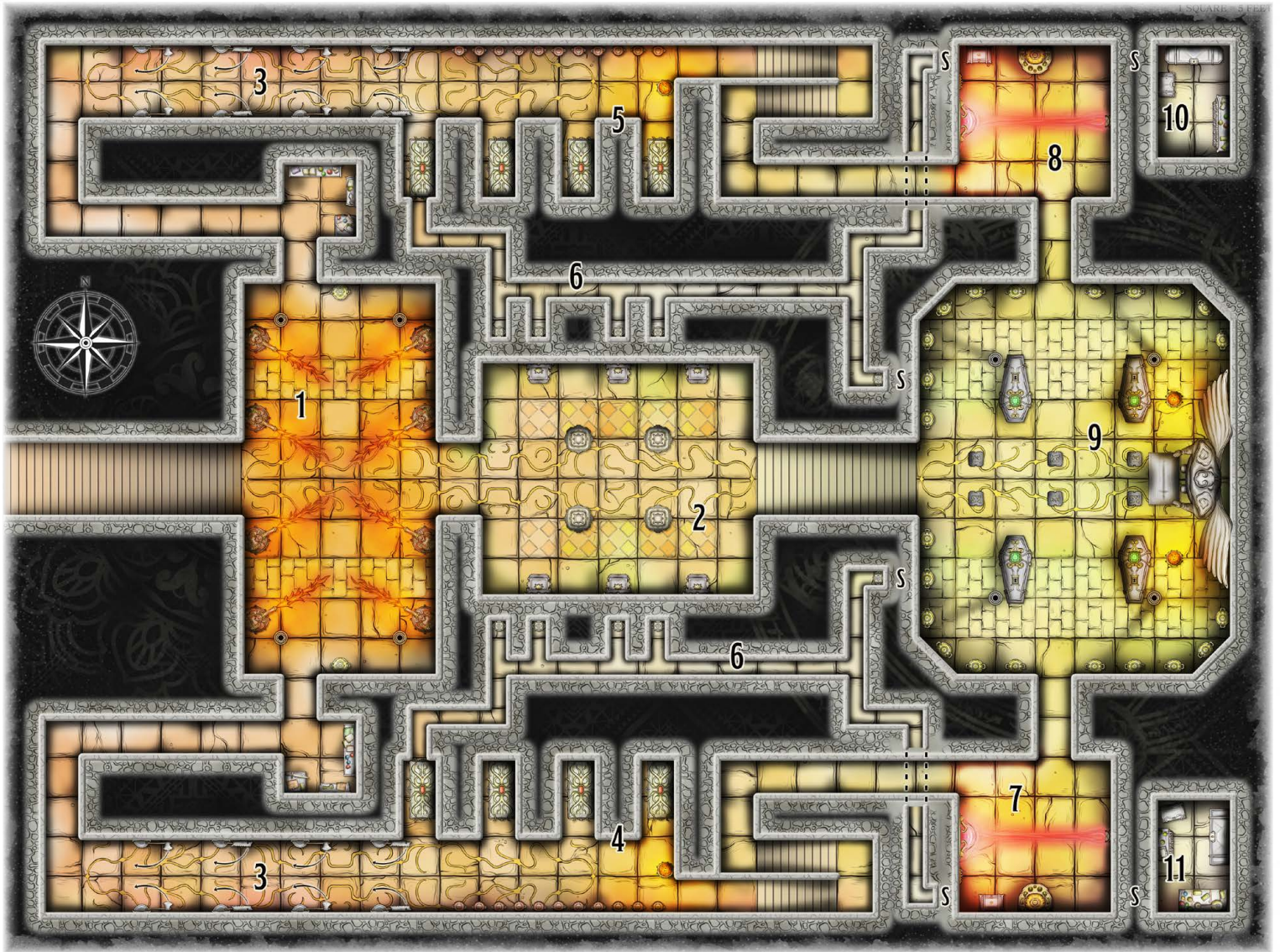
Eight clockwork machines spout thick jets of fire at random intervals. Scorched bones litter the chamber.

► **Remains.** If inspected closely, the remains are of humanoid origin; past adventurers that misstepped among the fire jets (DC 15 INT check). There are also metal fixtures from armor and clothing strewn about the room.

► **The Fire Engines.** Characters must move fast to reach any of the exits or be struck by the alchemical fire (2d6 damage, DC 12 DEX for half). Studying the fire pattern for 1 **crawling round** gives advantage when attempting to pass and prevents all damage on a success. A thief with the right tools may attempt to disable all the engines (DC 15 DEX). This stops the devices until dawn (see **Traps and Guardians**). A failure by 5 or more causes the engines to explode; 4d6 damage to the tinkerer.

RANDOM EVENT

d6	Details
1	Six skeletons wielding scimitars and a tattered banner approach the characters. The undead behave as if re-living a great battle from their past. The banner hints to which war (DC 12 INT), it was a conflict against elves that occurred a millennium ago.
2	One gnoll and two gnoll skirmishers arrive at the dungeon after tracking the characters for 1 day. They are hungry.
3	Dozens of translucent ghosts enter the dungeon. The ghosts drink and celebrate as if they had just succeeded in defeating a ruthless enemy. The ghosts do not react to the characters. They go to their resting places where they dissolve in ether.
4	Nature's laws change and all sound stops for 1d3 crawling rounds . Magic that requires talking or sound does not work.
5	A random character steps on a hidden pressure-plate triggers a swinging axe trap. They take 3d6 damage (DC 12 DEX).
6	The characters find mushrooms growing from a damp wall. They are edible and amount to 1d6 fresh rations.



2. OSSUARY OF CAMP FOLLOWERS

Several stone columns hug the walls and the center of the room. Each is dotted with countless compartments etched with fine runes and dated markings.

This room houses the remains of dozens of squires, camp-followers, and porters who accompanied Sir Marlon Stormrider's regiment in their missions. Many of them were of such low-born origin that they were unknown, even in their time. These compartments' markings only note a date of death and a few words of their deeds. Most ossuary drawers date back a millennium.

► **Restless Spirits.** The souls relish their solitude and eventless existence but they regard the characters' visit as a welcome respite. The friendly **ghosts** of 1d4 people emerge from their dwellings to ask questions to the party. Despite their interest, their undying existence grants them an aloofness that is hard to follow or ignore. These beings do not attack unless they are attacked first or if the valuables in the ossuary compartments are stolen.

► **Treasure (3 XP).** The compartments contain 195 gp, 840 sp, and a pouch with three rubies (80 gp each).

3. PASSAGE OF BLADES

Four sets of clockwork devices swing blades and axes rapidly. Half of them are at knee height, the rest are at chest height. Traversing this hallway is not difficult but does require some precision and patience (DC 12 DEX). Failure means the character is struck by one swinging blade and takes 1d8 damage, but they manage to cross.

► **Tinkering.** Inspecting the room for 1 **crawling round** reveals a control panel on the east wall. A character can use fine tools here to disable all blades (DC 12 DEX).

4. TOMB OF WARRIORS (SOUTH)

Eleven clay urns sealed with knotted rope stand in front of four ornate sarcophagi. The enclosures' lids feature fist-sized garnets and intricate silver inlays.

An aura of solitude and calm bathes this chamber. The spirits interred here departed to the eternal afterlife long ago. Thus, it is safe to inspect the burial containers.

► **Treasure (4 XP).** The enclosures contain only bones and ashes. The four garnets (50 gp each) and silver inlays (100 gp total) can be removed in 1 **crawling round**.

5. TOMB OF WARRIORS (NORTH)

This chamber is a mirrored version of area 4 except that an aura of desolate anxiety bathes this chamber. The spirits of those interred herein have not been able to find eternal rest. One of them materializes before the party.

► **Sir Anton Falinger (5 XP).** The **ghost** coalesces in front of its sarcophagus and bows to the characters. Sir Anton explains that many ghosts have found their honored afterlife a terrible ordeal in this dungeon. In time, they have come to realize that they would have preferred to be interred in their place of origin. Sir Anton says it is a town named Grames Buriil. A historian knows that Grames Buriil eventually grew to become the realm's capital Grambury (DC 12 INT). Sir Anton asks the party to bring the remains in the sarcophagi and the urns to a cemetery in Grames Buriil so they can finally rest. In exchange, Sir Anton and the other discorporate entities shall pool their power to grant the party a single *wish*. The ghosts remain calm if the characters refuse; they bid the party farewell. However, four **ghosts** attack the party if the sarcophagi lids' ornate fixtures are pried off.

6. NARROW PASSAGES

A small network of 2-foot-wide passages connects several chambers. In some dead-ends, coffer-like urns are marked with an old common-tongue rune.

► **Passage.** Human-sized creatures must at half speed. Larger creatures cannot fit. Hidden buttons on some dead-ends lead to secret passages (DC 15 WIS).

► **The Urns.** Each of the containers guards the bodily remains of a child. These children were part of the regiment's entourage; children of either camp-followers or soldiers. Such a tragedy is the loss of a child that they were given a place of honor in this forlorn catacomb.

► **The Child.** In a random urn, the **ghost** of a 12-year-old lad materializes. It claims his father departed this tomb long ago but he is unable to find rest, having missed so much of life. The aloof ghost-child begs the characters for a chance to experience the world. This would entail a character allowing the ghost to possess their body.

7. SOUTH BARRIER

A *wall of force*, created by an arcane device, keeps the end of the chamber unreachable. No spell can pierce this barrier. The only way to reach the far end is to find the secret door in one of the narrow passages in area 6 (DC 12 WIS). Pulling a brick causes the wall to slide inward.

► **Jade Figurines.** Seven figurines surround a gilded vase; each in the shape of a farm animal. They can be arranged to solve the puzzle described in area 8.

► **Treasure (1 XP).** The chest contains 200 gp, a decoy to distract brigands from finding the vault in area 11.

8. NORTH BARRIER

A *wall of force* keeps the end of the chamber unreachable. It is identical to the one in area 7 and can be bypassed from area 6 in the same manner.

► **Jade Figurines.** Seven figurines surround a gilded vase (empty); each in the shape of a farm animal. The figures are a horse, a cow, a donkey, a sheep, a dog, a cat, and a chicken. A few lines are scripted onto the vase. They read: "*Some are strong, others are resilient, but true power awaits those who are cunning and move toward the sunset.*" To complete this puzzle, the characters must arrange the figurines in order of intelligence and cunning, from east to west, and in both areas 7 and 8. It opens the adamantine locks in area 9.

► **Treasure (1 XP).** The chest contains 200 gp, a decoy to distract brigands from finding the vault in area 12.

9. THE GRAND TOMB

The statue of a winged warrior stands, arms spread, before an empty pedestal. Before it, four sarcophagi with complex adamantine locks rest eternally.

► **The Enclosures (8 XP).** Only a master locksmith can pick these locks (DC 18 DEX). Otherwise, they open after solving the riddle described in area 8. They contain the remains of four warriors; Sir Marlon Stormrider's most loyal followers. Their weapons are by their sides: a *+1 longsword*, a *+1 spear*, a *+1 dagger*, and a *+1 mace*.

► **The Missing Blade.** The **ghost** of Sir Marlon Stormrider materializes when the characters come. If inquired about his blade, Sir Marlon complains that an elf came 200 years ago, evaded all traps, and stole the sword. The ghost points to an etched message on the pedestal that reads: "*So long, thieves. You are too slow for Daeron Feathertin.*" Sir Marlon remarks that the elvish thief is renowned in El-Unore Reaches, a faraway kingdom.

10. NORTH VAULT

Two bricks on the walls of area 8, beyond the barrier, must be pushed to find this vault (DC 15 WIS).

► **Treasure (3 XP).** The coffers contain 40 gp, 1,300 sp, and a *potion of healing*. The bookcase contains an assortment of wizard spell scrolls (one of each): *knock*, *web*, *fly*, *magic circle*, *telekinesis*, and *plane shift*.

11. SOUTH VAULT

Two bricks on the walls of area 7, beyond the barrier, must be pushed to find this vault (DC 15 WIS).

► **Treasure (4 XP).** The coffers contain 50 gp, 600 sp, and a *potion of invisibility*. The bookcase contains a spellbook with the following wizard spells: *control water*, *wall of force*, and *prismatic orb*. In addition, there are three gold ingots on the table (100 gp each).

Harvest from Hell



By Elven Tower

Designed for use with

ShadowDark RPG



LEVEL-3 ADVENTURE

AN EPIC ADVENTURE ABOUT SAVING A SMALL TOWN FROM FLESH-EATING PRODUCE

ADVENTURE PRIMER

"I never meant for this to happen. So many people were killed, so many injured. Please, help me. Help me undo this and bring everything back to normal!"

Fiona



estled in the northern reaches of the Amber Expanse lies the picturesque town of Fallstead, a place renowned for its autumnal festivals and sprawling, scenic apple orchards.

Every year, the town bursts into vibrant hues of red, orange, and gold, drawing visitors from far and wide to partake in the seasonal celebrations. The air is filled with the sweet scent of ripe apples and the savory aroma of roasted vegetables, for Fallstead's fertile soil yields some of the largest and most beautiful produce in the region.

A NEW THREAT

HOWEVER, THIS PEACEFUL haven has recently been gripped by a creeping terror. Over the past few weeks, disturbing reports have surfaced, whispering of mutant vegetables wreaking havoc on the town. These tales have spread to the larger cities, where calls for brave heroes to aid Fallstead have grown urgent. The once-thriving orchards and fields now lie under a sinister shadow; many Fallstead villagers grabbed their shovels, scythes, and spades to take care of this threat. None came back.

AN EXPERIMENT GONE WRONG

THE ORIGIN OF this calamity traces back to a young woman named Fiona, the ambitious daughter of a renowned botanist from the capital. Desiring fame and recognition, Fiona absconded with a special magical fertilizer, hoping to start her own enterprise and eclipse her father's achievements. Yet, her well-intentioned plans spiraled disastrously out of control. The potent fertilizer, meant to enhance growth, instead mutated the vegetation, transforming them into voracious monsters.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

RIGHT PLACE AT THE RIGHT TIME

With Fallstead teetering on the brink of destruction, the townspeople look to the horizon, praying for the arrival of heroes who can quell the botanical menace. A group of heroes travel through the Amber Expanse and reach the town in shambles. Will they be able to help? (0 XP).

OLD GINNER'S DAUGHTER

The heroes know a retired knight who lives in the city. The old man hires them to look for his daughter in Fallstead. He became worried sick for her when he heard the news about the monster vegetables. Old Ginner (**knight**, with half HP) offers his sword to help (150 gp, 3 XP).

THE CULPRIT

Fiona's father, Ralph, has a pumpkin farm in the capital. He feels somewhat responsible for his daughter's deeds. He offers the heroes a family heirloom, a *+1 longsword* he inherited from his father, as a reward for assuring his daughter's safety and safe passage back home. Bringing the fertilizer is ideal but not necessary, he adds (3 XP).

Level 3 Adventure

► **Danger.** Unsafe. Roll for a **Random Encounter** every 2 **crawling rounds** and after loud noises (4-in-6 chance).

► **Light.** When the heroes arrive, consider the time of the day to know if they benefit from sunlight. Otherwise, all areas are dark unless they feature a brazier (see map).

► **Smells and Sounds.** The air is thick with a strong smell of potpourri. The whistle of the wind makes the trees and flying leaves sing an ominous symphony.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

d6	Details
1	Roots grow from the ground beneath the heroes (DC 12 DEX). On a failure, they become restrained and cannot move.
2	(Outside) While traversing a field, the heroes are suddenly attacked by a group of six monstrous apples (use the stats of mutant potatoes). The apples scream like banshees. Their sharp, thorn-like stems lashing out in a coordinated assault.
3	The heroes stumble upon a mutant pumpkin . The aggressive vegetable cannot be reasoned with and fights until slain.
4	The magical fertilizer has changed the fungi in the area too. The affected red caps and chanterelles become large, swollen bulbs. They all explode and release heavy, thick mist. A pungent smell of sulfur covers the area. Visibility is reduced for 6 hours.
5	A random hero fails to notice a hole and their foot becomes stuck (DC 9 WIS). Four mutant carrots emerge from below then.
6	Two dwarves (thugs) join the heroes. The monster veggies amaze them. They wish to hunt and eat these monsters.

Mutant Carrot

A carrot with three red eyes and thin limbs.

AC: 11 HP: 12 LV 2

ATK: 2 claws +2 (1d8) or 1 impale +2

MV: Near

S:+1 D:+0 C:+1 I:-2 W:-1 Ch:+0

Impale. The carrot charges and thrusts its body into someone (1d10). Impaled carrots attack their victims with advantage. It takes 1 round and 1d4 damage to remove them.



Mutant Pumpkin

An evil face with glowing eyes on a giant pumpkin.

AC: 9 HP: 31 LV 4

ATK: 2 stems +5 (2d6)

MV: Near

S:+4 D:-1 C:+2 I:-2 W:-1 Ch:+0

Death Throes. The mutant pumpkin explodes in a thousand pieces when reduced to 0 Hit Points. All creatures within 15 feet take 3d6 damage from this burst (DC 12 DEX for half).



Mutant Potato

A one-eyed vegetable abomination with strong teeth.

AC: 12 HP: 6 LV 1

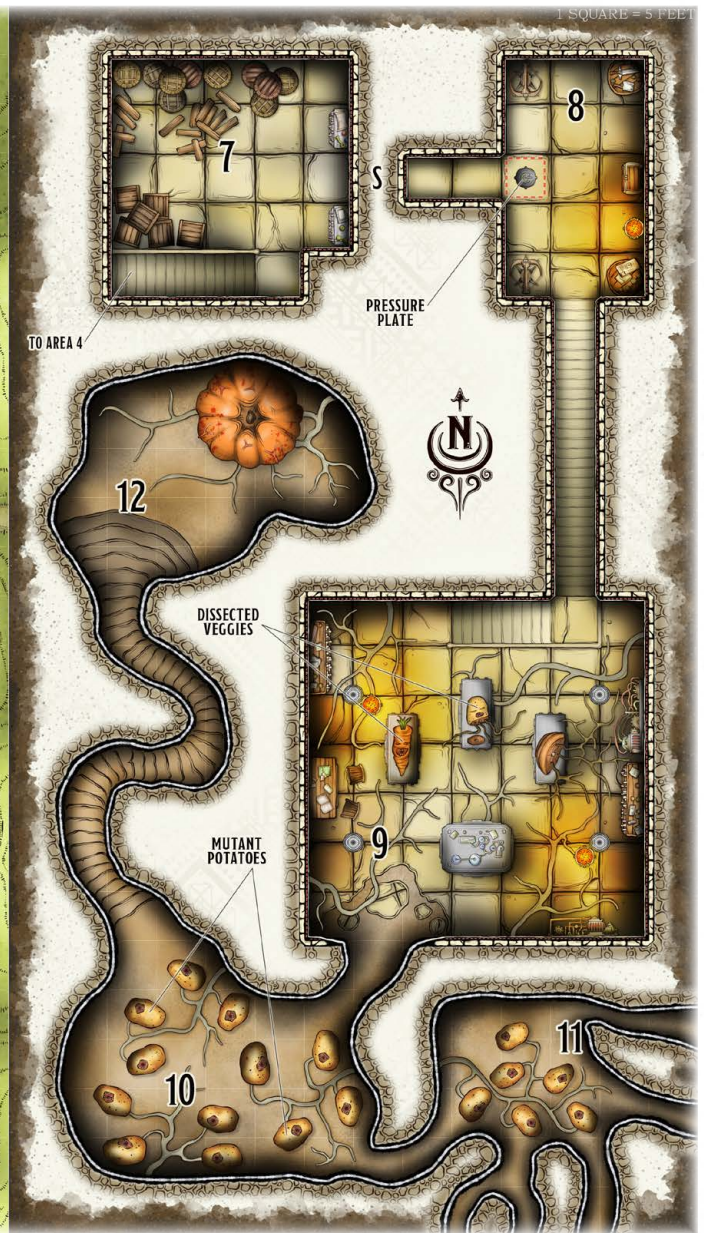
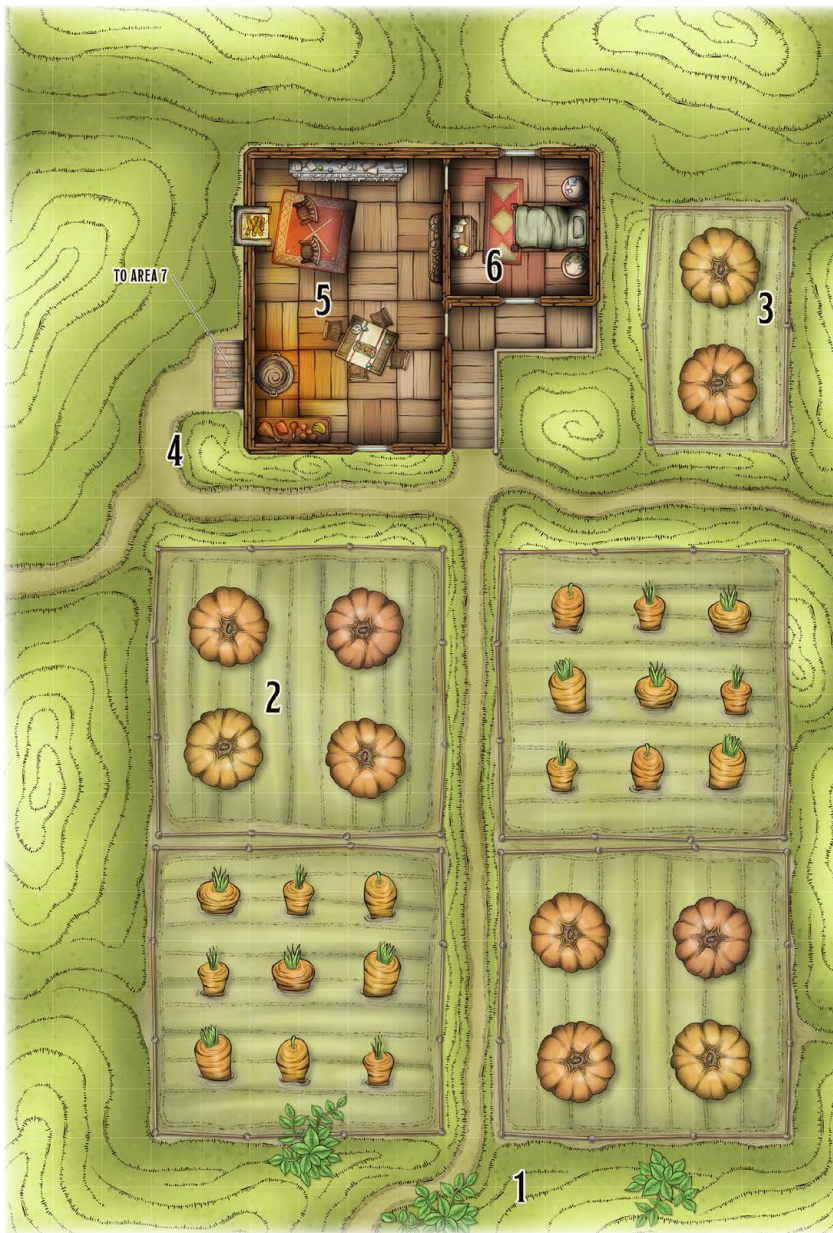
ATK: 1 bite +0 (1d6) or 1 hurl +1 (1d8)

MV: Near

S:+0 D:-1 C:+1 I:-2 W:-1 Ch:+0

Hurl. The potato moves, charges at high speed, and headbutts a target within 15 feet.





GETTING THERE

FIONA'S EXPERIMENTS IN her cellar are the core of the problem. The heroes must pay attention to their surroundings and follow the clues, tracks, and evidence left by the several days of chaos (DC 15 WIS).

Failing this check means the heroes walk right into an ambush before reaching the farm in question. Before they realize their mistake, they are attacked by three **mutant potatoes**, two **mutant carrots**, and one **mutant pumpkin**. The monster veggies fight until slain.

1. FALLSTEAD

The vegetables outside the farmhouse do not show monstrous characteristics. The heroes may approach safely. A perceptive hero notices the large plants and leaves by the main road are potato plants. However, the leaves are unusually large (DC 12 INT check). These giant plants are the mutant potatoes in areas 10 and 11.

2. MAIN HARVESTS

The heroes may spend 1 **crawling round** harvesting the large carrots and pumpkins to obtain 20 food rations. If the heroes inspect the area, they realize one of the pumpkins is hollow, with a cut in the shape of a door on one side. Fiona (**apprentice**) hides inside this pumpkin. She is weak, filthy, and scared. She would rather stay in this hiding spot than accompany the heroes.

3. SMALL PARCEL

One of these two pumpkins is about to become monstrous. When the heroes approach this area, they see the **mutant pumpkin** come to life and attack them.

4. CELLAR'S ENTRANCE

A *detect magic* spell reveals the powerful arcane energy coming from below the house. Alternatively, if the heroes find Fiona (see above), she tells them about the underground laboratory and the dangers they shall find within.

5. LIVING ROOM

Fiona's home stands eerily silent, its once vibrant garden and fields now overrun with wild, twisted vines. The windows are shattered, and the faint smell of decaying vegetation permeates the stale air.

The living room remains frozen in time, with an untouched meal set neatly upon a rustic wooden table, as if awaiting an absent guest. Two chairs sit before a cold fireplace, their seats slightly askew, hinting at a hasty departure. A nearby shelf brims with books on botany and harvesting, their spines worn from frequent use.

6. FIONA'S ROOM

Fiona's quarters exude a sense of abandonment, with a solitary bed pushed against the wall. An unfinished letter to her father rests on the side table, the ink smudged as if written in haste. Scattered notes and diagrams about the magical fertilizer lie strewn across the floor, bearing testament to her fervent ambitions of recognition.

► **Letter.** Fiona's last entries grow increasingly frantic, revealing her mounting desperation and the unintended consequences of her actions. The final page is stained with tears, the ink blurred, ending abruptly with a plea for forgiveness and hope for redemption.

7. CELLAR

The cellar is dark and cluttered; boxes and barrels are stacked haphazardly all around, their contents long forgotten. Two dusty shelves hold mundane readings, including old almanacs and worn manuals on farming techniques, untouched amidst the growing chaos above.

► **Secret Passage.** The heroes can easily notice Fiona's tracks and the highlighted section of the wall that slides aside (DC 9 WIS). Pushing one of the shelves aside reveals the hidden corridor and Fiona's laboratory.

8. ANTECHAMBER

A single chest rests on the far wall while two small tables flank it from each corner. The chest is empty; a clever temptation for intruders looking for easy treasure.

► **Trap.** If the heroes fail to notice the pressure-sensitive plate (DC 12 WIS), they walk into the chamber and trigger an automated crossbow trap. Two bolts fly and hit the first person that enters, dealing 2d8 damage.

9. LABORATORY

Dissected, mutant vegetables rest on three operating tables. Unfinished notes and sketches fill the desk, while a nearby shelf houses tomes of forbidden knowledge and vials of the fabled magical fertilizer.

Two crude devices resembling arcane engines hum faintly, the handiwork of a novice mage's fledgling attempts at harnessing mystical power. Before the heroes can inspect the place, an army of eight **mutant potatoes** approach. They roll from area 10 to attack the party.

► **Notes.** The heroes may spend 1 **crawling round** reading the notes of what Fiona attempted to do. She believed her little arcane knowledge would be enough to control and command the animated vegetables. She dreamed of carrot friends and pumpkin farm helpers. But she lacks both the power and knowledge. And she witnessed, helplessly, how unpredictable and chaotic magic can be.

FIXING THE PROBLEM

After combat, the heroes may attempt to undo Fiona's experiment gone wrong in two different ways:

- A mage can rewire the engines in 1 hour to cause a wave of dispelling energy in a 1,000-foot-radius (DC 12 INT); it renders veggies inert. Failing this check does the job, but the mage loses the ability to cast spells for 1 week. Spell checks have disadvantage the week after.
- One of the heroes uses the fertilizer left in the lab to concoct an antidote (DC 12 WIS). Monster veggies that get in touch with the antidote go back to normal. Failing this check though, means the antidote takes 2 rounds to work, forcing heroes to fight before it kicks in.



10. POTATO CAVE

The cavern is dimly illuminated by bioluminescent fungi, revealing a writhing mass of monstrous potatoes, their gnarled roots thrashing aggressively. The air is thick with an earthy, musty odor, as the oversized tubers pulsate with a menacing, unnatural vitality. The heroes are attacked by eight **mutant potatoes**.

► **Solution.** The heroes do not find any monster veggies if the arcane engines were rewired via a *dispel magic* spell. If this is not the case, they may use the fixed fertilizer to bypass the enemies (see **Fixing the Problem**).

11. UNCHARTED CAVERNS

The cavern extends into a smaller, echoing cave, its ceiling lost in the shadows above. From here, numerous uncharted tunnels snake off into the darkness, their twisting paths beckoning explorers deeper into the unknown. Six **mutant potatoes** attack intruders within 10 feet.

► **Solution.** Use the same description as in area 10.

► **Tunnels.** The tunnels wind endlessly into the uncharted darkness, the walls closing in with an almost suffocating grip. Scattered along the path are bat droppings and other signs of nocturnal creatures, suggesting lurking threats in the shadows. If the heroes choose to explore these paths, they walk into the lair of six **giant bats** after 1 **crawling round** of exploration.

12. THE ROOT OF ALL EVIL

The last cave lies deep beneath the earth, accessible only by a set of uneven, worn steps that descend into the dark. At the center stands a grotesque mutant pumpkin, its gnarled roots embedded deep into the cavern walls. Bloodstains mar its mottled surface; macabre evidence of the horrors it has unleashed.

The characters' actions in the laboratory are enough to stop the vegetable mutations. However, the pumpkin here is the root of everything and its location and power make it immune to either of the solutions presented before (see **Fixing the Problem**). The heroes must destroy this **mutant pumpkin** to rid Fallstead of all threats.

► **Encounter.** Before the heroes came, this monster ended the lives of many brave men who wanted the best for Fallstead and their loved ones. When the battle starts, and each round of combat after that, a **zombie** comes out of the pumpkin's mouth to attack intruders. These were innocent farmers and Fallstead's villagers.

► **Outcome.** Fallstead shall only be safe after defeating this pumpkin. It takes the characters half a day to cover the entire town, get rid of any other mutant veggies left (in case the fertilizer was used), and assure everyone the danger is gone. There is no need for further fights or checks. The heroes find no trouble doing this.

ADVENTURE CONCLUSION

THE CHARACTERS REACH the end of this adventure. For the consequences of their deeds, consider the following:

HEROES OF FALLSTEAD

The heroes deal with the flesh-eating vegetables and bring the town back to normal. The news of their deeds reaches the capital and they are given the title of "*Heroes of Fallstead*", and granted a parcel of land to build there.

OLD GINNERS' DAUGHTER

The retired knight's daughter is safe. They find her during their coverage of the town after the final fight. If Old Ginner is still standing, the two have a fond, touching reunion. The former knight pays the heroes their due and asks them to honor him by traveling together again. But this time, just a simple journey back to their home.

FIONA'S FATE

Bring Fiona back to her father, Ralph, or bring her to justice and have her pay for her crimes. A tough choice. The characters obtain a magical sword and the endless gratitude of a father if they reunite the botanist family. They shall earn the respect and favor of the capital's ruler if they deliver the person responsible for Fallstead's losses. Fiona is publicly beheaded if this occurs. What the characters end up choosing, in addition to the outcome of this decision, are adventures for another day...



One-Shots Archive



One-Shots Archive

An awesome compilation of twelve adventures in collaboration with a plethora of other cartography artists and concept art creators. These adventures are compatible with Dungeons & Dragons 5e and range from starter level-3 adventures, to kingdom-threatening level-9 quests.

GNASHRA, GNOLL CHIEFTAIN

“You are but weaklings, filthy cur. Quake before the mighty Gnashra, for the fires of Thar’zul burn within me and my kin! Your doom is nigh”.

Gnashra

Gnashra, the gnoll chieftain, now going by the name of the Scourge of Amber Mountain, rose from humble beginnings to a feared leader through cunning, strength, and a dark pact with infernal forces. Born under the blood moon, Gnashra exhibited unusual ferocity and intellect from a young age, traits that set him apart from his brethren.

Gnashra’s ascent to leadership reached its peak when he discovered a tome hidden in a crypt. The ancient book spoke of a demonic pact that could grant unparalleled power to those who dared to invoke it. Driven by a thirst for dominance, Gnashra journeyed deep into the heart of a cavern known as the Maw of Shadows, where the veil between worlds was thinnest. There, Gnashra performed the dark ritual. He offered his soul and those of his kin to the demon lord Thar’zul, a being of immense malevolence and power. The pact was sealed with blood and fire, and in return, Thar’zul bestowed upon Gnashra and his followers an unholy might. Their claws became as sharp as obsidian, their eyes glowed with a hellish fire, and a relentless bloodlust burned within them. Empowered by this infernal gift, Gnashra led his demonic pack and took over Amber Mountain. The Amber Expanse is in danger. Prowling feral gnolls stalk the night.

A COUNTERMEASURE

Fighting the hyenas in their demonic state is a hard ordeal. Only the most powerful artifacts can stop this strength from hell. If the heroes possess the *Strings of Peace*, they shall have an advantage to play:

► **Effect.** Animals and wild beasts that hear the artifact calm down and become docile. The hyenas can resist this effect (DC 13 CHA). On a fail, all checks to fight are made with disadvantage, decimating their strength.



Gnashra, Gnoll Chieftain

Towering, fearsome. Eyes ablaze with fire. Mottled fur, streaked with the scars of countless battles.

AC: 16 (plate) HP: 31 LV 6

ATK: 2 claw +5 (1d8 + 2) or 1 spell +5

MV: Near

S:+3 D:+2 C:+3 I:+3 W:+1 Ch:+2

.....

Bloodlust. +2 melee damage (included above).

Hellish. Hostile spells targeting the gnoll are DC 15 to cast.

Hellfire (INT). DC 11. All within a near-sized cube extending from gnoll 3d6 damage.

Cancel (INT). DC 13. Dispel the magic of an object for 1d6 rounds, or end one spell affecting a target within near.



THE AMBER CITADEL

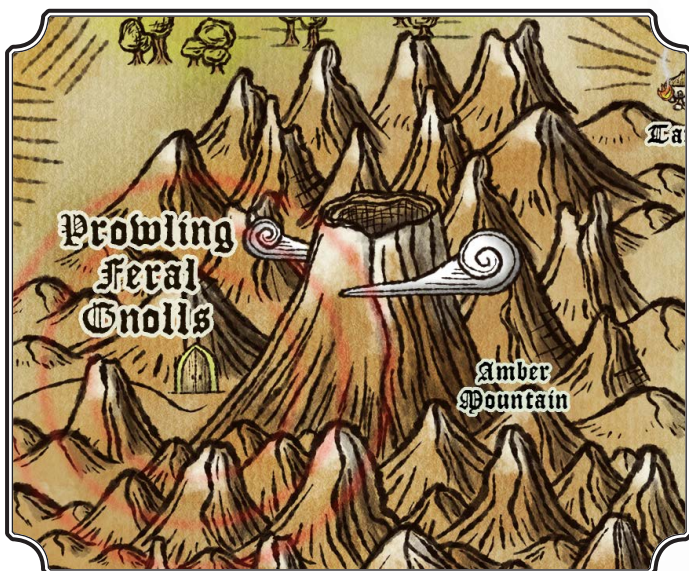
“Feast upon their fear, my brethren, and let their pain and screams herald our dominion! Tonight, these lands shall run red with our glory!”

Gnashra, Leader of the Gnolls

The Amber Mountain rises majestically from the surrounding plains, its towering peak veiled in a perpetual shroud of ash and mist. The once-mighty volcano, now dormant, casts a shadow of foreboding over the land, its slopes scarred by old eruptions. Streams of hardened lava snake down its sides, their obsidian surfaces glittering like black glass in the dim light. Vegetation struggles to reclaim the barren landscape, with sparse, twisted trees and resilient shrubs clinging to life amidst the rocky terrain.

In the heart of the Amber Mountain lies the Amber Citadel, a grand dwarvish ruin abandoned eons ago. Carved into the mountain's core, this ancient stronghold was once a testament to dwarven craftsmanship, with its intricately chiseled halls and vast chambers echoing the glory of a bygone era. Today, the citadel stands in eerie silence, its grandeur marred by the passage of time and the creeping encroachment of nature.

Gnashra and his gnoll pack have claimed this forsaken citadel as their lair, transforming it into a fortress of terror. The gnolls have defiled the once-hallowed halls, filling the air with filth, droppings, and trash. All of it creates a stench of decay and that permeates the entire dungeon. The ancient forges now blaze with unholy fire, casting a sinister glow on the stone walls, while the vast chambers have been converted into barracks and armories for Gnashra's bloodthirsty followers.



A CALL FOR WAR

WHEN THE GNOLLS reached the Amber Expanse, no one thought they would become the threat they are today. Gnashra's pact with a demon named Thar'zul not only boosted their strength. It also made the hyena-folk relentless, more aggressive, and fearless. But the humans, elves, dwarves, and halflings of the Amber Expanse have overcome their awe and the initial surprise.

After a series of smaller quests and tasks, the characters return to the capital, Grambury. They hear Duke Alaric Stormrider address his army and rally his troops. His voice inspires courage, duty, and honor:

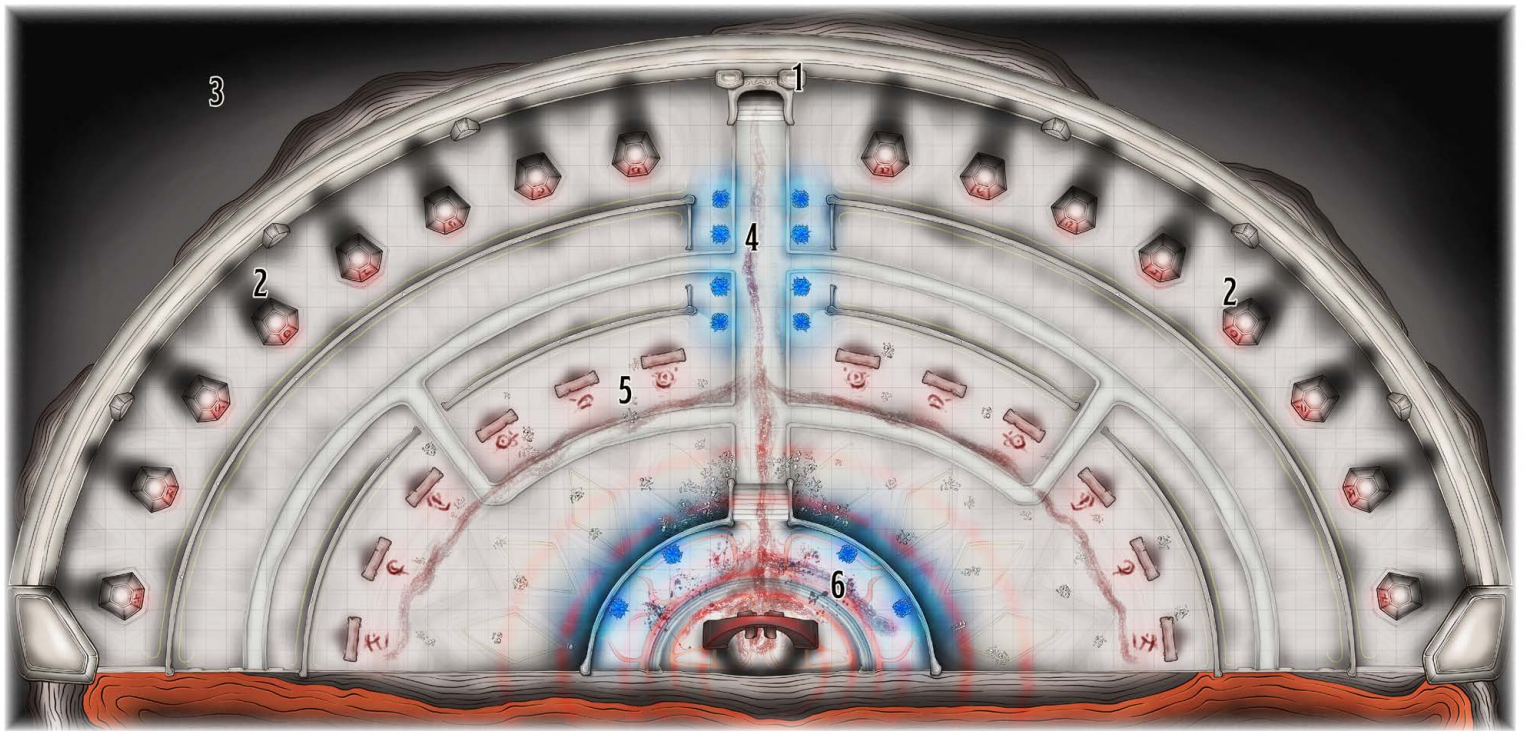
“Brave souls of Grambury, Brilshire, and the towns of the expanse, today we unite under a common banner to reclaim our lands from the vile grasp of Gnashra and his gnolls. The Amber Mountain, once a place of dwarven pride, now festers with demonic corruption. But no more! We shall march, our banners high, and purge this blight from our beloved realm.”

ADVENTURE HOOK

Heroes. The characters belong to the main garrison and are tasked with thrusting the enemy lines and reaching Gnashra. The seers of the capital foresee the use of dark magic and the summoning of evil forces. Marching along with the army, the heroes travel north through the Regal Road. The castle's chamberlain, the elf Terathiel, is in charge of rewarding the heroes, but only if they win the war, of course. The characters shall receive a title, a land deed, and a hefty pay of 4,000 gp (10 XP).

MARCHING WITH THE ARMY

Hundreds of carts and horses accompany the 4,000 swords and spears that leave Grambury. Bannermen, squires, henchmen, and loaders all march together. The characters have a place of honor near the front-line, just behind the duke. The army is so large that no checks are required for them to travel the Regal Road. On their way, a small garrison of soldiers stays behind in Mudfoot River and Green Halls, two of the most affected towns. The action begins when they reach Amber Plateau.



RETAKING AMBER PLATEAU

EVEN IF THE heroes visited this location before and drove away the gnoll invaders, its proximity to the hyena-folk's main hideout makes it an easy target.

The gnolls see the army approach from miles away. They prepare for an initial assault in the town. If the duke's army were to circle the town to attack the volcano directly, it could open the possibility of ending up trapped between two flanks. The duke concludes they must deal with these gnoll troops first at all costs.

PITCHED BATTLE

Consider the following mechanics for this engagement:

1. A platoon of twenty soldiers is under the heroes' orders. One of the heroes must be their inspiration and utter a heroic speech to them (DC 12 CHA).
2. One of the heroes must be the tank and muscle, receiving most of the enemy hits and pushing through the enemy lines (DC 15 CON).
3. A skilled warrior must land effective blows at the targets (Roll three separate melee attacks, AC 12).
4. A precise archer shall ease their group's advance (Roll three separate ranged attacks, AC 12).
5. An eagle-eyed hero must be aware of their enemy's movements beyond the obvious (DC 12 WIS). This allows for the correct counter strategy.
6. Lastly, the heroes may chant, shout battle cries, weave banners, play war drums or horns, and try to intimidate their enemies (DC 12 CHA).

DEVELOPMENT

The heroes retake the town and are victorious regardless of their results, however, each check failed translates into the loss of 10% of their army. For the melee and ranged attacks, they must succeed in at least two out of the three rolls made. Worst case scenario, they reach Amber Mountain with an army decimated by 60%. This translates into a harder challenge later on (see below).

Level 4 Adventure

► **Advancing.** The heroes move up and make their way through the enemy lines until they reach a large set of descending stairs. This is the entrance to the Amber Citadel and leads to the heart of the mountain (area 1).

► **Dangers.** Once the heroes reach Amber Mountain, each **crawling round**, and each area the heroes visit demands a random check (see **Pitched Battle**). The gnolls surround them in every direction; reducing the army's size by an additional 2% for every failed check. However, these checks are made with advantage if the army's total size by the time they are here is above 75%.

FIGHTING IN THE AMBER CITADEL

The pitch battle action and mechanics do not stop during the entirety of this assault (see **Dangers** above). Describe how there are allies fighting gnolls in every direction. Each area has a challenge. The characters must overcome the challenge to advance to other areas (see map). The characters must stop Gnashra before he completes the dark summoning (see **The Ritual**). Otherwise, they will fight Thar'zul's avatar as well.

1. CITADEL'S ENTRANCE

As the heroes descend, they are greeted by the awe-inspiring remnants of dwarven grandeur. The tunnel they entered gradually widens, revealing the full splendor of ancient dwarvish architecture.

The heroes stand at the threshold of a massive ceremonial chamber. Towering columns of polished granite rise to dizzying heights, their surfaces defiled with intricate demonic runes. This ancient stronghold, once a place of reverence, now stands as the stage for the imminent confrontation with Gnashra and his demonic horde.

► **Challenge.** The great battle goes on and the heroes are required to make a check (see **Dangers**). They must fight two **gnoll brutes** and four **gnollish hyenas** to continue their advance and be able to cover other areas.

► **Help.** Hundreds of soldiers fighting hyenas all around. Consider two **soldiers** and one **knight** accompany the heroes at all times. However, these men are not replaced if they fall, the rest of the army is busy fighting.

► **Weapons and Artifacts.** This is the final mission in the Amber Expanse. Consider the treasure, artifacts, and weapons that the heroes obtained before. For instance, the *Strings of Peace*, have the power to calm savage beasts and could turn the tide of this war.

THE RITUAL

Gnashra stands before the astral threshold in area 6. His summoning ritual is almost complete. The heroes have a small chance to stop him, though. From the moment the heroes reach this area, a mage among them recognizes the pieces of the demonic ritual at once:

1. The demonic runes on the columns (area 2) boost the summoner's powers, they must be erased.
2. The flames in area 4 are purple and dark blue. They must be cleansed or extinguished.
3. The celebrants in area 5 chant in an ancient evil tongue. They must be silenced and stopped.
4. Gnashra is close to completing the final step of the ritual: the sacrifice of a willing subject, and the deliverance of the victim's heart into the lava.

2. PILLARS OF KNOWLEDGE

A total of sixteen columns bear demonic runes painted with blood. They glow with an ominous crimson red.

► **Challenge.** The pitch battle goes on. Make a check (see **Dangers**) to remove the runes. The heroes must fight eight **gnolls** and three **gnoll skirmishers**. After dealing with these enemies, it takes 1 **crawling round** (thus another check) to remove the red evil runes.

3. THE DARK ABYSS

The half-moon-shaped citadel is the very heart of the mountain. A sea of molten lava swirls to the south, at the base of the semicircle. But the rest of its circumference is embraced by pitch-black darkness, an endless abyss. The chasm can only be seen by climbing the 30-foot-tall walls that surround the citadel (DC 12 STR check).

4. BLUE FLAMES OF HELL

Blue-hued flames from hell cast ghostly shadows and illuminate ancient runes with unholy light. The once-sacred hall pulses with dark, pungent energy; a haunted remnant of its former Dwarvish glory.

► **Challenge.** The heroes make another check when they approach the flames (see **Dangers**). One **gnoll brute** accompanied by six **gnolls** and three **gnollish hyenas** attempt to stop the heroes from extinguishing the flames.

► **Fire.** With water, large clothes, or any other useful element for this purpose, the heroes may spend 1 **crawling round** to extinguish all braziers. Alternatively, a mage can cast a *dispel magic* spell targeting the blue flames and return them to normal, non-demonic fire.

5. CULTISTS

► **Challenge.** There are two dozen gnoll celebrants chanting (**peasants**). They continue their chant, unbothered by the clash of swords around them. The heroes may spend 1 **crawling round** to cast aside all cultists. Intimidation does not work. But they flee when struck.



Thar'zul's Avatar

6. DEMONIC THRESHOLD

Gnashra stands bathed in the eerie blue flames that flicker ominously around him. His eyes glow with infernal fire, and his massive form casts a looming shadow against the ancient stone. The air hums with dark energy as he raises his claws, poised to complete the demonic summoning ritual.

► **Stopping the Ritual.** If the heroes erase the runes, cleanse the flames, remove the celebrants (see **The Ritual**), and they still command at least 70% of their army, the ritual is stopped in time and the demonic avatar is unable to step foot into the Material Plane. **Gnashra**, two **gnoll brutes**, two **gnoll skirmishers**, and five **gnolls** fight the intruders mercilessly until their last breath.

► **Thar'zul.** The heroes' army is weak and decimated. They see the gnolls closing in around them. Gnashra removes the heart of a willing gnoll with his bare claw and a portal to another world opens. Thar'zul's Avatar (**glabrezu**) steps forth from the astral door and screams. Only the gods may save the heroes now. They must fight the demon's avatar and all the enemies described above. The demon has only 30 HP if the heroes manage to remove the elements of the summoning (see **The Ritual**).

CONCLUSION

THE CHARACTERS REACH the end of this campaign and face the consequences of their valiant deeds.

A MASSIVE VICTORY

The heroes defeat the gnolls by a large margin. Their army suffers little losses and Duke Alaric Stormrider leads the march back home. Banners high, military songs in the air, Grambury and Brilshire unite in a week-long celebration. The Amber Expanse is safe again. Terathiel, the duke's chamberlain, names the heroes 'Saviors of the Expanse' and 'Dread of the Gnolls'. They are paid the agreed-upon amount and they are granted lands near the capital in case they wish to settle down.

A DAY TO FORGET

The heroes are victorious, but barely. They lose half or most of their army in the conflict. The march back home is silent and gloomy; their victory stained by Duke Alaric's death. The Amber Expanse is safe, but at what cost? Lady Elara Windrider travels from Brilshire to Grambury to take care of the duke's funeral and burial.

THE SPOILS OF WAR

The authorities of Grambury and Brilshire grant the characters permission to keep any valuables they find during their time in the Amber Expanse. This includes magical weapons and artifacts. The GM is free to add into the mix any other reward they deem fit.



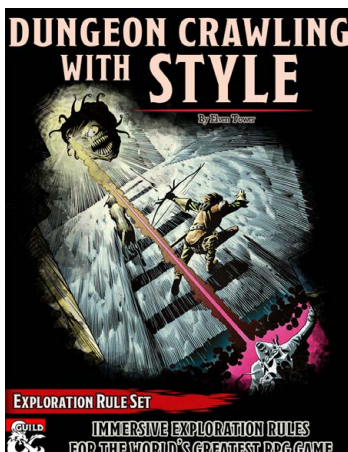
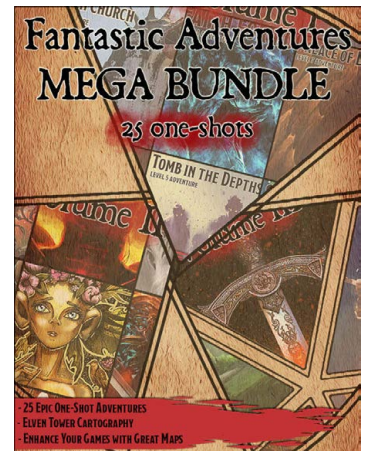
A NEW BEGINNING

The heroes, battered but triumphant, stand amidst the ruins of the once great citadel. Marlon Hammerhead, a dwarf councilman, does not wish to see his culture insulted like this again. He passes a decree that summons the dwarves of the expanse to rebuild their ancient stronghold. The heroes are invited to join, as ambassadors of peace. If one of the characters is a dwarf, they are granted the honor of a seat in their council. Alas, these are adventures for another day...

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