

IRONFIRE

PART 1



A 5TH LEVEL ADVENTURE IN
FOUR 2-HOUR SESSIONS
BY ASH LAW

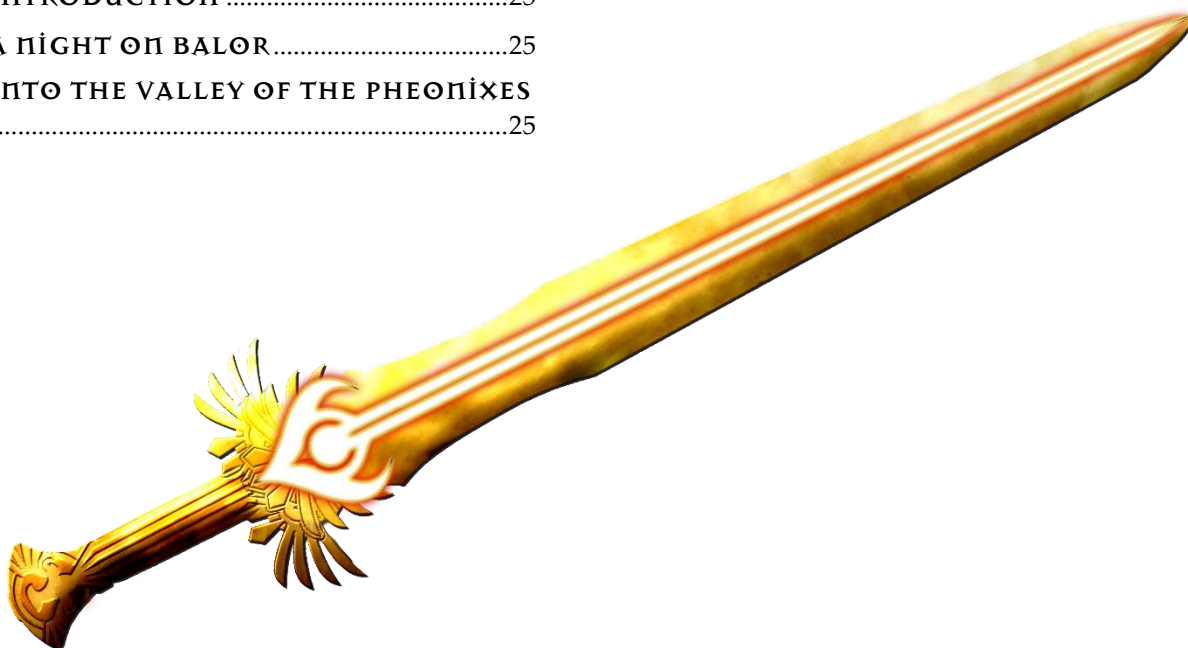
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IRON & GOLD

INTRODUCTION

The Dwarf King has managed to capture a meteorite without it damaging anything or unleashing the star-masks from within. He is willing to sell the meteorite to whichever icon or icons meet his demands.

For months strange meteorites have been raining down upon the Dragon Empire. Out of the sky rocks crawl strange creatures that have come to be known as ‘star-masks’, parasitic creatures that latch onto the faces of other beings and take over their minds and bodies. The star-masks have the ability to puppet the dead and living alike, and can warp reality to create star-mask brains that act as the center of their hives.

The Archmage has sent adventurers out to investigate the meteorites and the creatures, but so far has no solution to the growing problem of star-mask incursions. The other icons are starting to question the Archmage’s ability to solve the problem, especially as the meteorites seem to originate from an astral phenomena known as the ‘Archmage’s Comet’.

The Dwarf King has let it be known that he has captured one of these meteorites—intact! He is willing to sell the intact meteorite to the highest bidder. The Dwarf King says he’ll give preference to the Emperor, so naturally every other icon has sent a delegation to bid for the meteorite— whoever uncovers the secrets of the star-masks will gain great power.

The Dwarf King in this adventure can be played as more mercenary and greedy than heroic, an ambiguous figure. Then again, maybe the Dwarf King is heroic but his underlings are afflicted with the stereotypical dwarven greed.

WHO ARE THE ADVENTURERS?

The party should decide which icon that they are working for. I’ve assumed in writing this adventure that the adventurers have been sent by the Emperor to negotiate for the meteorite fragment on behalf of the Dragon Empire, probably offering increased imperial patrols against orcish hordes in dwarven lands, but it needn’t be so.

Here are some other possibilities you could tinker with, given that other icons may make more sense for this player character group:

ARCHMAGE’S HAND

The Archmage doesn’t claim responsibility for the strange things falling from the sky, but clearing up the mess is clearly part of his responsibilities. The Archmage has sent you to negotiate: in exchange for the meteorite you can give the Dwarf King a map to a sealed vault deep under the ground which is reputed to contain some lost dwarven treasures.

CRUSADER’S CAPTAINS

The star-masks are a threat to the security of the empire, so the Crusader has sent you to use a combination of threats and promises to obtain the material the Dwarf King has captured. The Crusader promises soldiers to help defend dwarven lands if he gets the meteorite—and has told you to make vague threats of invasion if the meteorite ends up in the hands of an unfriendly icon.

ELF QUEEN’S HERALDS

The Elf Queen wants to ensure that the next age is one that sees a resurgence of the elven races. The adventurers are part of the delegation sent to secure the meteorite, and can promise the succession of lands near the Grey Towers to the Dwarf King if he will promise the meteorite to them.

EMPEROR’S DEPUTIZED OFFICIALS

You are part of the official imperial delegation, here to trade the meteorite for a

reduction in taxes and an increase in imperial patrols to safeguard dwarven lands from the orcs hordes. Technically the Dwarf King should give the Emperor the sky rock no questions asked, but with the Dwarf King's recent troubles with the orc hordes he's using it as leverage; you could play this as morally ambiguously maneuvering by the Dwarf King, or a necessary action to defend his people.

GREAT GOLD WYRM'S REPRESENTATIVES

The Great Gold Wyrms know that none of the other icons can be trusted to act truly selflessly, once again it falls to the great dragon to safeguard the mortal realms. The Great Gold Wyrms are willing to exchange the meteorite for a horde of treasure, and the adventurers have been sent to make the arrangements.

HIGH DRUID'S CHOSEN ONES

The star-masks are unnatural abominations that must be fought. The High Druid has foreseen that the adventurers have the best chance of convincing the Dwarf King of her good intentions. The adventurers have nothing concrete to bargain with, but the Dwarf King probably already knows that the increased wealth of his mines is due to the High Druid's resurgence, and the High Druid might be willing to encourage more of the same.

PRIESTESS'S DIPLOMATS

The blessing of the light is upon the adventurers, as they carry the word of the Priestess to the Dwarf King. Though all may look hopeless, the plague of monsters raining down can be stopped if only the Priestess is given the meteorite. The gods will surely bless the righteous.

PRINCE OF SHADOWS' CONSULS

The Prince of Shadows would just steal the sky rock, but perhaps it amuses him more to send you. Maybe he's going to steal the meteorite anyway, but for now you are here to negotiate the exchange of the meteorite for the cargo of a ship that went mysteriously

missing last month. OK, it's no mystery—the Prince of Shadows stole the ship.

THE THREE

Recently meteorites pummeled Drakkenhall, apparently penetrating as far underground as the Blue's secret inner sanctum! The Three are interested in the meteorite that the Dwarf King is offering—in exchange for goblin slaves and rare wines. What the dwarves do to the goblins once they are handed over is no concern of the Three.

... OR THE DWARF KING'S SECRET PLAN

The Dwarf King *really* doesn't want to give up the meteorite and the potential power that it represents, but he also can't be seen to be keeping it for himself and working against those who are at least nominally his allies. The party is posing as an independent group, but secretly have the Dwarf King's backing.

...OR THE ORC LORD'S MINIONS OR THE DIABOLIST'S LACKEYS OR THE LICH KING'S HIDDEN AGENTS

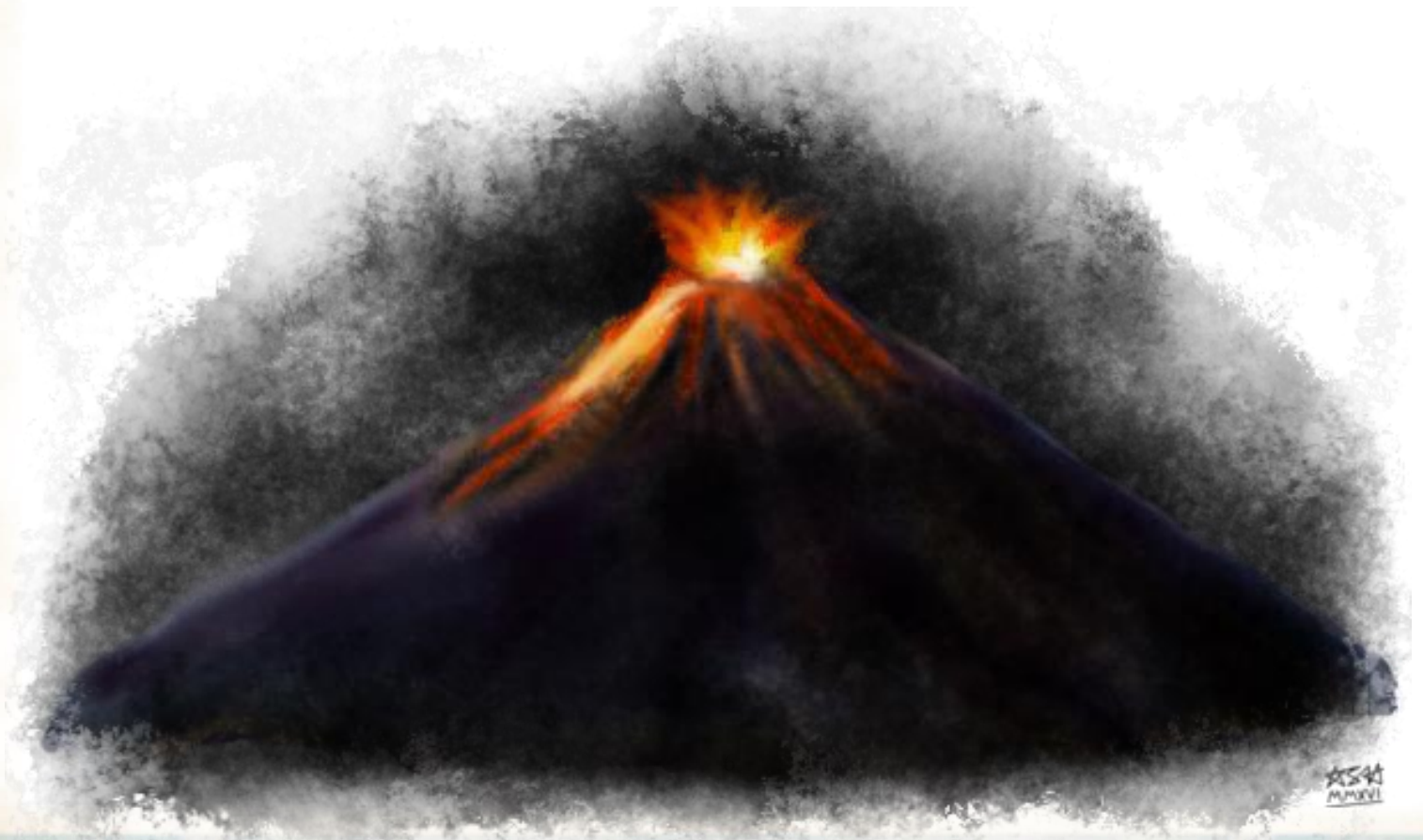
The Diabolist, the Orc Lord, and the Lich King all have a keen interest in gaining the meteorite for its potentially destructive powers. You'd rather be a hammer than a nail, and you don't need to be an oracle to see that the power of these icons is on the rise—so you've agreed to be a go-between. Maybe you even represent more than one evil icon (though that would be a tricky path to walk).

As far as the Dwarf King is concerned you represent an independent consortium of sorcerers. Your real patron's identity remains hidden from the Dwarf King. Your offer to the Dwarf King is that the consortium will work to free captives held by his enemies if the Dwarf King gives you the meteorite. Of course you have details of the captives to hand—they are being held by your real patron (the Diabolist, or the Orc Lord, or the Lich King).

TO IRONFORT

The Dwarf King has set the meeting of the emissaries of icons at a fort on the slopes of Balor, a volcano in the north of his domain. Before the adventurers can get to Ironfort they must cross the mountains to the north of Forge, trek across orc-infested lands, and brave the northern wilds. Ironfort and Balor are isolated, probably why the Dwarf King chose the location for the meeting.

This is a montage. Turn to a player and ask them to describe a problem that the party faced on its way to Ironfort on the slopes of Balor, but not how the problem was solved. *Maybe the party came across an orc encampment, maybe the northern snows blocked them into a pass, maybe the party got lost.* Turn to the next player and ask them how their character solved the problem. Go around the group until everybody has had a chance to describe a problem, and everybody has had a chance to describe how their character solved the issue. There is no need to roll dice during a montage, it is purely a narrative device to get the players warmed up and give everybody a chance to introduce their character.





IRONFORT



- 1 Northern Road
2 The Fort
3 The Hammer & Anvil Tavern
4 Temple of the Light

- Eastern Cliffs 5
Green Trees Street 6
Overland Road 7
Narrow Valley Pass 8

THE FEAST

The adventurers finally arrive at Ironfort. Ironfort is a walled dwarven town, built into the side of the mighty Balor volcano. The largest structure in the town is the fort itself, a sturdy dwarven-built citadel that protects the town and allows the forces of the Dwarf King to project his military might over the surrounding territory—keeping the roads safe for trade between Forge and the northernmost mines.

The adventurers are shown to rooms in a tavern in town (The Hammer and Anvil), and then once rested are brought to the fort for the meeting of delegations sent by the various icons who have expressed an interest in the intact meteorite that the Dwarf King has somehow obtained.

Apart from the adventurers the following people are present at the grand hall of the fort:

Captain Dran Shale— The nervous Dran Shale is the captain of the Ironfort and is present with several dwarf guards. Their orders are to stand aside if the emissaries of the icons start fighting—they are there to safeguard the town and fort, not to get involved in a brawl between powerful beings.

Duchess Halla— The self-assured Duchess Halla is the Dwarf King's mouthpiece in these negotiations. She's here to see exactly what each icon has to offer, and is willing to let them make threats and promises while playing her cards close to her chest.

Uebol the Unnerving— The Archmage has sent a black-robed delegation led by a simpering and emaciated wizard that identifies itself as Uebol the Unnerving. *If the party are working for the Archmage then they are the black-robed delegation and Uebol is there as their advisor.*

Lord Vermon of Axis— The Emperor has sent Lord Vermon from Axis. The overweight Lord Vermon is in charge of tax collection for this region, and has come here with a guard of half-orc imperial legionaries. *If the party are working for the Emperor then they are the guards for Lord Vermon, and are also there to advise and aid him during the negotiations. The half-orc legionaries are waiting in the town back at the tavern, guarding Lord Vermon's wagons.*

Celbrin Starshone of the Court of Stars— The Elf Queen has sent a trusted herald, Celbrin Starshone, to negotiate for the meteorite. Accompanying Celbrin is a rag-tag group of warriors wearing no distinct uniform save for broaches and cloak clasps displaying the Elf Queen's sigil. *If the party are working for the Elf Queen then they are the rag-tag group accompanying and advising Celbrin.*

Snakewalker the Hobgoblin— The Three have sent monstrous 'diplomats', led by a hobgoblin called Snakewalker. *If the party are working for the Three then they are the monstrous diplomats with Snakewalker.*

This part of the adventure is a chance for role-playing. Duchess Halla has arranged a feast for the factions, during which she attempts to find out what each faction is offering. *See the descriptions in the introduction for what each faction is willing to offer.* Each faction in turn tries to find out what the other factions are offering.

After the feast dwarf bards come to sing for their guests, and the various factions circulate attempting to make deals.

Each faction tries to ally itself with the adventurers. Each faction offers to join their bids with the bid or offer of whoever the adventurers represent in order to gain the best outcome, and cut rivals out from the process. However, the factions are mutually exclusive—the Archmage's emissary won't make a deal with the adventurers if they have already made a deal, the imperial ambassador won't make a deal with the adventurers unless they back out of other deals, and the representatives of the elves won't make deals if they can't get an exclusive deal.

A DEAL IS STRUCK

Duchess Halla eventually calls the gathered dignitaries to order. She declares that the adventurers and one other faction (*GMs choice which faction*) have won the interest of the Dwarf King, and that the other factions must retire to the tavern and can take no further part in the bidding process.

With a mixture of grumbling, pleasantries, and veiled threats the other factions leave. Only the adventurers and one other faction remain.

Duchess Halla asks each remaining faction to restate openly their terms, and then encourages the two factions to outbid each other.

This is a purely role-playing encounter, as each faction tries to outdo the others. Once one side or the other has gained a clear advantage in the negotiations Duchess Halla calls a close to the proceedings—she has yet to make a decision and bids the two factions to return in the morning once she has slept on it.

The adventurers and the other faction are told to head to the tavern (The Hammer and Anvil) to rest the night, and are shown out of the fort.

Trouble-shooting



The next part of the adventure relies upon a faction ambushing the party at the Hammer and Anvil tavern.

Smart groups might foresee another faction ambushing them, and insist on staying at the fort. In that case just move the fight so that the other action attacks the adventurers in the Ironfort proper, sneaking in to slay the party.

Some players might decide that they are the kind of 'heroes' who will attack others without warning—getting rid of their opposition through violent means. That's OK, just change the fight so that the adventurers are the ones doing the ambushing.

A STRIKE AGAINST THE DEALERS

As the adventurers head back to the Hammer and Anvil out from the shadows step some menacing figures. The following fight will be different depending on which faction or factions they befriended or allied themselves with, and who the party worked hardest against during the negotiations. Involved in the fight is one emissary, and the minions of that emissary. Each emissary and their minions are different.

Some parties might have made friends with an emissary, or be working with a faction emissary, and in such cases you could introduce a second emissary on the party's side and double the number of faction minions facing the adventurers.

UEBOL THE UNNERVING

As an enemy

Each round at the start of the round, one minion makes the following ranged attack as a free action:

Enchanted bolt +10 vs MD—12 force damage.

As an ally

Each round at the start of the round, the adventurer with the fewest hit points gains 10 temporary hit points.

LORD VERNON OF AXIS

As an enemy

The minions are half-orc legionaries—give them +2 AC if they outnumber those that they are engaged with 2-to-1 (if there are four minions engaged with a group of two adventurers the minions gain +2 AC).

As an ally

Lord Vernon throws an adventurer-tier healing potion to the first adventurer to become staggered.

CELBRIN STARSHONE OF THE COURT OF STARS

As an enemy

Roll a d6 at the start of combat, at the start of the round when the escalation die reaches that amount all the minions move as a free action.

As an ally

Celbrin grants +1 to ranged attacks against enemies that the elf is engaged with.

SnakeWalker the Hobgoblin

As an enemy

The minions gain +1 to attacks against anybody engaged with SnakeWalker.

As an ally

SnakeWalker grants a +1 AC bonus to any adventurer that the hobgoblin is next to.

Fight!

The fight is modified by which emissary the party are fighting, and if they have an emissary on their side.

Number of PCs	Iconic Emissary	Mendacious Minion
3	1	3
4	1	5
5	1	7
6	1	9

Mendacious Minion

4th level wrecker [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +12 (see ferocious start)

Sword and spiked shield +9 vs. AC—11 damage

Natural even hit or miss: Each enemy engaged with the mendacious minion takes 1d8 damage.

R: Javelin +8 vs.—10 damage

Limited use: 2/battle.

Ferocious start: Until the mendacious minion is staggered or the escalation die is 2+, it acts twice per round. Roll initiative once at +12. It takes its second turn when the initiative count is seven less (minimum 1).

AC 18

PD 17 HP 51

MD 16

Iconic Emissary

8th level leader [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +12

Icon-blessed weapon +13 vs. AC—24 damage

Natural 16+: The target also takes 15 ongoing damage.

Miss: 12 damage.

R: Emissary's curse +13 vs. MD (1d3 nearby or far away enemies)—25 psychic damage

Natural 16+: The target is confused (save ends).

Miss: 10 psychic damage.

Limited use: 1/battle.

C: Borrowed power +13 vs. MD (one nearby enemy, or one nearby enemy per point of esc. die if iconic escalator benefit is active)—15 psychic damage, and the target is hampered (save ends); until the target saves, it takes 15 psychic damage each time it attacks the icon emissary

Icon's protection: Whenever an enemy targets the icon emissary with a spell, the emissary regains the use of *borrowed power* if it's expended. In addition, if that spell is a recharge spell, roll its recharge check immediately after the spell is cast. If the spell is a per-battle or daily spell, roll a hard save (16+) immediately after the spell is cast; on a success, the spellcaster doesn't expend the spell.

Iconic escalator: The emissary and each of its nearby allies can use the escalation die unless the emissary has been hit by two enemy spells since its last turn.

AC 24

PD 19 HP 190

MD 19



THE DWARF KING'S EGG

The following morning Duchess Hella announces to the assembled emissaries (those that survived the night beforehand) that she has selected who is to receive the meteorite—the adventurers. The Dwarf King is willing to exchange it for all that was promised, plus a phoenix egg.

The adventurers are given a map to a secret valley high up on Balor. The dwarves never venture there, the phoenixes guard the valley against intruders, and the area around the valley is the lair of a basilisk. No dwarven group that has set out to the valley has ever returned.

As she completes her statement the various factions freeze for a moment, then quietly slip out of the fort into town to try to track down maps of Balor, to obtain supplies for a journey, and to stop the other factions from doing likewise.

The other factions present have realized that if they get a phoenix egg first before the adventurers that they can reopen negotiations and obtain the meteorite for themselves.

Of course there will doubtless be hidden agents of icons not officially present at the meetings in Ironfort in town, spies who will communicate to their compatriots and attempt to get a phoenix egg.

This is a freeform skill challenge. The adventurers must try to obtain maps, supplies, and otherwise scramble to obtain an advantage over anybody else who is racing to get to the valley first.

The party needs to complete three tasks of their choosing; whatever the adventurers chose to do break it down into three sub-tasks: the first task is DC 15, the next DC 20, the next DC 25. If the adventurers pass all three tasks they have an advantage in the next section—otherwise the other factions get racing toward the valley of the phoenix egg first and the adventurers are at a disadvantage in the next section.

AMBUSH OR AMBUSHED?

The various factions are racing to obtain the phoenix egg. One of those factions have hired a mercenary group that has been lurking at a camp far outside of the Ironfort settlement.

The mercenaries have received instructions to waylay the party and prevent them journeying up Balor.

The Nobler Path



If the adventurers get ahead of the rest of the pack but decide not to take the opportunity to ambush their rivals there are two ways to handle it. The first way is to simply say that the adventurers take the higher moral ground and use the time getting ahead of their squabbling rivals. The second way is to have no good deed unpunished, and have a group of rivals ambush the party.

If the adventurers succeeded in the freeform skill challenge in the last section, they have gotten far enough ahead of the various emissaries that they have had a chance to lay an ambush if they wish to—but if they failed the skill challenge then they are the ones getting ambushed!



Fight (ambush)!

In situations when one side ambushes or surprises the other, start by letting the ambushing side pick one creature who will start the ambush. Then roll initiative for all members of the ambushing side.

Only two creatures get to act in the ambush round: the nominated ambusher and their highest initiative ally. The GM can choose whether to advance the escalation die after the surprise round.

Then roll initiative for the side that got ambushed and play normal combat rounds.

Number of PCs	Whiplash Mercenary	Bloody Slasher Mercenary	Necromancer Mercenary
3	3	2	2
4	3	3	3
5	3	4	4
6	5	4	4

Necromancer Mercenary

4th level spoiler [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +7

Bone staff +8 vs. AC—9 damage

C: Blasphemous shadows +8 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies)—10 ongoing negative energy damage, and the target is vulnerable (save ends both)

Natural even hit: The target is hampered (save ends).

Natural odd hit: The target is dazed (save ends).

Self-diminishing: The necromancer takes 2d6 holy damage for each creature it targets with this attack.

AC 19

PD 16 HP 60

MD 13

Whiplash Mercenary

4th level blocker [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +8

Twin poisoned daggers +8 vs. AC—12 poison damage, and target is vulnerable (save ends)

C: Barbed whip +8 vs. PD (one nearby enemy)—8 damage

Natural even hit: The target pops free from each enemy it's engaged with and is pulled to the mercenary, who engages it.

Natural odd hit: The target is vulnerable (save ends).

Critical hit: The mercenary can make a *barbed whip* attack against a different target as a free action.

Crack the whip: Once per round when a nearby enemy makes a ranged attack, the mercenary can make a *barbed whip* attack against that enemy before the attack as a free action.

AC 21

PD 17 HP 48

MD 13

Bloody Slasher Mercenary

4th level wrecker [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +9

Slashing blades +7 vs. AC (2 attacks)—6 damage, and the target is vulnerable (save ends)

Critical hit: Until the target saves against the vulnerable effect, it also takes 2d6 ongoing damage each turn.

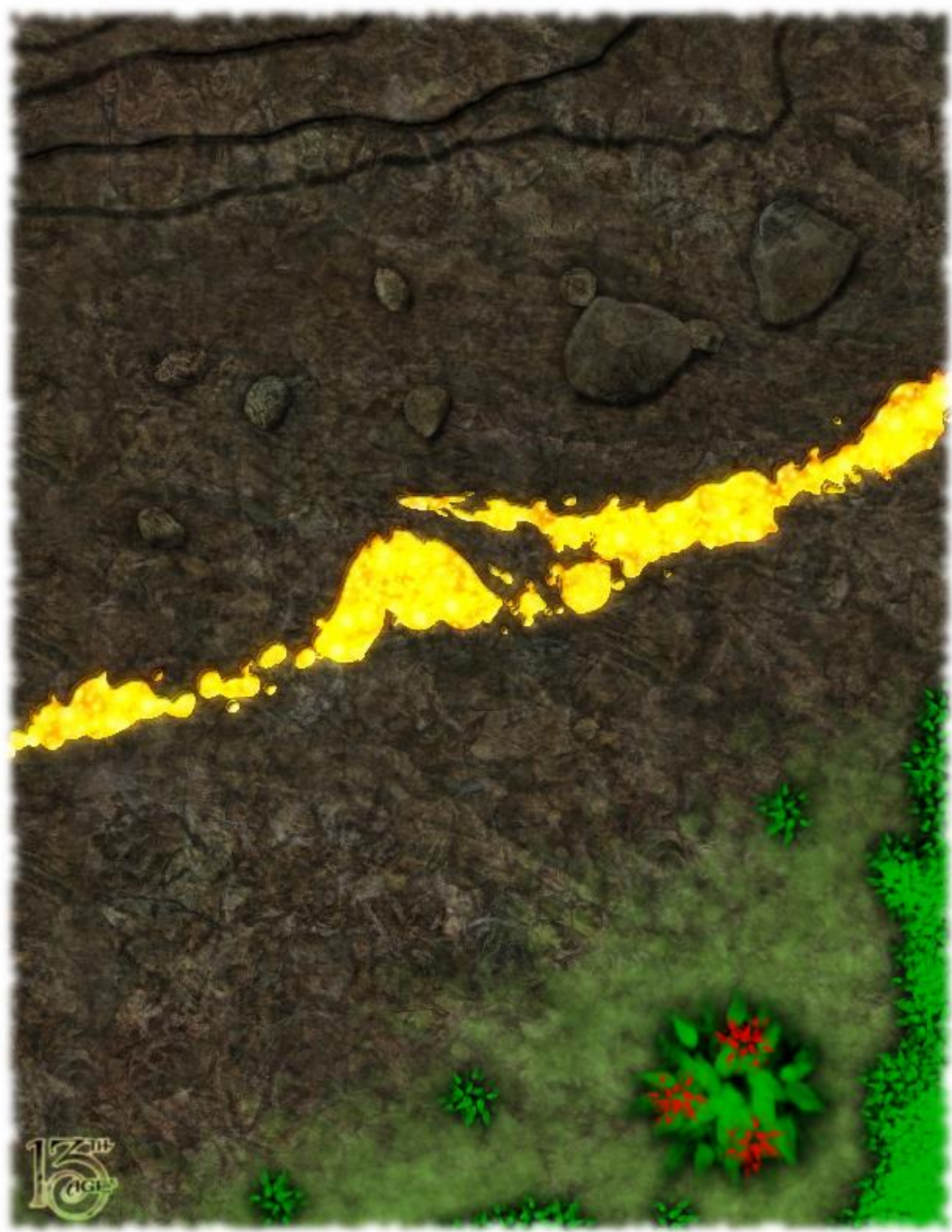
AC 19

PD 18 HP 54

MD 13







ASH & FIRE

INTRODUCTION

The Dwarf King has a meteorite that is more or less promised to the adventurers, but he also wants a phoenix egg as part of the deal, and getting hold of the egg pits the PCs against the factions who lost out in the bidding process. Is this any way to do business? It is if you're the Dwarf King's trusted agent, apparently! The adventurers are part of a frantic race up the volcano named Balor to find the hidden valley of the phoenixes.

For months meteorites have been raining down on the Dragon Empire, strange sky rocks that disgorge creatures known as star-masks. The star-masks are a menace—possessing the living and animating the dead.

The Dwarf King has got his hands on an intact meteorite, one with the star-masks still dormant inside. He arranged a meeting between interested parties to sell it off, and the party have successfully bid and won the right to be given the meteorite—but still need to complete the deal by getting a phoenix egg from a valley high on Balor. No dwarf has ever returned from the valley.

However, other interested factions have set out to get the phoenix egg before the party can get to it, hoping to reopen negotiations from a stronger position.

Can the adventurers get the phoenix egg in time to claim their prize before somebody else does so and gains the meteorite?

THE CLIMB

The adventurers are on the lower slopes of mount Balor, an active volcano. The party is searching for the valley of the phoenixes, which they suspect to be somewhere further up the volcano. However, every other faction is also searching for the valley and the egg that it contains.

This is a montage. Turn to a player and ask them to describe a problem that the party faced on the slopes of Balor, but not how the problem was solved. *Maybe the party came across an orc encampment, maybe they didn't bring enough food,*

maybe a monster lair is encountered. Turn to the next player and ask them how their character solved the problem. Go around the group until everybody has had a chance to describe a problem, and everybody has had a chance to describe how their character solved the issue. There is no need to roll dice during a montage, it is purely a narrative device to get the players warmed up and give everybody a chance to introduce their character.

LAVA FIELDS

The way up the volcano is over a landscape blackened by soot and ash. Though Balor is active it rarely erupts, mainly just bubbling away and spewing occasional clouds of pumice and stone. The dwarves that live on and in the volcano are acclimatized to life on the slopes of the volcano.

However, the adventurers are headed to an area that the dwarves don't visit—an area that is inimical and hostile to adventurers. The lava flows have mostly cooled, but here and there still pose a danger to unwary adventurers. Lava still flows under the solidified crust here and there, waiting for an unwary foot belonging to an inattentive adventurer to break through.

As the adventurers climb further up each adventurer must face one of the following hazards. You as GM get to pick the hazards based upon a freeform skill challenge—you describe the lava fields, tunnels, and twisted rock and as the players describe their characters' actions you introduce the hazards.

HOT ROCKS UNDERFOOT	TWISTED LANDSCAPE	VOLCANIC GASSES
<i>Difficulty to avoid: DC 15</i> Hot rocks +5 vs PD—2d6 fire damage	<i>Difficulty to avoid: DC 15</i> Sharp rocks +10 vs AC—3d6 damage	<i>Difficulty to avoid: DC 20</i> Gasses +10 vs PD—2d8 poison damage

THE RIVALS

The adventurers stumble across two groups locked in battle. As the battle is quite loud the adventurers have the option of going around the battle, or sneaking up and looking.

The two groups are ogres carrying the orc lord's banners and stitched-together undead monsters, both apparently looking for the valley of the phoenixes just like the adventurers. Neither icon had *official* representation at the meeting in Ironfort, but it appears that the Orc Lord and Lich King may have had spies in the city and troops nearby.

If the adventurers join in the fight against both groups, hoping to finish off some rivals, use the fight chart below.

Three-way fight!

The orcs and undead stop fighting each other to face the new threat, but don't aid each other in the battle either.

Number of PCs	Ogre Bersk.	Ogre Champ.	Four-Armed Gaunt	Gaunt wolf
3	1	0	0	2
4	0	1	0	2
5	0	2	1	0
6	1	1	1	1

If the adventurers go ahead and set up an ambush for the fight's winners use this fight chart. The undead win the fight against the orc lord's forces, so the adventurers will end up facing the Lich King's gaunts and some reinforcements that they've 'built' from the remains of the orcs.

Fight (ambush)!

In situations when one side ambushes or surprises the other, start by letting the ambushing side pick one creature who will start the ambush. Then roll initiative for all members of the ambushing side.

Only two creatures get to act in the ambush round: the nominated ambusher and their highest initiative ally. The GM can choose whether to advance the escalation die after the surprise round.

Then roll initiative for the side that got ambushed and play normal combat rounds.

Number of PCs	Four-Armed Gaunt	Gauntwolf
3	1	1
4	0	3
5	2	1
6	1	3

If the adventurers decide to avoid the situation entirely skip ahead to the *avalanche* encounter and have a gauntwolf join the basilisk fight when the escalation die reaches 3.

Regardless of who the adventurers fight, when the escalation die reaches 3 the fight is interrupted by an earth tremor. Everybody is popped free of engagement, the escalation die resets to 1, and initiative should be re-rolled. This happens every time the escalation die reaches 3 during the fight.



OGRE BERSERKER

Large 4th level wrecker [GIANT]

Initiative: +9

Giant axe or sword +8 vs. AC—28 damage

Natural 5, 10, 15, or 20: The ogre berserker gains the escalator ability (it adds the escalation die to its attacks) until the end of the battle.

Miss: Half damage, and the ogre berserker takes 1d6 damage.

You shouldn't have done that: When an enemy engaged with the berserker scores a critical hit against it, that enemy takes 7d6 damage.

Incidental damage: When an enemy makes an opportunity attack against the berserker, hit or miss, that enemy takes 2d6 damage.

Raugugugh: Once per battle as a free action, when the ogre berserker fails a save, it can take 3d6 damage to succeed at the save instead.

AC 18

PD 18 HP 120

MD 15

OGRE CHAMPION

You don't have to be an orc to be one of the Orc Lord's favored champions. Ogres like this guy make the point that you're probably better off not being an orc.

Large 5th level wrecker [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +10

Champion's battle-axe +10 vs. AC—30 damage

Natural 5, 10, 15, or 20: The ogre champion gains a second standard action this turn, but not a third.

Miss: Half damage.

R: Heavy javelin +10 vs. AC (one nearby or far away enemy)—26 damage

Miss: 10 damage.

Orc Lord's enemies: Whenever a nearby dwarf or elf enemy attempts to use their racial power, they must roll a hard save (16+). On a failure, the power fails and has no effect that turn (but they can try again next turn).

Slayer of wizards: Creatures engaged with the ogre champion take opportunity attacks from it when casting close spells as if they were casting ranged spells.

Nastier Specials

Escalating danger: The ogre champion adds the escalation die to the damage it deals with its attacks, hit or miss.

AC 21

PD 19 HP 140

MD 18



FOUR-ARMED GAUNT

This undead has been stitched together from many body-parts, with a sinew-wound catapult mounted so that it fires from where the head should be.

Large 6th level wrecker [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +12

Vulnerable: holy

Four-sword attack +11 vs. AC (1d4 attacks)—15 damage

Natural 4, 8, 12, 16, 20: The target takes 10 ongoing negative energy damage.

R: Flaming catapult +10 vs. AC (one nearby or far away enemy)—30 damage

Natural 16+: The target takes 10 ongoing fire damage.

Limited escalator: The four-armed gaunt adds the escalation die to its attacks until the die is 5+.

Nastier Specials

Iron spikes: When an enemy intercepts the four-armed gaunt, it takes 4d8 damage from the iron spikes driven into the gaunt's flesh.

Burning chains: When an enemy makes a melee attack against the four-armed gaunt and rolls a natural odd miss, that enemy takes 2d8 fire damage.

AC 22

PD 20 HP 200

MD 15

GAUNTWOLF

This undead wolf-like monster has been enhanced with rusted metal teeth and spikes. Gauntwolves are 'born' from the victims of gaunts. Well, born or built.

Double-strength 5th level mook [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +6

Vulnerable: holy

Iron teeth and spikes +10 vs. AC—14 damage

Miss: 2d6 damage.

Animal instincts: While staggered, if the gaunt is unengaged at the start of its turn, it must roll an easy save (6+). On a failure, the gaunt must move and attack a random nearby enemy that's staggered, or a random nearby creature if there are no staggered enemies.

Lashing tail, and spikes: When an enemy misses with a melee attack against the gaunt and rolls a natural 1–5, the attacker takes 2d6 damage.

AC 22

PD 19 HP 32 (mook)

MD 14

Mook: Kill one gauntwolf mook for every 32 damage you deal to the mob.





AVALANCHE

The volcano is unusually active, shaking and rumbling as the adventurers climb it. As the adventurers dust themselves off from their last battle (or from sneaking around it) an avalanche comes tumbling down upon them. The whole party must face the following threats, in order.

First the adventurers are pelted with rocks from above, small rocks at first (though still travelling fast), then boulders.

RUSHING ROCKS

Difficulty to avoid: DC 15

Rocks fall +5 vs AC—3d4 damage

Next the very ground the adventurers are standing on simply slides away from beneath their feet, sending them tumbling down the volcano's slopes.

GRAVITY-ASSISTED DESCENT

Difficulty to avoid: DC 20

Falling +5 vs AC—3d6 damage

Lastly an ashen cloud rolls across the adventurers, burying and choking them.

ASHEN CLOUD

Difficulty to avoid: DC 15

Ashen cloud +5 vs PD—2d6 damage

Once the cloud is past the worst of the avalanche is over, and the adventurers can rest and recuperate.

LAIR OF THE BASILISK

Up ahead is a ridge, and the adventurers can see distant figures fighting on it. The other factions must believe that the valley of the phoenixes lies that way. However, before the adventurers can get to the ridge they must cross a field of petrified bodies—the remains of every dwarven expedition to try to get to the valley of the phoenixes. This is the hunting ground of a basilisk, and the adventurers must brave the basilisk's gaze as they cross it!

There are plenty of mundane (non-magical) dwarf items, armor, and equipment scattered around the statues, or worn or held by the statues. The only problem is that 'going shopping' means looking around, potentially meeting the basilisk's petrifying gaze.



THE BLACK BASILISK OF BALOR

This giant, crested serpent has eight legs, and each scale drips with a myriad of deadly poisons. Just looking at a basilisk is enough to kill someone who isn't accustomed to dealing with deadly magic.

Large 4th level wrecker [BEAST]

Initiative: +3

Multi-legged attack +8 vs. AC (3 attacks, each against a different enemy) — 12 damage

Natural 16+: The target takes 5 ongoing poison damage.

Basilisk's stare: When a basilisk hits an enemy that is already taking ongoing poison damage, the basilisk can make a basilisk's stare attack against the target as a free action.

[Special trigger] **C: Basilisk's stare +8 vs. MD—5** ongoing poison damage, and the target must start making last gasp saves depending on the basilisk's type (see below) as it accidentally takes a full look at the basilisk. Constructs and undead are immune to this effect.

Last Gasp Failed Save Effects

Failed save: The target's blood begins to coagulate and harden, and dust puffs out of their lungs through their mouth.

Fourth failed save: The target's body turns to stone and they die.

Resist melee damage 18+: When a melee attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 18+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage. An attacker can ignore this resistance by declaring they are looking directly at the basilisk during the attack. If they do, the basilisk can make a basilisk's stare attack against them as a free action before the attack. Constructs and undead are not affected by this resistance.

Stare-down: When an enemy makes a ranged attack against the basilisk, the basilisk can make a basilisk's stare attack against them as a free action before the attack.

Nastier Specials

Death breath: Each creature engaged with the basilisk at the end of the basilisk's turn takes 10 poison damage.

AC 24

PD 19 HP 85

MD 18

AVOIDING SEEING THE BASILISK

Wise adventurers and clever players will think up ways to mitigate a basilisk's stare.

Won't look: The rules for the basilisk already assume that characters aren't looking at the basilisk. When they do, there's a price to pay.

Can't look: A character might try wearing a blindfold or using some other method to prevent them from looking at the basilisk accidentally. This negates the basilisk's stare ability but that character has a 50% miss chance with any attack (make the check before the attack roll). If a deliberately blinded ranged attacker misses with an attack and rolls a natural 1–5, they fumble and risk hitting one of their allies engaged with the basilisk, as per the Shooting into Melee rules.

Kind of looking: Characters might have crazy methods for looking at the basilisk indirectly such as a mirrored shield, a polished blade, a spell, or looking through the eyes of a familiar. Such characters take a –2 penalty to their attacks and if they are forced to make last gasp saves for the basilisk, the final death effect occurs after the fifth failed save instead of the fourth. Reward cleverness.

Doesn't affect me: Constructs such as forgeborn, and undead are unaffected by seeing a basilisk. Some characters might have unique things that could prevent the basilisk's gaze from working, such as a bat-elf that sees through sonar, a dwarf that has unusual magical senses but no eyes, or a wizard that perceives through psychic emanations. In general allow them to be immune to the basilisk's stare.



EGG & FEATHER

INTRODUCTION

The Dwarf King has a meteorite that is more or less promised to the adventurers, but he also wants a phoenix egg as part of the deal, and getting hold of the egg pits the PCs against the factions who lost out in the bidding process as well as ridiculously dangerous monsters.

The adventurers are on the slopes of Balor, a volcano in the north of the dwarven lands, trying to find a phoenix egg for the Dwarf King. They are not the only ones looking for the egg, rival groups working for icons hostile to the adventurers are also looking for the valley of the phoenixes so that they can reopen negotiations with the Dwarf King and possibly obtain the meteorite instead of the adventurers.

For months the Dragon Empire has been plagued by strange creatures called star-masks, and the Dwarf King has in his possession a meteorite that may hold the key to the star-mask mystery. Whoever returns with the phoenix egg will get the meteorite, and the icon that they work for will gain in power.

A NIGHT ON BALOR

The adventurers are resting on the slopes of the volcano. To get up as high as they have they have had to face rival adventurers, ambushes, monsters, and the natural hazards of the volcano. However, now they have a chance to rest before pushing on in the morning to the valley of the phoenixes.

All is not well though. Night on the volcano brings its own unique dangers and discomforts.

This is a montage. Turn to a player and ask them to describe a problem that the party faced at night on the slopes of Balor, but not how the problem was solved. *Maybe the party nearly freezes to death in the harsh climate, maybe an earthquake forces them to take shelter in a dangerous cave, maybe a lava flow breaks through near where they are camped.* Turn to the next player and ask them how their character solved the problem. Go around

the group until everybody has had a chance to describe a problem, and everybody has had a chance to describe how their character solved the issue. There is no need to roll dice during a montage, it is purely a narrative device to get the players warmed up and give everybody a chance to introduce their character.

INTO THE VALLEY OF THE PHOENIXES

At last the adventurers see a circling bird high overhead, and following it find themselves in the fabled secret valley of the phoenixes.

The landscape is blasted, the rocks cracked by the extreme heat that has obviously been a feature of this location in the past. However, the temperature in the valley right now is cool—chilly in fact. The adventurers' breath steams in the frigid air.

The adventurers are probably the only humanoids to ever set foot in the valley—every other expedition has fallen prey to the basilisk the PCs fought last session, or other hazards that have now claimed most of the rival factions who tried to beat the PCs up the mountain!

Near the center of the valley, nestled over a volcanic vent, is a golden phoenix egg. The egg is as large as a dwarf—several adventurers will need to cooperate to move the golden egg.

Circling overhead is a void phoenix, its silver and purple feathers glittering in the morning light. The void phoenix is obviously guarding the egg, but it has not yet spotted the party.

The adventurers have a choice: they can try to sneak the egg out of the valley and past the void phoenix, or they can climb the steep valley walls and launch an ambush on the void phoenix when it next swoops low to check on the egg.

SNEAKING THE EGG AWAY

It requires three DC 25 skill checks with no failures in order to sneak the egg away from the watchful eye of the void phoenix. As GM you decide exactly what the skill checks involve

based upon the plan that the players come up with for their characters sneaking a giant egg off from under the watchful gaze of a supernatural bird.

Failure in the freeform skill challenge means that the void phoenix swoops down and attacks (see *void guardian*). Success means that the party carries the egg off without the void phoenix noticing (see *the fires of creation*).

AMBUSHING THE PHOENIX

It requires three DC 20 skill checks to climb the steep rocks and get into position to attack the phoenix. Failing one of the skill checks means that the party fails forwards—they still move into position but there is some additional complication involved.

Provided the party passes two of the three DC 20 skill checks they get into position and can ambush the void phoenix (see *void guardian*). If the party fails all three skill checks then the void phoenix attacks them before they are ready to spring their ambush (see *void guardian*).

VOID GUARDIAN

If the adventurers have sprung an ambush, or if they failed a skill challenge use this fight, if the adventurers snuck past the phoenix with the egg skip this fight...

With a screech the void phoenix whirls in the sky. If the adventurers managed to spring an ambush on the phoenix by succeeding at the 'ambushing' skill check use the ambush rules, otherwise run the fight normally.

VOID PHOENIX

The phoenix has drawn all its heat into itself in order to ready itself for the next stage of its life cycle. Silver and purple turns out to be an excellent look for the bird.

Large 8th level spoiler [ELEMENTAL]

Initiative: +16

Fly-by talons +13 vs. AC—60 damage, and 10 ongoing negative energy damage (hard save ends, 16+)

Natural even hit or miss: The phoenix may move again this turn as a quick action if it has already made a flying move on its turn.

Miss: The void phoenix can use a void calling attack as a quick action, either this turn, or on its next turn.

[Usually special trigger, but also possible as a standard action] **C:Void calling +13 vs. PD (1d3 nearby or far away enemies in a group) — 35 negative energy damage**

Natural even hit: Target is dazed (save ends).

Target takes 10 negative energy damage each time it fails the save.

Flight: The void phoenix can fly amazingly well for a creature that is turning itself spiritually inside out.

Void aura: Enemies that end their turns engaged with the void phoenix must attempt an easy save (6+). If the save fails, they're dazed until the end of their next turn.

Resist fire and negative energy 16+: When a fire attack or negative energy attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 16+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

Spectacular effects: When the phoenix is dealt a critical hit, it must roll an easy save (6+). If the save fails, the phoenix drops to 0 hit points; see the reborn in void ability below!

Reborn in void: Whenever the phoenix drops to 0 hit points, roll a d20 and add the escalation die. For each time this void phoenix has rolled its reborn in void ability earlier this battle, subtract 10 from the roll. For example, a void phoenix making its second reborn in void roll (because its first roll ended up being 20+!) when the escalation die is 6 would roll the d20 and subtract 4.

20+: The void phoenix is immediately reborn, healing to 120 hit points above staggered and keeps fighting!

15–19: The void phoenix is reborn in a blast of cold and fire and negative energy, but vaults into the overworld, removed from the battle. On the other hand, it's not done with the PCs! Add the phoenix to an upcoming battle by surprise, adding it as an additional monster not accounted for by the usual encounter-building

calculations. Add a level if you feel like it, because it's angry.

8-14: The void phoenix is reborn in a blast of negative energy but wants nothing more to do with this battle. It makes the following attack, but when the attack is over it shoots off into the overworld so quickly that it's a teleport effect, and does not return to the battle, nor to the adventure.

Void rebirth +13 vs. PD (every nearby enemy)—35 fire and negative energy damage

7 or less: The phoenix flares back to life somewhere nearby in a few hours, days, months, or years. Probably not relevant to the PCs unless they or the phoenix bear a special grudge.

AC 23

PD 18 HP 230

MD 22



FIRES OF CREATION

The adventurers have finally got the egg to the edge of the valley, and are attempting to maneuver it through a crack in the rocks of the valleys wall; however, the adventurers face a new danger—the egg itself begins heating up. The phoenix inside is about to hatch, and the adventurers must seek cover quickly.

The narrow confines of the valley leaves little room to hide, the adventurers must find a place to shelter among the split and jagged rocks without hurting themselves.

SHARP ROCKS

Difficulty to avoid: DC 15 OR chose not to throw yourself flat and hide

Sharp rocks +5 vs AC—2d6 damage

Next comes a wave of blistering heat.

THE EGG CRACKS

Difficulty to avoid: DC 20 or DC 30 for those who chose not to throw themselves flat behind rocks

Flames +5 vs PD—1d12+6 fire damage

Miss: 6 fire damage.

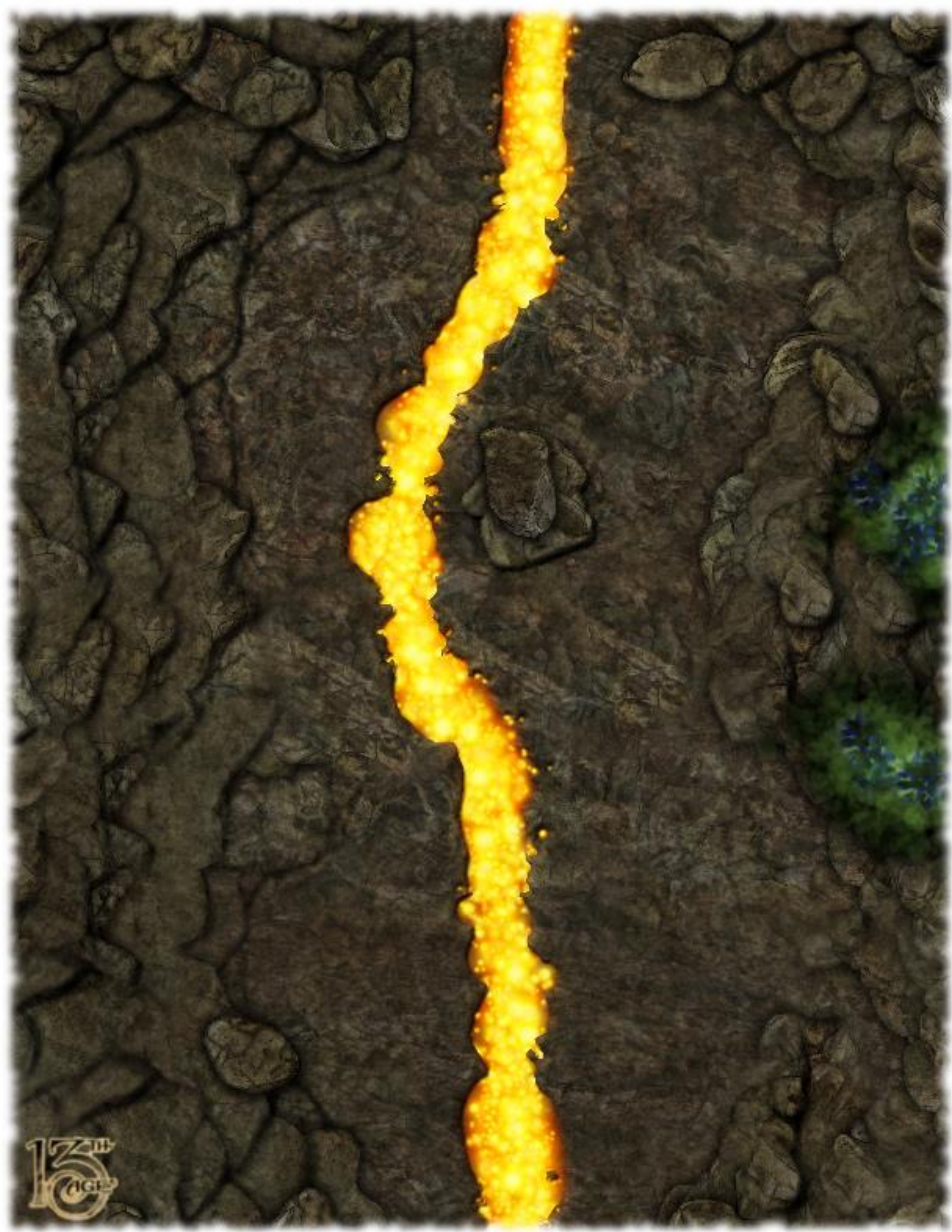
Lastly the egg itself explodes!

PHOENIX REBIRTH

Difficulty to avoid: DC 20

Shrapnel +5 vs PD—3d6 damage

Once the smoke clears the adventurers discover that the egg is now broken into thousands of shards.



JOURNEY BACK TO IRONFORT

The adventurers have only shards of the egg—hopefully enough to trade to the Dwarf King in exchange for the meteorite.

However, the adventurers are not the only ones looking to trade the phoenix egg with the Dwarf King. As the adventurers descend they see a group of figures waiting to take the phoenix egg remains from them. The adventurers can't really avoid their rivals, but do have prior warning before the fight is joined. Are these warriors working for an icon or independent mercenaries? It's up to you and what works best for the story at this point.

Fight!

The adventurers have a chance to plan tactics and strategies before the fight. Reward a good plan by starting the escalation die at 1.

Number of PCs	Lightning-Dancer	Tumbling Fighter	Battle-Tested Bruiser
3	5	2	2
4	5	2	3
5	5	2	5
6	5	2	6

LIGHTNING-DANCER

5th level mook [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +20 (yes, they are *fast*)

Lightning knives +14 vs. AC—7 lightning damage

R: Bow +14 vs. AC—6 lightning damage

AC 25

PD 19 HP 14 (mook)

MD 14

Mook: Kill one lightning dancer mook for every 14 damage you deal to the mob.

TUMBLING FIGHTER

5th level spoiler [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +3

Whirling knives +13 vs. PD—12 damage

Tumble and hamstring: When the tumbling fighter disengages, enemies that it successfully disengaged from take 1d4 damage and are hampered until the end of their next turn.

AC 24

PD 11 HP 68

MD 17

BATTLE-TESTED BRUISER

5th level wrecker [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +5

Huge club +13 vs. AC—10 damage

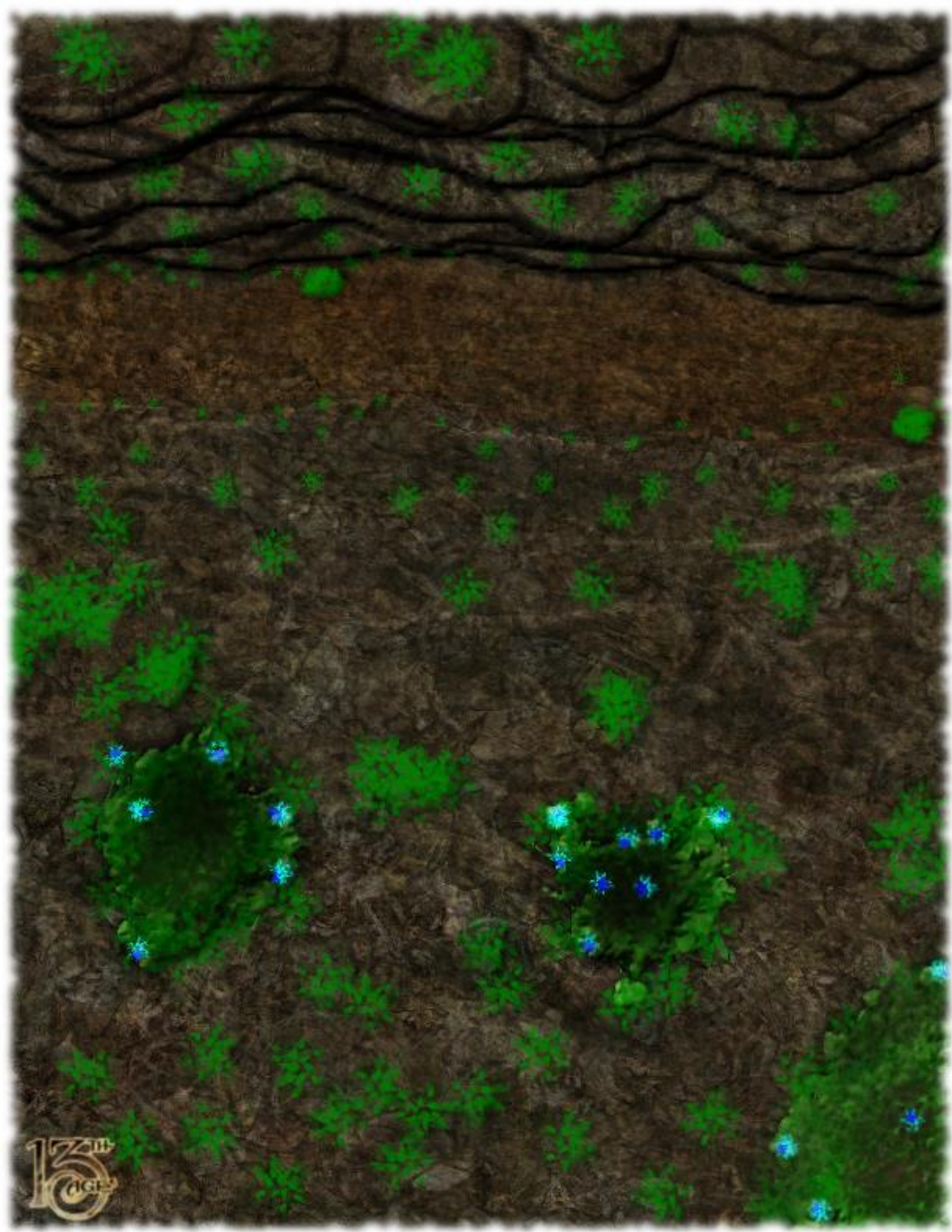
Haymaker follow-up: Once per battle the battle-tested bruiser does double damage on a hit.

AC 21

PD 15 HP 76

MD 12





SIEGE & SHOCK

INTRODUCTION

The adventurers have obtained the phoenix egg shell (well, many pieces of shell, that's almost like a full shell, right?) and are travelling back to the Dwarf King's emissary to make a trade.

The Dwarf King has an intact sample of a meteorite of the kind that produces star-masks, horrid monsters that have been plaguing the Dragon Empire for months. The lord of all the dwarfs is willing to trade the meteorite for a phoenix egg. While the party hasn't managed to obtain an intact phoenix egg, they do now have a phoenix egg shell and are headed to the fortified dwarven settlement of Ironfort to complete the trade.

DOWN BALOR'S SLOPES

The settlement of Ironfort is on the lower slopes of the volcano known as Balor. The fortified town safeguards trade routes from the far north and keeps roads from the dwarven capitol of Forge open.

The adventurers will face many hardships, both minor and serious, on their journey back down from the secret valley of the phoenixes to Ironfort.

This is a montage. Turn to a player and ask them to describe a problem that the party faced while descending the slopes of Balor, but not how the problem was solved. *Maybe the party became lost, maybe they were snowed in, maybe the party was attacked by goblins.* Turn to the next player and ask them how their character solved the problem. Go around the group until everybody has had a chance to describe a problem, and everybody has had a chance to describe how their character solved the issue. There is no need to roll dice during a montage, it is purely a narrative device to get the players warmed up and give everybody a chance to introduce their character.

LOOKING DOWN ON IRONFORT

The adventurers find themselves looking down upon the town of Ironfort, and they see that it is surrounded by an army.

The adventurers are still high up enough on the slopes of Balor that they can get a good look at the layout of forces surrounding the town, though they are still too far away to see the composition of the army besieging Ironfort.

As the adventurers peer down from their lofty perch they hear footsteps on the slopes above them. Marching along are—well the adventurers can't see who is marching but from the length of the strides and the stumbling gait it isn't dwarves.

The adventurers have a choice to make. They can hide where they are and wait for the unseen strangers to pass them by. The adventurers could opt to sneak up on the strangers and spy on them. Or the adventurers could work their way around to ambush the as-yet unseen strangers.

STAY HIDDEN

It is a DC 20 skill check to remain hidden, with each adventurer needing to roll. Failing the skill check results in a complication that makes the difficulty of the next person to roll 5 higher.

If more adventurers fail the skill check than pass it, go on to *star-mask orc fight*—otherwise skip that fight as the adventurers are hidden, and go to *the siege*.

SNEAK & SPY

It requires three DC 25 skill checks with no failures in order to sneak up on the strangers.

If the party fails a skill check they fail forwards, and though they still stealthily move toward a position to spy on the interlopers they also face complications. It is up to you what the complications involve: loss of equipment, damage (probably 2d6 damage to whoever failed each roll), or some other setback that increases the difficulty of subsequent rolls.

If all three skill checks are failed, the party moves up onto a cliff ledge but find themselves unable to lean out far enough to spy on the strangers. Skip ahead to *the siege*.

If the adventurers succeed they work their way silently into position on a ridge above the strangers and see that the interlopers are orcs infested with star-masks; at that point the adventurers can decide to keep hidden skip ahead to *the siege*, otherwise go on to *star-mask orc fight*.

AMBUSHING THE INTERLOPERS

If the adventurers decide to ambush the interlopers it requires no skill roll—go to *star-mask orc fight*, and the adventurers get to use the ambush rules against the star-mask orcs.

STAR MASK ORC FIGHT

The adventurers have encountered orcs on the slopes of Balor, orcs who are being puppeteered by the loathsome star-masks.

Battle is joined!

Fight!

During this battle any adventurer carrying phoenix egg shards has their crit range against star-masks and star-mask infested or controlled creatures expanded by 1 (usually to 19+). This property of phoenix egg shell is obvious to anybody who is carrying it into battle against star-masks.

Number of PCs	Masked Orc Tusker	Masked Cave Orc
3	3	10
4	3	16
5	3	22
6	3	30

MASKED ORC TUSKER

Huge tusks, powerful jaws, and a tiny piggy mind that senses what anyone else would call 'pain' as anger.

5th level troop [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +7

Club'n'tusk +10 vs. AC—16 damage

Furious charge: The attack instead deals 20 damage on a hit if the orc tusker first moves

before attacking an enemy it was not engaged with at the start of its turn.

Miss: 6 damage, and the orc tusker pops free from all enemies.

Star-mask tentacles: Disengage checks to move away from this monster have a -2 penalty.

AC 22

PD 19 HP 68

MD 15

MASKED CAVE ORC

Their bodies are thin and twisted with bat-faced grinning skulls and huge nearly-blind eyes, but the high-pitched screeching they use as sonar is perfect orcish. The sounds are nearly 100% curse words, but that's not uncommon for orcish.

5th level mook [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +6, or +12 at night or in dark caves

Obsidian knife +10 vs. AC—6 damage, and +1d6 damage for each other orc engaged with the target (max +4d6)

R: Whipping star-mask tentacles +9 vs. AC—9 damage

Hears everything: Increase the DC to sneak past cave orcs silently by +5.

Nocturnal predator: If the battle is at night (or in darkness), the orc gains a +2 attack bonus. If the battle is during the day (or in daylight) it takes a -2 penalty to all defenses.

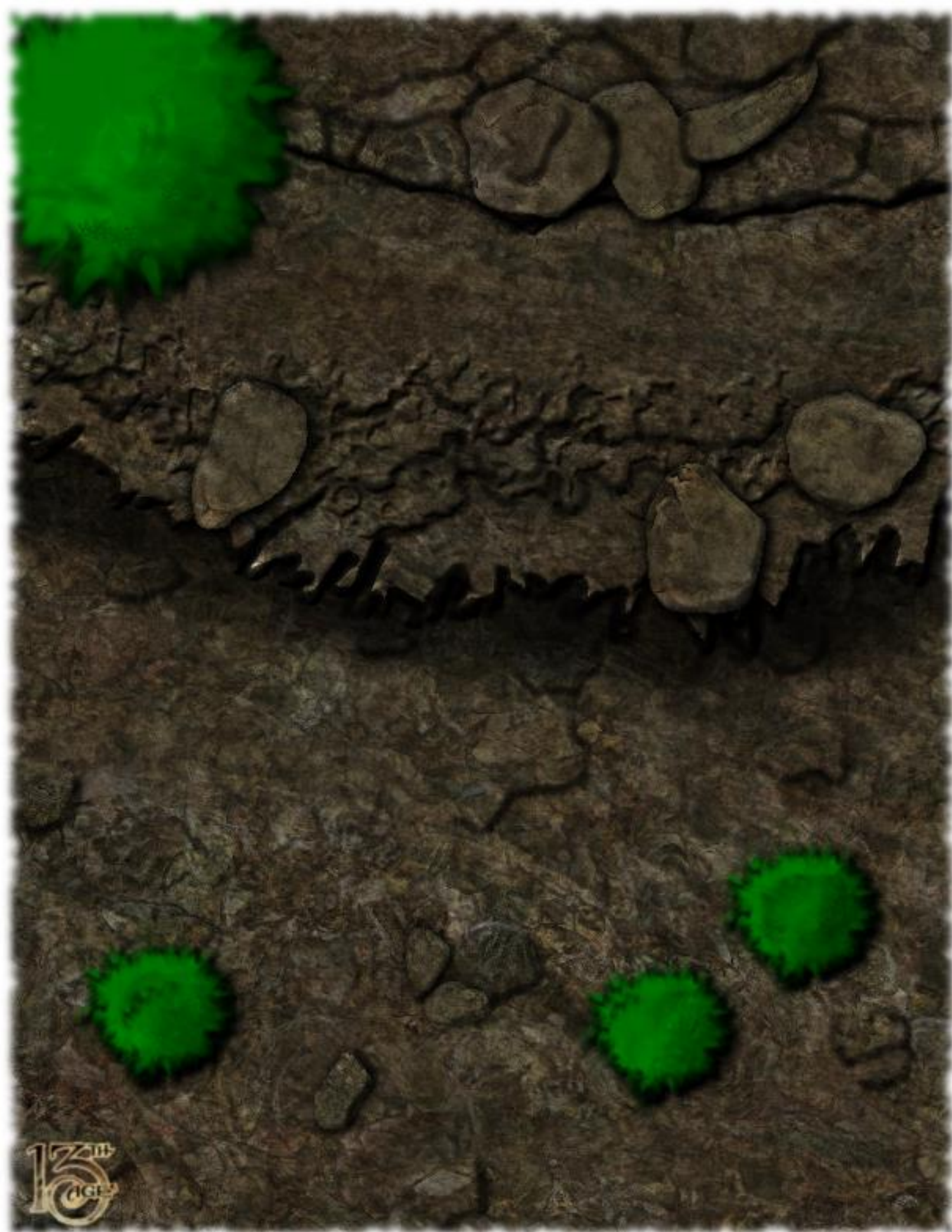
Star-mask leap: Once per battle when the escalation die is odd and this monster is unengaged, it can leap into engagement with a nearby or far away enemy as a move action without provoking attacks.

AC 21

PD 15 HP 18 (mook)

MD 19

Mook: Kill one cave orc mook for every 18 damage you deal to the mob.



THE SEIGE

The fortified town of Ironfort is under siege, or more accurately it is being attacked by an encircling force. From the adventurer's perspective higher on the volcano's slopes they can see that the defenders are winning.

However, the adventurers can also see that reinforcements are headed through a valley lower down Balor and will soon reach the town. If the reinforcements reach Ironfort before its dwarven defenders can secure its walls the fortified town will be overrun. However, if the reinforcements can be held at bay for long enough the dwarves can throw back the attackers and turn the tide of battle.

Trouble-shooting



Remind the players that their characters are trying to get the dwarves to hand over a valuable meteorite to them, and that fighting to protect the dwarves will only help their cause. Standing aside and watching the dwarves get slaughtered might lose them the meteorite entirely.

The dwarves in Ironfort are bottled in by the attackers, and are unaware of the trouble headed their way. However, the adventurers could run down Balor's slopes and meet the marching reinforcements at the head of a valley—holding the attackers at bay long enough for the dwarves to deal with those already attacking the town.

To run down Balor's slopes fast enough to get to the pass and stop the enemy getting through means running at break-neck speeds.

TRIP AND FALL

Difficulty to avoid: DC 20

A nasty tumble +5 vs PD—4d6 damage

Clever players might fashion sleds from their shields or use magic to avoid danger (a wizard with *feather fall* for example). Reward clever players by allowing them to roll twice to avoid the *trip and fall* hazard and take the better roll.

Once the adventurers reach the pass they must hold it for seven complete rounds. Once

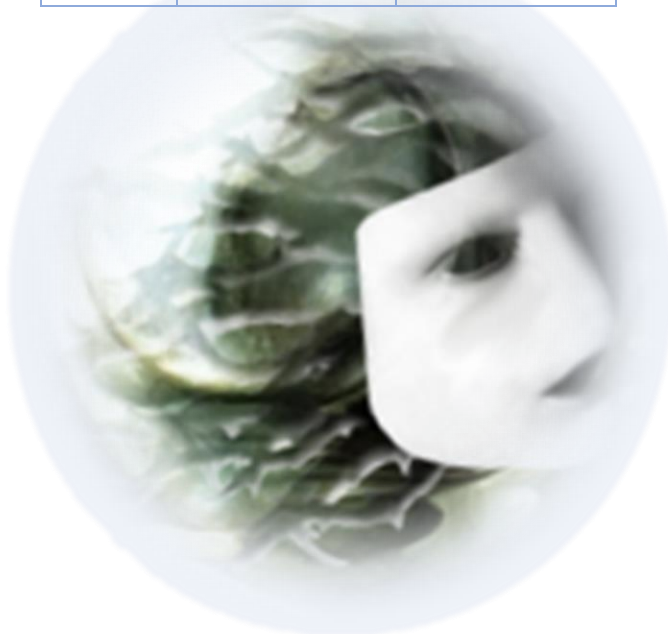
they have held the pass for seven rounds they can turn and flee with no penalties or campaign loss—they have held it for long enough to make a difference to the dwarven defenders higher up in Ironfort.

Fight!

During this fight the monsters just keep coming. Only a certain number (as determined by the chart below) can attack the party at any one time, but at the start of each round 1d4 more cave orc enemies surge forwards to take the place of their fallen comrades. **The battle ends when seven rounds have passed, the adventurers can withdraw from the fight at the point having achieved their objectives.**

During this battle any adventurer carrying phoenix egg shards has their crit range against star-masks and star-mask infested or controlled creatures expanded by 1 (usually to 19+). This property of phoenix egg shell is obvious to anybody who is carrying it into battle against star-masks.

Number of PCs	Masked Cave Orc	Masked Orc Rager
3	5	5
4	5	10
5	10	10
6	15	10



MASKED CAVE ORC

Their bodies are thin and twisted with bat-faced grinning skulls and huge nearly-blind eyes, but the high-pitched screeching they use as sonar is perfect orcish. The sounds are nearly 100% curse words, but that's not uncommon for orcish.

5th level mook [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +6, or +12 at night or in dark caves

Obsidian knife +10 vs. AC—6 damage, and +1d6 damage for each other orc engaged with the target (max +4d6)

R: Whipping star-mask tentacles +9 vs. AC—9 damage

Hears everything: Increase the DC to sneak past cave orcs silently by +5.

Nocturnal predator: If the battle is at night (or in darkness), the orc gains a +2 attack bonus. If the battle is during the day (or in daylight) it takes a –2 penalty to all defenses.

Star-mask leap: Once per battle when the escalation die is odd and this monster is unengaged, it can leap into engagement with a nearby or far away enemy as a move action without provoking attacks.

AC 21

PD 15 HP 18 (mook)

MD 19

Mook: Kill one cave orc mook for every 18 damage you deal to the mob.

MASKED ORC RAGER

7th level mook [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +12

Greataxe +12 vs. AC—16 damage

Dangerous mooks: The crit range of melee attacks by orc ragers expands by 3 until half the orc rager mob has been dropped.

Dying strike: When an orc rager drops to 0 hp, it can make a final attack as a free action. (GM, since it isn't always important which mook dies, feel free to make these extra attacks come from the ragers engaged with a PC.)

Star-mask leap: Once per battle when the escalation die is odd and this monster is unengaged, it can leap into engagement with a nearby or far away enemy as a move action without provoking attacks.

AC 22

PD 20 HP 27 (mook)

MD 16

Mook: Kill one orc rager mook for every 27 damage you deal to the mob.



TO THE WALLS

The adventurers have bought the dwarves of Ironfort enough time to throw back the attackers and secure the walls of the town. The adventurers' actions in delaying the star-mask reinforcements has been seen by the defenders, and the dwarves open the gates to let the adventurers inside the town of Ironfort.

However, the star-mask orcs have found a way into the fortified settlement via an old tunnel long forgotten and paved over, and are pouring out into the town. The adventurers can stem the tide of enemies flooding the town by fighting at the entrance to the old tunnel. If the adventurers win they will be heroes to the dwarves.

Fight!

During this battle any adventurer carrying phoenix egg shards has their crit range against star-mask infested creatures expanded by 1.

Number of PCs	Masked Orc Tusker	Masked Great Fang Cadre
3	2	3
4	2	4
5	2	5
6	2	6

MASKED ORC TUSKER

Huge tusks, powerful jaws, and a tiny piggy mind that senses what anyone else would call 'pain' as anger.

5th level troop [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +7

Club'n'tusk +10 vs. AC—16 damage

Furious charge: The attack instead deals 20 damage on a hit if the orc tusker first moves before attacking an enemy it was not engaged with at the start of its turn.

Miss: 6 damage, and the orc tusker pops free from all enemies.

Star-mask tentacles: Disengage checks to move away from this monster have a -2 penalty.

AC 22

PD 19 HP 68

MD 15

MASKED GREAT FANG CADRE

Among the countless cursed strains of orcs, there are many who grow into tall, fierce warriors when fed on the highest quality food. In particular, they thrive on the flesh of beautiful, talented, experienced, and powerful people.

10th level mook [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +13

Double axe +15 vs. AC—25 damage

Natural 11+: The cadre can make a second double axe attack (no more) as a free action.

Dangerous mooks: The crit range of melee attacks by great fang cadre orcs expands by 3 until half the great fang cadre mob has been dropped.

R: Big, black, creaking bow +15 vs. AC—37 damage

Natural even hit or miss: The attack targets PD instead of AC.

Star-mask tentacles: Disengage checks to move away from this monster have a -2 penalty.

Star-mask leap: Once per battle when the escalation die is odd and this monster is unengaged, it can leap into engagement with a nearby or far away enemy as a move action without provoking attacks.

Nastier Specials

On the spot mutation: Whenever an attack eliminates one or more members of the mob, there is a 50% chance that each survivor gains a mutation like a sudden new body part or temporary magical aura. The GM chooses one of the following improvements, perhaps at random, and invents a new part or magic effect to explain it: extra melee attack, damage aura: 1d20 damage vs. any enemy that starts its turn engaged with the orc, or +4 bonus to AC.

AC 27

PD 25 HP 50

MD 21

Mook: Kill one great fang cadre mook for every 50 damage you deal to the mob.



VICTORY

The star-mask orcs refuse to retreat, and are slaughtered by the dwarves. The streets run with orc blood and star-mask ichor.

The dwarves rejoice in the bravery of the adventurers, and a night of feasting commences. During the celebrations questions about the meteorite are brushed aside—that is something for the morning after grieving and victory celebrations are out of the way (*i.e. Part 2 of this adventure*).

AN UNEXPECTED TREASURE

The adventurers will have probably noticed that the phoenix egg shards have a unique property when they are facing star-masks—some magic in the egg shell is ill-disposed to the star-masks and causes their strength to wane while the adventurer's power grew.

Those adventurers who choose to embed phoenix egg shards into armor or weaponry (and there are plenty of grateful dwarven smiths on hand in Ironfort who can do so) gain the following magic items. There are more than enough phoenix egg shell shards for every adventurer to get both items if they wish—and there will be bags of shell left over.

PHOENIX WEAPON

The metal of this weapon shines bright with an inner fire.

[Any melee weapon]

+2 to attacks and damage with this weapon.

Your crit range against star-masks and star-mask infested or controlled creatures expands by 1.

Quirk: Obsession with rebirth; or obsession with seeing very sunrise; or compulsion to play with fire; or overly attentive to hair and anything else that might qualify as plumage.

PHOENIX ARMOR

The metal of this armor glows with an inner light.

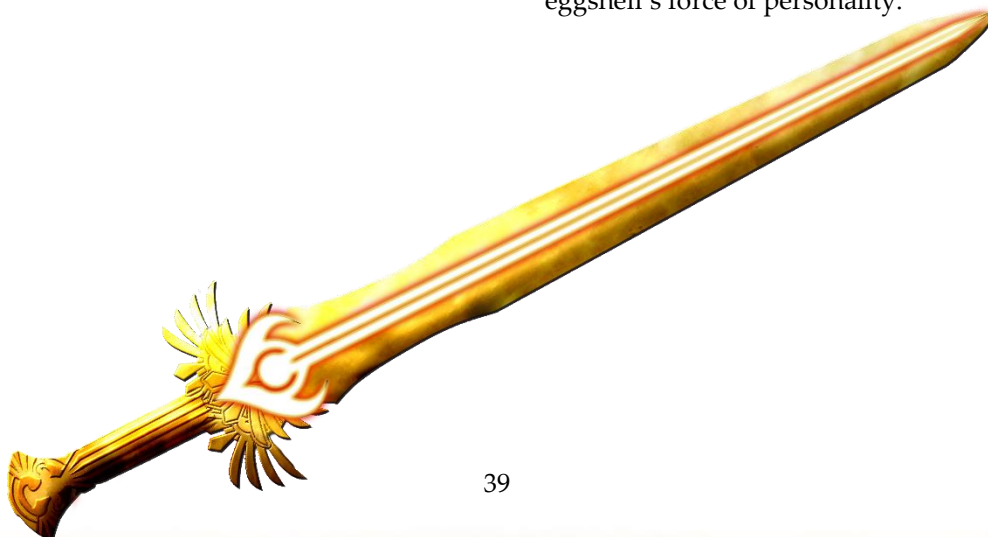
[Light or heavy armor]

+2 bonus to AC.

Once per round, when a star-mask or star-mask infested or controlled creature attacks you and misses it takes your level in fire damage.

Quirk: Obsession with fire; or extreme interest in birdwatching and birdcalls; or instinctive desire to always be the one to sacrifice; or compulsive desire to criticize boring and non-shiny clothes.

Quirk options: You still only get one quirk per item, but we listed multiple quirks because multiple characters are likely to get hold of the same items. That hardly ever happens! Is it going to be interesting in your campaign to have all the characters obsessed with rebirth? Maybe, maybe not. If you want to give all characters that have an item the same quirk, you can, or you can make things interesting by choosing different quirks to express different aspects of the phoenix eggshell's force of personality.



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