



MARK OF HEROES

GAMBIT AT DREADHOLD

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Sources: "Dragonshards: The Elves of Valenar Parts One and Two" [Keith Baker], "Dragonshards: The Reach of Riedra, Part One and Two" [Keith Baker], *Eberron Campaign Setting* [Keith Baker, Bill Slavicsek, James Wyatt], *Expanded Psionics Handbook* [Bruce R. Cordell], *Five Nations* [Bill Slavicsek, David Noonan, Christopher Perkins], *Explorer's Handbook* [David Noonan, Frank Brunner, Rich Burlew], *Races of Eberron* [Jesse Decker, Matthew Sernett, Gwendolyn F.M. Kestrel, Keith Baker], *Dungeon Master's Guide II* [Jesse Decker, David Noonan, Chris Thomasson, James Jacobs, Robin D. Law], *Monster Manual II* [Ed Bonny, Jeff Grubb, Rich Redman, Skip Williams, Steve Winter], *Fiend Folio* [Eric Cagle, Jesse Decker, James Jacobs, Erik Mona, Matt Sernett, Chris Thomasson, James Wyatt], *Races of Destiny* [David Noonan, Eric Cagle, Aaron Rosenberg], *Spell Compendium* [Matthew Sernett, Jeff Grubb, Mike McArtor], *Stronghold Builder's Guidebook* [Matt Forbeck and David Noonan].

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Based on the original DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® rules created by E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson and the new DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game designed by Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, Rich Baker, and Peter Adkison.

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INTRODUCTION

Gambit at Dreadhold is optimized for 4th-level characters. This means that it's designed and balanced for a group of four to five 4th-level characters (PCs). If your group deviates from this size and strength, each encounter features a section titled "Scaling the Encounter" so that you, the Dungeon Master (DM), can create a more enjoyable and better balanced adventure. If there are only four of five PCs of the same level in your group, it's easy to use this section: just use the level entry that corresponds with the PCs' level (the optimized entry is given in the main adventure text). For groups of mixed levels and groups with six PCs, determine the average level of the PCs, and increase that average by one for groups of six PCs. Treat that level as the groups level. That said, as DM you have discretion when it comes to fitting the challenges of the adventure to your group. If your group finds the challenges too easy or too difficult, feel free to increase or decrease the level of challenge appropriately. The goal is to challenge the PCs and entertain the players, not to overwhelm or even underwhelm them. The most enjoyable D&D games are ones where failure and character death are possible, but success and reward are attainable through daring and smart play.

Gambit at Dreadhold has been designed to be part of the RPGA DUNGEON & DRAGONS CAMPAIGNS: MARK OF HEROES program. Like all DUNGEONS & DRAGONS CAMPAIGNS adventures, it's recommended that PCs undertaking its challenges have at least one arcane spellcaster, a divine spellcaster (preferably a cleric), a strong warrior, and a rogue. Parties missing these valuable adventuring components may find *Gambit at Dreadhold* very challenging, and the chances of character death higher. Please warn the players of this before play starts. DUNGEONS & DRAGONS CAMPAIGNS allow players to "take one for the team"; that is to play a fastplay wizard, fighter, rogue, or cleric in place of one of their characters, and gain experience point for their character. If the group lacks one of these vital four classes, suggest to your players to take advantage of this option.

RPGA-SANCTIONED PLAY

Most likely you ordered this adventure as part of an RPGA even from the RPGA website, or as part of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS CAMPAIGNS retail program. To play *Gambit at Dreadhold* as part of the MARK OF HEROES campaign—a worldwide, ongoing D&D campaign set in Eberron—you must sanction it as part of an RPGA event. This event could be as elaborate as a big convention, or as simple as a group of friends meeting at the DM's house.

To sanction an RPGA event, you must be at least a HERALD-LEVEL gamemaster. The person who sanctions the event is called the senior gamemaster, and is in charge of making sure the event is sanctioned before play, runs smoothly on the date sanctioned, and then reported back to the RPGA in a timely manner. The person who runs the game is called the table DM (or usually just DM). Sometimes (and almost all the time in the cases of home events) the senior gamemaster is also the table DM. You don't have to be a HERALD-LEVEL GM to run this adventure if you are not the senior GM.

By sanctioning and reporting this adventure you accomplish a few things. First, it allows the PCs participating in play to accumulate experience points (XP) and gold pieces (gp) to advance their MARK OF HEROES characters. Second, it allows the RPGA to track and record what character did during the adventure, and future adventures a written with what the majority of player did in mind—in this way characters' action shape the future of the campaign. Lastly, player and DMs gain rewards for sanctioned RPGA play if they are members of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS REWARDS program. Playing this adventure is worth four (4) points.

This adventure retires from RPGA sanctioned play on February 6, 2006.

To learn more about the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS CAMPAIGNS:

MARK OF HEROES character creation and development, RPGA event sanctioning, and DUNGEONS & DRAGONS REWARDS, visit the RPGA website at www.rpga.com.

PLAYERS READ NO FARTHER

If you are planning on playing this adventure, stop reading now. The rest of the information in this adventure is for the DM only. If you read farther than this section, you'll know too much about its challenges, which kills the fun. Also, if you're playing this adventure as part of an RPGA-sanctioned event, reading beyond this point makes you ineligible to do so.

PREPARING FOR PLAY

To get the most out of this adventure, you need copies of the following D&D books: *Player's Handbook*, *Dungeon Master's Guide*, *Monster Manual*, and the *Eberron Campaign Setting*. It is also a good idea to have a copy of the *Expanded Psionics Handbook*, as it is possible that some character playing in this adventure will be kalashtar utilizing the psionics rules.

Throughout this adventure, blocks of *italicized* text provide player information for you to paraphrase or read aloud when appropriate. Sidebars contain important information for you, including special instruction on running or expanding the adventure. Information on nonplayer characters (NPCs) and monsters appear in abbreviated form in the adventure text. Full information on NPCs and monsters are given in a section directly after each encounter in a section titled "Combat Statistics" or can be found in the *Monster Manual*.

This adventure may use material from various other D&D sourcebooks and other official sources. While many times the adventure text notes where this information came from, the adventure is designed so that you don't need to have those sources during play.

Either attached to the adventure, you'll find a special *RPGA Session Tracking Sheet* tailored for this adventure. If you're playing this adventure as part of an RPGA-sanctioned event, complete and turn in this sheet to your senior GM directly after play.

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS MINIATURES

To run this adventure it's recommend you have the following miniatures:

From the HARBINGER™ set:

- 2 Ogres (71/80)

From the GIANTS OF LEGEND™ set:

- 2 Warfogred Fighters (06/72) to represent Timac's Bruisers
- Otyugh (27/72)
- 6 Bladeling Fighters (28/72) to represent bladelings and Timac's Dancers

From the ANGLEFIRE™ set:

- Dwarf Raider (03/06) to represent Vendurra d'Kundarak
- 8 Dwarf Mercenaries (31/60) to represent Dreadhold guards
- 2 Dwarf Wizards (04/60) to represent arcane guardians
- Spiker Champion (07/60) to represent the Hex
- Divine Crusader of Corellon (16/60) to represent Vessenda the Fox
- 4 Wild Elf Raiders (29/60) to represent young Valenar raiders.

From the UNDERDARK™ set:

- A pair of Battle Plate Marshals (01/60) to represent elite Dreadhold guards
- Dwarf Ancestor (34/60) to stone wardens.

BACKGROUND

"He who fights with monsters might take care lest he thereby become a monster. And if you gaze for long into an abyss, the abyss gazes also into you."
~ Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil

The nature and the function *Sarlonan* puzzle orbs are mysteries that continues to baffle the Diggers' Union.

Recently the Union has learned that an Inspired mass murder named Asulmaz may be the only creature on Khorvaire who knows and is willing to speak on their secrets. The problem is that Asulmaz has been incarcerated in Dreadhold Prison for the past two decades.

Dreadhold Prison is a mighty fortress prison in the Lhazaar Principalities. Converted ages ago by the Galifar kings, the prison is nigh inescapable. Run by the dwarves of House Kunderak, it holds creatures too important to kill but too dangerous to wander Khorvaire.

As some PCs may know, during the Last War the Diggers' Union incurred a rather sizable debt to House Kunderak. Due to the help of the Union during the Korari incident (see *EMH-4 Finding the Way*) negotiations about the terms of the debt have been recently reopened. As part of those negotiations the Union has been able to secure the release of Asulmaz from the Kunderak-run prison. The adventure starts with the PCs being sent to Dreadhold Prison to secure the release of the Inspired psychopath.

What the PCs don't know is that that the Union is not the only group desiring Asulmaz's release. The insidious Dreaming Dark desires the release of their one-time operative. When the Dreaming Dark learned that the Union had secured Asulmaz's release they sent their own operative to abscond with their long-incarcerated Inspired brother.

An isolated Kunderak outpost, serving at Dreadhold Prison is often tantamount to house exile. This is not helped by the fact that House Kunderak often shunts unpopular or insubordinate members of the house to Dreadhold as punishment, in the hopes that the regiment and bleakness of duty there will teach hard lessons of the necessity for house duty and obedience. News is slow to get to Dreadhold Prison, and sometimes that news is no better than rumor.

Sometimes Dreadhold's harsh lessons breed bitterness and desperation. The current master of the prison's outer ward, one Vendurra d'Kunderak, has long desired to escape her Dreadhold Prison exile. With the approach of members of the Diggers' Union, Vendurra has hatched a desperate plan to capture the Union member and hold them in ransom for the funds the organization owes her house.

Her plan is bold, daring, crazy, and not entirely her own. She has been psychically manipulated by an Inspired telepath, the Dreaming Dark agent who also moves to secure Asulmaz's release. And by the time the PCs arrive on the scene, this agent has already spirited the Inspired killer out of Dreadhold.

Needless to say, Vendurra's plans are unknown and unsanctioned by her House Kunderak superiors. But to the Vendurra's mind, it is the best chance to earn a transfer off the harsh rock of Dreadhold, and its boldness may even earn her a prestigious post within Krontar Peak.

SUMMARY

In the prologue, the PCs are given their assignment by Patron Zurin Tellun, the same patron who sped them to aid Glankas Korari in *EMH-4 Finding the Way*. After he briefs them on the mission, they are sped to Dreadhold via the, probably now familiar, *Stormdrake*.

Upon arrival at Dreadhold, the PCs are betrayed by Vendurra d'Kunderak and tossed into the general population of the Outer Ward Mines.

A stone golem or dwarf guards disarms the PCs, and while they may choose to fight the guards and keep their weapons, but is doing so is difficult, and affects the toughness of later combat encounters.

Once among the prison population, the PCs must quickly prove their worth and strength to the other inmates, or life—not to mention escape—becomes difficult indeed.

During this period of trials, the PCs are approached by several different prison gang leaders, each demanding different things from the PCs. Few, if any, are good. By negotiating or defeating various gangs, the PCs can pick up some knowledge about the Outer Ward Mines, gain smuggled or makeshift weapons, and even gain a little respect. In the end, if the PCs navigate the challenges of the gangs correctly, they gain the notice of one Captain Gregori.

Captain Gregori and his gang of pirates were caught robbing a House Kunderak ship almost a year ago. Unbeknownst to his dwarf captors, he and his crew have been secretly mining a tunnel to an area of the Dreadhold sewage system. While his crew has broken through the hard stone of the Dreadhold sewers, they have found the system guarded by monsters and traps.

Captain Gregori, wanting to maximize his chance for escape, sees the PCs at tools to navigating the sewer system and reaching the House Kunderak Towers above them. In return for disposing of monsters between Gregori and his escape, the captain agrees to take the PCs with him upon securing escape.

Once the PCs defeat the sewer's guardians, they find a path to the lower reaches of Vendurra's tower.

INSPIRED AND THE DREAMING DARK

To most people in Khorvaire, the people Riedra are humans long out of touch with their Khorvarian cousins. And the Inspired are the ruling class of the nation of Riedra. While their culture, their otherworldly grace, and their practice of psionics set them apart from the human of Khorvaire, few people even suspect the true nature of the Inspired—and the kalashtar are surprisingly tight lipped about their Sarlonian cousins.

That said, while this adventure and parts of *EMH-2 Pirate's Bounty* and *the Isle of Fire* discuss the Dreaming Dark, and the Digger Union Master in Newthron, the half-elf Urvandil, even named the organization in that adventure, no PC (including Kalashtar PCs) knows the true nature of the organization. Rather they are seen as strange instigators of turmoil that occasionally pop up among Riedran and Inspired alike. Inspired ambassadors to Khorvarian courts claim no connection to this dangerous and elusive organization, and their claims hold up to magical scrutiny.

While the Diggers' Union, the Aundair court, and House Kunderak suspect that Asulmaz is an agent of the Dreaming Dark, and that his actions in Arcanix were perpetrated for the mysterious goals of that organization, the minds of those institutions can only hypothesize to the reasons and ends.

In short, to most people on Khorvaire, mentioning the Dreaming Dark is like invoking the Illuminati in the real world. If the organization even exists, its methods, goals, and schemes are pondered and intensely debated.

For more information about the people of Riedra, the Inspired, and how to portray the Dreaming Dark, see the *WIZARDS OF THE COAST* website articles "Dragonsards" "The Reach of Riedra" parts one and two, available for free download on the *EBERRON* section of the site.

Here the PCs can subdue Vendurra and gain valuable information. Gregori uses a *whispering wind* spell to call his ship. At about the same time the dwarves of House Kundarak are alerted to the escape and send a force to Vendurra's tower to squelch the prison break. Gregori sends his men to confront the dwarves—sending them most probably to their death—and in doing so gaining precious moments for his escape.

The captain is still willing to keep his word to the PCs. The PCs can save themselves if they abandoned Gregori's men and jump from a ledge to the pirate ship below. Or they can decide to stay, Gregori leaves the choice to them. The captain jumps over the balcony, his fall slowed by a *feather fall* spell cast from his ship—it's a spell powerful enough to save the PCs also.

If the PCs decide to stay, all is not lost. They can attempt to parlay Vendurra for their freedom, shake her out of her psionic haze, or find some way to get her to recognize the error of her way.

TROUBLESHOOTING

This adventure is not your standard dungeon crawl. There are a few things in this adventure that have to happen in order to move forward the plot and at times the PCs could rightly feel railroaded. It's your job as the DM to minimize that feeling.

Getting Captured

One of this adventure's hardest pills to swallow is that the PCs must get captured after they enter Dreadhold Prison. Because of this, beginning encounters are really stacked against the PCs. This will likely frustrate many players—and it should. It's pretty much an open secret that DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game is designed to favor PC success. One of the challenges of this adventure is how the players deal with failure, even when they do everything right.

That said, there are a number of ingenious players participating in the MARK OF HEROES campaign, and some may figure out a way of escape that the adventure designer didn't anticipate. In these situations it's up to you to think fast and come up with clever ways to pull off the PCs' capture. Don't be afraid to frustrate the players—after all that's one of the goals—but make such contingencies plausible, and keep at least the appearance of rules fairness.

Losing Equipment

While the beginning of the adventure is fairly simple, the middle has some tough combat encounters. Early in the adventure the PCs likely lose much of their possessions. And while they have a chance to gain new equipment, and even regain their own, losing equipment makes challenges harder. This has been taken into account throughout the adventure.

At Least I Have My Skills

The Diplomacy skill can play a big part in this adventure. It's a good idea to review that skill's rules before play (*Player's Handbook* pages 71 and 72).

In many cases using Diplomacy should involve more than just chucking dice and adding modifiers. Have the PCs roleplay, and judge how convincing their roleplaying ways. Remember that the DM's friend rule allows you to modify rolls in either direction for circumstances. For Diplomacy and similar checks, reward good roleplaying with that bonus.

Remember that the "Fast Talker" campaign card from MARK OF HEROES set 4 can aid rushed Diplomacy checks, but only those against opponents who don't start as hostile.

Play in this adventure can also include many Sense Motive, Listen, and Spot checks. You may want to have players make a number of

checks before the start of play. Don't tell them exactly what they are for, but just have them roll five checks each. You can even allow them to modify the rolls with standard action points, but warn them that action points spent in this way are gone for the entire game, even if you don't end up using that roll.

There's a fair amount of read-aloud text at the beginning of the adventure. Feel free to paraphrase or adjust this text as necessary.

Time

The PCs have no set time limit to achieve their goals once in the Outer Ward Mines. Based on their actions and their interaction with the Outer Ward Mines gangs, they'll have ample opportunity to rest and plan their next move.

Watch the Tone

Dreadhold Prison is a harsh and uncaring place. Prisons in general are not nice places, and you may get the urge to be vivid of your descriptions of prison inequity. As a general rule you should avoid sexual connotations, crash jargon, or excessive or graphic violence. That's not the fantasy roleplaying many people want to participate in. Make the prison scary, but remember the sensibilities and maturity of your audience.

Raising the Dead

At this point the PCs may have gained enough renown, and hopefully enough gold and experience, to come back from the dead. Like many things that involve XP and gp cost, raise dead and other spells work differently in DUNGEONS & DRAGONS CAMPAIGNS. If a PC dies, and his or her companions are able to bring the body back to a temple with clerics powerful enough to cast *raise dead* within 11 days after the time of death, a character can be raised (assuming the soul is willing). This incurs a 1,100-gp debt, which may be divided up between the characters played during the session. This debt is forever subtracted from the equipment value of the characters, and reported in the "GP Debt" field of the Session Tracking sheet. Additionally, the character that came back from the dead has its experience points reduced. The amount of experience points reduced is dependent on the current character level (see the table below) of the PC raised. Record the proper amount on the "XP Drain" field of the Session Tracking sheet. These two costs are the only costs for the raise dead (even for 1st-level characters), and overrides the rules for the spell found in the *Player's Handbook*.

Please Note: When a character is brought back from the dead it is not recorded as a character death (so don't mark "Y" on the Session Tracking). Just record the gold debt and experience drain.

Experience Point Drain for Raised Characters

Character Level	XP Drain
4th	2,000 XP
5th	2,500 XP
6th	3,000 XP
7th	3,500 XP

PROLOGUE:

MISSION TO DREADHOLD

This prologue assumes the PCs have successfully completed *EMH-4 Finding the Way*. If none of the PCs have played that adventure, modify the prologue so that the PCs meet Patron Zuzrin Tellun in Grea Tower in Wroat, Breland. If the PCs start in Wroat, have them take a lightning rail to Sharn and then a ship to the prison.

Patron Zuzrin Tellun, a cultured and imposing elf, and rumored member of the Conclave of Masters, stands before you on a windswept platform at the mountain city of Krona Peak in the Mror Holds.

"You have served the Union well in the past, and we again require your skills on a very important mission. We are sending you to Dreadhold prison in the Lhazaar Principalities. There you are to take into your custody a prisoner name Asulmaz, and escort him to Wroat. This is of utmost importance to the Union and speed and secrecy are of paramount importance. As always you will be well compensated by the Union."

The elf grows quiet as a group of dwarven servants shuffle on to the balcony, brining wine and a basket of fresh fruit. They set it on a small table close to Zuzrin. He smiles curtly to the servants, and gives them a slight bow. He does not take the wine or food, but offers it to you.

"Please, refresh yourself, but do so quickly. I apologize, but you'll find your belongings already on the Stormdrake. House Lyrandar has graciously extended its service to us for one last trip. I would not presume to have your belongings packed without your knowledge, but the Stormdrake has a schedule to keep, and you must be leaving in less than an hour.

"Once you reach Dreadhold you'll make contact with the outer warden, one Vendurra d'Kundarak. Letters of introduction as well as a description of Asulmaz are in your belongings already. Once you've secured the prisoner a ship will take you to Regalport, from there a House Lyrandar will take you to Sharn.

"Any questions?"

At this point the PCs will surely have many questions. Zuzrin answers them while stressing that time is of the essence.

A simple DC 10 Knowledge (geography) tells the players that the Lhazaar Principalities are located in the far northeast corner of the Khorvaire continent. A DC 15 Knowledge (local) also recalls that Dreadhold is an ancient island prison run by House Kundarak and that the nastiest of the nasty end up there to be locked away there and forgotten. Zuzrin can inform the PCs of these facts if asked. He can also provide the following additional information upon questioning.

Q: Who is Asulmaz?

A: "He is an insane Inspired—the strange and exotic masters of xenophobic nation of Riedra on the continent of Sarlona. Once attaché to the Reidra ambassador to Aundair, he committed a series of murders within Arcanix. The Riedra ambassador, shocked and embarrassed by her adjunct's actions, handed over his fate to Queen Aurala. Instead of having the man executed she sent him to Dreadhold. He has been rotting on that rock for almost three years.

"He is very dangerous, but will be drugged and bound for your return trip. Vedurra d'Kundarak will give you his "handling" materials."

Q: Why does the Union want Asulmaz?

A: "He claims to know many things about the Sarlonan puzzle orbs. This information is vital for our better understanding of what they are and what purpose they serve."

Q: And Queen Aurala allows his release to our care?

A: "Yes, as long as we deliver him to her after our interrogation is done. I believe the Queen of Aundair many have reconsidered her leniency."

Q: What are we being paid for this?

A: The patron gives the PCs a stern look at this question and says, "the betterment of the Union should be payment enough." After waiting a few moments, letting the PCs stew a smile cracks on his face. "Of course such a thing and coin are not mutually exclusive. For successfully escorting the inspired to Wroat, each of you will be paid a sum of 2,000 gp.

Q: Why don't you drink the wine?

A: Those who played in *EMH-4 Finding the Way* may remember that the patron is a wine connoisseur. Those who are connoisseurs themselves (Appraise DC 15) notice that the wine has a strange dirty, almost sulfur aftertaste. Zuzrin says simply "it is a terrible vintage. I am sorry that you suffer it, but it seems all these dwarves have."

Q: How are negotiations with the House Kundarak's Banking Guild going?

A: Excellently. Your aid has reopened negotiations. We have created a mutually acceptable schedule for repayment of the union's debts, and it was though those negotiations that we were able to secure Asulmaz's release from the prison. I appreciate the work you've done for the Union.

After he has answer the PCs' questions, Zuzrin leads the PCs to the Stormdrake and sees them off. Days later they reach Dreadhold prison.

PART ONE: THINGS FALL APART

First Mate Ledrin of the Stormdrake calls out "Destination Ho!" and points toward the peninsula ahead. According to Captain Aielous, Dreadhold prison sits on a rocky island just off the windswept jut of land. As the airship banks closer, your destination comes into view. A single large peak rises from the thrashing sea. It's a solid black finger of stone that seems to taunt the sea around it as waves crash futilely against its sides.

A single large black stone dock reaches out into the water on the east side of the island.

"It looks like you'll be climbing down the rope ladder," the first mate says, a grin stretches across his face. "No airship landing."

Climbing down the rope ladder the wind whips about and the sea's spray splashes on you. It's rough going, but you eventually make it to the dock. From there, large stone stairs wind up the cliff face.

Up hundreds of steps, and partially obscured by sea fog, the stairs lead to the crafted walls and turrets of the prison. The entrance is a massive double door of blackened metal. Each door is embossed with the manticores symbol of House Kundarak.

A turret just right of the prison entrance sports a large crane, obviously there to lift supplies from the dock.

The walls of the fortress and turrets are constructed of the islands black stone—stone that seems to absorb the little light that makes it through the stormy and overcast skies.

The raging sea and the angry sound of screeching gull are the only sounds and life in this forlorn place. Before any glimmer of hesitation can take hold, the Stormdrake speeds away southerly, sunnier shores.

Use "Illustration 1" to help describe this scene.

The journey up the stairs is arduous, taking almost 20 minutes to complete (the stairs on the map are not to scale).

Final arriving at your destination you see the gates of the famed Dreadhold before you. Forty-foot tall stone walls jut up into a gray and stormy sky. Scorched black iron double doors, each 10 feet wide and 20 feet tall, are set into the wall.

Entrance Corridor

As the PCs approach the double doors slowly and silently open revealing the hallway beyond (see Map 1: Outer Ward Mines Entrance). After the walls open the PCs hear a loud and booming voice issue forth from the end of the corridor. The voice commands, "Enter."

Adventuring instincts may immediately assume the hallway is



some sort of trap, and it can be in some circumstances. Right now it is just a dramatic way for the prison to deal with visitors. House Kundarak believes in inspiring awe in Dreadhold early, using intimidation to foster respect for the power of the penal institution by presenting it as an unyielding distant thing, unshaken by compassion, pity, and the pleasantries of civilized society.

Once the PCs are within the inner corridor, the outside doors swing shut with a startling boom. The PCs are surrounded by utter darkness for a minute before the corridor walls are illuminated with a strange magical flame, similar to that of a *continual flame* spell.

The PCs hear the strange booming voice again. The sound seems to emanate from the door at the corridor's end.

"What is your business at Dreadhold?"

The voice waits for the PCs to answer. After they do a slot in the far door opens at about dwarf height, and the PCs are instructed to show their papers to the dwarf behind it. Once their identities are confirmed the PCs are allowed entrance into the Outer Ward of the prison.

Nothing exciting happens here unless the PCs try something stupid. Insubordination or attacks are quickly dealt with by flooding the chamber with a gas that acts like a *stinking cloud* spells cast by a 10th-level wizard, but its strange alchemical properties also affect warforged (DC 14 Fort Save; lasts 10 rounds). When the PCs are incapacitated a group of 10 Dreadhold guards enter the chamber via a very hidden secret door (Search DC 30; only opens from inside the prison). Each wears a special breathing apparatuses that allow them to function within the area.

Dreadhold Guards (10): mix male and female fighter 2; hp 22 each; see "Combat Statistics", below.

Development: If the PCs are gassed and subdued, the guards haul them off to the prisons. Rindol explains their fate when he speaks to the PCs in the Outer Ward Mines (see Part Two).

If the PCs play nice, they pass the front gate are led through the courtyard to Vendurra's tower.

A large courtyard dominates the area beyond the second pair of double doors. Another identical gate structure sits on the opposite side of the courtyard about 300 yards away. Dwarves mill about the massive courtyard.

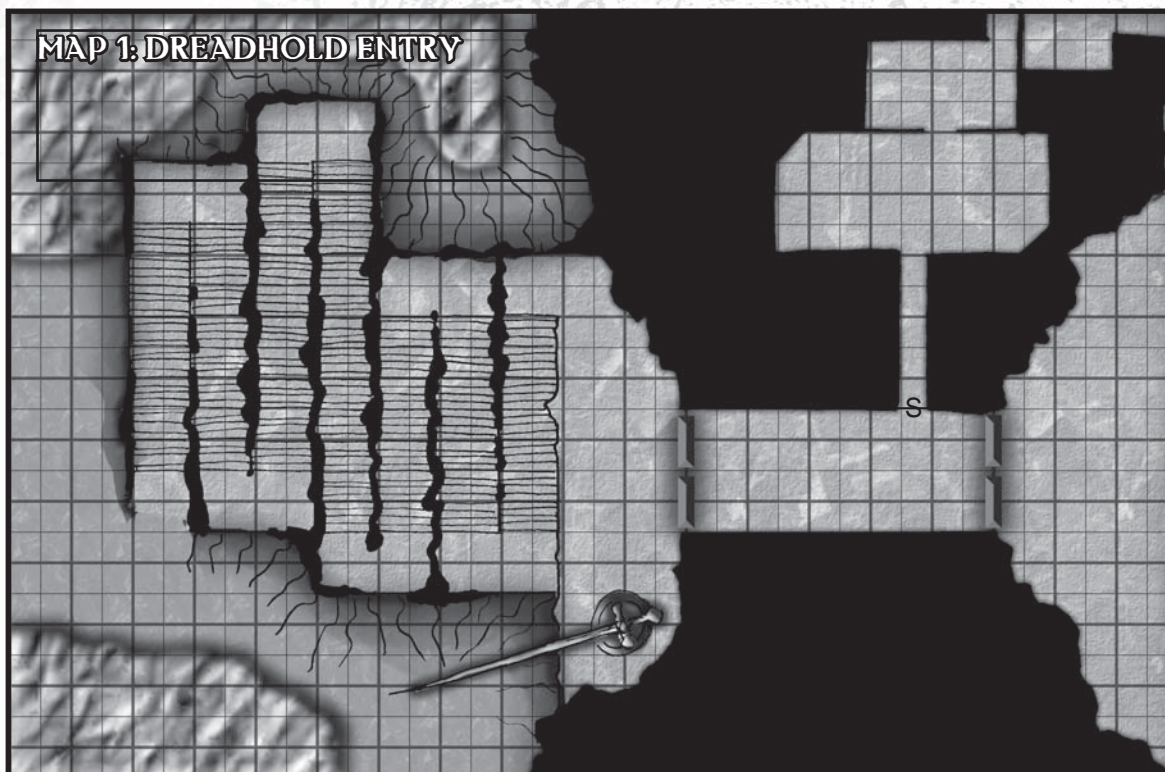
Observant PCs notice that dwarves populate the complex almost exclusively. All of the dwarves are members of House Kundarak, and a few of them are dragonmarked members.

Inquisitive PCs will have many questions about the courtyard and what they can see of the prison.

- The courtyard and support structure for the Outer Wards Mines seems to sit directly atop this section of the prison.
- The Outer Ward Mines, the lower security—but still virtually inescapable section of the prison—seems accessible from a holding courtyard dug into the stone toward the center of the courtyard.
- The set of double doors on the other end of this inner courtyard are as strong and seem at least as well guarded as the entrance to the prison. That must be the entrance to the deeper, more secure inner prison.
- Many stone stairs climb up the wall of the courtyard to the bases of towers built into the walls of the courtyard. Each looks like a mini-fortress. Obviously this entire courtyard could be turned into just another extension of the prison if need be, while the House Kundarak dwarves hole up in their turrets until given the opportunity to regain control.

The PCs path winds its way up the stairs to the largest of these towers—the warden's abode.

Finally you arrive at Vendurra's tower and are escorted to an a chamber just beyond its open entrance.



A spartan chamber of white marble, it looks sterile and uncomfortable.

Vendurra makes a late entrance, having the PCs wait for well over an hour. She wants them edgy—it's easier to control and manipulate people on edge. To help create an edge during this waiting, read or paraphrase the following.

While the benches in the antechamber are plush, they are constructed with dwarves in mind, and are uncomfortable to smaller and larger folk.

From the antechamber you have a clear view of the byway that lead you to this place. Every so often Kunderak dwarves pass by, each gives you suspicious or sometimes stern stares as they pass by.

The have the PCs make a Sense Motive check or use the first of the checks you've already had them make before the start of play (see the "Troubleshooting" section page 4). Succeeding a hunch check (DC 20 – See *Player's Handbook* page 81) the PCs get the impression that the dwarves are uncomfortable with the PCs arrival at Dreadhold Prison.

If the PCs try to talk to the dwarves they politely but firmly request that the PCs return to the antechamber and wait for Vendurra.

Eventually the warden of the outer wards makes her appearance up and makes a big to-do about inspecting the PCs' paperwork. Then she proceeds to question the PCs in a puzzling manner. She asks the following questions of the PCs. Each question is followed with some guidelines for answers and Vendurra's response to those answers.

• **Q: What do you want with prisoner Asulmaz?**

The PCs may be uncomfortable answering this question. In past adventures they've been told to keep the existence of the *Sarlonian puzzle orbs* secret. If they cover up the existence of those strange orbs, have the speaking PCs make a Bluff check (or use a roll from the pre-rolled skill checks), and allow Vendurra a Sense Motive check to discern the deception. If she succeeds the check, she'll throw it in the PCs' faces later.

If the PCs tell the dwarf warden about the *Sarlonian puzzle orbs*,

she questions them about the strange device, accumulating all the knowledge she can about the orbs.

• **Q: When will you bring prisoner Asulmaz back?**

This question may absolutely puzzle the PCs, as they've likely been told by Patron Zuzrin Tellun that after the union is done with Azulmaz he would be returning to Aundair to face the queen's justice.

If the PCs tell Vendurra such, she bluntly explains that this is unacceptable. She demands that the PCs swear that they will return Azulmaz back to Dreadhold when the union is done with him.

This course of action many seem strange considering that Azulmaz has already left the prison, and that Vendurra lacks the inclination or the ability to put the insane Inspired in the PCs' custody. Her demands are a subconscious attempt by her mind to warn the PCs of the situation. It triggers a DC 20 Sense Motive check to give the PCs the hunch that all is not right with this situation, and a separate DC 25 Sense Motive to discover that Vendurra's behavior is being influenced by an enchantment or telepathy effect.

No matter what the PCs answer, Vendurra remains obstinate and upset with the prisoner transfer. Despite this she asks the PCs to follow here to the Outern Mines Entrance.

Vendurra d'Kunderak: Dragonmarked female dwarf; Expert 4/Rogue 5; hp 50; see "Combat Statistics", below.

To the Outer Ward Mines

Vendurra walks briskly toward the Outer Ward Mines processing area the PCs saw earlier. She is quiet as she marches, until she greeted by three Dreadhold guards. Then she tells the PCs the following as she walks toward the Outer Ward Mines processing area.

"Asulmaz is dangerous. He'll tell you that he is seer, but that's a lie. He's a nomad. For those of you ignorant in the jargon of psionics, this means that he has a talent for teleportation...or rather psychopotation.

"You would think that would make him hard to keep in here, but teleportation magic and psychopotation psionics are suppressed throughout the prison.

"He is also partial to the telepathy discipline, which means he can get into your head. We keep him on special drugs to suppress that particular talent. I'll give you a healthy supply of those drugs and teach you how to administer them, as well as supply you bindings to limit psychoportation. House Kundarak expects the return of any unused drug doses and the bindings upon your mission's completion."

She is not lying about the Inspired's talents, but at this point agents of the Dreaming Dark have already absconded with the prisoner, so the last bit is a lie. Allow the PCs a Sense Motive check (her Bluff is +16 and the PCs and she gets a +10 bonus since there is nothing that would normally put the PCs off guard), success means that they think she is not being truthful about the drug or the collar, but they don't know how.

At the end of her spiel, Vendurra and the PCs reach the entrance to the processing room.

Vendurra raises her hand and a large gong sounds. With that the large iron portcullis opens. Beyond the portcullis a ramp winds down roughly cut walls to a cavernous courtyard below. At the floor of the courtyard, numerous barred gates lead to side caves. Throngs of prisoners wait at each gate, hooting and hollering, at the PCs and guards. There are also three large stone statues of dwarves spaced evenly around the courtyard.

Vendurra turns to you. "Our cleric of Fury, Degrol, will meet you at the bottom. Don't let his choice of deity bother you; he is a skilled practitioner of the arts that heal the mind. Asulmaz has a private room in a special sector of the Outer Wards. Degrol has been his keeper for the past two years. He'll train you on the techniques to keep the Inspired bound and placid."

While Asulmaz's special keeper was Degrol, and he is a cleric devoted to Fury, the rest of this is a lie (Vendurra again gets a +10 bonus on all PCs who didn't detect her subterfuge with the last Sense Motive check). Not that there is much the PCs can do about things at this point. The processing area of the Outer Ward Mines is very well protected. Four Dreadhold guards and a single arcane guardian guard

each of the towers flanking the pit.

Dreadhold Guards (8): hp 22 each; see "Combat Statistics", below.

Arcane Guardian (2): hp 16 each; see "Combat Statistics", below.

No fool, Vendurra is on guard, and can call upon eight more Dreadhold guards and four additional arcane guardians who show up in a round later to force the PCs through the portcullis. Once the PCs are through, the portcullis slams shut.

Reinforced Iron Portcullis: 4-inch thick; Hardness 10; hp 100; DC 30 to lift.

Once the PCs are beyond the portcullis they have two options: they can walk down the ramp or resist. Resistance literally takes the floor out from under them, as the ramp is rigged to collapse.

Trap: With a single spoken command Vendurra can have the dwarves in the nearest tower collapse the walkway, which converts it to an effective, albeit rough, slide to the bottom of the processing area. Those on the ramp can attempt a Reflex DC 22 save to grab on the ramp's edges and either stop or slow the fall, but those unable to do so slide to the bottom, taking 1d6 points of nonlethal damage. Even if the PCs walk to the bottom of the ramp, Vendurra collapses the ramp to impede their path back to the holding cell.

Processing Area

Like the entire prison, the courtyard area warded against teleportation magic and psionics, and flying.

While the walls of the pit are roughly worked stone (base Climb DC 20) but are treated with slick augmentation, increasing the DC to 30.

Once the PCs are at the bottom, Vendurra laughs at them and taunts them with the following:

"Thank you so much for making this so easy for me," Vendurra calls down arrogantly. You see your masters owe my masters a rather sizable sum of money. And now I am going to get the union to pay in full, as they should. How my masters have not seen my genius before is almost inconceivable."

DREADHOLD PRISON WARDS

A mountain of stone and the torrid sea aren't the only impediments to escape at Dreadhold Prison. Various wards also protect the place. Here is a list of the weakest of the prison's wards that affect the Outer Ward Mines.

Wards Against Divination and Clairsentience

The entire prison is warded with a *nondetection* field (see *Player's Handbook* page 257), barring divination spells and clairsentience powers including various *detect* and *scrying* spells and psionic powers. It affects every creature and item in the Dreadhold Prison, requiring a DC 26 caster level check for a divination to succeed.

Wards Against Teleportation and Psychoportation.

The entire prison is warded with a *dimensional lock* field (see *Player's Handbook* page 221), barring, among other spells, travel via *dimension door* and *teleport*. It also bars the *Mark of Passage* *dimensional leap* spell-like ability, and any spell or spell-like ability with the teleportation subschool or subdiscipline. Interestingly enough this ward doesn't bar summoning spells nor does it prevent the summoned creature's disappearance at the end of the spell's duration.

Wards Against Flying

Some areas of the prison (like the processing area of the Outer Ward Mines and the Outer Ward Mines themselves) feature fields of permanent *earthbind*. These fields have the

effect of that spell (see below). The save for the fields is DC 22 due to the power of the magic that creates the field, and the save must be made daily. Failing a save grounds the creature for as long as it is within the *earthbind* field.

Earthbind

(From *Complete Spell Compendium*; formally *undeniable gravity* from *Miniatures Handbook*.)

Transmutation

Level: Druid 2, sorcerer/wizard 2

Component: V, S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

Target: One creature

Duration: 1 minute/level (D)

Saving Throw: Fortitude negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

You hinder the subject creature's ability to fly (whether through natural or magical means) for the duration of the spell. If the target fails its saving throw, its fly speed (if any becomes 0 feet. An airborne creature subjected to the spell falls to the ground as if under the effect of a *feather fall* spell. Even if a new effect would grant the creature the ability to fly, that effect is suppressed for the duration of the *earthbind* spell.

Earthbind has no effect on other forms of movement, or even on effects that might grant airborne movement without granting a fly speed (such as jumping or *levitate* or *air walk* spells).

When she gives her speech, all the PCs get yet another Sense Motive check (DC 25). Success clues the PCs that she is being magically or psionically compelled to trap the PCs. Her plan is not all her own.

This knowledge is cold comfort though, as sharing it with the rest of the House Kundarak dwarves does not garner any sympathy. The dwarves have heard prisoners claim just about everything over the years in the hopes of escape.

She prattles on with the self-aggrandizing chatter, whether or not the PCs point out that negotiations for repayment have already been reached and House Kundarak has promised the Diggers' Union custody of the insane Inspired as part of the deal.

"I'm well aware that our superiors have worked out a preliminary deal, but I've decided to strengthen the Kundarak position. I think the Diggers' Union got off to easy, and if the Banking Guild is capable of anything, it is the art of renegotiation of debt. You will remain here until such time your 'bail' is met, and I am satisfied that the Diggers' Union has made it reparations to House Kundarak in full.

"As for me, I am sure that my genius will be well rewarded, and I will soon be off to an assignment at Krona Peak. You'd better hope negotiations end quickly, or that the new warden is as kind as forgiving as I am."

Vendurra turns to leave, but she swings back waiving an index finger about in a dramatic show of remembering.

"Oh, yes, I almost forgot. The Inspired, Asulmaz, I've released him into the care of another party: a well-meaning group of individuals of his own race. I guess the Diggers' Union will just have to live without him."

At this point one of the statue's eyes begins to glow. Its stone joints grind as it moves toward the PCs. Seemingly emanating from its unmoving mouth a gruff voice with a dwarven accent commands the PCs to surrender their weapons.

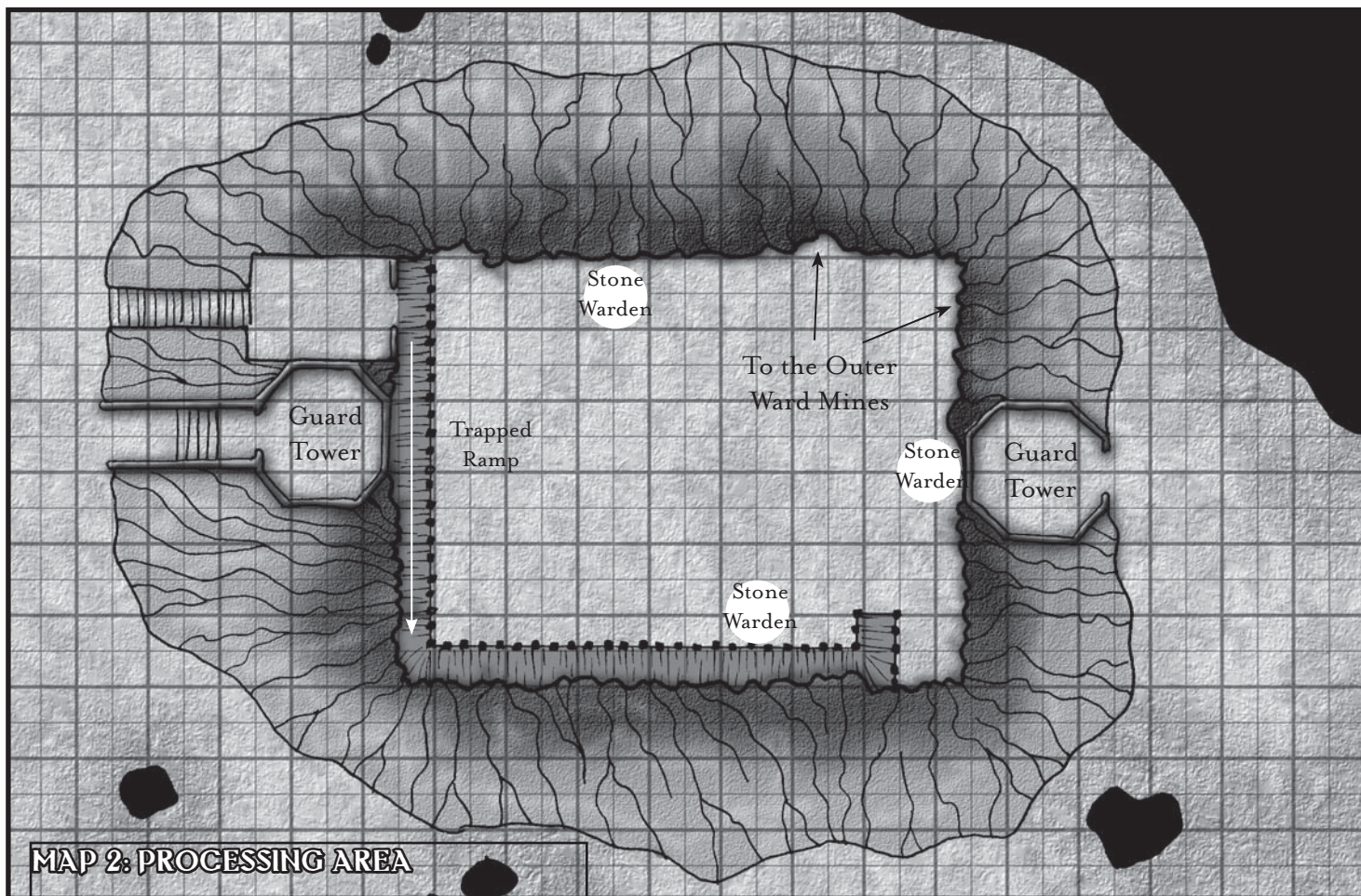
"Give all your weapon's to the Stone Warden, Resistance is ill advised."

The stone warden is a modified stone golem used in House Kundarak exclusively at Dreadhold. The house has combined the near indestructible nature of a golem with the cunning and skill of a dwarf guard who controls it from a distance using magical controls created by House Cannith. Use "Illustration 2" to help describe the stone warden.

If the players refuse to comply with the stone warden the controller proceeds to pummel them until they are defeated or surrender.

Stone Warden (Stone Golem) hp 107; see *Monster Manual* page 136. The stone warden is controlled by a remote dwarf, and can detect magic at will, allowing its controller to see the magic on the PCs.

Tactics: Stone Wardens are virtual engines of destruction. Lucky for the PCs, there is an unlikely friend at the controls of this particular construct. Rindol d'Kundarak, the dwarf controlling the construct doesn't like or usually agree with Vendurra, but he is obedient to House Kundarak. When he attacks the PCs he does so only with nonlethal force. He also tries to plead with the PCs, warning them that they are doomed to imprisonment, and it is pointless to struggle. If they struggle overly much, Vendurra activates the other two stone wardens, and then the "gloves are off."



MAP 2: PROCESSING AREA

Once the PCs surrender or they lie unconscious at its feet, the stone warden strips all weapons and magic items from the character. It leaves armor (even if magical) and all other items on the PCs. It then places a *spellbane collar* on each PC (see sidebar).

Development: If by some stroke of luck the PCs are able to defeat (bring to 0 hp) the first stone warden, Vendurra taunts them again. Clapping, she calls down.

"Very good! Now that's something I have not witnessed before. I guess Diggers are made of stern stuff than I thought. Ah, no matter."

Then the other two stone wardens come to life. If the PCs don't surrender immediately, the pair attacks with lethal force until they do or the PCs are dead.

Once the PCs are processed (stripped and given *spellbane collars*) they are released into the Outer Ward Mines. If they are unconscious when this occurs, stone wardens watch over them until they are conscious, so that the other inmates do kill the PCs in their sleep.

Proceed to "Part Two: Outer Ward Mines."

Scaling the Encounter

There is no scaling for this encounter.



Vendurra d'Kundarak

COMBAT STATISTICS

DREADHOLD GUARD

CR 2

N mix male and female dwarf fighter 2

Medium humanoid (dwarf)

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft, Listen +1, Spot +1

Languages Common, Dwarven

AC 19, touch 11, flat-footed 18; +4 dodge AC against giants.

hp 22 (2 HD)

Fort +6, **Ref** +1, **Will** +0; +2 saves against poisons and spells

Spd 20 ft. (4 squares)

Melee dwarven waraxe +5 (1d10+2/x3)

Ranged +3 light crossbow +3 (1d8/19-20)

Base Atk +2; **Grp** +4 (+4 to resist bull rush attempts)

Atk Options Power Attack (+2), Cleave, +1 attack against orcs and goblinoids

Abilities Str 14, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 10

Feats Cleave, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (dwarven waraxe)

Skills Climb +2, Intimidate +3, Listen +1, Spot +1, Profession (guard) +2, Sense Motive +2,

Possessions Dwarven waraxe, heavy steel shield, banded mail, light crossbow, 20 bolts, 12 silver pieces

Hook "Submit, prisoner, or things will go hard for you."

ARCANE GUARDIAN

CR 3

N mix male and female dwarf wizard 3

Medium humanoid (dwarf)

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft, Listen +1, Spot +1

Languages Common, Dwarven; Draconic, Goblin

AC 11, touch 11, flat-footed 10; +4 dodge AC against giants.

hp 16 (3 HD)

Fort +3, **Ref** +3, **Will** +3; +2 saves against poisons and spells

Spd 20 ft. (4 squares)

Melee dagger +2 (1d4+1/19-20)

Ranged light crossbow +2 (1d8/19-20)

Base Atk +1; **Grp** +2 (+4 to resist bull rush attempts)

Atk Options +1 attack against orcs and goblinoids

Combat Gear arcane scroll of *glitterdust* (CL 3; DC 13)

Wizard Spells Prepared (CL 3; 20+3 to penetrate SR)

2nd—*scorching ray* (+2 ranged touch), *web* (DC 15)

1st—*magic missile* (2), *shield*.

0—*detect magic*, *light*, *resistance*, *virtue*.

Abilities Str 12, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 15, Wis 10, Cha 6

Feats Combat Casting, Lightning Reflexes

Skills Concentration +9 (+13 cast def.), Decipher Script +8,

Knowledge (arcana) +8, Spellcraft +10

Possessions Dagger, light crossbow, 20 bolts, arcane scroll of *glitterdust* (CL 3; DC 13)

Hook Arcane guards support the normal House Kundarak soldiers from a distance, peppering unruly prisoners with their spells.

VENDURRA D'KUNDARAK

CR 8

N female dragonmarked dwarf expert 4/ rogue 5

Medium humanoid (dwarf)

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft, Listen +5, Spot +5

Languages Common, Dwarven; Goblin

AC 15, touch 13, flat-footed 15; +4 dodge AC against giants; uncanny dodge; trapsense +1.

hp 50 (8 HD)

Fort +4, **Ref** +7, **Will** +5; +2 saves against poisons and spells; evasion; trapsense +1

Spd 20 ft. (4 squares)

Melee +1 rapier +7 (1d6+1/18-20)

Base Atk +6; **Grp** +6 (+4 to resist bull rush attempts)

Atk Options sneak attack +3d6. +1 attack against orcs and goblins

Combat Gear wand of *magic missile* (CL 5; 10 charges)

Abilities Str 10, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 15

Feats Least Dragonmark (Mark of Warding — *arcane lock*/1 day), Lesser

Dragonmark (Mark of Warding — *glyph of warding* 1/day), Skill

Focus (Bluff)

Skills Bluff +16, Diplomacy +15, Disable Device +13, Intimidate

+15, Listen +5, Open Lock +13, Sense Motive +11, Search +1

(trapfinding), Spot +5, Use Magic Device +13

Possessions +1 rapier, bracers of armor +2, ring of protection +1, wand of *magic missile* (CL 5, 10 charges), noble's outfit.

Hook "Please understand; I am much smarter than you are."

PART TWO:

OUTER WARD MINES

In this part of the adventure, the PCs must navigate the Outer Ward Mines to survive, gain equipment, and earn enough respect to gain the notice of Captain Gregori Bezron.

The Factions and Gaining Respect

While there are many factions and groups in the Outer Ward Mines, there are four that the PCs have reason to interact with before Captain Bezron takes notice of them: Ri'Shar's Destroyers, Timac's Corp, the Valenar Warband of the Fox, and the Hex's Blades.

Each of these factions has its own uses and challenges, and each is somehow connected to the others. The following are brief summaries of these, and what they offer and how they challenge the PCs.

Ri'Shar's Destroyers: This hobgoblin scoundrel is the leader of one of the largest gangs in the lower warrens of the mines. He can arm the PCs, but only if they do him a special favor.

Timac's Corp: These warforged newcomers to the prison have spent their sleepless rest periods constructing numerous makeshift weapons and armor. If the PCs can help defend them against Ri'Shar's ogre thugs, the PCs could earn a small share.

Warband of the Fox: This decimated warband desperately wants to secure a *spellbane collar* key to increase their chances of survival in the Outer Ward Mines. When the PCs come along, they attempt to elicit their help for mutual gain.

Hex's Blades: These vicious outsiders from Shavarath are interested only in strife. But these warlike creatures have secured a Eberron dragonshard spellcollar key, so battling them secures a valuable prize.

Also, the PCs may be able to befriend a cursed mongrelfolk named Zurgul. While befriendng this hapless creature does not garner respect, he can be an excellent guide to navigating the various gangs of the Outer Ward Mines, and his council could speed the PCs path through the

SPELLBANE COLLAR

The artificers of House Kundarak created these collars to further ensure the incarceration and transpiration of dangerous spellcasters and manifesters.

Constructed of cold iron (hardness 10, hit points 30) and powered by an Eberron dragonshard that also serves as the collar's locking mechanism.

Locked by passing a similarly attuned Eberron dragonshard over the locking device, the collar can only be unlocked by passing a similar "key" dragonshard over the collar, negating all magic around it (by an *antimagic field* or similar spell or effect) or physically breaking the collar. The last option is fraught with risk, as damage done to the collar is also done to the collar's wearer (who usually does not benefit from hardness). Above and beyond that, any attacks made against the collar also activate it, as if the wearer had cast a spell (see below).

Whenever the wearer of a *spellbane collar* attempts to cast a spell, manifest a power or activate a spell-like or psi-like ability, the collar flashed with a bright white light. First the wearer must succeed at a DC 16 fortitude saving throw or be dazed for 1d4 rounds, and lose any spell cast, spell-like ability or psi-like ability activated, or power points spend to manifest a power. Furthermore, the collar burns white hot, inflicting 1d4 points of damage per caster or manifester level, or 3d4 points of damage if the collar is attacked.





tangled web of prison intrigue. That said, the mongrelfolk is a gifted prophet whose prophecies usually are tinged with some grief.

Lastly the PCs might gain more aid from the Stone Warden controller, Rindol d'Kundarak. While the Kundarak scion's advice might aid the PCs, the prisoners think little of those who consort with the jailer, and it may cause the PCs to lose respect.

Respect is an important thing in the Outer Ward Mines of Dreadhold, and the PCs' ability to gain it quickly can reduce their stay in the infamous prison. Interacting with each of the key factions offers many ways to gain or lose respect. For purposes of this adventure, respect is quantified by the PCs earning Respect Points (RP). Once the PCs have earned 10 RP, Gregori Bezron takes notice of them, and the PCs can proceed to "Part Three: Jailbreak". Keep in mind that interaction with each faction has the possibility of yielding 5 RP, so it's possible to interact with only two factions before moving on to Part Three of the adventure. At the same time, it is also possible that the PCs interact with all four factions and never gain enough RP for the incarcerated pirate champion to search them out. In this case, past kindnesses shown to Zurgul may persuade the mongrelfolk to "introduce" the PCs to the captain. If Zurgul doesn't feel behooving to the PCs, then play advances to the "Conclusion." See the section "Left to Rot".



The Grand Entrance

Once the PCs are captured they are released into the Outer Ridge Mines. Use "Illustration 3" to help describe this scene.

The Upper Ward Mines stretch out and away in a roughly crescent shape. Rough-cut stairs lead down from all of the entryways into the large 'common cavern' of the mines beyond. Flanking either side of the stairs at the bottom are two more stone wardens. The prisoners give them a wide berth.

This section of the mines is an impossibly large chamber that stretches from a few hundred yards wide at this end to almost double that in the middle. The ceiling stretches hundreds of feet up. The sides are dotted with dozens of stone and wooden ramps, creating a hive of dwelling well above the cavern floor.

At first blush all of the prisoners appear dangerous, some even monstrosity so. Drow ogres set down their picks to flash evil grins, and hobgoblins chuckle evilly as one of their number is snatched into a dark cavern by some huge tentacled thing; his companions so caught up in their spiteful mirth the remain ignorant to his gruesome fate.

As the PCs climb down the rough-hewn stairs, all eyes are on them. The prisoners size them up. There is not a friendly face in the bunch. Life is hard in Dreadhold, and the PCs are going to have to survive by grit and wit.

As they approach the truly massive main cave of the Outer Ward Mines they can see that the place is roughly split up into territories, as ragged banners fly over and separate living areas.

The mines seems to be divided into several camps made up of tents and mine shafts converted into squalored residence. Each large area is marked with banners and totems.

Each camp is populated by creatures of the same race or by natural allies, but many groups seem to harbor a few oddballs.

Some PCs will seek out others of their general race to group with, while others might look for a defensive position to hole up in.

The PCs do not realize what the *spellbane collars* do unless they ask somebody or they try to cast their first spell or manifest a psionic power.

If the PCs seem at a loss of what to do or where to go, have them stumble upon the mongrelfolk Zurgul first. The strange and cursed creature is a natural guide to the various factions of the mines, and can aid you, the DM, in moving over the important adventure plot.

Zurgul

Originally from Sharn, poor blind Zurgul was born with two rare—if not unique—gifts: prophecy and immortality. And while many a king, prelate, or master of a dragonmarked house may muse on giving all their gold for such gifts, to the poor mongrelfolk they are naught but a curse.

Soon after his gift for prophecy was discovered he was "rescued" from the squalor of home Fallen by a member of Sharn's ruling council (though not even Zurgul will reveal which one). This employment lasted for as long as Zurgul's first ill foretelling, at which point the mongrelfolk was flung from the highest window of his master's estate.

Upon landing, the mongrelfolk learned the painful nature of his second gift, and his body painfully mended on the floor of Vallia Towers.

It took the blind creature a week to return to his master's side, and when he did, he was quickly thrown out the window again, this time warded with spells that would foil *feather fall*. When Zurgul returned again, his death was far more painful and graphic. It was only then that the councilmember fully realized the full extent of the Zurgul predicament. Since he could not seem to kill Zurgul, the councilmember exiled the poor mongrelfolk to Dreadhold Prison.

Zurgul has dwelled in Dreadhold prison for almost a decade.

TRACKING RESPECT POINTS (RP)

Respect Points Gains

- PCs Kill Zurgul (everyone but the poor mongrelfolk finds this funny): +5 RP
- PCs Defeat Ri'Shar's thugs: +5 RP
- PCs Defeat Timac's Corp: +5 RP
- PCs are able to keep most of the weapons they stole from Timac: +5 RP
- PCs Defeat the Warband of the Fox: +5 RP
- PCs Remove their spellbane collars: +5 RP
- PCs Defeat Hex's Blades: +5 RP

Respect Point Penalties

- PCs are caught talking to Rindol: -5 RP

While newcomers seem to always take a shine to the strange, somewhat creep, but rather helpful Zurgul, eventually they learn his prophecy is a precarious boon.

Zurgul: male mongrelfolk commoner 1; hp 3; see "Combat Statistics", below.

The wretched little thing deeply craves attention, and fawns over newcomers with a zeal matching the most notorious of royal sycophants.

Lost you are. Zurgul help the brave heroes captured by the villains Kunderak! Protect Zurgul and he'll become your guide.

Always referring to himself in the third person, and reversing his sentence structure, the wretch follows the PCs insisting that he can guide them, which seems darkly comical at first, given that the creature is obviously blind. Nothing short of a successful Intimidate check (DC 20, due to the mongrelfolk's pure doggedness), charm magic, or killing the poor wretch stops Zurgul from following the PCs once he's latched on. He makes a rule of not associating with creatures who've killed him, so most of the prison are *persona non grata* in the mongrelfolk's eyes.

If asked how a blind and defenseless mongrelfolk could possibly help the PCs in this place, Zurgul answers with the following:

"Zurgul sees; he sees what is yet to be. He knows you are not long in this stinking pit." With that his brow furrows, as if in deep concentration.

"He sees you with wind in your hair making a choice that could set you free...it could send others to their death, but that part's not important."

And so starts the first of his prophecies. It refers to a choice the PCs may have to make at the end of the adventure. It is a fairly typical Zurgul prophecy, as it starts with the good and ends with that bad. The miserable prophet is compelled to always add the bad, but downplays it and refuses to elaborate on it, even when asked; doing so tends to get him killed sooner.

The Voice of Rindol

If the PCs seem helplessly lost, Rindol d'Kunderak, the stone warden controller who took pity on the PCs in the processing room can offer more aid. The dwarf knows much of what goes on in the Outer Ward Mines, and can guide the PCs toward the various resources that can

be won in this part of the adventure. He can speak to the PCs via through one of the many stone wardens sprinkled throughout the Outer Ward Mines.

While weapons are technically contraband, and the deactivation of *spellbane collars* is punishable by harsh isolation that is tantamount to a death sentence, Rindol is a pragmatist, well aware of the impossibility of policing the entire Outer Ward Mines. The controllers of the stone wardens also know that denying the prisoners all of their contraband and secrets leave little to take and bargain with when inmate cooperation needs coercing.

Gaining insight from Rindol does have a price thought, if the PCs are seen conversing with a stone warden, it saps respect from the inmate at large, since they assume that the PCs are warden stooges, or maybe even spies.

None of the stone warden controllers, including Rindol, know of Captain Gregori's plan to escape Dreadhold.

Gang Captain Ri'Shar (EL 5)

Ri'Shar an infamous hobgoblin brigand leads one of the more powerful gangs in the lower mines. Ri'har fancies himself a hobgoblin of the same stature as the Dhakaan warlords of old.

The occasional hobgoblin and ogre guards his territory, each usually attended by a few goblin lackeys. By virtue of Zurgul's advice, or just by stumbling into Ri'Shar's expansive territory the PCs gain the notice of some of these guards, who then question them (Whose you? What you want? Why?), all the while noticeably sizing them up. Compared to many in the prison, the PCs likely cut impressive figures with newer armor and cleaner attire, and even the dimmest ogre knows that Ri'Shar will be interested in the newcomers...he's always interested in the newcomers, especially ones who look like they can handle themselves in a fight.

Eventually Ri'Shar's foot soldiers escort the PCs to their boss's lair, a secure cave on the higher levels of the mines. Upon presenting themselves to Ri'Shar, the hobgoblin's flunkies make the PCs show some sign of respect to him (kneeling when addressing him, some personal possession, or a mildly humiliating act). After this is done, Ri'Shar gets directly to the point:

"If you're new, then you need weapons and friends. I can provide both, but I am not by nature a charitable man. We bargain here. What do you think you have that I want?"

The PCs can try to offer various bits of their equipment, but what

ZURGUL AND HIS PROPHECIES

For as long a Zurgul stays with the PCs they'll suffer (or notice?) the strange twists of fate that seem to surround Zurgul. The following are a few examples of what they could be, but feel free to make up some of your own.

The prophecy always begins with Zurgul making a cryptic statement. He can make such a statement as an immediate action.

In making up or adjudicating the twists of fate it is important that none of them should kill a character or permanently take them out of play. It's okay if the twist hurts them real bad, though.

1. *Strike and your foe is broken, but shattered become yours.* (On the next successful attack the PCs' weapon shatters, but it does automatically confirm a critical on the strike.)
2. *Fleet footed you are, but addle you become.* (A spellcaster gains and extra 10 feet of movement for a round,

but the next spell they cast is wasted, just as if the spellcaster failed a Concentration check.)

3. *Count this one must, another chance you'll not get.* (The character gains a +10 insight bonus to a skill check, but suffers a -10 penalty on the next four skill checks).
4. *Stand like a stone, and then fall like a sack.* (A character gains a +4 dodge bonus to their Armor Class, but if their foe hits it is an automatic critical.

It is also important to note that despite the rules involved, Zurgul is technically not responsible for the success and their successive mishaps (and no *augury* or similar divination points to Zurgul as the cause of the benefit or the mishap). They are just blind luck of circumstance that Zurgul sees through his unique gift. It is perfectly normal for those who suffer from these twists not to see it so, and such is the real tragedy of Zurgul's existence.

Ri'Shar really wants is to use the PCs as hired thugs. If they don't pick up on this he laughs at their stupidity.

"You are green. Well here is what you will do for me. A few of those 'forged from Timac's gang have been spending their sleepless nights making weapons. There's no problem with that, I guess. But they refuse to play me my proper tribute. They need to be taught a lesson... a lesson they will never learn from if you get my meaning...and I would rather not waste my own blood on it. I will give you some junk weapons I have about. Do the deed and I'll give you better ones. Fail and, well, I'll make sure not to slip in the smear that is left of you next time I pass that way."

If the PCs agree, he supplies them with weapons. Each PC can choose one weapon from the following list:

- dagger
- club,
- shortspear,
- spear; or
- sling

The weapons are makeshift, which affects the PCs ability to wield them and the damage they do. They all suffer a -1 penalty to attack and damage rolls (minimum 1 point of damage).

Once the PCs pick their weapon, the hobgoblin directs them to Timar's lair. See that section of the encounter for development.

If the PCs refuse Ri'Shar's "offer" the penalty is that the PCs have to fight their way out of the lair. Ri'Shar puts two ogres in the PCs path. If the PCs can defeat them, they are free to go, as long as they swear not to step upon Ri'Shar's territory ever again.

Creatures: The powerful ogres are used to winning battles with brawn not wits. Their tactics are rudimentary but effective.

Ogres (2): hp 35, 29; see *Monster Manual* page 199; these ogres don't carry javelins.

Development: If the PCs bring back Timac's weapons, the hobgoblin congratulates the PCs on their prowess, and takes possessions of the weapons. If the PCs remind Ri'Shar of his promise, he throws them a longsword and a mace from the weapons, and says.

"You're lucky I am feeling charitable. Keep what I've given you and these, and run off, before my good sense overrides my generosity."

If the PCs push their luck, Ri'Shar orders a pair of ogres to attack (see above). If the PCs defeat the ogres, he throws them a dagger and a battleaxe, and orders them out of his territory. If the PCs continually refuse Ri'Shar, the full force of his immediate gang attack (five more ogres, a dozen bugbears, eight hobgoblins, and 20 goblins!).

Timac's Corp (EL 5)

It's now well known among the prisoners that Timac's Corp, a group of warforged devoted to the path of the Lord of Blades has been creating good quality weapons. Most of the Outer Ward Mines gangs have attempted to open some sort of negotiations with the warforged in the hopes of gaining trade with the warforged artificer, Timac. So far all have been disappointed, as the warforged seem unwilling to trade with any but their own kind. The PCs may encounter the corps on a raid ordered by the hobgoblin Ri'Shar, in an attempt to trade with the warforged directly based on Zurgul advice, or have just stumbled into Timac's territory.

Unless the PCs count at least one warforged in their midst, any dealings with the corp end in aggression. Zealous followers of the Lord of Blades, this violent band believes that they are far superior to any "thing of flesh and blood", and only tolerate those who they

perceive pose a threat to enter into their territory.

Warforged can make contact with the corp, as the group is wary of those outside their groups, but always willing to make room for a 'forged who has seen the light of the Lord of Blade's teachings. They may even be willing to grant likeminded warforged weapons.

Warforged who approach the corp, must succeed a Bluff check to get the corp to believe it is a follower of the Lord of Blade's philosophy of warforged supremacy (DC 15, unless, of course, the PC is actually a follower), and a further Diplomacy check moving for the corp to grant them weapons. For a warforged to gain weapons this way, it must sway the group to a helpful attitude (see the "Influencing NPC Attitudes" sidebar on page 72 of the *Player's Handbook*). The corps's starting attitude is dependent on the circumstances of the PC's approach.

- Three or more warforged PCs approach
Timac's Corp alone to parley for weapons. Friendly
- Three or more warforged PCs approach with
members of other races to parley for weapons. Indifferent
- Two or less warforged PCs approach alone to
parley for weapons. Unfriendly
- Two or less warforged PCs approach with
members of other races to parley for weapons Hostile

But they will give the approaching warforged a full minute to explain its poor choice of company.

All other circumstances of approach are considered hostile and practically impossible (+20 modifier to the DC; see *Player's Handbook* page 65) for their attitude to change on the matter. Feel free to grant as much as a +2 circumstance bonus for good roleplaying. Only other warforged may aid this Diplomacy check, as the members of Timac's Corp do not listen to the words of "fleshbags".

Success on the check grants warforged PCs—and warforged PCs only—their choice of one of the following weapons.

- dagger
- short sword
- light mace
- heavy mace
- longsword
- battleaxe

These weapons are of normal workmanship. They also come with the cost that the warforged PCs must swear to aid Timac's Corp in times of need.

Failure provokes a combat with Timac's minions.

Creatures: Whether or not the PCs fail in negotiation for weapons, or if the PCs are making a raid into Timac's territory to steel weapons for Ri'Shar, they battle the following members of the corp.

Timac's Bruisers (2): mix male and female personality warforged fighter 2; hp 17, 13; see "Combat Statistics," below.

Timac's Dancers (4): mix male and female personality warforged rogue 1; hp 5, 4, 4, 3; see "Combat Statistics," below.

Tactics: While not all of these warforged were veterans of the Last War, those that were have trained and drilled with their companions extensively.

The normal warforged just wade into the PCs and start attacking, while the smaller scouts circle about, looking for the best places to flank. The cunning group makes good use of environment and flanking maneuvers; and will even retreat if more than half their

number is defeated.

Development: Destroying the warforged gains their weapons (two longswords and four Small short swords). Those on the raid for Ri'Shar gain not only those weapons, but the contents of one of the corps cache of weapons: three longswords, four maces, eight daggers, two battleaxes, and a pair of short spears. After discovering such a treasure trove of weapons, some PCs may ponder reneging on their "agreement" with Ri'Shar, or at the very least stashing some of the weapons out of the sight of the hobgoblin gang master. This should be fairly easy if the PCs still have a *bag of holding*, *Heward's handy haversack*, or similar hiding space (unless for some reason Ri'Shar knows about such items). It is more difficult to accomplish if the PCs must find a hiding spot somewhere amid Outer Ward Mines. Prying eyes are everywhere. In these cases have the stealthiest of the PCs make a hide check. A DC 25 success hides the weapons in a cache somewhere away from the prying eyes of other inmates. If the PC asks Zurgul's aid in hiding the weapons, grant a +5 bonus to the check, as the mongrelfolk can use his gifts to suggest the best hiding spot.

Warband of the Fox (EL 5)

Sentenced to Dreadhold for numerous successful raids into Karnnath, the Warband of the Fox is lead by the daring and beautiful Vessenda the Fox. Named more for her cunning than her looks (which are still considerable), Vessenda was recently outfoxed by the powerful Ri'Shar.

After the conflict much of Vessenda's warrior's blood stained the hard cavern floor of the Outer Ward Mine. The proud Vessenda, beaten but not vanquished, knows she needs aid to not only restore her place in the prison's hierarchy, but also have the warband survive the coming weeks.

Believing—and rightly so—that regaining her spellcasting ability will give her people an edge in regaining a place in the prison's hierarchy, she covets the Hex's *spellbane collar key* (see below). At the same time, with the wounding and loss of so many of her warrior in the fight with

Ri'Shar, she dares not attempt another assault so quickly, and she worries when another gang will sweep in like jackals and finish off the Warband of the Fox.

When seemingly civilized newcomers enter the prison, she sees an opportunity for an alliance, and approaches the group.

If the PCs agree to steal the *spellbane collar key* from the Hex, she not only agrees to release them of their own collars, but to give the PCs a cache of weapons that used to belong to her dead warriors.

More mercenary PCs might take the decimated state of the warband as a perfect opportunity not only to collect the weapons of the dead warriors, but to take those arms and armors currently in the possession of Vessenda and her young warriors.

Creatures: Fearlessly, Vessenda and her warband don't fear death if the PCs attack. They fight with honor, distinction, and to the death.

Vessenda the Fox: female Valenar elf ranger 3/ sorcerer 1; hp 20; see "Combat Statistics", below.

Young Valenar Raiders (4): mix male and female Valenar elf fighters 1; hp 10, 8, 8, 5; see "Combat Statistics", below.

Tactics: If the PCs decide to strike, the warband is at a real disadvantage, as Vessenda doesn't risk casting spells due to the *spellbane collar*. The young raiders square into a turtling formation using Combat Expertise and fighting defensively to raise their Armor Class. Vessenda takes moves around the square, taking corners to protect the raiders from flanking maneuvers. Once the PCs attack them, they give and offer no quarter, putting their fate in their ancestor's hands.

Development: If the PCs are able to retrieve the *spellbane collar key* from Hex, Vessenda is true to her word, and removes the collars and she gives each of the PCs a short sword.

If the PCs build a rapport with Vessenda and here raiders, they may be able to talk Captain Gregori into allowing the group to join the escape (Diplomacy DC 15); this will only make their choice tougher when the Gregori treachery is uncovered.

Hex's Blades (EL 5)



These strange bladeling warriors are from the plane of Shavarath, though few of the inmates believe their claim to such cosmic origins. A gang apart in the Outer Ward Mines, they are lead by a strange war adept who calls himself the Hex. The warriors are fanatically loyal to this holy man, and would gladly lay down their lives to protect him, believing upon their death they will be whisked away to the paradise of conflict that is Shavarath.

Hex's Blades are hunters looking for fair and fitting battle, as they follow the teaching of the Hex who claims that his people are trapped in Dreadhold (and Eberron itself) to surgically prune the world of weaker beings. Due to their innate weapons, and the fact that somehow Hex has obtained a *spellbane collar* key (he claims a Spirit of Strife gave it to him in a religious vision), so that none of the bladelings suffer the *spellbane collar* restraints, the group is powerful, and not even Ri'Shar dares to come into conflict with them.

Creatures: Approaching the Hex's territory is the same as looking for a fight. The group suffers no visitors uninvited, and never issues invitations. Use "Illustration 4" to help describe the bladelings.

Bladelings (4): hp 6, 5, 4, 4; see "Combat Statistics", below.

The Hex: male bladeling adept 4: hp 29; see "Combat Statistics", below.

Tactics: The bladeling warriors start combat with their razor storm ability, hoping to tenderize approaching combatants. The Hex, if given the opportunity, cast *bull's strength* on himself, and then targets approaching PCs with his *sleep* spell. He'll use his own razor storm and his *burning hands* to further wound the PCs before entering in combat with his short sword.

The bladelings warriors lay down their lives to protect the Hex.

Development: Once the PCs have defeated the bladelings, they can retrieve the Eberron dragonshard *spellbane collar* key from a small pouch around the Hex's neck. The PCs will also note that that short sword that the Hex wielded was of exceptional quality, probably masterwork.

Scaling the Encounter

The scaling is broken down by encounter and gang. Each details the increased challenge of combating the gang.

5th-level Characters:

Ri'Shar's Destroyers: Add two bugbears (hp 22, 17; see *Monster Manual* page 29).

Timac's Corp: There are three Timac's bruisers (hp 17, 16, 13) and seven Timac's Dancers (5, 5, 4, 4, 3).

Warband of the Fox: Add three young Valenar raiders (for a total of seven; hp 10, 8, 8, 8, 3, 2).

Hex's Blades: Add two more bladelings (for a total of six; hp 6, 5, 5, 4, 4, 3).

6th-level Characters:

Ri'Shar's Destroyers: Add three bugbears (hp 22, 17, 14; see *Monster Manual* page 29) and one ogre (for a total of three; hp 35, 29, 28).

Timac's Corp: There are five Timac's bruisers (hp 17, 15, 16, 13, 12) and seven Timac's Dancers (5, 5, 4, 4, 3).

Warband of the Fox: Add six young Valenar raiders (for a total of 10; hp 10, 8, 8, 8, 7, 7, 5, 4, 3, 2).

Hex's Blades: Add four more bladelings (for a total of eight; hp 6, 5, 5, 4, 4, 4, 3, 2).

7th-level Characters:

Ri'Shar's Destroyers: Add five bugbears (hp 22, 18, 17, 15, 14; see *Monster Manual* page 29) and one ogre (for a total of three; hp 35, 29, 28).

Timac's Corp: There are six Timac's bruisers (hp 17, 15, 16, 14, 13, 12) and eight Timac's Dancers (6, 7, 5, 5, 5, 4, 4, 3).

Warband of the Fox: Add eight young Valenar raiders (for a total of 12; hp 10, 8, 8, 8, 7, 7, 6, 5, 5, 4, 3, 2).

Hex's Blades: Add seven more bladelings (for a total of 11; hp 8, 8, 7, 6, 5, 5, 4, 4, 4, 3, 2).

COMBAT STATISTICS

ZURGUL

CR 2

Male mongrelfolk commoner 1

N Medium humanoid (humanoid)

Fiend Folio page 125 and modified by *Races of Destiny* pages 98 to 100

Init +1; **Senses** blind; **Listen** +2, **Spot** automatic failure

Languages Common, Mongrel

AC 8, **touch** 8, **flat-footed** 8

hp 3 (1 HD)

Immune sleep

Fort +2, **Ref** +1, **Will** +4; diffuse blood, +1 bonus on saves against enchantment or illusion spells and effects, +1 bonus on saves against poison

Spd 15 ft. (3 squares)

Melee unarmed strike -2 (1d3-2 nonlethal)

Base Atk +0; **Grp** -2

Abilities Str 6, Dex 12, Con 15, Int 8, Wis 18, Cha 14

Feats Skill Focus (Listen)

Skills Listen +13

Blind Prophet (Su): Zurgul was born a day of great significance to the draconic Prophecy. He is blind, and his eyes are solid white with no pupils. In times of distress he has strange visions that duplicate the effect of an *augury* spell (CL 20).

Diffuse Blood: Mongrelfolk gain a +2 racial bonus on saving throws against any spell that targets a particular race, provided the selected race is part of their general ancestry (human, Halfling, dwarf, elf, gnome, goblin, or orc).

Emulate Race (Ex): Because of their mixed heritage, mongrelfolk can use magic items that only function for a user of a certain race. This works like the *emulate race* function of *Use Magic Device*. A mongrelfolk can automatically emulate any humanoid race, with no need for a skill check.

Immortal (Ex): It seems that Zongelmon cannot die...or at least stay dead for long. Upon his death the mongrel folk comes back to life 2d6 hours after his death. This occurs even if his body is destroyed; he just appears within a safe location around the area of his death.

Sound Imitation (Ex): A mongrelfolk can mimic any voice our sound he or she has heard. Listeners must succeed on a DC 16 Will save to detect the ruses.

Possessions rags, wooden holy symbol of the Shadow.

Hook "Zurgul hears your voice, and his mind's eye sees your destiny."

TIMAC'S BRUISERS

CR 2

N mix male and female personality warforged fighter 2

Medium construct (living construct)

Monster Manual III page 190

Init +2; **Senses** Listen +0, **Spot** +0

Languages Common

AC 19, **touch** 12, **flat-footed** 14; light fortification

hp variable, see adventure text (2 HD)

Immune poison, sleep effects, paralysis, disease, nausea, fatigue, exhaustion, effects that cause the sickened condition, and energy drain.

Fort +5, **Ref** +2, **Will** +0; +2 saves against poisons and spells

Weakness can't heal damage normally

Spd 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee longsword +4 (1d8+2/19-20) or
slam +4 (1d4+2)

Atk Options Power Attack (+3), Cleave

Base Atk +2; **Grp** +4

Abilities Str 15, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 8

Feats Cleave, Mithral Fluidity, Power Attack

Skills Jump +5, Intimidate +4

Possessions longsword, heavy steel shield

Continued on page 18

COMBAT STATISTICS (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17)

TIMAC'S DANCERS

CR 2

N mix male and female personality warforged scout rogue 1

Small construct (living construct)

Monster Manual III page 193**Init** +7; **Senses** Listen +1, Spot +1**Languages** Common

AC 16, touch 14, flat-footed 13; light fortification

hp variable, see adventure text (1 HD)**Immune** poison, sleep effects, paralysis, disease, nausea, fatigue, exhaustion, effects that cause the sickened condition, and energy drain.**Fort** +1, **Ref** +5, **Will** -1; +2 saves against poisons and spells**Weakness** can't heal damage normally**Spd** 20 ft. (4 squares)**Melee** Small shortsword +2 (1d4+1/19-20)**Ranged** Small dagger +4 (1d3+1/19-20)**Combat Options** 1d6 sneak attack**Base Atk** +0; **Grp** -4**Abilities** Str 12, Dex 17, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 8, Cha 6**Feats** Improved Initiative**Skills** Bluff +2, Climb +5, Disable Device +5, Jump +3, Hide +11,

Move Silently +7, Slight of Hand +7, Tumble +7

Possessions short sword, 3 daggers.

BLADELING

CR 1

LN Medium outsider (lawful)

Monster Manual II page 31**Init** +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +0, Spot +0**Languages** Common

AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 14; DR 5/magic and bludgeoning

hp variable, see adventure text (1 HD)**Immune** acid, rust**Resist** cold 5, fire 5**Fort** +2, **Ref** +3, **Will** +2**Spd** 30 ft. (6 squares)**Melee** claw +1 (1d6)**Base Atk** +1; **Grp** +1**Special Actions** razor storm**Abilities** Str 11, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10**Feats** Improved Initiative**Skills** Craft (weaponsmithing) +4, Jump +4**Razor Storm (Ex):** Once per day, a bladeling can expel shrapnellike bits of skin in a 15-foot cone, dealing 2d6 points of piercing damage. Reflex save (DC 10) halves damage. After this attack bladelings AC drops to 13, touch 11, flat-footed 12.**Hook** "No one touches the Hex!"

THE HEX

CR 4

Male bladeling adept 4

LN Medium outsider (lawful)

Monster Manual II page 31**Init** +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +3, Spot +3**Languages** Common; Draconic

AC 16, touch 11, flat-footed 15; Dodge, DR 5/magic and bludgeoning

hp 29 (5 HD)**Immune** acid, rust**Resist** cold 5, fire 5**Fort** +5, **Ref** +4, **Will** +9**Spd** 30 ft. (6 squares)**Melee** mw shortsword +4 (1d6/19-20), or claw +3 (1d6)**Base Atk** +3; **Grp** +3**Special Actions** razor storm**Combat Gear** flask of alchemist's spark**Adept Spells Prepared** (CL 4)2nd—bull's strength1st—burning hands (DC 13), command (DC 13), sleep (DC 13)

0—cure minor wounds (DC 12), mending, purify food and drink

Abilities Str 11, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 10**Feats** Dodge, Improved Natural Armor**Skills** Craft (weaponsmithing) +4, Jump +4**Possessions** masterwork shortsword.**Razor Storm (Ex):** Once per day, a bladeling can expel shrapnellike bits of skin in a 15-foot cone, dealing 2d6 points of piercing damage. Reflex save (DC 12) halves damage. After this attack bladelings AC drops to 13, touch 11, flat-footed 12.**Hook** "I know that the Valenar have sent you. They've sent you to your doom."

YOUNG VALENAR RAIDERS

CR 1

Mix male and female Valenar elf fighters 1

CN Medium humanoids (elf)

Init +5; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +2, Spot +2**Languages** Common, Elven; Goblin

AC 17, touch 13, flat-footed 14; Combat Expertise

hp variable, see adventure text (1 HD)**Immune** sleep**Fort** +2, **Ref** +3, **Will** +2; +2 save against enchantment spells and effects**Spd** 30 ft. (6 squares)**Melee** short sword +3 (1d6+2/19-20)**Ranged** dagger +4 (1d4+2/19-20)**Base Atk** +1; **Grp** +3**Abilities** Str 14, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 8**Feats** Combat Expertise, Weapon Focus (scimitar)**Skills** Handle Animal +1, Jump +3, Listen +2, Ride +8, Spot +2, Search +3**Possessions** chain shirt, short sword, dagger**Hook** "For our ancestors' honor!"

VESSEDA THE FOX

CR 4

Female Valenar elf ranger 3 / sorcerer 1

CN Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +4; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +3, Spot +3**Languages** Common, Elven

AC 18, touch 14, flat-footed 14

hp 20 (4 HD)**Immune** sleep**Fort** +3, **Ref** +7, **Will** +3; +2 save against enchantment spells and effects**Spd** 30 ft. (6 squares)**Melee** short sword +2 (1d6+1/19-20) and

dagger +2 (1d4/19-20) or

short sword +4 (1d6+1/19-20)

Ranged shortbow +7 (1d6/x3)**Base Atk** +3; **Grp** +4**Sorcerer Spells Known** (CL 1)1st □□□□—shield, true strike

0 □□□□—detect magic, detect poison, ray of frost (ranged touch +7), resistance, virtue

Abilities Str 12, Dex 18, Con 11, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 14**SQ** two-weapon combat style**Feats** Bladebearer of the Valenar (*Races of Eberron* pages 107–108, bonuses in statistic block), Combat Casting, Endurance^B, Track^B**Skills** Concentration +7 (+11 cast def), Climb +4, Jump +4, Listen +3, Ride +9, Search +1, Spot +3, Survival +6**Possessions** chain shirt, short sword, shortbow, 5 arrows**Hook** "Sometimes discretion is the better part of valor. Sometimes the frontal assault is."

PART THREE:

JAILBREAK

When the PCs earn enough respect among the prison inmates, they come to the attention of Captain Gregori (NE male human bard 7; Bluff + 16, Sense Motive +2), a "famed" Lhazaar pirate, that—if he and his men can be believed—was on the verge of reaching the vaulted of pirate prince when he and his entire crew of one of his ships was captured by House Lyrandar.

Captain Gregori usually takes little interest in newcomers, but he has run into a problem with his plan to escape the Outer Ward Mines, and is in need of capable and daring help. Adventurers could be just the help he needs.

Captain Gregori sends his first mate to open negotiations with the PCs.



Enter Dreson Snod (EL variable)

Dreson Snod (NG male human rogue 2 / expert 3; Bluff +15, Sense Motive +9), first mate of the *Spitfire*, Captain Gregori's old flagship, has a secret. While his captain has believed him to be an extremely capable, albeit bland, first mate who has served him with distinction for close to two years now, the captain has been deceived. Dreson Snod is actually an agent of House Lyrandar who has been spying on the captain.

Like Captain Gregori, Snod has been interested in the PCs exploits in the Outer Ward Mines. After spending over six months in this stinking prison he secretly hopes the PCs have been sent by his house to hope, but the realist in him knows that's unlikely.

Dreson does not need to ask the PCs their name. He knows it (or any aliases the PCs have gone by, or honoraries grant to them by their enemies) by virtue of their reputation among the various prison gangs.

While he has searched them out, and is hopeful the PCs will be helpful to his goals, he approaches them with the indifferent stoicism of a heartless inmate (a Sense Motive check DC 25 can sense his hard expression is more ruse than real). Hope is weakness in Dreadhold Prison.

A thin, almost emaciated man, bald with drawn features and a gray-speckled stubble approaches you. His dress is that of a Lhazaar sailor, dirty and worse the wear from imprisonment. Behind him are half-dozen other sailors, mostly human, but a large half-

orc and a smirking dwarf are among the throng.

"I've been sent here to retrieve you for an audience with Captain Gregori, for a matter that could prove mutually beneficial."

As he escorts the PCs to Captain Gregori's camp, he keeps up his feigned attitude of indifferent until the PCs actively try to change it (via the Diplomacy skill, see *Player's Handbook* page 71).

If they can improve his attitude to friendly, he gives the PCs the following information.

- We were originally on a ship called the *Spitfire*, the flagship of Captain Gregori. We raided the southern shipping lanes, targeting House Lyrandar ships whenever possible. Eventually the dragonmarked house caught up with us. We were captured and the entire crew of the *Spitfire* was thrown into Dreadhold prison.
- While charismatic, the captain is a slave to his passions and whims. He can be paranoid at times, so watch what you say to him. When he feels threatened he can be a real snake.
- He needs help with a plan for escape. He feels, and I agree, that you might be the right people for the job. Play your cards right, and freedom can be yours.

If his attitude is helpful, he is even more forthcoming, taking the PCs to a secluded alcove after dismissing the other sailors to tell them his deeper secrets.

- The *Spitfire* was captured because of me. I am actually an agent of House Lyrandar. At the end of the Last War Gregori stole a Lyrandar treasure that my house has been attempting to secure ever since. I was sent to infiltrate his pirates and gain his trust. I've had some success, but he still has not shared the secret location of the Lyrandar treasure. I hoped that a stay in Dreadhold would loosen his tongue, but I think it has just strengthened his resolve.
- I believe that the captain is truly insane. I have heard him talk and even argue violently with himself from time to time. But he is also brilliant. In inexplicitly he has found a way out of the prison via the sewer system of the upper complex, and he seems to know an incredible amount of information about the system, but he has never set foot in it.
- While the captain's strange genius has found a way out, we've run into problems. The dwarves have nasty monster living in their sewers, and they've already killed a number of crewmen. That's where you come in. The captain wants you for your monster slaying skills.
- The captain does not plan on taking any of the other gang leaders or members with him. He is only interested in saving his crew...and of course you, if you agree.

If the PCs told Dreson they are members of the Diggers' Union:

- The captain distrusts your organization. When we were captured, a member of the Union was serving on the *Spitfire*, but he never made it here. I think Krekor Gevil died, but the captain believes it was the Digger who betrayed him to House Lyrandar.

Captain Gregori

With the exception of the capture of the *Spitfire* and his subsequent stay at Dreadhold Prison, Captain Gregori has an incredible knack of always being at the right place at the right time. Rumor has it that a guardian spirit watches over him.

His current abode, a series of caves 30 feet up the walls of the western mine were secured when the group of minotaurs who formally inhabited them died of a mysterious plague. Since the crew of the



Spitfire have mined these caves, and have secretly worked on their escape plan by digging their way to the sewer system of the upper complex. The crew broke through to a rather perilous section of the sewers a little over a week ago, and have even completed some reconnoitering of the immediate pipe system, but ran into a number of dangers. This is why Gregori wants to talk to the PCs. He feels that given their reputation, they may be the perfect solution to the problems his people have encountered within the sewers.

Snod escorts the PCs up the rope ladders that lead to the upper caves (with crewmen aiding those not used to rope ladders) and deep within the caves occupied by the former crew of the *Spitfire*. In a deep cavern they find the captain.

A well-kept mineshaft heads back about 40 feet before coming to a junction where it splits off into half a dozen or so tunnels that head off at various angles. Most are crowded with tents and makeshift beds. The one straight ahead, though, is kept clear and you hear a single agitated voice echoing down it.

"I told you that you must tell me everything, no matter how inconsequential you think it is. Importance is my call to make, not yours. I am about to interview the help, and I want them to have the best chance of success.... You're sick of this place? Don't you think I am sick of this place! We are on the verge of leaving I swear, but you need to tell me everything."

As the PCs enter the chamber, they see a single man standing at its center. He paces back and forth in agitation; running his fingers through his long dark beard. He was obviously either talking to himself or some unseen creature in the room, but no amount of searching on the PCs part finds any other creature in the room. The look on his face is pure crazy. When he notices that he is not alone, his visage softens to normality, he straightens up, dusts off his clothing, and moves toward the newcomers, his hand out in friendship.

"So these are the new inmates I am guessing? Not much to look at but I hear you are good in a fight, at least that's what the walls tell me, if you take my meaning."

The tone and direction of the conversation depends on the PCs reaction to the obviously unstable Gregori.

If they treat the captain with respect and good humor, Gregori lets them in on his plan to escape Dreadhold.

"It's very exciting. We've dug into the lower sewers, and I have a map of the path we need to take to get out."

At that point he shows the PCs a rough map of the system he has drawn on the wall of the chamber (use "Illustration 5" to illustrate this scene).

If the PCs ask the pirate captain how he came across the map, he just smiles, winks, and puts his finger to his mouth in a shush motion but never says. He greets all other requests for the map's origins with obstinate silence, changing the subject immediately whenever he can. If the PCs persist too much, he dismisses them, stating flatly they are more trouble than they are worth. Proceed to the conclusion "Left to Rot."

If the PCs seem unconcerned with the map's origins, or when they decide to let the captain have his little secret, he continues.

"Unfortunately we have run into problems. Those nasty little Kundarak dwarves have populated their sewers with otyughs—nasty dung-eating aberrations. One of those damn things ate three of my crew, and now our egress is at a standstill."

"What I need is some real butt-kickers to take of the beasts. I pondered asking one of the gangs, but I would rather not deal with the criminal element, if you take my meaning. But you...oh, you are the answer to my prayers: brave heroes, wrongfully accused, in league with the brave crew of the Spitfire, bane of tyrants, bandits for the people I an effort to escape this foul pit of inequity."

Gregori is laying it on pretty thick, and there are many statements that may throw up some red flags for the PCs.

First off the PCs may want to know why Gregori came to the conclusion that the PCs are "brave heroes, wrongfully accused." The captain blows this off with a simple "well, no one is guilty in Dreadhold," but the captain knows

more about the PCs are letting on (Sense Motive DC 20, clues the PCs on to this). Though like the origin of the map, he stubbornly keeps the secret of this intelligence.

He also paints the picture that his pirates are the champions of the underdog and the scourge of the oppressor. Most pirates believe this to a certain extent, and use it as justifications for their larcenies, but it is definitely not true in the case of Captain Gregori. He is in it for the money, the excitement, and a lust for personal power.

Basically, he wants the PCs to agree to his plan, and lays it out as thick as he has to, but does not beg. If the PCs insult him, or refuses to help, he lets them go, and pushes on with his plan without them, using the PCs knowledge of his plan to motivate his men (go to Conclusion "Left to Rot").

When they agree, he is ecstatic.

"Okay. Here is what we are going to do. We have extended one of the old mining shafts here to the sewer system underneath this wretched place. You will enter the sewers first. You will disarm any traps and clear us a path to the sewer grate near Vendurra's tower. Once there, I know where to find the way out."

Gregori is of course not being totally truthful. An utterly selfish individual, all he really cares about is his own escape. A DC 20 Sense Motive suggests that the captain is not being totally honest about his plan, but offers no further information.

If at anytime the party mentions they are working for the Diggers' Union, Gregori's trust of the PCs wane. While his offer still stands, this has consequences later in the adventure.

If the PCs let the captain know that Dreson Snod who betrayed the Spitfire to House Lyrandar, Captain Gregori thanks them for this information. Snod disappears mysteriously (and his place in later encounters is taken by Hevgu the Brute, the half-orc who

served as the *Spitfire's* bosun). It also changes Gregori's mind about the Diggers' Union.

Development: Before the PCs set off, Captain Gregori makes sure they are up to the challenge. He removes *spellbane collars* from those still so confined, and can supply the PCs with any simple melee weapon.



Otyugh Lair (EL 5)

Following Gregori's directions leads the PCs through the twisting and turning sewer ways, and finally toward a junction pool that also serves as home to a savage disposer of sewage and unwanted guests. This chamber is the chief horror that Gregori wants the PCs to defeat. The creature in this chamber has already consumed two of his crewmen, and he has warned them of its dangers.

Beyond the steel cataract door, the sewer tunnels enter a maze of tunnels, cross-tunnels, and smaller sub-tunnels. After almost an hour of navigation through the confusing mess, the main tunnel opens up into a large circular junction chamber. Some 40 feet wide, this domed chamber features entry tunnels at the four cardinal directions, and is dominated by a large pool of garbage and more unsavory refuse. A relatively narrow and slick walkway, its floor slanting dangerously toward the sickening water, surrounds the pool.

A chamber designed for sewage treatment and flow control, this place is typically more deeply submerged (a normal unmodified Instigate check notices this), but with the malfunctioning cataract door, it is experiencing a period of "low tide".

The walkway is treacherous. Creatures walking faster than half their speed must succeed a DC 12 balance check each round or slip into the sickening water. The fall does no damage, but those submerged must succeed a DC 14 Fortitude save or fall victim to a particularly virulent strain of filth fever that has an incubation time of 1d3 rounds rather than day. The room's occupant is, of course, immune to this sickness.

The refuse pile is home to an otyugh. There are many of these disposers in similar chambers throughout the sewer system, but with any luck this is the only one the PCs will tangle with.

Creature: The dwarves of House Kundurak transport wild otyugh into these domed chambers with the aid of extradimensional cages. Once a creature is let loose, it quickly finds it's trapped, as the chamber's entrances are too small for egress. This only adds to the creature's aggression, as the maddening captivity makes the creature mute and beyond the capacity to care about diplomacy.

Otyugh: hp 39; see *Monster Manual* page 204.

Use "Illustration 6" to help describe the creature and its lair.

Tactics: Typically the otyugh hides in the trash and offal at the center of the 10-foot deep pool (granting the typical +8 to Hide check, since it is the creature's lair), its eyed tentacle above the chunky liquid watching for the occasional rat or giant monstrous centipede morsel. Upon spotting the PCs approach, the creature

DETECT THOUGHTS

Some characters might decide to test the nature of Captain Gregori's "madness." A *detect thoughts* determines the following, presented by round:

1st Round: Unsurprisingly, there is the presence of thought.

2nd Round: Within the general area of Captain Gregori, there is always the presence of two minds. One is Intelligence 13 (Captain Gregori) and the other is Intelligence 18.

3rd Round: Captain Gregori and the phantom mind seem in a constant state of bickering, but given a minute or two of uninterrupted eavesdropping on their thoughts the reading PCs can determine the following.

- The phantom mind seems to be some sort of guardian spirit that looks upon Captain Gregori like a parent does a child.
- Gregori constantly rages against the other intelligence, but not only is the spirit smarter than the pirate, it seems to have heightened senses.
- Gregori is obviously getting his information about the sewers and the escape from this phantom intelligence.

This is all the information the PCs are able to glean about Gregori's guardian spirit in this adventure.

Gregori is smart enough to keep his plan to betray his men out of his surface thought; the PCs are not able to suss his planned betrayal with this spell.

creeps toward the appropriate pool edge, submerged the entire way. It springs up and attacks when a PC gets within reach (15 feet, with tentacle). Insane but still cunning, the creature pulls its victim into the sickening slush, but takes the -20 penalty to grapple checks, so it is not considered grappled itself, knowing its prey is not as comfortable as it is in the sewer pool. Once it has submerged the PCs, it attacks those that can move somewhat freely in the disgusting water, while leaving those sinking and stuck alone to drown. It enjoys its meat with the proper marinade.

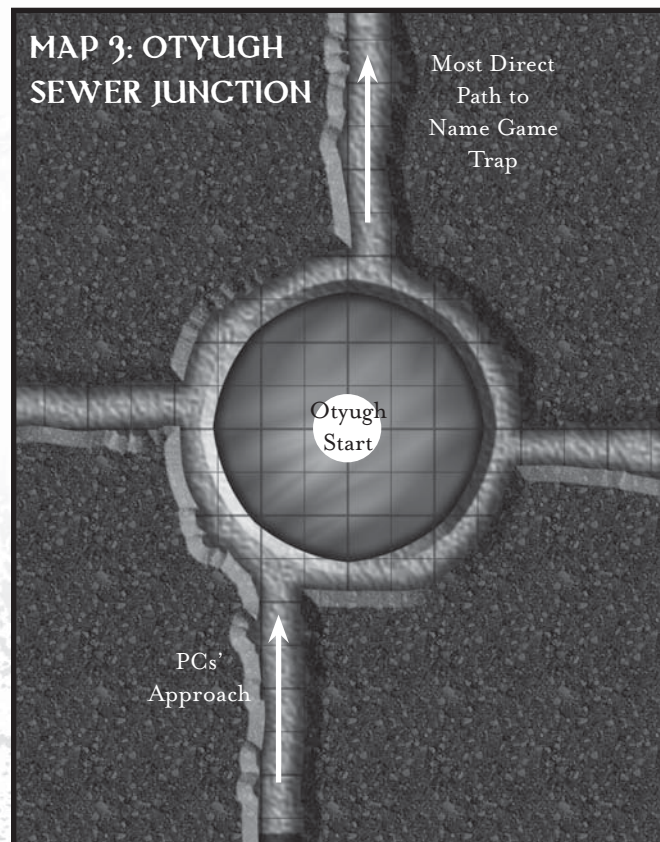
Development: A difficult foe in an environment suited to its strengths, vanquishing the otyugh is not easy. While the chamber is difficult to quickly navigate, weakened or depleted PCs are better off attempting to avoid the creature, maybe practicing hit and run tactics.

As stated earlier, the various tunnels are too narrow for the creature to enter (though it can reach down them with its tentacles), so scampering down one of the tunnels avoids the creature. While Captain Gregori's directions have the sewer exists just beyond the chamber, reachable by the tunnel on the opposite side of the PCs entrance, some PCs could rightly guess (Survival DC 12; grant dwarves a special +2 stonecunning bonus to these check) that one of the side chambers could eventually meet up correct tunnel.

This tactic takes the PCs through a claustrophobic and confusing jumble of tunnels that eventually lead the PCs to an identical otyugh chamber. From this chamber, all the PCs must do is escape through the proper side tunnel (the first tunnel counterclockwise if they escaped via the left tunnel in the original room, or the first tunnel clockwise if they escape by the right tunnel). Eventually this path leads them to the "Name Game Trap".

This does pose problems. Captain Gregori and his men don't dare fight the creature themselves—that's why they've recruited the PCs. If the PCs navigate around the threat, it greatly effects later encounters, and limits the PCs choice of endings.

Regardless, the PCs gain full XP for defeating the otyugh if they successfully negate round the aberration.



Scaling the Encounter

5th-level Characters: There are 2 otyughs (hp 42, 39)

6th-level Characters: There are 3 otyughs (hp 46, 42, 39)

7th-level Characters: The otyugh in the chamber is a dangerous lifeleech otyugh (hp 94); see "Combat Statistic", below.

Name Game Trap (EL 4)

Once the PCs defeat the otyugh, it takes less than an hour to traverse the pipe-like tunnels that connect to the courtyard above the Outer Ridge Mines. If the PCs vanquished the otyugh, Captain Gregori and crew follow at a safe (some might say cowardly) distance.

As the tunnels twist upward, dwarves among the PCs sense that they must be almost level with the courtyard above the mines. Once such pronouncements leave their lips, almost as if on cue, the PCs spot light shinning through a grate on the ceiling of a tunnel ahead. When the PCs approach they may be startled by what they see.

Harsh light streams down through the grate, almost blinding at first, and then a dark shape moving across the grate obscuring the light. The shadow is followed by a large crash of metal upon metal, as the plate boots of a House Kundarak guard slam upon the grate. Over the next few moments, what seems like an entire patrol of dwarves passes over the grate.

The PCs could attempt to exit the sewers here, but their jailbreak would be very short lived indeed. If the PCs insist, the grate has the same statistics as the grate in the warforged trap (see below). Once the PCs are spotted in the courtyard, the dwarves spring into action, rallying all available guards, arcane guards and elite guards (see the "Combat Statistics" for "Part Four: Stand or Fall".) and even stone wardens to recapture or—if necessary—kill the PCs.

The grate has a better use. Peering out of it helps the PCs get their bearings, and gives them a better idea of the direction they must head in order to gain access to Vendurra's Tower.

From this point it takes less than half an hour for the PCs to reach their next challenge.

A bizarre and infernal contraption blocks the path to the grate. Taking up the entirety of the tunnel, it consists of dozens of puzzling bars, gears, bells, and other mechanical parts. Arms, similar to warforged arms, jut out here and there along the cramped corridor. Each hand at the end of the arm holds some type of sword or axe.

Through the middle is a small pathway that is just big enough for a human to crouch through, or a halfling or gnome to walk.

What appears to be the head and torso of a warforged just out at the cornerstone of the path's entrance, serving as a morbid façade for the device.

Use "Illustration 7" to describe this contraption.

The machine surrounds the cramped hallway and is 15 feet long. Medium creatures traveling through the hallway are squeezed (see "Squeezing" subsection of the "Terrain and Obstacles" section, *Player's Handbook* page 148), but smaller creatures can move through it without restriction. Like the tunnels of the sewers, Large creatures cannot squeeze into this passage—it's too cramped.

The machine's strange innards exposed, the bizarre and rather redundant structure of the trap allows rogues to attempt a special Search check (DC 20) from a distance (20 feet with proper lighting) to determine that the strange corridor is a trap, and that those who pass through it will likely be attacked by the weapons wielded by the various warforged arms.

When a creature approaches within 10 feet of the machine, the warforged head and torso becomes animate. The macabre device speaks to those approaching in a hollow and somewhat lifeless voice.

Greetings (insert the race of the PCs closest to the warforged head and torso). You have been noted, and may attempt to pass through this trial or turn back. Any attempt to bypass me by any other means will sound the alarm. Are you ready?

This speech (and the activation of the infusion that comes with it; see below) occurs during a surprise round.

The PCs will no doubt be puzzled, as this may be the oddest contraption they've ever encountered.

This trap is older than Vendurra's tenure at Dreadhold Prison. It was constructed and placed here by her predecessor, a talented but unstable dwarf artificer eventually driven insane by the isolation and boredom of his post; his paranoia driving him to trap his tower's lower sewers in this bewildering manner.

It guards an iron grate (2 in. thick; hardness 10; 60 hp; break DC 28) that is securely locked (Good Lock DC 30).

Trap: The warforged adds a sinister intelligence to what would normally be a simple trap to bypass. It also gives the quick-thinking PC a way around the trap without actually disarming it.

While the warforged head has retained most of its intelligence, it refuses to converse with the PCs other than in the regimented way given in the read-aloud text above.

Basically, when a creature approaches within 10 feet of it, the warforge speaks those lines, noting the creature's race. What it's really doing is infusing all of its weapons with the *personal weapon augmentation* (8th-level caster), and attuning its weapons to the type of creature it calls out.

Upon doing this, the weapons gain the *bane* special ability (see *Dungeon Master's Guide* page 224) attuned to the type and subtype of the creature that the warforged has called out. This ability lasts as long as the duration of the infusion (80 minutes) or until the warforged calls out a new type of creature, and which point the duration of the old infusion ends. The warforged can infuse its weapons like this an unlimited number of times each day.

An artificer can attempt an artificer knowledge check (DC 15) to determine the true purpose of the warforged's action. Those PCs with Spellcraft can also attempt to recognize the infusion, but with more difficulty (DC 21).

Once the weapons are attuned, the nature of the attunement not only determines the type of *bane*, but also what kind of creatures the warforged arms will attack: in other words, the warforged arms do not attack creatures of a type different than the attunement type.

Because aspects of this trap are controlled by a sentient—albeit largely unresponsive—creature, the mechanism sometimes acts like a trap and sometimes like a creature.

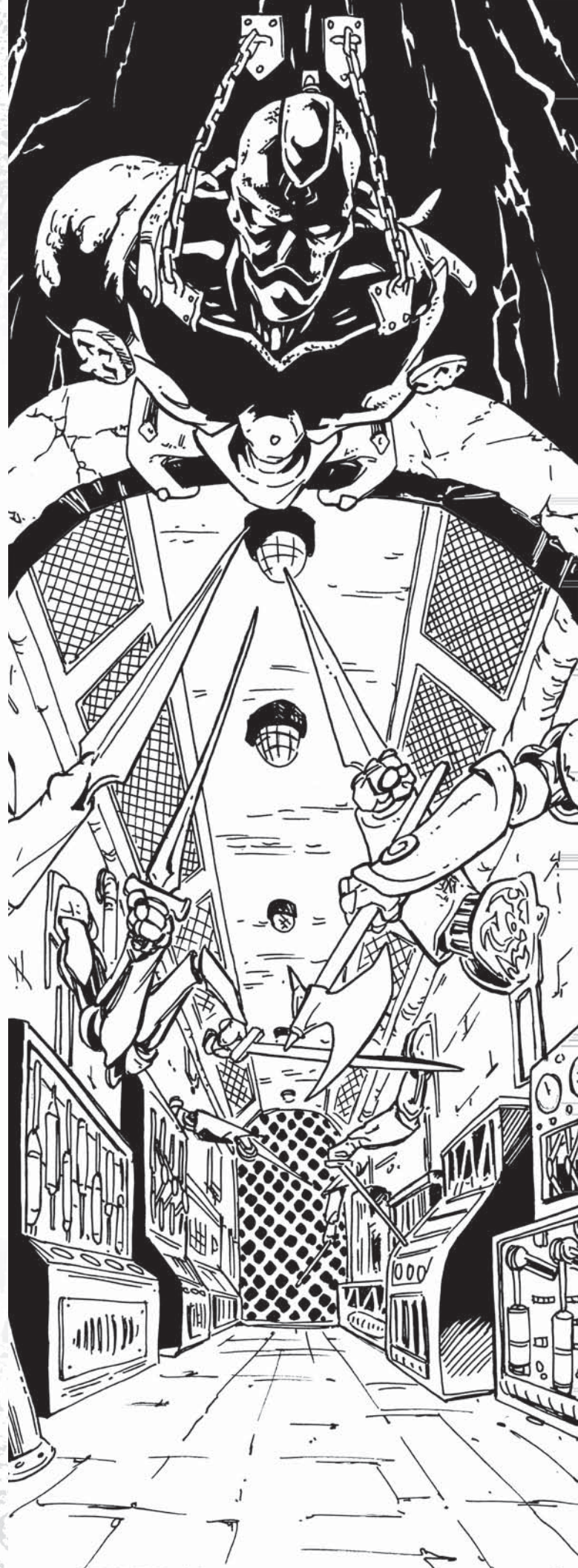
When a creature of the attuned type enters the passage it is immediately attacked by one of the warforged arms (Melee +12 sword [1d8+1/19–20] or battleaxe [1d8+1/x3]), and is attacked each time it enters a 5-foot square of the passage. For instance, if a creature of the attuned type traverse to the grate at the end of the passage, it is attacked three times for its trouble. If it then decides to leave the passage, it suffers two more attacks by the warforged arms.

These attacks can be avoided with the Tumble skill in a way similar to avoiding attacks of opportunity when tumbling through threatened squares (see *Player's Handbook* page 84). Each additional attack made by the device after the first adds +2 to the Tumble DC.

Attacks made against creatures of the attuned type moving through the device's passage occur during the turn of the movement, and can be made against multiple creatures of the attuned type that enter the device's passageway.

Furthermore, every round on the warforged initiative, the weapons make two attacks against creatures of the attuned type within the passageway. Unlike the attacks provoked by moving, these cannot be avoided with use of the Tumble skill. But like the attacks made against creatures moving these attacks are automatic, and occur as long as the weapons are attuned, even if the warforged head is incapacitated even destroyed (in this case use the warforged's last place in the initiative order to determine when these weapons attack). These attacks occur prior to warforged's action, and thus before it decides to attune the weapon.

The trap's ability to recognize approaching creatures and to infuse



COMBAT STATISTICS

LIFEELEECH OTYUGH

CR 8

NE Large aberration

Monster Manual III page 119 (modified by errata)**Init** +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +10, Spot +10**Languages** mute from madding captivity**AC** 21, touch 16, flat-footed 18**hp** 94 (9 HD); fast healing 5**Fort** +9, **Ref** +6, **Will** +12**Spd** 40 ft. (8 squares), climb 20 ft.**Melee** 4 tentacles +14 (1d8+8) and bite +8 (1d6+4)**Space/Reach** 10 ft./10 ft. (tentacle up to 15 ft.)**Base Atk** +6; **Grp** +18**Special Attacks** constrict, improved grab**Abilities** Str 27, Dex 16, Con 23, Int 7, Wis 18, Cha 8**SQ** fast healing 5, life-leech aura, spell-strengthened hide**Feats** Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Iron Will, Weapon Focus (tentacle)**Skills** Climb +16 (can always take 10, even if rushed or threatened), Hide +3 (+11 in lair), Jump +12, Listen +10, Spot +10**Possessions** chain shirt, short sword, shortbow, 5 arrows**Constrict (Ex):** A lifeleech otyugh deals automatic tentacle damage with a successful grapple check.**Spell-Strengthened Hide (Su):** The sickly gray skin of the lifeleech otyugh has been infused with magical energy. This strange energy grants a lifeleech otyugh a +4 deflection bonus to its Armor Class.**Lifeleech Aura (Su):** Whenever a spell or spell-like ability with the healing descriptor is used on a creature within 60 feet of the

lifeleech otyugh, the otyugh gains the benefit of the healing spell as if it had been one of the spell's targets. If a healing spell cast within 60 feet of a life-leech otyugh would grant it enough hit points to exceed its full normal total, it gains the remaining hit points as temporary hit points. A lifeleech otyugh can't have more temporary hit points from its lifeleech aura than its full normal hit point total. Temporary hit points gained in this manner last for 1 hour.

The ability affects spell completion and spell trigger items (such as scrolls, staves, and wands), but not other magic items.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a lifeleech otyugh must hit with its tentacle attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking attacks of opportunity. If it gets a hold, the lifeleech otyugh can constrict.

WARFORGED TORSO AND HEAD

CR 5

N mix male and female personality modified warforged fighter 5

Medium construct (living construct)

Monster Manual III page 190**Init** +2; **Senses** Listen +0, Spot +0**Languages** Common**AC** 7, touch 7, flat-footed 5; light fortification**hp** 50 (2 HD); hardness 10**Immune** poison, sleep effects, paralysis, disease, nausea, fatigue, exhaustion, effects that cause the sickened condition, and energy drain.**Fort** +7, **Ref** -1, **Will** +1; +2 saves against poisons and spells**Weakness** can't heal damage normally**Spd** 0 ft.**Abilities** Str 16, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 8

the weapons with the *bane* special ability is entirely contingent on the warforged head and torso. Once destroyed, it loses its ability to further infuse the weapons in the passage, but weapons already infused continue for the duration of the infusion. Weapons no longer attuned no longer attack

Warforged Head and Torso: hp 50 (hardness 10); see "Combat Statistics", below.

Lastly, the PCs might want to ignore the warforged's warning, and disable the trap the old fashion way. To do this, the rogue must be in the middle of the device's passageway, and succeed a DC 30 Disable Device check. Disabling this rather complex device takes 2d4 rounds. Luck for the PCs, the alarm the warforged spoke of was dismantled when his creator finally left Dreadhold, almost a decade ago.

Development: Once the PCs defeat the trap and open the grate, they find a small chamber with a rung ladder leading up toward what appears to be a dead end. A Search (DC 20; give dwarves their stonemasonry bonus to find the door) finds the secret trap door, opened by pulling the third to the last rung out.

When the PCs open the door, proceed to "Part 4: Stand or Fall?"

Scaling the Encounter

5th-level Characters: Increase the warforged head and torso to 60.

6th-level Characters: Increase the warforged head and torso to 60. Moving into a trapped square provokes attacks from two of the warforged arms instead of one.

7th-level Characters: Increase the warforged head and torso to 80. Moving into a trapped square provokes attacks from two of the warforged arms instead of one. The weapons are considered magic for the purposes of damage reduction.

PART FOUR:

STAND OR FALL?

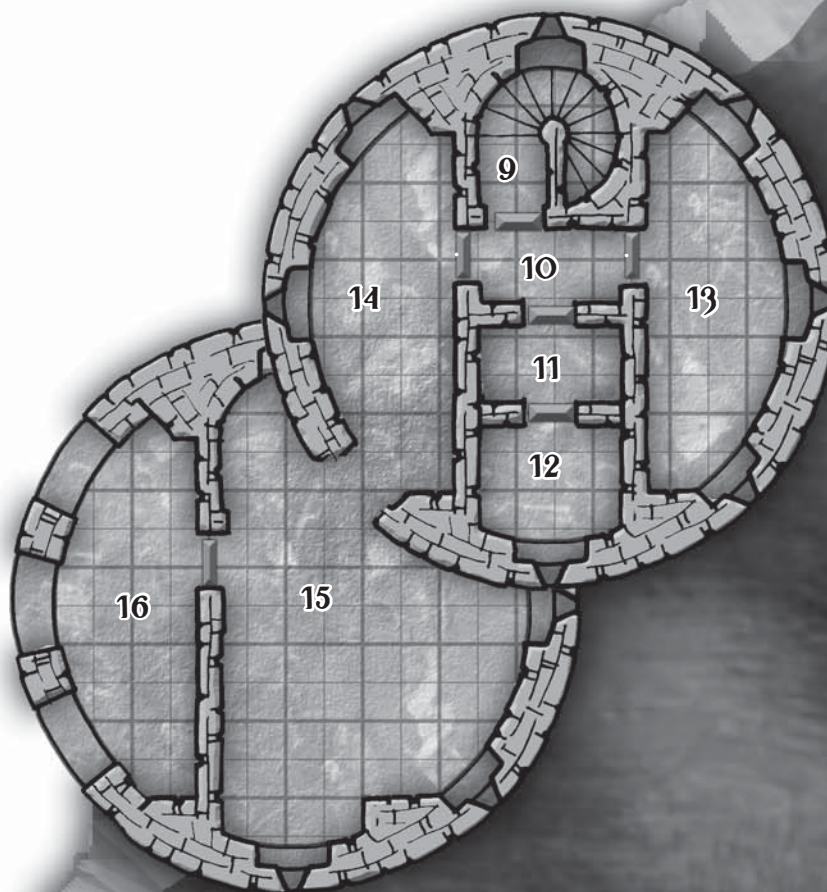
Almost all of the final part of the adventure takes place within Vendurra's tower. The basic layout of the tower is presented on "Map 4: Vendurra's Tower", which contains a basic overview of the rooms. Many of the rooms are not detailed in this section, as their full details are not important to the unfolding drama. That said, PCs still lacking in equipment might want to spend time rummaging through the tower before confronting Vendurra. There are some weapons to be had in the tower. Use your best judgment on determining what's reasonable to find. It is not unreasonable to assume there are knives (treat as daggers) in the Simple Kitchen (area 4), or even a display with the arms of House Kundarak adorned with a pair of crossed decorative (but still functional) battleaxes in the Sitting Room (area 3), but finding a heavy repeating crossbow with magic ammunition in the desk drawer of her Private Office (area 14), would be stretching it.

The trap door opens into the rather secluded Storeroom (area 8). The secret door is cleverly hid and nearly invisible on the tower side (Search DC 30; elves don't get an automatic search check), and can only be opened again by compressing a long-forgotten pressure plate on the wall of the stairs leading to the upper level (area 9). Vendurra does not know about the secret door.

While dwarves among the PCs know they are on the same level as when they waited on Vendurra at the beginning of the adventure (they waited in area 1 of this tower), and observant PCs notice that the stonework is of the same type as that chamber (Appraise or Investigate DC 15; those with at least 5 ranks of Knowledge [architecture and engineering] gain a special +2 synergy bonus, and dwarves can add their +2 stonemasonry bonus to such checks), stealthy scouting is needed for the PCs to get their bearings without alerting the lady of the tower.

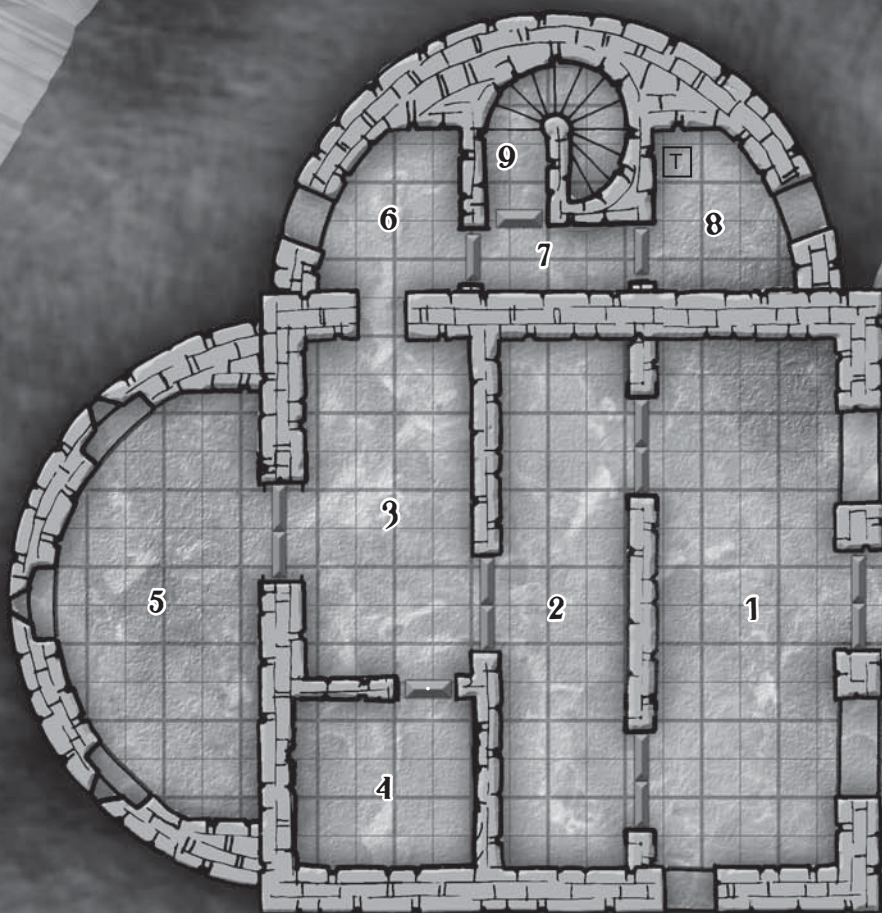
All the doors of the tower are strong wooden doors (2 in. thick; hardness 5; hp 20; break DC 25 if locked) doors. Locked doors are noted on the map of the tower. All locks are good locks (DC 30 to open). Vendurra carries a key that opens all locks in the tower.

MAP 4: VENDURRA'S TOWER



1. Entrance Chamber
2. Hall of Wardens
3. Sitting Room
4. Simple Kitchen
5. Dining Room
6. Antechamber
7. Hallway
8. Storeroom (PCs' Entrance)
9. Stairs Between Levels
10. Hallway
11. Washroom
12. Privy
13. Private Gallery
14. Private Office
15. Vendurra's Bedroom
16. Balcony (Gregori's Escape)

• in doorway indicates locked doors
(Open DC 30 or Break DC 28)



Tower Guards (EL 5)

There are only a couple of real dangers in the lower level of the tower. The first are a pair of elite guards always stationed in the Hall of Wardens (area 2).

Elite Dreadhold Guards (2): hp 35, 31; see "Combat Statistics" below.

Tactics: While well trained the guards are not really expecting anyone except for Vendurra to come through the rear doors. Unless the PCs are noisy or Vendurra has already sounded the alarm, the PCs gain a surprise round against these guards.

If the guards are able to react, their first goal is to alert the rest of the complex. If they make it past the front door of the tower, they are able to sound the alarm (see below). They will risk their lives in order to raise the alarm, believing both the warden and the integrity of Dreadhold Prison are in danger.

Seasoned soldiers and on the defensive, both guards know the advantages of fighting defensively and withdrawing.

Development: Even after they silence the guards, the PCs could still inadvertently raise the alarm. If the PCs exit the tower, and don't use the appropriate stealth, the dwarves in the courtyard spot them, and the alarm is raised (see below).

If the PCs don't defeat these guards, they are the first to show up when Vendurra raise the alarm.

The Alarm Sounds

Eventually the PCs' luck runs out and the dwarves of House Kundarak are alerted to their escape. While the following encounter details how it occurs despite the PCs' best actions, there are many ways that the PCs could raise the alarm. Some are detailed in the encounter above.

If the alarm has been raised before this point, use this section as guidelines for how to progress the action.

Once the PCs have secured the lower tower, or decided to explore the upper tower, Gregori and some of his men start piling into the fortress. The pirate captain, recently but hastily shaved for the event is absolutely manic with excitement.

"Can you smell it?" The captain calls out to his men. "I smell the sea on the air here. It's the salty air of freedom."

His words have obviously roused his men, and they shout out with three cheers of huzzah! The captain beams with delight, but First Mate Snod's face falls, and he lets out a string of expletives."

"Damn fools, still your tongues. The dwarves will hear!"

But the damage is done. Vendurra, from here chamber above, had heard the cry, and has sounded the alarm. Within seconds the sound of the large gong echoes throughout the courtyard and Vendurra's tower.

Captain Gregori quickly orders his men to barricade the doors in both the Entrance Chamber (area 1) and the Hall of Wardens (area 2), and commands Dreson to lead the men in the defenses. He then turns back to the PCs.

"We must find the way out. I am sure it's upstairs."

As the PCs search the upper level of Vendurra's tower, the pirates are below preparing for the defense, and a few minutes later, defending the tower from the forces of House Kundarak. There is no need to play out that skirmish, but makes sure to describe loud crashes, and the screaming of combatants from time to time as the PCs search the upper tower. While the pirates put up a good fight, they are no match for the forces of Kundarak. As the PCs reach particular parts of their search, events spiral out of control downstairs. Each of the following sections has a section giving guidance on where the battle is at that point.

Dreamer of the Dark

Progressing through the tower, the PCs eventually come across Vendurra's Private Office (area 14). While the warden is not here, her seneschal, a dwarf named Nordal, is. The PCs might (Intelligence check DC 15) recognize him as the unobtrusive clerk that always seemed to follow the warden around earlier in their visit (though he was not mentioned then). The plain-looking dwarf has one of those faces that everyone tends to forget or ignore, but the is no ignoring him now. He sits at his mistress's desk, rocking back and forth. His eyes are milky white, and a disgusting trail of drool trails to the scrolls spread out on the desktop, all now ruined by a incredibly large pool of saliva. Catatonic, he is whispering something over and over again. If a PCs approaches, he or she can hear that Nordal is saying:

"I dream in darkness, and that is where I shall always walk".

Those who played in *EMH-2 Pirate's Bounty and the Isle of Fire* might recognize the phrase. It is the same one repeated by the catatonic apprentice of the missing wizard, Beltulmas.

With a successful Spellcraft check (DC 25) characters can rule out *feeblemind* as the cause of Nordal's state. And a character with the *Psicraft* skill might know (DC 27) that the effect resembles the *decerebrate* power, but with some major differences: it's not the brain stem that's been removed; Nordal has retained enough brain function to stay alive indefinitely with proper care; and a creature *decerebrate* can't talk at all. Furthermore, a character with the *Investigate* feat can point out (DC 15) that that strange phrase seems to be a calling card, like those used by killers with a compulsion to let someone know their handiwork. Asulmaz was such a killer, but a Knowledge (local) DC 25 check recalls his calling card was to tear apart his victims with the *baleful teleport* power.

The Battle Progresses: At some point in their investigation of poor mindless Nordal, the PCs hear a large explosion downstairs. The explosion is powerful enough to shake the tower, cause waifs of fine rock dust to fall from the ceiling. Moments later, First Mate Snod enters the chamber to give a report to Captain Gregori:

"They have broken through the entry room's defenses. Two died by the spell that destroyed the barricade."

Finding Vendurra

The PCs find the warden of the Outer Ridge Mine in her Private Chamber (area 15) cowering behind her bed.

At this point, Vendurra is coming out of the psionic manipulation that has led her to such brash actions in the past few days. She is a little confused by some of her actions, but is too proud and stubborn to admit fault or mistakes. Not only that she still sees the Inspired woman who manipulated here in a positive light.

She knows she is in trouble when the PCs and Captain Gregori enter her room, but her pride keeps her obstinate, but she stops short of violence. She is not willing to die fighting the escapees. She shuffles around behind her bed an nightstand like a cornered rat, hurling insults and threats, but eventually gives up and surrenders to the PCs and Gregori.

A search of some trunks in the chamber finds the PCs equipment, carefully packed. She typically sells off such loot to visiting supply caravan in return for creature comforts. Luckily no caravans have visited Dreadhold Prison since the PCs were detained.

Her attitude towards the PCs is unfriendly and little then can do short of magical coercion is going to change that (add +20 to all Diplomacy DCs). Threatened enough (Intimidate DC 19) and she gives up some information that could be useful later on:

- **Where is Asulmaz?** I don't know. A group of Riedrains lead by an Inspired woman showed up at the prison a few days before you showed up. I handed him over to the Inspired, but now I am not sure why. No matter. Better with her than Digger scum like you.
- **Who was this Inspired woman?** She said her name was Re'Laz. She's rather brilliant. It was an absolute joy spending time with an intellectual equal for a change.
- **Why did you toss us in prison?** To get money out of your worthless union. House Kundarak is not your free line of credit. Re'Laz agreed with me.
- **Can you get us out of here?** No. The guards downstairs will eventually break through whatever ramshackle defenses you've laid in the lower tower. Anything I say will be assumed to have been coerced from me and will do you no good. The Diggers' Union will eventually meet my demands and pay up. Until then you will continue to enjoy Kundarak hospitality...unless I decide to just execute you for this little stunt.

It's very possible that the PCs may just attack Vendurra. If this is the case, she defends herself the best she can. Her stats are on page 10. The vain dwarf promises anything to save her life, but all of her promises are ultimately hallow.

As the PCs deal with Vendurra, Gregori investigates the balcony (area 16). He pays little to no attention to the interrogation, but stares out toward the horizon.

The Battle Progresses: While the PCs are question Vendurra and searching the chamber, the sounds of battle become louder below. The clash of arms and screams of the dying become more frantic with every minute. After the PCs are done questioning and searching, First Mate Snod returns with another status report. He sports a number of small cuts and the side of his face is bruised. He looks nervous, if not scared, and pants in exhaustion.

"The dwarves are about the break through, sir. What is the plan? We could use a good plan right about now."

Gregori flashes his first mate a smile, puts his hand on his shoulder and tells him to go back down and ready the crew.

"Wait for my call, and then come running up like the Keeper himself is behind you. We're almost there lad, I swear."

As Dreson rushes off to give the pirates the news, the PCs can make Sense Motive checks (DC 18). Success realizes that the captain has just lied to his first mate.

Hard Choice

After lying to his first mate, Captain Gregori walks back out to the balcony, and as he does, a fireball explodes in the distance. Captain Gregori doesn't look the slightest bit shocked at this. He just turns to the PCs and says:

"Well that was cue. You can stay and die with Dreson and my worthless pirate crew if you want. I on the other hand have a boat to catch and you would do well to catch it to."

With that Gregori takes two steps and dives over the balcony railing.

Anybody who rushes over sees Gregori slowly floating down towards a ship below (Spellcraft DC 21 confirms it it's via a feather fall). Captain Gregori's offer was genuine, and any PCs who wishes to join in his escape just needs to jump off the balcony, and Gregori's wizards will cast feather fall on them as well, but they must do so before the captain

reaches the ship below and leaves (6 rounds).

Development: This is the hard choice. Do the PCs jump with Gregori and free themselves from their false imprisonment and in doing so sentence First Mate Dreson and his crew to certain death? Or do they stay and try to help the doomed crew?

Whatever choice they make ends the adventure. If the PCs jump with Captain Gregori, go to the conclusion "Soft Landing, Hard Fall" if they come to the aid of Dreson Snod and Gregori's old crew, go to the conclusion "Not So Certain Death."

Scaling the Encounter

5th-level Characters (EL 6): There are three elite guards.

6th-level Characters (EL 7): There are two elite guards and two arcane guardians.

7th-level Characters (EL 8): There are three elite guards and two arcane guardians.

COMBAT STATISTICS

ELITE DREADHOLD GUARD

CR 3

N mix male and female dwarf fighter 3

LN Medium humanoids (dwarf)

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft; **Listen** +1, **Spot** +1

Languages Common, Dwarven

AC 19, **touch** 11, **flat-footed** 18; **Dodge**; +4 **dodge AC** against giants

hp variable, see adventure text (3 HD)

Fort +6, **Ref** +1, **Will** +0; +2 **save** against poisons and spells

Spd 20 ft. (4 squares)

Melee masterwork dwarven waraxe +7 (1d10+2/x3)

Ranged light crossbow +3 (1d8/19-20)

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +5 (+4 to resist bull rush attempts)

Abilities Str 14, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 6

Feats Cleave, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (dwarven waraxe), Dodge

Skills Handle Animal +1, Jump +3, Listen +2, Ride +8, Spot +2, Search +3

Possessions banded mail, heavy steel shield, dwarven waraxe, light crossbow, 20 bolts, 12 silver pieces, *potion of shield of faith* (CL 1st).

Hook "Submit, prisoner, or things will go hard for you."

CONCLUSION

If the PCs survived the adventure, they eventually are able to leave Dreadhold prison. The circumstance of their leaving is contingent on their actions.

Left to Rot

If the PCs are never able to gain the attention of Captain Gregori, or the pirate leader dismisses the PCs, the characters are left to rot in Dreadhold Prison for well over a month.

If Captain Gregori dismissed the PCs, he uses their knowledge of the plan to motivate his crew to push through the sewers before the opportunity is lost. In the resulting jailbreak, the captain escapes, while every member of his crew (including Dreson Snod) is slaughtered by the Dreadhold Guards.

While the Banking Guild formally and publicly disavows Vendurra's "barbarous act of unlawful imprisonments," the Warding Guild's response is painfully slow, tying up the release of the PCs in bureaucratic red tape. This playing of both sides ultimately brings the Diggers' Union back to the negotiation table to negotiate higher

and quicker payments on their debits to grease the wheels and gears between the PCs and release from Dreadhold Prison.

Vendurra d'Kundarak is reassigned to Krona Peak, and given oversight over the security of an important section of the Kundarak family. Her cunning and ability to capitalize on an opportunity are toasted among the masters and mistresses of the dwarven house.

Not So Certain Death

PCs who refuse Captain Gregori's offer of escape to aid Dreson Snod and the crew of the *Spitfire* are in for one hell of a fight; the keepers of Dreadhold Prison tend to deal with escape attempts and riots in a harsh manner. But the PCs do have a bargaining chip—they have Vendurra d'Kundarak. PCs can parlay the warden for a peaceful ending of the conflict and even the promise that the Diggers' Union be made aware of their captivity.

While it takes a few weeks for the Diggers' Union to negotiate their release, House Lyrandar, interested in regaining their own agent—Dreson Snod—aids the Union. This solution is the only way that the PCs can gain the Story Object: Favor of House Lyrandar – Saving Snod.

If for some reason the PCs can't use Vendurra as a bargaining chip, the outcome is more bittersweet. While the PCs are captured and survive the ordeal, the majority of the *Spitfire*'s crew were slain in the melee, including First Mate Snod. It takes more than a month for the Diggers' Union to secure the release of the PCs, and only after renegotiation of the Union's debt to the Banking Guild.

Soft Landing, Hard Fall

If the players jump over the balcony with Gregori the wizard on the ship below casts *feather fall* and the PCs float to safety. True to his word the captain takes them to Port Krez as long as the PCs show him the proper deference.

If the PCs treat the captain with hostility, he and his powerful new crew are able to subdue the PCs, and he sets them out to drift on a rowboat. While the PCs eventually make it to land, and back to the Diggers' Union, it takes the better part of a month to do so.

His abandoned crew are all slain in the fight with the Dreadhold guards, and the story of the attempted break and the slaughter of the inmates gets top billing in all the major chronicles throughout Khorvaire, though nothing is ever mentioned of the PCs and Gregori's escape.

The PCs will just have to live with the fact that their escape came at the prices of the death of the crew of the *Spitfire*.

In almost all cases eventually the PCs leave Dreadhold. When they do, read or paraphrase the following:

Dreadhold fades in the distance as the ship rocks once again in the waves. A long trip that did not turn out exactly as planned but you have your skin in once piece which at least is more then you thought might happen a few days ago. Asulmaz is gone. Taken by an Inspired agent just when he was almost in your reach. It seems many have an interest in this Sarlonan puzzle orb and if the inspired are after it, which can only mean trouble.

ADVENTURE QUESTIONS

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS CAMPAIGNS (of which MARK OF HEROES is part of) tracks character progress digitally. At the adventure's end, you report what the characters did, by answering a number of questions. The answers to those questions are tallied, and determine not only what happens in the campaign, but also the experience (XP) and gold piece (gp) value increase each characters gains.

At the end of this adventure, you'll find the RPGA Session

Tracking form, tailored for this adventure. On the section titled "Adventure Questions" fill in the bubble that corresponds to the best answer for the questions below.

Many time the questions ask whether or not the PCs defeated an encounter. Defeating doesn't necessarily mean killing all the enemies, but many times such an event suffices as defeating an encounter. Sometimes the PCs merely bypass an encounter. Through luck or circumstance a group of PCs can avoid encounters unscathed. Does bypassing an encounter earn the XP that defeating it would? No. The reward for getting past an encounter without actually interacting with it is having extra resources to bear in the next encounter. Where is the line? You are going to have to make that decision, because you are the DM.

For traps, PCs get experience points just for encountering them, whether or not they have been disabled.

Sometimes the PC's actions don't really fit the actions of a particular adventure question perfectly. This especially happens when you play the adventure using the 'Scaling the Encounter' options. In these cases find the answer that best fits the spirit of their results.

1. Did the PCs defeat the Stone Golem in the processing room?

- A. No. They did not even attempt it. They laid their weapons down like good little boys and girls.
- B. No. They tried to but it laid down the smack upon them.
- C. Yes. Heroic deeds indeed shall be spoken of this epic triumph.

2. Did the PCs gain enough respect to get the attention of Captain Gregori?

- A. No. The challenges of Dreadhold prison were too much for the PCs to gain less than 5 points of respect.
- B. Almost. They gained at least 5 respect points, but not enough to gain the captain's notice.
- C. Yes. The petty power plays of common prisoners were of little challenge to a group of seasoned adventurers.

3. Did the PC's learn of First Mate Dreson's true loyalties?

- A. No. Totally did not have a clue they had a hidden potential ally.
- B. Yes. They figured out he was a good guy.

4. Did the PC's defeat the Otyugh?

- A. No. The garbage monsters were to much for them.
- B. Almost. Got some but not all of them.
- C. Yes. Their stench was no match for the purifying fury of the heroes.

5. Did the PCs figure out how to get past the Warforged Name Game trap?

- A. No. They just took the damage and got past it.
- B. Yes. They put one and one together and got three and got past it without to much hardship.

6. How did the adventure end?

- A. The PCs were left to rot in Dreadhold Prison, only leaving when the Union was able to secure their freedom.
- B. They escaped with Captain Gregori
- C. The PCs came to the aid of the crew of the *Spitfire*, and eventually gained their freedom.

7. Rate the group's roleplaying.

- A. Fantastic. Everyone had interesting and engaging characters that interacted with the adventure in very fun ways.
- B. Good. Most everyone had interesting and engaging characters that interacted with the adventure in very fun ways.
- C. Okay. There was some roleplaying.
- D. None. They treated the adventure only as a set of objectives. There was no roleplaying.