

# The Beginning of the End

Over five centuries ago, three mighty adventurers began their search for the long-lost den of the titan Kongradol. The party consisted of the mage brothers Odon and Oxon, founders of Odonburg, and the Pressonian explorer Duda Weysevain. After two years of rigorous search, the trio finally found Kongradol's Rest within the foothills of the Basilisk's Spine Mountains.

Although the great worm Kongradol continued its millenia-spanning slumber, the party uncovered many secrets within its resting place. They discovered ancient texts, powerful artifacts, and other oddities left behind by the dulons, the world's mysterious creators, who'd vanished five centuries prior. The group carefully collected the artifacts to bring back to Odonburg where they could be studied further by Odonburg's greatest magical scholars. Just as they were about to leave, Oxon, the world's most powerful diviner, established a psychic link with Kongradol. Within the mind of the sleeping titan, Oxon learned the greatest secret of Casar. This hidden truth shook Oxon to his core and nearly drove him insane.

As soon as Oxon returned to Odonburg, he shared what he knew with one of his disciples, the Archchanter Burshai. Burshai, a voracious student of the humanoid mind and psychology, understood what the secrets Oxon learned could do to the rest of the world if it ever became public knowledge. Burshai and Oxon joined forces with six more mages, the other six representing the remaining arcane schools. This coalition of eight mages called themselves the Truthkeepers of Burshai. The Truthkeepers traveled back to the Basilisk's Spine Mountains and built a mighty tower named The Tower of Burshai atop its highest peak. From this tower, Burshai performed an enchantment ritual that would affect the mind of nearly every sentient being in Omeria; so long as the tower continued to stand and function, anyone who even came close to uncovering what Oxon did at Kongradol's Rest would immediately forget what they knew. Finally, Oxon stored everything he knew into a leatherbound journal. The Archillusionist Aruxius masked the contents of the journal with a nigh-impenetrable *illusory script* spell. Oxon then entrusted the journal with a family of gnomish tinkerers in the nearby forest of Wallingmiotta. With their mission complete, the eight Truthkeepers of Burshai sequestered themselves within the tower.

For centuries, the Tower of Burshai fulfilled its purpose. With the exception of some very few creatures across the continent, no one ever discovered the Truthkeeper's secrets.

Then, just a few days ago, the journal reemerged. Long detached from its historical purpose, the owner—a descendant of the gnomish tinkerers who were given the journal by Oxon—contacted the top scholars and historians around Central Omeria to help him expose the journal's obscured contents. These scholars plan to gather at a converted lighthouse in the village of Haver on the western coast. Little do they know that there is an enemy among them.

## About This Book

Hand of the Eight is an exciting Fifth Edition adventure optimized for four to six characters. The player characters are heroes of the story; this book describes the villains and monsters the heroes must face and the locations that they must explore to bring this adventure to a successful (or potentially unsuccessful) conclusion.

This book introduces the world of Omeria, particularly its central region, where the Three Great Wastelands hide dark secrets that could unravel all of existence. While it's recommended that you have a copy of the sourcebook Pexia's Guide to Omeria before running this adventure as it will help you better understand some of the people, places, and things described in this adventure, the book gives you all the pertinent details about the setting within the text. Naturally, you're free to edit and adjust things as you see fit. It's your world!

## Adventure Summary

The end of everything begins with what seems like nothing when an orcish pirate steals an old book from a lighthouse. Soon, the entire continent of Omeria becomes embroiled in the mystery surrounding the book. The adventure's beats deal mostly with the factions who wish to gain control of the book and the challenges they present the characters. Below is a summary of the adventure's major factions.

### The Danaavrakti

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The first faction, which the adventurers feel more than see, are the demonic creatures who live within Omeria's Obsidian Plain, the danaavrakti. Dozens of centuries old, the danaavrakti wish to possess the book and share its secrets with all of Omeria, knowing full and well that the knowledge contained therein will disrupt ordinary life across the continent. Using this chaos to their advantage, the danaavrakti hope to establish themselves as the gods of Omeria. Chief among the danaavrakti is a foul being of great power named Hulay.

### Truthkeepers of Burshai

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Nearly four centuries ago, one of Odonburg's two founders, the archmage Oxon, divined the true nature of the world. Terrified by what this information could mean for the future of Omeria and its people, Oxon formed a mysterious faction called the Truthkeepers of Burshai to hide this information from the world. Although Oxon disappeared years ago, the Truthkeepers continue to uphold Oxon's tenets, ensuring that Omeria's great secret is never uncovered by its people.

### Mysterious Third Party

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Finally, there is a third party at work at the heart of this adventure. Whereas the Truthkeepers hope to hide the truth from the world and the danaavrakti hope to expose it, this third party hopes to tip Omeria closer to its inevitable destruction—revealing the contents of the ancient book is only the first step in that journey.

To prevent spoiling the ending of the adventure and who the "true" villain at the heart of Hand of the Eight is, details of this third party aren't shared until the end of the book in Chapter 10. If you wish to learn the information now, turn to page [x] and read the sidebar "Revelations."

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# Running the Adventure

To run the adventure, you need the three Fifth Edition core rulebooks: the handbook for players, gamemasters, and the manual detailing Fifth Edition's monsters.

Text that appears in a box like this is meant to be read aloud or paraphrased for the players when their characters first arrive at a location or under specific circumstances, as described in the text.

When a creature's name appears in **bold** type, that's a visual cue pointing you to its stat block as a way of saying, "Hey, game master, make sure you get this creature's stat block ready—there's going to be an encounter!" If the stat block appears in the Appendix of this adventure, the text tells you so; otherwise, you can find the stat block in the core rulebook.

*Spells* and nonmagical equipment mentioned in the adventure are described in the core manual for players. *Magic items* are described in the core manual for game masters, unless the adventure's text directs you to an item's description in the Appendix.

## Using the Maps

This book contains several interior maps used in the adventure. You can also get the full map pack from DMDave's Patreon preset for Virtual Tabletop (VTT) play. Unless stated or marked otherwise, the maps are positioned so that the north side of the map is at the top of the map and all grid squares equal five feet.

## Omeria

Also known as the Long Continent, Omeria is the humanoid-dominant continent on the planet Casar. In the far north, the Rasgax Highlanders protect the lower lands from the horrors that hide in the ice and snow. Central Omeria is divided by two great features: the Basilisk's Spine Mountains and the Three Great Wastelands: Desolation of Ditimaya, The Obsidian Plain, and The Wither. Major city-states cling to the coastlines in this region. To the far south, the Nation of Odonburg utilizes the innate magic of *emerald odonburgite* gems to enhance their technology.

The Three Great Wastelands is the primary setting for this document. The beginning of the adventure features exploration through the Desolation of Ditimaya, a once green expanse ruled by the fallen kingdom of Karnione. Later, the characters travel to The Wither, a span of lifeless terrain filled with savage beasts, gnolls, and land pirates. Finally, the characters must enter the dread fortress Shred.

The adventure also takes the characters to three different extraplanar realms: The Other, a sea of endless shadow; Loikiel's prison, a pocket dimension where a powerful transmuter eternally sleeps; and The Cruel, a demon-wracked hellscape of pain and hate.

## Adventure Flow

The accompanying adventure flowchart visualizes the narrative flow of the adventure. Many of the chapters focus on places of interest and offer characters opportunities to explore the world of Omeria. Other chapters focus exclusively on the plot.

Chapter 1 introduces the characters to the village of Haver on the westernmost coast of Central Omeria. During a hurricane, a band of orcish pirates attack the coastal village of Haver. While the attack seems random at first, the characters soon discover that the orcs are looking for a valuable artifact hidden at the nearby lighthouse.

Chapter 2 sees the characters chase the leader of the orcish pirates to his island fortress. There they must face a litany of dangers hidden within the island's dangerous swamps and coastlines.

Chapter 3 is a race against time as the characters travel across the Desolation of Ditimaya in hot pursuit of the orcish pirate.

Chapter 4 takes the characters to the exotic city of Orbea, where they must solve a murder mystery and find a lost artifact.

Chapter 5 features the menacing mountain range, Basilisk's Spine Mountains. The characters must climb the tallest mountain in the land and enter a ruined tower. There, they will uncover dark secrets that will forever change the world.

Chapter 6 drops the characters into The Other, a veritable sea of endless shadow. Within this hostile environment, they learn more about the nature of their world and what they must do to save it.

Chapter 7 finally introduces the eponymous Hand of the Eight, a young boy imbued with immense power. After tracking him through the desert, the characters must save him from the clutches of three power-hungry military forces.

Chapter 8 places the characters on a quest to find a long lost archtransmuter, Loikiel, and his demon-slaying sword, Anomaly. Although Loikiel holds the key to defeating the demons at the head of this adventure, it begs the question: can he be trusted?

Chapter 9 sets the characters before the mighty danaavrakti fortress, Shred. Once they figure out how to get past its unimaginable defenses, they will enter The Cruel, a demiplane of pain and hate.

Chapter 10 is the final chapter that puts the heroes before Hulay, the adventure's supposed villain. But is Hulay actually an enemy? Or is he an ally?

## Dissecting the Adventure

The content in this book is designed to work both as a full campaign that will take characters from 1st level all the way to 11th level. However, you can run each of the quests within the book separate from the whole. You can also place this campaign into any setting of your choice. It especially works best in settings with lots of deserts and wastelands. Feel free to change the names of the people, places, and things to better fit your world, too. Remember: it's your game!

[Adventure Flowchart]

## Running NPC Party Members

Usually, nonplayer characters (NPCs) are controlled by the game master. There are more than a few times in this adventure where NPCs become a regular part of the party, particularly in Chapters 4, 5, 7, and 8. If roleplaying an NPC becomes too much of a hassle for you, see if one or more of your players are willing to take on another role.

When a player agrees to take control of a friendly NPC, award that character a copy of the NPC's stat block, along with any roleplaying notes that are important to playing the character. Be sure to warn that player that you might commandeer play of that character at any time. There are particular plot points in the adventure where you'll need to control the NPC, so it's important you establish early on the need to take over at certain points.

## Transcontinental Travel

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There is a ton of travel in this adventure which can sometimes be daunting for game masters who aren't used to exploration or travel. When handling travel, here's a few things to keep in mind.

### Start Small, Go Big

When the characters first set out traveling, make sure they get a sense of the world around them. Once you've established the mood and atmosphere for a travel sequence, you can move to broader strokes, only describing what's needed. That way you don't bog down your characters with unnecessary details long after they "get the point."

### Use the Travel Rules

Each time a travel segment comes up during this adventure, there are rules provided that will help you run these sequences. Nearly all of these rules are designed to keep things brisk, interesting, and simple during travel. Before running one of these sequences, be sure to review these rules and use them, as they can help you quite a bit.

### Don't Overdo Random Encounters

Fundamentally, random encounters serve a few key purposes. First, they work to establish the tone, setting, and inherent dangers of a location or setting. Second, they work as a way to direct the plot where it needs to go, especially if the characters have fallen off the right path. Third, they can help slow things down a bit, especially if you're not ready for your players to approach a certain part of the adventure for which you haven't properly prepared. With that considered, you don't need to do more than one or two per session. More than that and it begins to get tedious. While the rules offer ways to randomly generate such encounters, you are in no way obligated to make frequent checks. Use your best judgment and the reactions of your players to know when and where to use random encounters.

## Pronunciation Guide

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The Pronunciations table on the next page shows how to pronounce many of the non-English names that appear in this adventure.

[Pronunciation table]

## Character Creation

Hand of the Eight introduces a completely new world to your players with its own intricacies and peculiarities. This section helps your players plan characters that fit into the world and feel as if they've always been in Omeria.

## Character Motivations

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The campaign sourcebook, Pexia's Guide to Omeria, contains character motivations that you can use in this adventure in place of backgrounds. This section also includes brand new motivations related directly to the plot that you can use. That way, if your characters are having trouble fleshing out their characters' backstories with details about Omeria, share the motivations list here with them.

[Motivations table]

## Dreams of the Boy

In each chapter of the adventure, one or more of the characters will experience dreams involving a young boy. Although they don't realize it, they're experiencing the thoughts and memories of the boy Ninety-Three, the eponymous Hand of the Eight. The characters finally meet the Boy in Chapter 7, aptly titled "Ninety-Three", and then join him in the last chapter, "The Hand of the Twelve" for the final showdown with the adventure's central villain, Hulay.

At the start of each chapter, choose the character you want to experience the dream. You can read it aloud so all of the players can hear it, or you can give the dream to the character in secret. Be sure to read the full read-aloud text as each text block will include details important to understanding the boy. That way, the characters will have an easier time convincing Ninety-Three that they mean him no harm when they meet him later in the story.

# Chapter 1. Storm of Mega

Just off the coast of the small fishing town of Haver, a powerful storm churns. The Haverians have begun preparations for the hurricane, evacuating non-essentials to the nearby village of Roselake. Unfortunately, what they didn't account for is the seafaring orc tribe of the Odzedoz. The orcish pirates plan to use the storm as the perfect opportunity to lay siege to the town. Led by Mega the Brash, a powerful orc chief known for his blood-thirsty take-no-prisoners nature, the orcs are a true force to be reckoned with.

## Running This Chapter

This chapter introduces the characters to the main plot of Hand of the Eight and, even if they aren't aware, two of the factions vying for control of the game, Prime. For whatever reasons they decided at the beginning of the game, the characters are in the coastal village of Haver. With a large hurricane headed their way, the Haverians scramble to make preparations. Amid the commotion, a band of orcish pirates assaults the village. One or more of the characters recognize that the attack is a distraction from the orc's main goal; the orcs are interested in the lighthouse at the sound end of town. Although the characters are able to stop a few of the orcs from killing innocents in the tower, the orcs' leader Mega manages to kill the lighthouse's owner and escape with a hostage before the characters can stop him.

## Dreams of the Boy

At the start of the session or during an early short or long rest, choose one of the characters to experience a dream (see the section "Dreams of the Boy" for details on how this works). Read the following:

You're dreaming. You know you're dreaming. You can sense it. But there's something more to this dream. From the swirling darkness of this unconscious construction you can feel something—someone. In the center of this darkness, you hear gentle sobs. A small voice begs, "Please. Let me out. I don't want to be here anymore." Before you can turn your attention away from this, you can make out the form of a small boy crouched on a stone floor. He looks up at you with his tear-soaked eyes. But then—

Pale, yellowish light starts to pour from his eyes and mouth and ears. The light writhes under his arms and his chest. While he seems innocent at first, this innate power seems unearthly to you.

Another voice—unseen—gasps and growls, "How is he doing this? It's impossible!"

And then you wake.

There is no explanation for who or what the boy was at this point, nor are there any clues leading to his location.

## Character Advancement

This chapter is intended for four to six characters of 1st level. Characters who successfully complete this leg of the adventure should earn enough experience to reach the 2nd-level.

## Haver

Haver is a large village off the coast of the Omeria Ocean and the starting point for this adventure. Most Haverians toil in the Omerian Ocean as fishers, traders, and sailors.

The majority of Haverians are humans of Ditimayan descent. However, around 20 percent of Haver's population is made up of Von Doral dwarves. Although they've lived with each other for nearly three decades since the fall of Von Doral, the tensions are still high. Much of Haver is segregated, with the humans living and operating in the town proper and the dwarves living just past the Eastgate in the ironically nicknamed Noble's Ward.

Long before it was a fishing village, Haver was a seaside fortress and the site of the Attack of Regrets. Surrounding the edge of the harbor are the old ballistae and canon ports facing towards the sea. Of course, an actual canon hasn't been in place for almost a decade, not since the signing of the Treaty of Hidden Goals fifteen years prior. The only siege weapon that remains is Old Beatty, a rusty mangonel at the north end of the docks. These days, Haver largely stays out of the politics of greater Omeria.

Most travelers and Ditimayans know Haver for its piety and devout worship of Suen, God of Storms. Hurricanes and tropical storms aren't uncommon in Haver. Since the powerful storms often disable competition, they see these destructive natural forces as gifts from Suen. As such, Haver is exceptional at preparing for such events.

## Haver Basics

**Population:** 800 (mostly human with a large dwarven population)

**Leadership:** Haver is led by Rhukhim Mastid (LN male Ditimayan human **veteran**). Most days, the iron-willed burgomeister does his best to keep the peace between the Haverian humans and Von Doral dwarves. The Von Dorals have their own representative, too: Degnarlum Coppertoe (NE male Von Doral dwarven **commoner**), a sailor. Coppertoe's job is to protect the interests of the Von Dorals. Unfortunately, Coppertoe is easily manipulated and a cheap bribe. Since his election, he's damaged the reputation of the Von Dorals more than he's repaired it.

**Defense:** Haver can muster 80 militia (use the **guard** stat block) and 8 **veterans**.

**Commerce:** Haver's fishmongering and position as a central trading hub between Castlegrasp and Orbea makes it a relatively wealthy little village.

**Organizations:** A small guild of mages meets regularly at Haver's Sparkling Lookout lighthouse. Led by a wizened sage named Nammod Ruhreid (NE male Ditimayan human **mage**), these sages enjoy talking and drinking wine more than they enjoy casting spells.

## Life in Haver

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Most Haverians are hardworking men and women of the sea. Unlike its neighboring villages and cities, Haverians actively practice worship, paying homage to the Goddess of Storms, Suen. It's not unusual for strange travelers from distant lands to pass through Haver as it acts as a trading hub between the metropolis of Castlegrasp to the south and the trade port of Orbea to the north.

Many Haverians fought during the Attack of Regrets, a war that pitted the great southern nation of Odonburg against northern Omeria's Kingdoms of Man. Once word came out that the war was for naught and started over a huge misunderstanding between the stakeholders, the Haverians quietly decided to practice isolationism.

The most action Haver sees now is when fights break out between the refugee Von Doral dwarves and humans. Sixty-five years ago, the goblins of Gar Wabrizz pushed the Von Dorals from their homes in the Basilisk's Spine Mountains. Although the humans allowed the dwarves to resettle in their lands, the dwarves blamed the humans for the loss, claiming that they didn't help them in their time of need. This bitterness still rings true six decades later.

## Travel

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Haver sits on The Leash, a long, infrequently paved road that winds up the Weysevain Coast from Castlegrasp to Cabal. Because of the shape of the coast, Haver is also relatively safe from the violent Broovian storms that plague the Omerian Ocean. Travel times for characters traveling both on foot or by ship are listed below. Mounts can shorten the land travel times by as much as 50 percent.

### Travel from Haver

To	Land Travel Time	Sea Travel Time
Arruquetta	6 days	3 days
Cabal	14 days	7 days
Castlegrasp	2 days	1 day
Dedezdere	2 days	—
Doganaga	3 days	—
Hasastan	4 days	—
Orbea	4 days	2 days
Qola	9 days	—
Roselake	1 day	—
Tadju	15 days	—

## Locations in Haver

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Despite its relatively small size compared to the massive trading port of Orbea or the majestic metropolis that is Castlegrasp, Haver offers a few points of interest for travelers and denizens alike. Noteworthy places in Haver are keyed to the map of Haver on page [x].

## Old Beatty

*Rusted mangonel*

More of a decoration than a weapon these days, Old Beatty is a large, rusting mangonel that served during the Attack of Regrets. Much to everyone's surprise, it still works. Before Old Beatty can be fired, it must be loaded and aimed. It takes two actions to load the weapon, to actions to aim it, and one action to fire it. A pile of heavy, salt-stained stones stands next to it.

**Mangonel Stone.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 200/800 ft. (can't hit targets within 60 feet of it), one target. *Hit:* 27 (5d10) bludgeoning damage.

## The Sparkling Lookout

*Lighthouse and magic guild*

Situated by the water and a short walk from Rirreared Market, the Haver's sages guild makes its home in the long-decommissioned lighthouse, the Sparkling Lookout. In addition to its owner and founder of the guild, Ruhreid Nammod, there are three apprentice wizards here (LN male human **nobles** with proficiency in Arcana that can cast *fire bolt*, *mage hand*, and *prestidigitation* at will). Their names are Emar Cadel, Zuzen Mahran, and Nebrork Hallowpelt.

The Sparkling Lookout is detailed further later in this chapter.

## Town Hall

*Village's leadership office*

The largest building in Haver is its town hall. Here, the burgomeister makes announcements concerning the welfare of the town. Any disputes and civil matters are handled here, as well. There is a small jail in the basement of the building capable of holding three prisoners.

## The Wise Shirt

*Tavern and inn*

There are three taverns and two inns in Haver, but the most popular of the bunch, by far, is The Wise Shirt. This drinking hole is owned and operated by Aywin Luphine (LG male half-elf **noble**), who most see as a bit of a snoot. But it's Luphine's star bartender Bezka Wells (LG female half-elf **noble**) who keeps everyone coming back night after night. Bezka drinks almost as much of the ale as she sells and loves to dance on the bar. Rumor around town is that she's in a relationship with the burgomeister, but neither party will confirm or deny the allegations.

The Shirt has a small inn, too, with four beds. It's only 5 sp per night to sleep at the Shirt and that includes three square meals and stabling (if you're coming with horses).

## Magic Laws in Haver

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*Pexia's Guide to Omeria* details the magic laws of the continent and how they affect everyday lives. If you don't own a copy of that book, this section offers some basics.

In Central Omeria, particularly close to the city of Castlegrasp, magic cast from the following schools of magic are illegal: conjuration, enchantment, and transmutation. Haver is a little loose on these restrictions—after all, nobody's going to jail for casting *mage hand*—but certain NPCs might treat characters oddly if they violate these statutes. Overall, any spells that alter or change a person's mind or body without their permission is strictly forbidden and will result in imprisonment and sometimes death.

Certain subclasses and NPCs can use these powers so long as they follow rules set forth by their respective culture. For example, the Stonearms of Castlegrasp can use transmutation magic, but only do so in extreme cases.

## The Storm Cometh

When the adventure begins, Haver is making preparations for a huge hurricane sweeping in from the Omerian Ocean. Once the characters get a sense of the setting and their characters, read the following:

The warm air turns cool and a rumble of thunder echoes overhead. Westward, black clouds boil over turbulent waters—it's a storm, and a nasty one by the looks of it. A bell starts to ring at the center of town. The folks of Haver seem to know what it means and start following protocol. The fishermen call to their hands to unpack what they can and tie down the rest. Shop owners cash out their customers and start shuttering their shops. Parents coax their children away from the docks and back indoors.

Many Haverians question the nature of the storm, seeing as hurricane season is over for the year. Despite their skepticism, most Haverians know better than to ignore the signs of a storm. Already, the clouds above are dark and fat with rain and dark gray waves smash against Haver's rocky shores. The bright, emerald light of The Sparkling Lookout lighthouse casts the entirety of Haver in a verdant glow. Soon, the Haverians shutter windows, prepare sandbags in front of their doors, and remove any items outside of their homes or places of business that could get blown away during the storm.

## Starting Quests

After the characters have had a few minutes to react to the coming storm, introduce the following scenario.

"You there!" calls a tall fellow with dark hair and a crooked nose. "I'm Rhukhim Mastid, the burgomeister here. Looks like we've got a hurricane brewing off the coast, likely headed this way. Could you assist?"

If the characters aren't driven by an innate desire to help the town prepare, Mastid offers each 5 gp for assistance and twice that if they do an exceptional job. He's got a few chores they can help with. The characters can work as a team, or they can split up to handle each of the chores.

### Shutter Town Hall

Town Hall is a large, rectangular building bordering town square. As most of the garrison is assisting in evacuations, there aren't many hands to help shutter its ten huge windows. Mastid needs at least one character to assist.

**Resolution.** No checks are required to shutter the windows, just time. One character can shutter the windows by themselves after four hours of work. For each additional character who helps, cut the time in half to a minimum of half an hour; it takes two characters two hours, three characters one hour, and four characters half an hour.

## Catch Tibby

Venerable Mrs. Odette's white cat, Tibby, is on the loose and won't come in. Frantic, Mrs. Odette demands that Mastid help her, so Mastid delegates the task to the characters. If they agree, they follow Mrs. Odette to her small house in Haver's Sunrise District.

**Resolution.** It takes three successful ability checks to catch Tibby. The checks must be made in order, and if one check fails, the characters have to start over with the first check. Each series of checks takes 10 minutes to perform, even if the very first check fails. One character can perform all checks, or the characters can divide the checks among themselves.

- First, one character will need to make a DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check to spot the cat.
- Next, once Tibby is spotted, a character must make a Dexterity check contested by Tibby's Dexterity check (Tibby gets +2 to the check).
- Last, the same character who succeeded on their Dexterity check must make a Strength (Athletics) check contested by Tibby's Dexterity (Acrobatics) check in order to catch her. Tibby gets a +2 to her check.

Once all three checks are successful, the characters can hand off Tibby to Mrs. Odette who retreats into her shanty for the duration of the storm—not a word of thanks from her, either!

## Convince the Old Dwarf to Come In

Darebumli Onyxbrow (CN male Von Doral dwarf **commoner**) is a stubborn, always-drunk sailor who lives on his small sailing boat in the harbor. Every storm, he refuses to go in. Typically, it requires Mastid and at least two members of the garrison to convince him—by force, bribe, or lies—to seek shelter at The Wise Shirt. Not wanting to deal with it this time, Mastid turns to the characters for assistance.

**Resolution.** Getting Onyxbrow to leave his ship and go to the Wise Shirt takes some coaxing. Have the players roleplay the interaction with Onyxbrow. Onyxbrow is incredibly stubborn and has a bit of a foul mouth, spouting a surprising range of dwarven profanities through slurred speech. Fortunately, there are three things that will automatically motivate Onyxbrow to leave his ship for the Wise Shirt. If the characters ask around town for secrets to convincing the old dwarf to surrender, a few citizens share one of the following tips:

- **Alfie Sapphireburster.** Should the characters mention that Alfie Sapphireburster will be at the Shirt, he'll dash that way. The old man's got something of a crush on the guard.
- **Gold.** If the characters offer up at least 1 gp as a bribe, Onyxbrow will head to the Shirt.
- **Jokes.** Onyxbrow loves a good joke. Any character who demonstrates a keen sense of humor or razor wit (the more off-color, the better) will convince Onyxbrow to head towards the Shirt.

The only other option to get Onyxbrow to the White Shirt is to knock him out cold (Mastid mentions that it's been the only solution on more than one occasion). The characters can fight the old man—who enjoys throwing things and cursing as he does—and knock him out with non-lethal force. The only trouble is that they'll have to drag the heavy old coot to the Shirt if they do that.

# Odzedoz Raid

As the waves begin to lap at the shore rocking the boats in the harbor, Alfie Sapphireburster (NG female Von Doral dwarf **knight**) rushes to Mastid or the characters with reports that she saw the black sails of Odzedoz longboats galloping over the waves.

"Odzedoz," sighs Mastid as he looks out over the black, cresting waves. "They're a nasty band of orcish pirates led by a cutthroat named Mega the Brash. Half the militia's assisting with evacuations and with the storm coming, and we won't be able to get word to Castlegrasp in time. You're fighters, right? Think you can help?"

Should the characters agree, Mastid offers to pay each character 50 gp for their services. Alfie told Mastid they were at least twenty minutes out, so there will be time to prepare. She also mentions that it looks like there were three longships.

## Hurricane Conditions

Many of the fights in this part of the adventure take place outside during a raging hurricane. The following hazards apply: **Strong Winds**. The hurricane winds impose disadvantage on ranged weapon attack rolls and Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing. The winds also disperse fog and extinguish open flames. Plus, flying by nonmagical means is nearly impossible; the giant vultures featured in this part of the adventure have special training which allows them to ignore this rule. **Heavy Precipitation**. Everything is lightly obscured, and creatures in the area have disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or sight. The rain also extinguishes open flames.

## Preparing for the Raid

Mastid explains the orcs' typical tactics:

- Fortunately, the Odzedozi longships aren't (usually) equipped with siege weapons. However, each ship can hold as many as fifty orcs. With only forty militia members onhand, it'll be a bloody fight for sure.
- It's likely that Mega is riding with them. Mega never misses the opportunity to join in a raid. Often, Mega rides first into the throes of combat upon his stormborn giant vulture, Cheeko.
- The orcs will use their overwhelming numbers to swarm the docks, preferring a frontal assault.

## Assets

Fortunately, the characters and Mastid aren't the only ones around to fight the pirates.

- Alfie Sapphireburster has offered to stay with the noncombatants in the White Shirt along with Bezka and Aywin.
- A **canid** (see the Appendix) dock worker named Rahl wants to help. Rahl always invites a good fight. He arms himself with a harpoon that's easily twice as long as he is tall.
- Forty members of the militia are still in town. They all use the **guard** stat block.
- Ten sailors have offered to help. They are all **commoners** armed with light crossbows (+0 to hit, 1d8 piercing damage).

- Old Beatty is the only mangonel left over from the Attack of Regrets that's still operational. See the section "Locations in Haver" on page [x] for details.

## Strategy

Mastid looks towards the characters for a defensive strategy, as his chief concern is protecting the people of Haver. However, if he's asked for advice, he offers the following strategic locations for fighting the orcs. In each situation, he assigns ten members of the militia (**guards**) to assist the characters during the fight.

- Mastid believes that attacking their ships will scare away the pirates. It takes five people to effectively operate Old Beatty, the mangonel by the docks. He suggests that the characters help with it since they're more likely to understand its operation. If the characters choose this option, see "Fight at the Docks" below.
- The buildings surrounding town square offer plenty of excellent vantage points for snipers, especially the roof of the town hall. If the characters choose this option, see "Fight in Town Square" below.
- The walls around the town—while crumbling—also offer an excellent vantage point against the orcs. An interior wall divides the docks from the town proper. That's where he recommends they station themselves. If the characters choose this option, see "Fight at the Gates" below.
- Should things turn bad, The Wise Shirt was once an old fortress. It's easily defensible and has an old smugglers tunnel that leads out of the walls. If the characters retreat to this location during any of their fights, see "Fight at the Wise Shirt" below.

## Running the Combats

The characters may participate in up to three different combats before the close of this chapter. First, they must choose the location where they wish to start the defense: the docks, townsquare, or the walls. If things go poorly for them during that combat, then they will need to retreat to The Wise Shirt tavern/inn and defend the people there. Then, after that combat, they will need to take the fight to Mega at the Sparkling Lookout, which should run like a typical location-based crawl. See the section "The Sparkling Lookout" below for details.

The set-up for each combat is detailed below in its respective sub-section. Because most of the combats involve high numbers of NPCs and enemies, many of these combats have complication tables which help automate the extraneous combatants. To use these tables, run combat like normal except with the following changes:

**Group Initiative.** Instead of rolling initiative for every individual **guard** and **orc**, roll initiative once for all of the guards and once for all of the orcs.

**Guard Checks.** During the guards' turn, roll a d20 and add the number of guards that are still participating in the combat. Then, reference the Guard Results table to determine the outcome of their actions that turn; for simplicity's sake, they do not take individual actions. Also during their turn, the players may reposition the guards anywhere they like, so long as a guard doesn't move beyond its normal movement speed. Once all of the guards have been killed or run away, ignore this rule until the characters appear in a new location.

**Orc Checks.** At the start of the orcs' turn, roll a d20 and subtract the number of orcs that were killed during the previous round. Then, reference the Orcs Results table to determine what they do this round. Even if there are no orcs currently in the fight, continue to make rolls using this table until the combat ends.

**Orc Turns.** After checking the Orcs Results table, run the orcs' turn as normal. Any time an orc comes within 5 feet of a militia member, they can use their action to automatically remove the guard from play—assume that the orc hit and dealt enough damage to automatically kill the guard. Any features or ability that would allow for the players to defend an incoming attack, such as the Protection Fighting Style, prevents the militia member's death.

**Stay/Retreat.** Once all of the militia members are removed, at the end of each round, ask the players if their characters wish to stay or retreat. The characters are free to fight for as long as they can. If they choose to flee, they do so without any consequences. Characters cannot flee from The Wise Shirt or Sparkling Lookout.

Certain conditions, obstacles, and cover granted by the different locations may give special bonuses or penalties to some of these rolls; make sure to review these before the start of combat.

**Winning the Fight.** If the characters last for 10 rounds without dying or fleeing, they win the fight. Refer to the "Winning the Fight" section under the respective fight in which they're taking part to determine what happens.

**Getting Knocked Out.** It's possible that the characters all get wiped during this series of fights. If you don't wish to incorporate a "hardcore style" of play, simply have them knocked unconscious. They awake the next morning to learn that the orcs escaped with Nadia Mansouri and the book. See "Mega Escapes" for details.

## Guard Results

Guard Check	Outcome
1-5	1d4 guards run away
6-10	The guards stand their ground
11-20	Remove one orc from the fight
21-25	Remove two orcs from the fight
26+	Remove three orcs from the fight

## Orc Results

Orc Check	Outcome
1-5	Nothing happens
6-15	1 orc appears at the westernmost edge of the board
16-20	1d4 orcs appear from the westernmost edge of the board

## Fight at the Docks

The combat at Haver's docks places the characters right in front of the orcs as they begin their approach. A map of the docks is included in the Appendix. Before the combat begins, allow the players to place the militia members anywhere on the board they like. After the players place the militia members, they may place their own characters. Then, follow the rules detailed in the "Running the Fights" section above.

This combat has the following special rules:

- The orcs fire arrows from their ships. At the start of each character's turn, they must succeed on a DC 8 Dexterity saving throw or take 3 (1d6) damage from the arrows. Characters behind full cover automatically pass their saving throws.
- Any time the Orc Results table tells you to place orcs on the board, double that number.
- Orcs that arrive appear at the westernmost sides of the dock.
- The characters can fire Old Beatty at the orcs. To fire old Beatty, they must spend two actions loading the old mangonel, two actions aiming it, and one action firing it. Once fired, one of the players rolls a d20. On a result of 15 or higher, Old Beatty hits one of the ships. The next time the orcs make their Orc Check, subtract 10 from the result.

**Winning the Fight.** Characters who successfully defeat the orcs at the docks have saved the lives of dozens of Haverians. Before the orcs totally retreat, however, the characters witness four orcs riding giant vultures flying toward the Sparkling Lookout. Before the characters proceed to the lighthouse, they make one final shot with Old Beatty (ignore the number of actions needed). Have one player roll a d20. On a result of 13, the mangonel takes out one of the orcs. Subtract one of the orcs guarding the front of The Sparkling Lookout (area 1).

Proceed to section "The Sparkling Lookout" below.

## Fight at the Gates

The interior walls that divide the docks from Haver proper are the characters' next line of defense against the orcs. A map of the gates are included in the Appendix. Before the combat begins, allow the players to place the militia members anywhere on the board they like. Keep in mind that there are both interior and exterior areas. After the players place the militia members, they may place their own characters. Then, follow the rules detailed in the "Running the Fights" section above.

This combat has the following special rules:

- There are two ballistae mounted on the top of the wall. If three guards are standing by a ballistae at the start of the guards' turn, they add +3 to their Guard Check that turn (up to a maximum of +6). Similarly, the characters may use the ballistae; it costs one action to load the ballista, one action to aim the ballista, and one action to fire it. Shots fired with the ballista must be made at targets standing to the west of the walls. These shots are made with a +6 to hit, regardless of who's aiming or firing the weapon, with the usual penalties for firing in heavy wind. Alternatively, the characters may target the ships in the distance. If they do, have one of the characters using the ballista roll a d20. On a result of 14 or better, the ballista hits a ship. The next time the orcs make their Orc Check, subtract 5 from the result.
- Guards standing behind arrow slits cannot be targeted by orcs outside of the arrow slits.
- At the start of combat, the gate is closed and barred. If four or more orcs come within 5 feet of the gate, they can combine their actions to break the gate open.
- An orc that starts its turn at the base of a wall can use its full movement speed and action to climb the wall, appearing in an unoccupied space on top of the ramparts.

**Winning the Fight.** If the characters defeat the orcs at the walls, they save dozens of Haverians. Before they can celebrate, they witness four orcs riding giant vultures flying from the ships to the Sparkling Lookout. Unfortunately, they're too far away to target the vultures or their riders with the ballistae.



Proceed to section "The Sparkling Lookout" below.

## Fight in Town Square

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Town Square offers the characters a few more helping hands, but also puts the orcs dangerously close to the village's citizens. A map of the town square is included in the Appendix. Before the combat begins, allow the players to place the guards anywhere on the board they like. For this fight only, the characters get fifteen guards instead of ten. After the players place the guards, they may place their own characters. Then, follow the rules detailed in the "Running the Fights" section above.

This combat does not have any additional rules.

**Winning the Fight.** Ultimately, the fight here distracts the characters from the orcs' real target: The Sparkling Lookout. As soon as they defeat the orcs, a sailor rushes up to inform the characters that a gang of orcs just took control of The Sparkling Lookout. Because the orcs had more time to prepare, add one additional orc to area 1 of The Sparkling Lookout.

Proceed to section "The Sparkling Lookout" below.

## Fight in The Wise Shirt

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If the characters flee from one of the three fights above, they must retreat to The Wise Shirt inn and tavern where many of the village's noncombatants are hiding in the basement. A map of the Wise Shirt is included in the Appendix. Instead of guards, the characters are joined by four NPCs: Alfie Sapphireburster (dwarven **knight**), Bezka Wells (half-elf **noble**), Rahl the **canid** (see the Appendix) dockworker, and Rhukhim Mastid (human **veteran**). Instead of using the rules for Guard checks, run these NPCs as normal. If you feel overwhelmed running the NPCs, allow each of the players to run one or more of them. Have the players place these four NPCs anywhere they like. Meanwhile, you must place 10 **commoners** in the basement; these are noncombatants. The rules concerning the Orc Checks remain the same.

This combat has the following special rules:

- The characters and NPCs can use their action, bonus action, or 10 feet of their movement to shut and lock any of the doors in the inn. A locked door has AC 15, 18 hp, and immunity to poison and psychic damage. To simplify things, an orc within 5 feet of a door can use its action to break down the door, no check required. A character or NPC can use their action to block a door with their body; when they do, an orc must succeed on a Strength check (+3) contested by the blocker's Strength check to force the door open.
- By knocking over a lantern or candle, an orc can use its action to create a fire in the tavern. When a fire breaks out, it appears in an unoccupied space beside the orc. A creature that enters or starts their turn in a space with fire takes 2 (1d4) fire damage. A creature can use its action to extinguish the fire. On initiative count 20, roll a d12 and add the number of existing 5-foot square spaces that are currently on fire. On a result of 1-8, nothing happens. On a result of 9 or higher, the fire spreads to one random unoccupied space. If twelve spaces or more catch on fire, the entire tavern becomes a hazard. When this happens, the fires cannot be extinguished. Additionally, each creature that starts its turn in the tavern takes 1 poison damage from smoke inhalation. A creature whose hit points are reduced to 0 from smoke inhalation is stable but poisoned for 1 hour, even after regaining hit points.

**Winning the Fight.** Even if the characters defeat the orcs at the tavern, they're too late to stop Mega from leaving with Nadia Mansouri and the book. They will have to learn secondhand what happened at The Sparkling Lookout.

Proceed to "Mega Escapes" below.

## The Sparkling Lookout

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So long as the characters successfully defeat the orcs at the docks, gate, or townsquare, they discover that a group of four orcs riding giant vultures flew to the huge lighthouse at the south end of town, The Sparkling Lookout. If the characters hope to stop Mega and his pirates, they will need to enter the lighthouse and defeat them.

## General Features

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Despite its age, The Sparkling Lookout is a relatively well-cared for lighthouse. Like many lighthouses on the Weysevain Coast, its lamp is powered by a small fragment of emerald odonburgite. It's this gem that gives the Lookout its green glow.

Both the lighthouse's exterior and interior walls are made from clay bricks and its floors are made from broad, wood timbers. Ceilings rise 20 feet above the floors. Doors are made from solid oak and are all unlocked. The last two floors are exposed to the outside and are subjected to the heavy wind and precipitation conditions detailed earlier in this chapter.

## Arrival

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When the characters first arrive at The Sparkling Lookout, read the following:

The door to the old lighthouse is off its hinges. From eighty feet above you, you hear a high-pitched scream. A man yells, "No! Please!" The wind, rain, and awkward angle make it impossible to make out who's up there.

Mega is already at the top of The Sparkling Lookout. He's captured Nadia Mansouri and he's preparing to kill Ruhreid Nammod. Time is of the essence.

## Keyed Locations

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The following locations are keyed to the map of The Sparkling Lookout on page [x].

### 1 - Ground Floor

This floor serves as the family room and quarters for Nammod and his disciples. The fireplace and *continual flame* lanterns illuminate the entire level.

**Encounter: Orcs.** One or more **orcs** stand guard at the double doors that lead into the front floor of The Sparkling Lookout. The number of orcs here depends on how well the characters defended Haver from the orcs.

- If the characters managed to take out one of the orcs riding a giant vulture by the docks using Old Beatty, then there is only one orc standing guard here.
- If the characters faced the orcs at town square, then there are three orcs standing here.
- In all other situations, there are two orcs here.

One hundred feet to the south of the lighthouse, the orcs keep their flying **giant vulture** mounts tethered. There is one for each orc present plus two more for the orcs in areas 4 and 5.

## 2 - Basement

Food, tools, and other mundane items crowd the majority of this level.

**Encounter: Apprentices.** Nammod's three apprentices, Emar, Zuzen, and Nebrork hide among the shelves. All three are lawful neutral male human **nobles** with proficiency in Arcana who can cast *fire bolt*, *mage hand*, and *prestidigitation* at will. Their spellcasting ability is Intelligence (+3 to hit with spell attacks).

**Secret Exit.** There is a hidden passage in the western wall that leads out to the water. Finding the passage requires a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check. The passage is locked. A character with proficiency in thieves' tools can pick the lock with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check. Otherwise, it can be broken open with a successful DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check.

## 3 - First Floor - Arcane Chambers

Nammod's study and laboratory dominate this level. Three dead mages, all colleagues of Nammod, lie dead in the stairwell and study. The trio discovered—to their horror—that they could not access their magic in this room. In fact, no magic works here—a large, blue stone at the east end of the room creates an area of antimagic (as the spell *antimagic field*) throughout this entire chamber. For Mega and his orcs, it was like skewering fish in a barrel.

**Valcryn Vorpos.** A fourth **mage**, a neutral male gnome named Valcryn Vorpos, slipped into a secret closet hidden in the eastern wall. Finding the secret chamber requires a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check. The door is locked from inside. A character with proficiency in thieves' tools can pick the lock with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check. Otherwise, it can be broken open with a successful DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check.

Valcryn is terrified and will likely attack the characters if they find him, screaming, "Please don't kill me!" If the characters calm Valcryn down, he shares that he recently traveled to Haver to share a finding with Nammod and the other mages: an old book. Valcryn does not know the name of the book, but he and the other mages took to calling it "Prime." Valcryn suspects that there is a connection between the orcs' attack and Prime. He also believes that the storm was caused by Nammod. Valcryn won't join the party and won't leave the closet until the orcs exit the lighthouse.

**Treasure: Summer Diamond.** Nammod sold most of his valuables in order to purchase the blue stone which creates the antimagic field. The stone is a *summer diamond*, and it's very rare. See the Appendix for details.

## 4 - Second Floor - Storage

This large room is cluttered with all manner of trinkets, weapons, armor, and other unusual items. A ladder at the center of the room offers access to the trapdoor at the center of the third floor.

**Encounter: Orc Bruiser.** An **orc bruiser** (see the sidebar) waits in this area. It tries to surprise the characters if it can.

**Treasure: Nammod's Junk.** Assume that the characters can find at least any weapon or armor from the Fifth Edition rulebook valued at 50 gp or less in this area.

## 5 - Third Floor - Controls

Controls to the lighthouse fill this large area. A trapdoor in the floor offers access to the floor below. A catwalk surrounds the control room. At the east end of the catwalk there is a ladder that leads to the top level.

**Encounter: Orc.** A lone **orc** guards the ladder on the catwalk. The orc tries to grapple and throw intruders over the railing. To throw a character over the railing, the orc must use its action to grapple the characters. Then, on its next turn, it must make a Strength (Athletics) check contested by the character's Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. If the orc succeeds, the character tumbles over the railing 30 feet below, taking 10 (3d6) bludgeoning damage from the fall.

## 6 - Fourth Floor - Lamp

Before the characters climb the ladder to reach the top floor, they hear an exchange between Nammod and the orc, Mega.

"You can't kill me!" a man pleads from above. "We had a deal. You and your men would attack the town and kill the other sages and I would get the book to Hulay."

Whoever the man is talking to snorts with laughter. "The deal has changed. As big a risk as you are taking, weak-sack, I imagine that book is worth more than what you paid me. I'm thinking much more."

"You will anger Hulay!" says the pleading man.

"Then I will anger Hulay," says the orc.

Next, you hear a cracking sound—like a large bone snapping. Then, the lifeless body of an old man falls from the level above you down to the rocks below. A woman screams from above.

The orc pirates' leader Mega just killed Ruhreid Nammod while Nadia Mansouri watched. Just as the characters reach the topmost level of the lighthouse, they watch helplessly as Mega flies off on his giant vulture mount Cheeko. Mega holds an old leather bound book in his hands. There is a dark-haired woman tossed over the back of Cheeko, clearly a captive. She screams for him to let her go.

If the characters hope to stop Mega, it won't be easy. At the start of combat, Mega and Cheeko are 120 feet away from the westernmost edge of the lighthouse. This puts the pair out of range for most spells as well as the short range for most ranged weapons. Furthermore, ranged attacks are made at disadvantage because of the rain and wind from the hurricane. Finally, harming Mega or Cheeko puts his hostage, Nadia Mansouri, at risk.

For story purposes, it's best that Mega escapes, as he is the character who drives the majority of the story during the first three chapters of this adventure. If a character manages to land a hit on him, instead of him taking damage or falling, have him remember that character so that he may enact vengeance later!

# Mega Escapes

Despite their best efforts, Mega's plan was nearly flawless. His orcs successfully distracted the town militia and the characters, allowing him the opportunity to enter the lighthouse, slay the mages, steal the book, and kidnap Nadia Mansouri. If the characters hope to defeat him, they will need to learn why Mega attacked the lighthouse then track him and the other surviving pirates down. Fortunately, there are plenty of clues that the characters can uncover in the next chapter of this adventure, *Assault on the Ghost Holm*.