

HELL-DIVING

FIGHT BACK AGAINST THE HORDES OF HELL, FOR DEMOCRACY!

Hell-Diving is a Fifth Edition adventure for three to five characters of 9th level.

BACKSTORY

In the heart of Graystrand Peak, a dwarven citadel nestled deep within the mountains, a group of miners made a discovery that would forever change the course of their civilization. What they initially believed to be a meteor, rich in precious metals, turned out to be a vessel from the stars. Inside, they found the lifeless body of an elven astronaut, a member of the enigmatic Starchild Society that resided in the Astral Expanse.

Driven by curiosity and ambition, the dwarves used their magical prowess to resurrect the elven voyager. From him, they learned of the wonders and possibilities that lay beyond their subterranean realm. The dwarves, renowned for their craftsmanship, began to dream of a future among the stars, one where they could surpass the achievements of the elves who had long looked down upon them.

Inspired by this newfound knowledge, the dwarves of Graystrand embarked on a bold endeavor. They combined their unparalleled mastery of engineering with the arcane secrets gleaned from the elven ship, determined to forge a path to the Astral Expanse. However, their ambitious expansion did not go unnoticed.

From the fiery depths of Pyriathus, a hell-planet consumed by hatred and malevolence, the devils watched the dwarves' ascent with growing envy and rage. The Overlord of this infernal realm, fueled by an ancient animosity towards all humanoids, saw the dwarves' astral aspirations as an unforgivable affront. Using his absolute authority, he rallied his legions. He vowed to be the hammer that would strike the dwarves down from their lofty ambitions, the force that would crush them back into the depths of the earth from whence they came.

As the flames of war spread across the cosmos, the heroes of Graystrand found themselves at the center of an interplanetary conflict. They fought not only to defend their homeland but also to protect the dream that had ignited their hearts and minds. Against the relentless onslaught of the devils, they would need to summon every ounce of courage, ingenuity, and determination to secure their future among the stars.

PLOT HOOK

The party is made up of trusted warriors of Graystrand, who have been sent out to recover a fallen vessel and bring home its knowledge.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

As the adventure begins, the players find themselves onboard a fast-moving starship, being debriefed about their mission. They will be dropped off in a nearby desert, not too far off from the spaceship Truthseeker, which lost contact with the home base. Upon arriving at Truthseeker's last known location, they find it crashed. They investigate the ship and are quickly overwhelmed by a horde of threats, which deny them access to Truthseeker's information logs. After neutralizing the threats, the party returns home with the logs, finding intel about devil attacks that threaten the hegemony of dwarven democracy. Having no other choice, the party prepares to defend the Graystrand forces while they launch a Runebomb directly to the devil's base on Pyriathus.

Once the party is done preparing for the incoming threat, they are swarmed by wave after wave of devils, forcing the party to use their surroundings and traps for the best defense possible. At the end of the second chapter, their defenses are either completely dismantled or they emerge victorious.

In the final chapter, the party learns through telepathic communications that the team tasked with launching the nuke, has met their end at the hands of infernal forces that snuck behind enemy lines. The party must retreat back to the orbital runecannon, patch it up and get it ready for firing, before facing a final, troubling choice: risk the entire world or kill the dreams of dwarvenkind.

APPENDIX: HORDE COMBAT



This adventure will throw hordes of enemies at your players. Here are the rules to use to transform what would otherwise be a management nightmare, into an epic and easy to track experience for you and your players.

I. Damage Tracking for the Horde

- Note down the number of monsters within the horde
- Note down the hit points of one typical monster within the horde (you can round to the nearest 5 or 10 for simpler calculations).
- Consolidate all damage received by the horde into a single hit point pool.
- When accumulated damage exceeds the hit points of one or multiple monsters, eliminate monsters from the horde and reset the damage count. **Any excess damage should be carried over.**

Example:

The party is engaging a horde of 20 skeletons. A skeleton has an average of 13 hit points, but we will round it down to 10 to make things simple. There are 20 skeletons in your horde.

Your notes should look like this:

Number of creatures (Nb): 20 HP (out of 10): 10

The barbarian rushes in and lands a big critical hit for a total of 27 points of damage. With that damage, 2 skeletons go down, and the damage carries over. So now your notes should look like this:

Nb: ~~20~~ 18 HP (out of 10): ~~10~~ 3

And you keep going until the number of skeletons drops to 0 (or the number of party members does).

II. Horde Attacks and Damage Distribution

- Assign which horde monsters attack which character. Start by looking at the situation. Does the horde have ranged attacks? Are any of the characters up front and likely to take more hits than everyone else?

Our base assumption should be that the monsters attack the characters equally.

If there are 50 skeletons and 5 characters, 10 skeletons will attack each character. If one character manages to hide from the skeletons, the skeletons divide their attacks among the rest.

If a scenario evolves and the monsters can't attack, they deal no damage. For example, if there is a choke point, and the skeletons don't have ranged attacks, they can't hit the players.

Note: An isolated character that is completely surrounded can be targeted by a maximum number of 8 creatures in melee.

- To save time in combat, if you are preparing to make your players take on a horde, use average damage to not spend hours rolling damage dice (see page XX).
- To determine if an attack hits for each creature, roll a d4 instead of a d20. Use the following attack success rate guidelines:

- Base: A roll of 1-2 is a miss, and a roll of 3-4 is a hit.
- With Advantage: Only a 1 misses.
- With Disadvantage: Only a 4 hits.

If a creature has a very high AC, or gains a higher AC through casting the *shield* spell—something that only a 15+ on the d20 used for their normal attack roll would hit—consider making only a 4 hit. Consider asking your players for their AC before combat so you can adjust the attack rolls accordingly.

Example:

If we take our skeletons as above, they have a +4 to hit. This means that any AC above 19 is considered very high AC for this fight, and anything below is considered normal AC.

So our barbarian who charged into the fray is now surrounded by 8 skeletons. He only has 17 AC, which means we use the base rolls. We roll 8 d4s. 3 of them show a 3 or 4, so that's 3 hits. Using the average damage, our barbarian takes 15 damage.

8 attacks and their damage is wrapped up in less than a minute—very nice!

III. Handling Area of Effect (AoE) Attacks

Determine Affected Monsters:

- Assess the area impacted and judge the number of creatures within. Favor densely packed scenarios for dramatic effects.
- Rough estimates for creatures affected by AoE size:
 - Small AoE (e.g., *flaming sphere*): 4 creatures
 - Medium AoE (e.g., *burning hands*): 8 creatures
 - Large AoE (e.g., *fireball*): 16 creatures
 - Huge AoE (e.g., *circle of death*): 32 creatures

Resolve Saving Throws and Damage:

- Horde monsters are usually weaker grunts. Typically, only 1 in 4 monsters succeed on saving throws. Adjust this based on context; if you use monsters with very high Dexterity scores, consider making 1 in 2 succeed against Dexterity saves instead.

- In exceptional or heroic moments, consider having all monsters fail their saves.

- If the AoE damage surpasses the hit points of an individual monster, remove those affected. Any residual damage after exact kills should be added to the horde's damage tally, which might result in further eliminations.

Manage Status Effects:

- If an AoE confers a status effect, assume 1 in 4 of the affected creatures succeed and are afflicted. These creatures may be narratively described or temporarily removed from combat to avoid meticulous tracking.

Example:

It's now the wizard's turn, and she casts the *shatter* spell. Considered a medium AoE, it catches 8 creatures.

She rolls 3d8 for damage: 14 thunder damage!

Our horde skeletons have 10 hit points. Using the AoE rules above, 1 in 4 succeed. So, for 8 creatures, 2 succeed on the saving throw and 6 fail. These 6 skeletons instantly die.

So our note for the hordes would look like this:

Nb: 20 HP (out of 10): 10

Nb: ~~20~~ 14 HP (out of 10): 10

The remaining 2 in the AoE take 7 damage each, but we count the horde as one entity, so our notes would then look like this:

Nb: ~~20~~ 14 HP (out of 10): 10
 Damage taken: 7 + 7 = 14

Nb: ~~20~~ 13 HP (out of 10): ~~40~~ 6

So her spell killed 7 skeletons and damaged an 8th one.

I broke down the math to be as clear as possible, but there's no need to write everything out in your own notes.

IV. Additional Horde Management Tips

- **Narrative Focus:** Emphasize the story. Instead of detailing mechanics, paint a vivid picture of hordes charging, spells detonating, and heroes standing resilient. This is an epic moment; don't get bogged down by mechanics too much.

- **Reflavoring Creatures:** Use one stat block for different monsters in the horde. Describe variations in appearance or behavior without altering mechanics. You can say that the horde is composed of zombies and skeletons, but only use one of these stat blocks for your entire horde.

- **Combine Horde with Single Entities:** Using a horde alongside distinct creatures (e.g., a zombie horde with a werewolf that gets its own actual stat block) creates a more layered combat scenario.



CHAPTER 1: LOST KNOWLEDGE

In which the party looks for a lost ship.

Prologue

If you are playing this adventure as a one-shot, now is the time for players to introduce themselves and share insights about their characters if they haven't already. Ask them how long they've been adventuring, if they've always adventured as a group and any relationships they might have to one another, as well as to the world they live in. Are they dwarves who are deeply devoted to dwarven democracy and freedom? Or are they mercenaries who have been recruited recently for this mission?

Once the party has fully introduced themselves, you can proceed to the next "Read this" fragment.

Read this:

"The voice comes in through the R.I.T.E., also known as the Rune Implemented Telepathic Enabler, its gruffness familiar. 'Listen here, lads! Your job is simple. Go down there, find out what happened to the crew of the Truthseeker vessel, retrieve the black box, then come back to where we can pick you up.' This is, of course, the third or fourth time General Sternfront has given you this breakdown. One can say many things about the man, but he sure is careful, checking up on you multiple times over the course of the day. You also know what he means by blackbox—a runic-powered tracking and memory device, capable of withholding all the information gathered by the crew of a ship. Since the ship Truthseeker disappeared, the black box went silent. Though hard to find, the last known signals were enough to triangulate a rough location. Now, the task has fallen to you. Pinpoint the exact location, find the black box and find whatever information the crew were killed for before they could return home. 'You'll walk there because we can't afford to lose another ship, any questions?' The voice rings out a final time."

The party can now pose their final questions to their handler, General Sternfront (see "General Sternfront" sidebar).

GENERAL GURNAR STERNFRONT (LG DWARF VETERAN)

Information: General Gurnar Sternfront is a distinguished military leader of Graystrand's Astral Defense Force, known for his strategic mind and unyielding discipline. His appearance reflects his status: a blend of traditional and astral-inspired armor, with his hair and beard braided and clasped in gold. Sternfront's career was built on his deep understanding of the strategic importance of the Astral Expanse, making him a pivotal figure in the defense and expansion of dwarven interests among the stars. Despite his tough exterior and demanding nature, he is profoundly dedicated to protecting the people of Graystrand, valuing discipline, order, and the well-being of dwarvenkind above all else.

Roleplaying as Sternfront: When roleplaying as General Sternfront, embody a voice of authority and confidence, with a direct and concise manner of speaking that reflects his military background and strategic mindset. He stands tall (for a dwarf) and uses deliberate gestures, especially when discussing plans or giving orders. Sternfront views the party as a critical asset to his objectives, expecting discipline and courage. He rewards strength and bravery but is quick to correct any behavior he sees as reckless. The party's achievements can earn them his respect and trust, allowing a future transition from mere assets to key players in the astral endeavors of Graystrand.

The party can ask the General any final questions, as well as make final preparations (such as casting *mage armor* spells).

If the party asks the General whether he has any ideas what the Truthseeker was looking for, he'll tell them it was classified information. They can persuade him into disclosing it with a **DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check**. On a successful check, he'll tell the party they have information to suggest issues regarding infernal threats, which they sent the Truthseeker crew back to investigate. They were told to not give any information until they've returned home, to not cause global panic.

In terms of rewards, tell the party they will each receive 1,000 gp upon completing the mission, with additional bonuses based on the amount of information they uncover.

Once the party has finished speaking to the General through their telepathic link, he will encourage them to make final gear checks. Each party member must make a **DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check** to ensure they have everything they need. On a failed check, choose to either give a -1 penalty to their ability checks, weapon attack rolls or armor class, as a result of forgetting an important piece of gear on the ship. On a roll of **18 or higher**, they also find a **potion of healing** among their government-issued gear.

Once the party feels ready to leave the ship, you can proceed to the next subchapter.

Desert Rangers

Read this:

“As the hatch of your starship hisses open, the intense heat of the desert planet immediately washes over you, a stark contrast to the controlled climate you’ve grown accustomed to during your journey. Before you stretches an endless sea of sand, its dunes shimmering under the relentless gaze of twin suns. The air is thick with the scent of scorched earth, and the horizon wavers with the heat’s mirage. General Sternfront’s final words echo in your minds, ‘Find the Truthseeker, recover the logs, and return swiftly.’ You step onto the sandy surface, the fine grains shifting underfoot. The vastness of the desert engulfs you.”

The party must now navigate the desert en route to the Truthseeker. Ask the party for a marching order. The party member leading the marching order must make a **DC 17 Wisdom (Survival) check**. On a failed check, each party member without resistance to fire damage must succeed on a **DC 15 Constitution saving throw** or suffer one point of exhaustion due to the prolonged exposure to extreme heat. This saving throw can be prevented by spells that create sufficient water such as *create food and water* or by means of avoiding heat (resistance to fire damage, etc.) On a successful check, the party member can roll on the table below, stumbling across one of the appropriate encounters. Repeat, re-rolling duplicates, until the party reaches the Truthseeker.

D6

Desert Encounter

1 **Mirage Oasis.** Driven by the harsh desert conditions, the party is lured to what appears to be an oasis, a potential source of respite and perhaps clues from other travelers. The party member leading the marching order must make a **DC 16 Intelligence saving throw**. On a failed save, each party member gains a point of exhaustion.

Unstable Dune. The party unknowingly steps into dunes that begin breaking rapidly. Each party member must succeed on a **DC 17 Dexterity saving throw** or take 2d8 bludgeoning damage.

3 **Wreckage of a Scout Drone.** The party stumbles upon the wreckage of a dwarven scout drone, partially buried in the sand. Recovering it from the sand requires a successful **DC 18 Strength (Athletics) check**, destroying the drone on a failure. The drone’s memory core grants access to its last recorded images, showing a swarm of quick creatures descending upon the Truthseeker.

4 **Scorched Earth.** While navigating the dunes, the party discovers an area where the sand has turned to glass, an indicator of intense heat. Any party member can make a **DC 16 Intelligence (Arcana) check** or a **DC 16 Intelligence (Nature) check**. A success on either check reveals that among the vitrified sand are remnants of what appear to be unnatural defensive spells and technological barriers, suggesting an intense battle took place here. These can be investigated further with a **DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check**. On a successful check, the party finds fragments of infernal machinery, hinting at the involvement of devils.

5 **Desert Nomads.** The party stumbles upon a group of desert-traveling halflings, hooded and riding camels. If asked about the Truthseeker, they tell the party they recall seeing something fall from the sky during the last sandstorm. They will also point the party in the right direction. They also offer to trade the party. They are willing to offer instant rust-removers for water. If the party takes the trade but does not have access to a spell such as *create food and water*, each party member who gave his water for the rust-remover makes the next **Constitution saving throw** to avoid suffering a point of exhaustion at disadvantage. The rust-remover can be used later in the adventure. With the guidance, they then arrive at the Truthseeker, without needing to repeat the check.

6 **The Truthseeker.** The party arrives at their destination. Proceed to the next subchapter.

🌀🌀🌀🌀 The Truthseeker 🌀🌀🌀🌀

Read this:

“After hours of arduous travel through the desert, guided by the coordinates provided by General Sternfront and the occasional arcane signal pulsing from the depths of your equipment, you finally come upon the wreckage of the Truthseeker. It lies sprawled across a wide basin, its hull rent open by some tremendous force. The sight is sobering; the once-proud vessel is now a complete wreck. As you approach, you see pieces of the ship are scattered around the site, perhaps offering clues as to what transpired.”

Show the party map 1. They can now investigate the wreck of the Truthseeker.

Area 1 - Point of Arrival

The party arrives here. They can move freely while investigating the surroundings.

Area 2 - Motors

The party can investigate the motors with a **DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) check**.

On a successful check, read this:

“Your eyes scan the debris, noting scorch marks and deep gashes on the outside of the motors. While these could surely have been inflicted post-crash, it’s highly unlikely, judging by the dust patterns. Something slashed at the engines mid-flight.”

On a roll of **20 or higher**, add this:

“There is one thing, however, which strikes you as odd, which is the surprising absence of some propeller blades. Only some, though. The bottom ones. As if they were never there in the first place, a clean cut.”

Area 3 - Hull

The party can investigate the hull with a **DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check**.

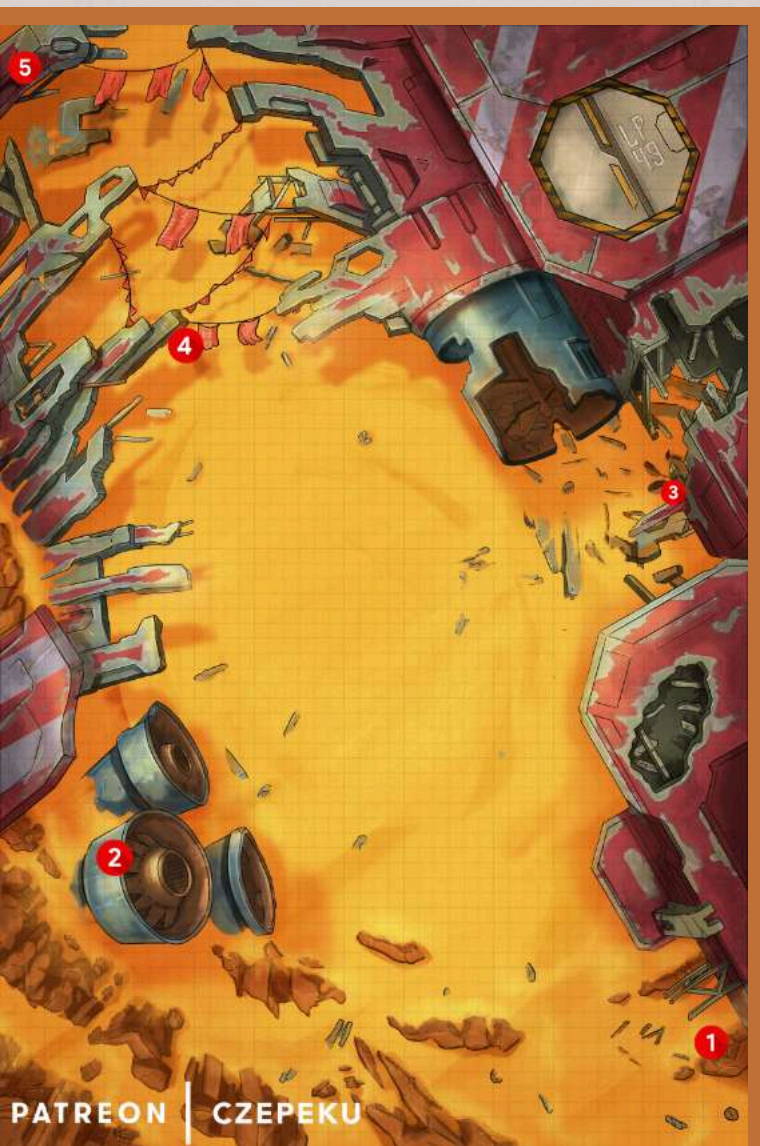
On a successful check, read this:

“Immediately upon stepping into the half-broken hull, you look to both your sides and notice a deep rusting to the central structure, not just the outside plating. The ship looks old and raggedy. What’s for sure is that the insides of the ship have been ‘scooped out’, including chairs, resources and the black box.”

The party can then further investigate the hull by looking at its make number and making a **DC 15 Intelligence (History) check** or by investigating the rusty structure with a **DC 16 Intelligence (Arcana) or Intelligence (Nature) check**.

On a successful **Intelligence (History) check**, they discover the make of the ship indicates it’s no older than a few months, meaning this amount of rust couldn’t have overtaken it that fast naturally, especially in a desert.

On a successful **Intelligence (Arcana) or Intelligence (Nature) check**, they sense that the rust is arcane in nature, corroding the ship at an unnatural rate.



Area 4 - Laundry Lines

Read this:

“Perhaps most disturbing, you find a series of laundry lines, moving from one side of the ship. What seem to once have been white linens are now stained red in their entirety. They look less like they were put out to dry and more so like they were left out here as a signal.”

The party can follow the laundry lines all the way to area 5. In addition, while looking at them, any party member can make a **DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check**. On a successful check, it occurs to them that all forces aboard the Truthseeker also had metallic armors, but no such armors, stained or otherwise, seem to be strung up.

Area 5 - Temporary Hideout

Read this:

“By following the lines, you eventually stumble into a makeshift tent, inside which you can see a hunched dwarf, holding a large, black box. There is no doubt about it, that which you see in front of you is the black box, though it now lies in the hands of a dead comrade.”

The party can now approach the body and retrieve the black box. If no party member has a **passive Perception of 20 or higher**, they do not notice the many landmines their now-dead comrade has set up to protect the black box. Each party member within 15 feet of area 5 must succeed on a **DC 18 Dexterity saving throw**, taking 3d8 fire and 3d8 lightning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

If they trigger the explosion read this:

“Just as you stretch out to free the box from the cold grasp of its guardian, a sudden, sharp hiss pierces the air. The ground trembles slightly underfoot, and without warning, a bomb hidden next to the body explodes in a blinding flash and a deafening roar, sending a cloud of sand and debris into the air. As the dust settles and the ringing in your ears subsides, an eerie silence envelops the crash site for a moment.”

Then read this (if they didn't trigger the explosion, read starting from here instead):

“With cautious steps, you reach for the black box, and successfully retrieve it. As the body's grip loosens, a note flutters to the ground. Picking it up, you read the hastily scrawled message: ‘I'm sorry, bomb used for protection against those things. Long live Graystrand!’ As you finish reading these words, the silence is broken by a faint, unsettling sound beneath the earth—skittering, as if something awakens or stirs from a deep slumber. The realization dawns on you that the crew of the Truthseeker faced threats both seen and unseen, and now, with the black box in hand, it seems it is your turn next. Roll for initiative.”

Roll initiative. The party must now fight **one giant rust monster** and a **horde of 8 rust monsters**.

Once the party has defeated all of the enemies, you can proceed to the next subchapter.



Return Home

Read this:

“With the black box securely in your possession, you swiftly make your way out of the wreckage’s shadow. As you emerge into the open desert, the familiar hum of engines fills the air, and you look up to see a skyship descending towards you, its silhouette cutting a stark contrast against the twin suns setting on the horizon. The hatch opens, and General Sternfront himself steps out, his gaze fixed on the black box under your arm. Without a word, you board the skyship, and as it ascends, leaving the desert’s treacherous embrace behind, Sternfront turns to you. ‘Report,’ he commands, his voice a mixture of urgency and anticipation. As the skyship speeds towards home, you begin to debrief him on everything you’ve encountered—the ambush, the bomb, the mysterious note, and the unsettling movements beneath the earth. Sternfront listens intently, before setting his sights once more on the black box, which is to be opened when you reach home.”

The party arrives home shortly thereafter. Grant them a few minutes to discuss and debate what might’ve been the source of the Truthseeker’s fall. Then, have them meet back up with General Sternfront.

Sternfront will ask the party to join him in his office via the R.I.T.E.

Read this:

“Some time after your return, as you each find moments of quiet amidst the preparations for what lies ahead, a sudden and clear voice intrudes upon your thoughts. General Sternfront, utilizing a telepathic communicator, summons you with an urgency that brooks no delay. ‘I need you in my office—now’. Upon entering Sternfront’s office, a room adorned with the medals from countless campaigns, you’re met with an unbelievable sight. Seated across from Sternfront, exuding an aura of command and determination, is the President of Graystrand himself, Urmmar Keenkind. ‘Is this them?’ he asks.”

Sternfront will introduce the party to Keenkind (see “President Keenkind” sidebar).

PRESIDENT KEENKIND

General Information: President Urmmar Keenkind lead the pioneering society of Graystrand into an era marked by both incredible technological advancement and looming extraterrestrial threats. His appearance exudes authority, with meticulously groomed silver hair and a beard that frames a face marked by the trials of leadership. Keenkind’s attire is a blend of traditional dwarven craftsmanship and modern regalia. A leader who rose from the ranks of an esteemed engineer to the highest office, Keenkind’s vision for Graystrand extends beyond its terrestrial bounds, aspiring for a society that thrives among the stars.

Roleplaying as Keenkind: When playing President Keenkind, project a demeanor of calm confidence and leadership. His voice reflects the importance of his job, commanding respect and attention. Keenkind speaks deliberately, choosing his words with care to inspire those around him and articulate his vision for Graystrand’s future. Despite the pressures of his position, he shows a genuine interest in the welfare of his people and the heroes who stand at the forefront of Graystrand’s defense and expansion.

Upon meeting the party, Keenkind will ask them for a detailed retelling of how they found the black box, as well as question if they altered it or messed with it to any extent. A successful **DC 20 Wisdom (Insight) check** reveals an underlying fear behind all his questions. The party must persuade him of the truth with a **DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check**. On a failed check, Keenkind will turn to Sternfront and threaten him that the party’s moves will dictate the course of his career. On a successful check, Keenkind will become more relaxed.



Then, regardless of the outcome, Keenkind will explain to the party that the blackbox carries information about an incoming devil attack coming from Pyriathos. If that information is true, it could signify their fears were true: interplanetary war has begun between the dwarves and Pyriathos. Keenkind will explain to the party that the Truthseeker had information that the devils would start the siege in a few days' time. The ship was found only today, meaning the siege is to begin tomorrow, at first light. As such, there's no time to waste. The party will be transported to Farfall Aerial Base, where their main task will be to defend the Extraterrestrial Neutralization Device (E.N.D.). There isn't enough time to reposition all of the military before the attack, only who is nearest. This is especially problematic, as Farfall is also the location of most intergalactic ships and astral-tech. Otherwise, the dwarven democracy is doomed. The fiends **must** be neutralized. Since the party was so helpful in retrieving this information, they'll receive 2,000 gp each and be placed in charge of one of the gates of Farfall.

If the party makes a successful **DC 22 Wisdom (Insight) check** while Keenkind is imparting this information on them, they'll find he is oddly excited for a threat that could end all dwarvish life as they know it, almost happy in getting to launch the nuke. On the other hand, Sternfront seems deeply distraught. Nevertheless, the party must now go to Farfall and participate in the defense.

You can proceed to the next chapter.

CHAPTER 2: TOWER DEFENSE



In which the party must defend an air base.

>Welcome to Farfall

Read this:

"As your vessel descends through the clouds, the sprawling expanse of Farfall Aerial Base comes into view, its myriad runways and hangars gleaming like a jewel set upon the rugged landscape below. This is the heart of Graystrand's might, a fortress dedicated to the defense of the realm and beyond. Today, it stands as the last bastion protecting the Extraterrestrial Neutralization Device (E.N.D.), dwarvenkind's hope against the infernal onslaught. As you disembark, the air buzzes with the tense energy of preparation; crews rush to fortify defenses, and engineers make final adjustments to the E.N.D. off in the distance, ensuring it stands ready to fulfill its dire purpose. The gravity of your mission weighs heavily upon your shoulders as you survey the base, understanding that, though it may seem like an honor, this job is, in part, also a suicide mission. General Sternfront greets you, his expression grim yet resolute, signaling it's time to prepare for the imminent clash. He leads you to the southern gate, which you are to defend at all costs. Then he wishes you the best of luck."

Show the party map 2. They must protect the gate (area 1) for as long as they can, retreating as needed. In addition, since they are in charge of the defense protocols for the gate, they can spend the rest of this chapter customizing their defenses to the best of their abilities.

Robot Engineers: The party is given command over small robotic engineers, which they can use to upgrade their defenses. They have access to 15 engineers, and 3 more are broken but each can be repaired with a successful **DC 17 Intelligence check**, a character proficient with Tinker's Tools can add double their proficiency bonus to the check. On a failed check the robot is destroyed for good and can no longer be fixed. Once a robot has been assigned to a location, it can no longer upgrade any other location.

Point each marked area to the party. Areas 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 each represent defenses which the party can customize before the main siege begins. They can do so only during this chapter.



Area 1 - Gate

The infernal hordes will emerge through this point, attacking the gate. The gate has an AC of 20, 100 hit points and immunity to psychic and poison damage. The party can choose to have it closed or open. They can spend **10 engineers** to reinforce it, doubling its hit points.

Area 2 - Gate Cannons

These cannons are the first line of defense. Each cannon has an AC of 16, 50 hit points and immunity to psychic and poison damage. The party can choose between the following cannon variants:

- **Regular Cannon.** Must be manned by a creature. As an action, a creature can make a cannon attack targeting a creature or horde within a 30-foot cone in front of it. The creature has a +10 to the attack and deals 6d10 on a hit. On a roll of 1 the cannon becomes jammed until a creature uses its Action to fix it.

- **Grease Cannon.** Must be manned by a creature. As an action, a creature can spew grease from the cannon in a 15-foot cone. Each creature or horde in the cone must succeed on a **DC 15 Dexterity saving throw** or have its speed halved for 1 minute.

- **Automatic Cannon - Costs 5 engineers.** It functions like a regular cannon, but doesn't need to be manned, instead attacking a hostile creature or horde within range each turn at initiative 20.

Area 3 - Chests

The chests can be used for supplies. Each chest has an AC of 10, 15 hit points and immunity to psychic and poison damage. The party can choose between the following chest variants for each of the 3 chests:

- **Healing Kits.** As a bonus action, a creature can open a chest and regain 4d10 hit points. The chest is then expended.

- **Empowering Kits.** As a bonus action, a creature can open a chest. Its next weapon or spell attack deals double damage. The chest is then expended.

- **Booby Chest - Costs 1 engineer per chest.** The chest holds bombs inside. When the chest is destroyed, each creature within a 15-foot radius of the chest must make a **DC 15 Dexterity saving throw**, taking 6d6 fire damage on failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Area 4 - Defense Emitter

The emitter can be used to defend the party. The emitter has an AC of 15, 30 hit points and immunity to psychic and poison damage. The party can choose between the following emitter variants:

- **Grounding.** Each creature within 60 feet of the emitter has its flying speed reduced to 0.
- **Defender.** At initiative 20, each party member within 30 feet of the emitter gains 2d10 temporary hit points.
- **Spellbender - Costs 8 engineers.** Each party member within 60 feet of the emitter has advantage on all saving throws.

Area 5 - Batteries

The batteries can be used to regain resources. The batteries have an AC of 17, 50 hit points and immunity to psychic and poison damage. The party can choose between the following battery variants:

- **Energy Boosters.** At initiative 20, each party member within 10 feet of the battery has its speed doubled until the end of its next turn and can make an additional attack when it takes the Attack action on its next turn.
- **Arcane Amplifiers.** At initiative 20, each party member within 10 feet of the battery rolls 1d6, regaining a spell slot equal in level to the rolled result.
- **Double Batteries - Costs 4 engineers.** The battery grants both benefits.

Once the party has customized all areas, you can proceed to the next subchapter.

⊕⊕⊕⊕⊕⊕ Siege of Farfall ⊕⊕⊕⊕⊕⊕

Read this:

“As the first shadows of the enemy darken the horizon, a sudden clarity cuts through the pre-battle — a telepathic message from President Urmarr Keenkind himself. His voice fills your minds, ‘Brave defenders of Graystrand, as you stand on the precipice of this monumental battle, know that the hopes and prayers of our entire nation are with you. Your courage lights the darkness ahead, a beacon of hope in these trying times. Remember, you do not fight alone; the spirit of every citizen of Graystrand fights alongside you. Let your valor be the shield that guards our freedoms, and your resolve be the sword that secures our future. Long live Graystrand!’ As the first wave of the infernal forces approaches, you stand ready, united by the president’s call to arms, prepared to defend your home against all odds.”

Ask the party to place themselves along map 2. They must stop the devils coming from area 1 from reaching area 6 (the launching pad). Whenever a monster or horde enters the map, it will move toward area 6 unless it is attacked (unless stated otherwise). Once attacked by a party member, that monster/horde will attack the party member until they have reached 0 hit points, then begin moving toward area 6 once again.

Lastly, make it clear to the party that, at any point, they can retreat to area 6, giving up ground to remain safe. If the party retreats, the devils overwhelm the base early, killing Sternfront and his forces, as well as further destroying the E.N.D. This will have an impact later on in the adventure.

GM NOTE: Since this part of the adventure is made to “mimic” a tower-defense game, consider altering the attack patterns of the monsters from what would otherwise make sense. Some monsters could just take the Dash action and reach their destination, but the flavor of battle would make it more interesting if they attack the players, their battlements and tear them all down before rushing in, as to not lose too many of their forces).

Ask the party for initiative, then roll a collective initiative for the devils. They will attack in waves, emerging periodically every round or every other round, as follows:

- During the first round, a **horde of 15 imps** will attack the base as a scouting unit.
- During the second round, a **horde of 20 lemures** and **two barbed devils** will storm the gate.
- When the previous wave is killed, a **horde of 10 lemures**, and **two bearded devils** riding **nightmares** will attack.
- Lastly, when the previous wave is killed, a **horde of 60 lemures**, **two bearded devils** and **one chain devil** will attack.

Once the party has either defeated the last wave or has retreated to area 6, proceed to the next subchapter.

If the party has retreated, they duck into a less-attacked portion of the base and can rest for a bit. They can take a short rest, which is reduced to 10 minutes.

GM NOTE: Reducing the short rest to 10 minutes is a homebrew rule that can replenish the party's resources in case they've spent too much and you feel they will surely die in the last encounter. If you like depleting your party's resources and feel like they are healthy enough, you can forgo this rest altogether.

If the party has instead defeated all the incoming waves, they receive reinforcements from one of the neighboring gates. Each party member regains 5d10 hit points and becomes heroic until the end of the adventure. While heroic, they can choose to automatically succeed on one attack roll or saving throw. Then, they are no longer heroic.

Then, read this:

“As the battle rages on, pushing you to the limits of your strength and resolve, a sudden, urgent plea echoes through your minds, telepathically transmitted by General Sternfront. His voice, strained under the weight of the unfolding chaos, bears a desperate message, ‘To all available units, this is General Sternfront! We are overwhelmed at the E.N.D. Launching Pad—devil forces have breached our perimeter, and the situation is dire. We need immediate reinforcement to repel the invaders and secure the device. Make haste!’ You know that your intervention is critical. Gathering your resolve and rallying your allies, you prepare to make a decisive move toward the E.N.D. Launching Pad, ready to face whatever horrors await, for the survival of your homeland and the victory over the encroaching darkness.”

The party can make final preparations, then you can proceed to the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3: LAUNCHING PAD

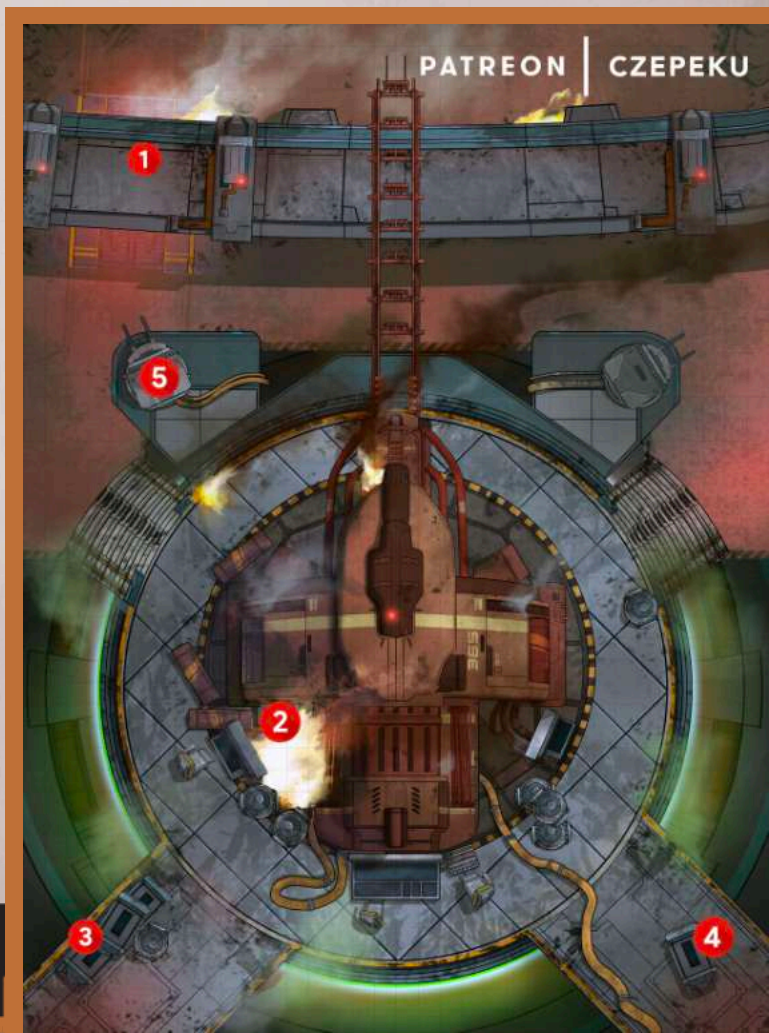
In which the party must launch a defective missile.

Fix It

Show the party map 3. They arrive at area 1. They've arrived at the E.N.D. Launching Pad littered with dozens of dwarven corpses. If they took a short rest, they can see General Sternfront dead on the ground. Otherwise, he is fighting in the distance, mounted on a cannon, shooting devils away from the E.N.D.

Each party member can make a **DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check**. On a successful check, they notice the cannon (area 2) is broken and will need fixing before it can be fired. The tools they need, they see, seem to lie in nearby boxes (area 3 and 4).

As they make this realization, the party is attacked by a **horned devil** and a **horde of 5 imps**, alongside every other monster that arrived at area 6.



If the party didn't take the short rest, there is an additional **horde of 10 lemures** swarming Sternfront (**veteran**) in area 5. He is using a regular cannon, and only has 30 hit points remaining. The cannon only has 25 hit points remaining.

Reminder: Regular Cannon. Must be manned by a creature. As an action, a creature can make a cannon attack targeting a creature or horde within a 30-foot cone in front of it. The creature has a +10 to the attack and deals 6d10 on a hit. On a roll of 1 the cannon becomes jammed until a creature uses its Action to fix it.

During this encounter, they must fix the cannon (area 2), while fighting the **horned devil** and imps. To fix the cannon, any party member must put out the fire with water or spells (*create food and water*), then use tools retrieved from areas 3 and 4 to make two successful **DC 16 Intelligence (Arcana) checks** while next to area 1.

Once the party has fixed the cannon, proceed to the next subchapter.

GM NOTE: Since the goal of this combat is not to kill the enemy, rather to fix the cannon, make this clear and apparent to the party. Describe the incoming hordes of infernals held off by other soldiers. The party must not hesitate, or else they will die and be overwhelmed. If they're handling the monsters too well, don't be afraid to throw more of them.

Final Choice

Read this:

"As you stand amidst the remnants of the battle, the E.N.D. Launching Pad now somewhat secure under your vigilant guard, President Urmmar Keenkind's voice once again fills your minds. 'Heroes of Graystrand, your valor has exceeded the bounds of our greatest hopes. Yet, the final test of your courage is upon us. Directing the missile back upon our base will not only eliminate the devil's immediate threat but also destroy our home and our capability for space travel. We'll become reliant on other races for protection, losing our sovereignty. Your sacrifice will ensure the devils never exploit our technology, and limit the reach of their expansion. Your names will be etched in history, symbols of ultimate sacrifice.'

If General Sternfront is still alive:

"General Sternfront's voice joins the chorus through the telepathic link, his tone heavy. 'There's another path. Redirect that missile to the devil's home turf, break their fucking planet, that nuke will decimate them. But, it leaves a door open for those who survive to snatch up our tech, and use it against others. The galaxy might lose in the short term because of that, but it gives our people a chance to recover and regain what's ours! We could once again soar amongst the stars.' His voice trails off, as he begins coughing blood. The choice is yours: will you safeguard the galaxy's immediate survival or gamble its future, for the sake of dwarvenkind. Your call, soldiers."

The party must choose where to aim the rocket. Then, proceed to the next subchapter.



The End

Based on the party's performance during the adventure, they reach one of the following endings:

1. **Complete Failure.** The party has died without firing the E.N.D. The entire universe is doomed.

2. **Protectors of Dwarvenkind.** The party fires the rocket at the base, wiping out the devils. Graystrand survives and never again attempts astral travel. Their dreams of the sky are forgotten. The devils never again struck faraway galactic sectors like earth, and dwarvenkind was saved. Though the fiends did destroy the isolated parts of the universe that they could reach.

3. **The Long War.** The dwarfs remember those who destroyed Pyriathos, saving countless planes from eternal damnation, but plunging the universe into its most brutal war. The heroes' gamble on the resilience of dwarvenkind led to a long conflict against the devils, who now had access to technology they could have never created themselves. Though the devils were eventually repealed, and the dwarves regained their sovereignty, it was at the cost of much bloodshed.

The End.

Appendix: Monster

Giant Rust Monster

Large Monstrosity, unaligned

Armour Class 19 (natural armor)

Hit Points 94 (9d10 + 45)

Speed 40 ft., burrow 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	14 (+2)	21 (+5)	2 (-4)	14 (+2)	5 (-3)

Skills Perception +8

Senses darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft., passive Perception 18

Languages —

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Iron Scent. The rust monster can pinpoint, by scent, the location of ferrous metal within 30 feet of it.

Standing Leap. The rust monster's long jump is up to 30 ft. and its high jump is up to 15 ft., with or without a running start.

Rust Metal. Any nonmagical weapon made of metal that hits the rust monster corrodes. After dealing damage, the weapon takes a permanent and cumulative -1 penalty to damage rolls. If its penalty drops to -5, the weapon is destroyed. Non magical ammunition made of metal that hits the rust monster is destroyed after dealing damage.

Actions

Multiattack. The Giant Rust Monster makes two attacks.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 23 (3d12 + 4) piercing damage.

Antennae. The rust monster corrodes a nonmagical ferrous metal object it can see within 5 feet of it. If the object isn't being worn or carried, the touch destroys a 1-foot cube of it. If the object is being worn or carried by a creature, the creature can make a DC 11 Dexterity saving throw to avoid the rust monster's touch.

If the object touched is either metal armor or a metal shield being worn or carried, its takes a permanent and cumulative -1 penalty to the AC it offers. Armor reduced to an AC of 10 or a shield that drops to a +0 bonus is destroyed. If the object touched is a held metal weapon, it rusts as described in the Rust Metal trait.

Deadly Leap. If the rust monster jumps at least 15 feet as part of its movement, it can then use this action to land on its feet in a space that contains one or more other creatures. Each of those creatures must succeed on a DC 16 Strength or Dexterity saving throw (target's choice) or be knocked prone and take 14 (3d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage plus 14 (3d6 + 4) slashing damage. On a successful save, the creature takes only half the damage, isn't knocked prone, and is pushed 5 feet out of the rust monster's space into an unoccupied space of the creature's choice. If no unoccupied space is within range, the creature instead falls prone in the rust monster's space.

Rust Gust (Recharge 5-6). The rust monster focuses its antennae on all the metal in a 15-foot cone. Each creature wearing metal in that area must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 16 (3d10) force damage and becoming stunned until the end of their next turn on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

In addition, the rust monster corrodes a nonmagical ferrous metal object within the area. If the object isn't being worn or carried, it destroys a 1-foot cube of the object. If the object is metal armor or a metal shield which is being worn or carried by a creature who failed the saving throw, it takes a permanent and cumulative -1 penalty to the AC it offers. Armor reduced to an AC of 10 or a shield that drops to a +0 bonus is destroyed. If the object is a held metal weapon, it rusts as described in the Rust Metal trait.



THANK YOU!

A BIG THANK YOU TO ALL OF THOSE WHO FOLLOW AND SUPPORT ME, WITHOUT YOU I COULDN'T HAVE BROUGHT THIS PROJECT TO LIFE.

COVER ART BY **GRAND FAILURE**

ART ON P.4: DARK LORD STUDIOS
P.8; 14: GRAND FAILURE
P.10: WARM_TAIL

MAPS CREATED BY CZEPEKU.

AN ADVENTURE BY MONKEYDM
ON PATREON

TAKE CARE!

