

ENDS AND MEANS

A DUNGEONS & DRAGONS[®] *LIVING* *FORGOTTEN REALMS* ADVENTURE

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Less than a century has passed since the fall of Underhome; by dwarven standards, the sting of that loss is still fresh. A small but vocal group of dwarves actively seeks out confrontations with the local drow, seeking to drive them back into the depths of the Underdark. Vengeance is one thing, but at what point does it cross the line and become a senseless, endless vendetta? A *Living Forgotten Realms* adventure set in the East Rift for characters levels 4-7.

Based on the original DUNGEONS & DRAGONS[®] rules created by E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson and the new DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game designed by Andy Collins, Rob Heinsoo, and James Wyatt.

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OFFICIAL D&D PLAY

Most likely you ordered this adventure as part of an event, or you received it from your organizer. To play this adventure and receive rewards for it, you must schedule it as an 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 schedule a game for public play, you must be enrolled in the Wizards Play Network. Information on enrolling in the program can be found at www.wizards.com/wpn. If you are scheduling the game for private play, you do not need to be enrolled in the Wizards Play Network. The person who schedules the event, called the organizer, is in charge of making sure the event is scheduled before play, runs smoothly on the date scheduled, and gets reported back to Wizards in a timely manner. The person who runs the game is called the table Dungeon Master (or usually just DM). Sometimes (and almost all the time in the cases of home events) the organizer is also the table DM. You don't have to be enrolled in the Wizards Play Network to DM this adventure if you are not the organizer.

By scheduling and reporting this adventure you accomplish a couple of things. First, it is an official game, tracked under your play history. Second, DMs gain rewards for scheduled play if they are members of the DM REWARDS program. DMing this adventure is worth one (1) point.

To learn more about event scheduling and DM REWARDS, visit the D&D Events website at www.wizards.com/dnd and click on "Events."

PREPARING FOR PLAY

In order to play this adventure, you'll need copies of the following D&D 4th Edition rulebooks: *Player's Handbook*, *Dungeon Master's Guide*, and the *Monster Manual*. Any other rules referenced in this adventure will be noted in the **New Rules Items** section at the end of the adventure.

Throughout this adventure, text in bold italics provides player information for you to paraphrase or read aloud when appropriate. Information on nonplayer characters (NPCs) and monsters appear in abbreviated form in the adventure text.

Along with this adventure, you'll find a session tracking sheet. If you're playing this adventure as part of an officially scheduled event, complete and turn in this sheet to your organizer directly after play.

READING MONSTER STAT BLOCKS

Most of the information should be easy to understand, as it mirrors the information presented in the *Monster Manual*. Attacks may have a letter next to them designating the type: M for melee, R for ranged, C for close, and A for area. A lower-case letter (used only in some melee and ranged attacks) denotes that the attack can be used as a basic attack.

IMPORTANT DM INFORMATION

As the DM of the session, you have the most important role in facilitating the enjoyment of the game for the players. You take the words on these pages and make them come alive. The outcome of a fun game session often creates stories that live well beyond the play at the table. Always follow this golden rule when you DM for a group:

Make decisions and adjudications that enhance the fun of the adventure when possible.

To reinforce this golden rule, keep in mind the following:

- **You are empowered to make adjustments to the adventure and make decisions about how the group interacts with the world of this adventure.** This is especially important and applicable outside of combat encounters, but feel free to use the "scaling the encounter" advice (usually for adjusting to different-sized groups) to adjust combat encounters for groups that are having too easy or too hard of a time in an adventure.
- **Don't make the adventure too easy or too difficult for a group.** Never being challenged makes for a boring game, and being overwhelmed makes for a frustrating game. Gauge the experience of the players (not the characters) with the game, try to feel out (or ask) what they like in a game, and attempt to give each of them the experience they're after when they play D&D. Give everyone a "chance to shine."
- **Be mindful of pacing, and keep the game session moving along appropriately.** Watch for stalling, as play loses momentum when this happens. At the same time, make sure that the players don't finish the adventure too early; provide them with a full play experience. *Living Forgotten Realms* adventures are designed to be played within 3.5 - 4 hours; try to be very aware

of running long or short. Adjust the pacing accordingly.

- **Give the players appropriate hints so they can make informed choices about how to interact with their environment.** Players should always know when enemies are affected by conditions and are bloodied. They should be given clues about how to interact with their surroundings so they can tackle skill challenges, combats, and puzzles without getting too frustrated over lack of information. This helps to encourage immersion in the adventure and gives players “little victories” for figuring out a good choice from a clue.

In short, being the DM for a *Living Forgotten Realms* adventure isn't about following the adventure's text word-for-word; it's about creating a fun, challenging game environment for the players. Chapters 1 and 2 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* are filled with good information about being a DM for a D&D game.

APPROPRIATE CHARACTER LEVELS

This adventure is designed for player characters (PCs) levels 4-7. Characters that fall outside of the level range may not participate in the adventure. Make certain to check the levels of the PCs before beginning play to ensure that they are the proper level.

Each adventure has a low-level version and a high-level version. The low level is meant for a group whose levels, on average, fall in the lower levels of the adventure's level spread. The high level is meant for a group whose levels, on average, fall in the higher levels of the adventure's level spread.

A group may decide to play the high level when their levels are more suited to the low level if everyone in the group agrees to do so; however, some of the rewards may not be available to them. Conversely, a group may decide to play the low level when their levels are more suited to the high level if everyone in the group agrees; however, some of the rewards may be less than what they'd ideally want from the adventure.

Reading the Numbers: Each encounter has a level and sometimes other values (such as XP or skill check DCs) listed with two numbers divided by a slash. The number before the slash is always the value for the low-level version of the adventure; the number after the slash is the value for the high-level version of the adventure.

FAILING TO DEFEAT AN ENCOUNTER

If a group fails to defeat an encounter - that is, if they have to flee from a combat because it's too tough or they reach the predetermined number of failures in a skill challenge before reaching success - they are only awarded half experience points (round down) for the encounter. If they manage to tackle the encounter later and defeat it, award them the other half of the experience points for the encounter.

CHARACTER DEATH

If a PC dies during the course of the adventure, the player of that character and the rest of the group have two options, provided that they have access to the Raise Dead ritual (either a PC has it and can use it or the characters return to civilization), they have access to the body, and it is possible to return the dead PC to life.

- **Pay the component cost for the ritual.** If the group chooses this option, the cost should be divided evenly among the group (500 gp for heroic tier, 5,000 gp for paragon tier, and 50,000 gp for epic tier). Using a source outside the group to cast the ritual costs 20% more than the component cost. Total cost when using an outside source is 600 gp for heroic tier, 6,000 gp for paragon tier, and 60,000 gp for epic tier. A PC that dies and chooses this method of return gains full (or half, if the party was defeated) experience points from the encounter in which the character died, but no experience points for any encounters that were missed while the character was dead. If there are encounters remaining, the PC continues to earn experience as normal, and receives a normal cut of the rewards at the end of the adventure.
- **Invoke the Death Charity clause.** If the group cannot afford to pay for the ritual (or doesn't desire to do so), the PC can choose to return to life at the end of the adventure. Doing so forfeits all rewards (including treasure and story rewards) earned for the adventure except experience points gained prior to the character's death (the character receives the experience point award for the encounter in which they died). The PC cannot participate in the same adventure a second time.

MILESTONES

No matter if the characters succeed or fail in an encounter, they reach a milestone if it is the second encounter they've had since the start of the adventure or their last extended rest. **Encounters that do not give**

out experience points do not count for purposes of reaching a milestone. Make certain to mention this information to the players when applicable, as it gives each PC another action point and affects how some magic item powers are used.

LASTING EFFECTS

Sometimes a PC suffers a lasting effect that isn't easily resolved before the end of the adventure. The two most common lasting effects are the death penalty and diseases.

Death Penalty: When a character dies and is brought back to life by the Raise Dead ritual, that character suffers a -1 penalty to all attack rolls, skill checks, saving throws, and ability checks until they have reached three milestones. The player should simply record the adventure where the character died on their adventure log, and then keep a running tally of milestones reached. Once the PC has reached the third milestone since coming back to life, they no longer suffer the penalty.

Diseases: Diseases take hold of a character and last until they are cured or they reach their final state. Normally, a PC makes an Endurance check after each extended rest to see if the disease improves, worsens, or maintains its current condition. At the end of the adventure, any character suffering from a disease must resolve the disease to either its cure or final state, using the necessary number of extended rests to do so. Other characters adventuring with the PC may decide to aid the afflicted character during this time. If a disease reaches its final state and the PC can get a Cure Disease ritual cast (and pay the appropriate costs), they may do so.

Other Lasting Effects: Other effects that last beyond the scope of the adventure should be resolved at the DM's discretion. Any effects that last for a specific period of time (that end after a certain number of days or a certain number of extended rests) should be resolved at the end of the adventure in which the effect was obtained (unless otherwise specified). Effects that use some sort of adventuring benchmark of unknown duration (such as milestones) should be recorded on the character's logsheet and tracked across adventures.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The Haft is a faction of dwarven patriots; at least that is how they see themselves. Fanatically loyal to their race, they are willing to die and to kill for their ideals. The Haft's leaders believe that the drow, although scattered by the events of the Spellplague and driven from Underhome, are organizing another invasion. (The

upper levels of Underhome are sealed, but the lower levels are still inhabited by drow; see FRCG 121.) Should the drow gain full control of Underhome once more, the hereditary home of the local dwarves will become nothing more than a staging ground for further incursions against the East Rift. The members of the Haft see themselves as the last bastion of defense against this looming threat.

Operating under a veil of secrecy, the Haft constantly sends expeditions into the Underdark, seeking ways to utterly destroy the drow. Although there are many within Earthheart who would agree with this goal, the Haft's methods are unorthodox to say the least, and many of their ideas would be unconscionable to good-aligned dwarves. Thus, the Haft operates outside the law. Although they have a number of high-placed operatives within organizations like the army, the government, and the church of Moradin, the Haft's members are not a typical conspiracy in the sense of trying to seize control of the East Rift. They need power and powerful allies only to the extent that these things allow them to continue their work. The Haft is focused on one goal and one goal only: the complete eradication of the drow race, by any means necessary.

In this adventure, the Haft seeks samples of a particularly deadly Underdark lichen, called Xylaria. The spores can infect nearby creatures, eventually slaying the host and animating the corpse as a fungus-undead hybrid. The Haft has managed to figure out how to control the resulting creatures through a mixture of magical and alchemical processes.

The Haft's goal is to introduce Xylaria spores into the population of drow that live beneath the ruins of Underhome. This will have two effects: first, it will slaughter all the drow, opening up the possibility of a dwarven return to Underhome; second and more importantly, the fungus will infect the bodies, causing the dead drow to rise as plant-undead monsters that the Haft can then control. Their plan is to send these creatures against other drow cities in the Underdark; with each successful operation, the size of the "army" will grow because of the spores' corrupting effect, and eventually the drow will be completely wiped out.

The PCs are enlisted to help carry out this plot, although its true magnitude is not immediately disclosed. The PCs will have to decide how far they are willing to go - and if they cross the Haft, they themselves will be considered enemies by the fanatical dwarves.

DM's INTRODUCTION

The Haft has agents placed throughout Earthheart's infrastructure. Guards, merchants, artisans, laborers,

and politicians have all sworn their allegiance to the Haft and its lofty goal. The squad inspecting those seeking entrance into the city of Eartheart is commanded by Fidmis, a relatively low-ranking member of the city guard, but a respected lieutenant of the Haft. He is identifying those people who he believes might be able and willing to undertake a very special task. Naturally, he spots the PCs as they wait their turn to enter the city, and asks them to step out of line for a brief conversation. Once the PCs have been taken aside, he will make his offer. Those who do not accept are not harried; Fidmis knows that he can always find others.

Fidmis explains that he has been asked to find adventurers to retrieve some samples of a particularly rare lichen from a cave in the Underdark. There is an alchemist in Eartheart who is willing to pay quite well for these samples. Boril, a spelunker and tracker of remarkable skill, will accompany the PCs into the Underdark and assist them in locating the chamber where the plant is known to grow. Boril is ill-suited for combat, and will hide should the party be attacked.

The PCs, with Boril's aid, eventually reach the plant's chamber, but not before being set upon by a hunting party of drow and their pet umber hulk. The Haft knows that the hunting party is in the area, and sees this battle as a test of the party's capabilities.

With the hunting party defeated, the next task before the party is locating and obtaining the lichen itself. To do so, they must first defeat its guardians, who serve as clear evidence of what fate awaits those who become infected by the spores.

Boril leaves messages for the Haft as they progress through the Underdark. These messages use a unique code and are fairly innocuous (stones arranged in certain patterns, series of scratches on walls, etc.) Those with keen eyes and experience with dungeoneering may recognize them as trail markings, but the code is unique to the Haft, so deciphering them will not be possible. Using these messages, the Haft monitors the party's progress and makes preparations for their final encounter. If Boril is asked, he relates that it is common for the drow of the upper regions of the Underdark to use such markings, and he is just trying to confuse any pursuit by sending the drow off in the wrong direction.

Once they have acquired the fungus samples, Boril leads the party to the Haft's headquarters, which is curiously enough located in the Underdark as well. Here, the PCs see what the Haft is truly doing. The Haft has devised a way to turn the plant into a weapon, making it even more deadly than it is in its natural state. Large numbers of test subjects are held in cages throughout the complex, in varying stages of infection. The largest appears much more than the shambling

wrecks that the PCs faced in the cavern, and it is quite obvious that the Haft has perfected the process.

Having revealed their intentions to the PCs, the Haft offers the PCs the opportunity to join their cause. Should any of the characters refuse, the Haft unleashes the sports on the PCs, hoping to remove any possibility of incrimination and to increase the size of their manufactured army. With the current phase of their plan at its culmination, the Haft abandons the complex; leaving the PCs to their fate. The PCs must fight their way free of the monstrosities created by the fungus and make their way back to the surface.

Should the PCs escape, they will be able to alert the populace of the East Rift of the Haft's existence and its plans. Should they fail, the Haft will continue to scheme in secrecy.

Technically, a lichen is a symbiotic combination of a fungus with a photosynthetic partner such as an algae; however, the purpose of this adventure isn't to provide a botany lesson. Therefore, the terms "fungus," "lichen," and "plant" are used here, more or less interchangeably.

PLAYER'S INTRODUCTION

This adventure assumes that the PCs have come to Eartheart for reasons of their own. The PCs begin the adventure outside Eartheart, waiting their turn for entry into Hammergate (the foreigners' district). This would be an ideal time for character introductions if some or all of the PCs have never met one another.

Non-dwarves are not allowed into the city proper, but all are welcome in Hammergate after a brief inspection of their possessions or cargo and a few simple questions to ensure that they do not threaten the city. Drow and other "monstrous" PCs, of course, are subjected to additional scrutiny by the dwarves.

Read or paraphrase the following:

The entrance to Hammergate, the trade district of Eartheart, is heavily guarded. The queue to enter the city is quite long today, as each person, parcel, and wagon is thoroughly searched before being motioned through the gate one at a time.

As your turn gets closer, you notice that a uniformed dwarf is selecting people, and escorting them not through the gate, but through a smaller door cut into the stone wall beside it.

Your turn arrives and the dwarf's gaze falls on you. He smiles broadly, grips you by the arm, and pulls you from the line.

"Follow me," he says. "I've got a job fer ya."

ENCOUNTER 1: THE JOB

SETUP

Important NPCs:

Fidmis (male dwarf militia commander; Bluff +14)

Boril (male dwarf tracker; Dungeoneering +15)

Fidmis leads the PCs into a room adjoining the guard house. There is a single table with two chairs. Boril and Fidmis immediately sit in the chairs, forcing the PCs to stand. The room is well-lit by a quartet of oil lamps, one in each corner. There are no windows, and only the single wooden door through which everyone entered. The overall purpose of this scene is to convey the necessary information for the PCs to accept the job, but at the same time, the whole thing should feel very uncomfortable. This should not come across to the players like the typical adventure hook. The PCs aren't directly being asked to do anything shady, and the job on its face seems perfectly legitimate, but Fidmis is unpleasant at best. Basically, you want them to be suspicious, but not so suspicious that they aren't willing to go along (even if for no other reason than to find out what this mission is really about so they can report it to the proper authorities).

Read the following:

"I've picked ye out from the lot, because it looks like ya can handle yerselves in a fight," the dwarf says nonchalantly. "Assumin' ye'll agree as that's the case, I've got a proposition that'll benefit the both of us, but if I'm wrong and danger's not yer lookout, let's just shake hands now and save ourselves the trouble, eh?"

He places a small pouch upon the table, and it emits the cheerful clink of coin as it settles.

"Five days' work, and that," he winks and smiles happily at the bag on the table, "is yours."

Allow the PCs to ask whatever questions they like. Answers to likely questions are summarized below. Fidmis is quite wily (Bluff +14, Insight +12) and will do his best to avoid acting completely untrustworthy. His dedication to the Haft is unfaltering. Attempts to alter his loyalty, or to charm or compel him, automatically fail (due to his loyalty and to magical protections that are beyond the scope of this adventure).

- The militiaman (who does all the talking) is called Fidmis; his colleague's name is Boril. They would like to talk to the PCs about doing some "side work" that is not official business of the city, but nevertheless could be profitable for everyone.

- Fidmis readily admits that what he's asking the PCs to do is "off the books." His position as supervisor of the Hammergate guard patrol allows him to easily recruit adventurers and other appropriate people for odd jobs. These tasks are requested by a wide variety of individuals and groups throughout Eartheart.
- Today, Fidmis is recruiting individuals to collect a sample of a rare lichen to be sold for a handsome sum to a local alchemist. The lichen in question is called Xylaria, and it grows only in a remote section of the Underdark.
- Boril is an expert tracker and master dungeoneer. Fidmis claims that there is no dwarf alive that knows the tunnels of the Underdark better than Boril. He discovered the only known cave where the fungus can be found, and he will lead the party there.
- The PCs are needed because the Underdark is quite dangerous, and Boril is no fighter. In particular, the area where the cave is located is known to be the hunting grounds of drow.
- Payment will be 100 gold pieces per PC for completion of the task.
- Fidmis recommends that the party stock up on light sources and other supplies, as the only light that exists in the Underdark is what you bring with you. Supplies and equipment are not part of the pay package; the PCs have to provide their own, although Fidmis can provide an advance against their pay of 5 / 10 gp per PC if requested.
- It should take two days of travel through the Underdark to reach the cave, a day to harvest the plant samples, and another two days to get back out, whereupon the harvested fungus can be delivered into the hands of the alchemist.
- (Insight DC 9) Both Fidmis and Boril loathe drow. If there are any drow PCs in the party, the dwarves do what they are able to hide their feelings, which isn't much. Even on a failed Insight check, the PCs cannot help but detect hints of racial distrust. However, Fidmis and Boril do not exclude drow from their job offer for one very good reason: they plan on double-crossing the PCs once their job is done, so actually, the more drow in the party, the better. If confronted with their racial distrust, Fidmis will shrug, claiming that old habits die hard. *"Guess this'll be a good chance fer ya ta prove all them stereotypes wrong, eh?"*
- (Insight DC 14) Fidmis is well-dressed, and his hands are neatly manicured. It doesn't appear as if he's done an honest day's work in his life. How

someone like that could end up in a leadership position in the militia is curious indeed.

- (Insight DC 19) It is clear that Fidmis isn't being completely open with the PCs. He is hiding something, but what? Play on their suspicion, but not so much so that they refuse the job. (See the Troubleshooting section if the PCs are especially recalcitrant.)
- (Diplomacy DC 14) The PCs are able to smooth talk Fidmis into raising the up-front payment to 10 / 20 gold pieces each, but he will adamantly refuse to go any higher. ***"This'll be deducted from yer pay, ya do realize?"***
- (Diplomacy / Intimidate DC 19) If pressed about his appearance, Fidmis confesses that his parents bought his position in the militia some years ago, sparing him from the normal rigors of training. He makes a comment about how it was money well spent, and pats his money purse.
- (Diplomacy / Intimidate DC 24) If the PCs press him about his seeming lack of transparency, Fidmis will cut the conversation short, as follows:

"Look. I haven't got where I am today by bein' open an' honest, and I've got a good feelin' you ain't either. So either take the job or don't. If not, there's a long line of folks outside." He jerks a fat thumb at the door. "I'm sure I'll be able to find someone willin' ta replace ya."

ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

The encounter ends when the PCs either accept or decline the job. If the job is refused, the adventure ends here; there is a sucker born every minute, and Fidmis is intent on finding them.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

The PCs do not earn any XP for this encounter, and it does not count towards a milestone.

TREASURE

Fidmis gives the PCs a maximum of 10 / 20 gold pieces each as an advance payment.

TROUBLESHOOTING

This is one of those adventures where some of the players might complain that they are being forced to take the mission even though their PCs would never do so. Fidmis is unpleasant and he's obviously not telling the PCs everything he knows. Furthermore, even if his "off the books" activities are not strictly illegal, they surely aren't part of his official duties for the militia. The

players might conclude that this mission is a cover for some smuggling or other criminal activity.

Good PCs might feel like they have no business taking this job because the circumstances seem a bit shady, and lawful good or military PCs might feel obligated to report Fidmis to his commanding officer. All of that is fine and normal. Your job is to let the players work through these issues in character but still get them to go on the adventure. (Otherwise, everybody's going to have a lot of unexpected free time on their hands, and where's the fun in that?)

There are a number of ways you can troubleshoot this situation without letting it completely derail the adventure. One obvious avenue for the PCs to pursue is checking up on Fidmis, either before or after they accept the job. Fidmis is no soldier, but he is an able administrator and commander. He's careful to make sure that his unit discharges its duties thoroughly, so his evaluations by his superior officers are always sparkling. Furthermore, he is clever enough to share the wealth from his "side jobs" up the chain of command to a handful of influential officers who therefore have an incentive to ensure that his extracurricular activities aren't stopped. Thus, no matter who the PCs talk to within the militia, they are assured that Fidmis is an excellent dwarf who, although a bit rough around the edges, would never do anything to weaken Eartheart's defenses or compromise the military's integrity.

The PCs might want to know the identity of the alchemist who has contracted with Fidmis to buy the lichen. The dwarf is cagey on this point, and says that he doesn't want the PCs to cut him out of the picture, since if they were able to negotiate directly with the alchemist, they would just try to keep all the money for themselves.

As for the lichen itself, the PCs have never heard of anything called Xylaria, but allow them to roll Dungeoneering and Nature checks to confirm. It isn't necessarily unusual that they haven't heard of the fungus; the Underdark is filled with rare and unusual flora and fauna that haven't been seen on the surface in centuries, if ever.

If all else fails, suggest to the players that by accepting the assignment, the PCs can serve as undercover agents on behalf of the city, and if anything untoward happens, they'll be in a position to put a stop to it. If they just walk away, then whatever criminal activity Fidmis might be up to, there won't be anyone around to stop him. Should the PCs have suitable contacts from previous East Rift regional adventures, allow them to contact these individuals, who will advise them to play along with Fidmis and then make a full report later if anything illegal is in fact going on.

ENCOUNTER 2: THE AMBUSH

ENCOUNTER LEVEL 4 / 6 (950 / 1,400 XP)

SETUP

This encounter includes the following creatures at the low tier:

3 Drow Bloodstingers (D)

1 Umber Ravager (U)

This encounter includes the following creatures at the high tier:

3 Drow Bloodstingers (Level 7) (D)

1 Umber Ravager (Level 9) (U)

The party enters the Underdark without incident. The cavern that houses the plant is a two-day journey from the edge of the East Rift, and suitable places to rest are few and far between. The first day's travel is uneventful, as the PCs are using passageways that are well-traveled and subject to occasional patrols by the East Rift. True to Fidmis's word, Boril is an excellent Underdark guide and tracker (Dungeoneering +15) should the PCs wish to test his knowledge on any subject. However, Boril is not much of a traveling companion. He seems very nervous and is always scanning in all directions for threats. When asked, the dwarf says that he's been attacked by drow on more than one occasion and it is never safe to let your guard down when you are in the Underdark. If the PCs have any stories of battles where they fought and killed drow, Boril will listen eagerly; otherwise, he is difficult to engage in conversation.

If the PCs ask Boril what he knows about Xylaria, the dwarf replies that he doesn't know much. He discovered the lichen on one of his many trips into the Underdark, and brought it back to Eartheart, where it turned out to be a rare specimen that nobody had ever seen before. Fidmis was able to find a buyer, and now that alchemist wants a much larger sample. Boril doesn't know if the lichen has any special properties; to him it was just a patch of mossy stuff growing in a cave.

About halfway through their second day in the tunnels, the PCs come across a small underground pool. Boril finds it a suitable place to rest. Unbeknownst to the party, however, a drow hunting party lies in ambush. The drow have been tracking the adventurers since they entered the Underdark, and have chosen this to be an optimal ambush point.

A day and a half after you plunged into the darkness, Boril leads you into a pair of adjoining caverns. A large pool of water lies completely undisturbed, appearing as a sheet of flawless glass sprawling in the larger of the two chambers. After scanning the area in his usual paranoid fashion, the dwarf grudgingly calls for a brief rest.

As you crouch to fill your waterskin, a small ripple forms from the edge of the pool and radiates inward. Then another. And another. Then you hear it. The rhythmic pounding of heavy footsteps on stone. Something large is coming.

Pause for effect and then read the following:

You hear a faint trilling sound: a short, sharp whistle echoes through the cavern. In response, a burly, chitinous creature with oversized forearms, thick claws, and huge mandibles comes lumbering toward you out of the shadows.

If any of the PCs has a passive Perception score of 21 or higher, add this:

You notice that a crude collar of chitin and leather has been buckled around the beast's neck.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

This area has a few important features.

Illumination: The cave is completely dark. The only light that exists is the light that the PCs bring with them. It is also important that you be mindful of precisely who is carrying a light source and where they are standing. There may be pockets of darkness that the drow can use to gain concealment and make use of their high Stealth skill.

Ground: The floor of the cavern is slightly wet, but otherwise does nothing to inhibit movement.

Pool: The water in the pool is clean and pure, and is only approximately 4 inches deep. However, a thin layer of algae has grown beneath the surface and is fairly slick. Anyone running, charging or moving at more than half speed through the pool must make an Acrobatics check (DC 13) or fall prone.

Rubble: The areas of rubble are considered difficult terrain, costing 2 squares of movement.

TACTICS

The party begins the encounter in the area marked by a dotted white line on the map.

The umber ravager isn't the smartest thing in the world, so tactics aren't necessarily its forte. The drow communicate with the umber hulk using complex whistles, chirps, and hand gestures. This provides them a degree of control of where it moves and the targets they want it to attack (it requires a minor action for any one of the drow to command the umber ravager). Should these commands stop because all the drow are dead or have fled, the umber ravager will simply attack the nearest enemy, fighting to the death. It uses *disarming gaze* to render a foe helpless, then makes repeated *claw flurry* attacks; or if pressed on all sides, the hulk uses *crushing gaze* to send a few opponents staggering and give it time to reposition itself. (It has a burrow speed, so if it can get clear of all opponents, the umber ravager may go underground.)

The drow bloodstingers are quite cunning and make efficient use of position and target selection. They spread out as much as possible to avoid area attacks while focusing their fire from behind cover or taking advantage of stealth to gain combat advantage, in the hopes of downing individual opponents quickly. Drow are ruthless and seek to deny the party any benefit of healing, so characters that use healing powers draw their attention (and perhaps become the next target of the umber ravager). The drow save their *cloud of darkness* ability to facilitate their withdrawal if necessary.

Boril makes himself scarce during the fight. The PCs do not need to worry about protecting him, but he is also not able to assist them. (However, he could be used for a timely Heal check on a downed PC, if doing so would help avoid a character death or even a TPK.)

SCALING THE ENCOUNTER

Make the following adjustments to the combat based on the number of PCs present.

Four PCs: Remove one of the drow bloodstingers.

Six PCs: Add another drow bloodstinger, or if the party is especially strong (with at least two characters who can provide healing), add another umber ravager. The second ravager burrows up behind the PCs after a round or two of combat, hopefully forcing the party members to divide their attention.

ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

Once the hunting party has been defeated, Boril will viciously kick and mutilate any drow bodies (and will remorselessly kill any drow prisoners that the PCs attempt to take). He is vehemently opposed to taking an extended rest no matter how bad a shape the PCs are in. He will insist that the party take only a short rest and move on before more drow investigate the area. If the

PCs insist on taking an extended rest, Boril threatens to leave them behind. Only with a DC 29 Diplomacy or a DC 24 Intimidate check can the PCs persuade Boril to wait for six hours while they complete an extended rest. If they do this and real-world time permits, consider ambushing them with a second drow patrol (for which they earn no additional XP). Resting in the Underdark should be extremely dangerous for the typical Heroic-tier adventuring party.

If all the PCs are defeated, Boril escapes, and can return in a few days with reinforcements to at least recover the bodies.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

For defeating the drow hunting party, each PC earns 190 / 280 experience points.

TREASURE

The drow have a combined treasure of 30 / 40 gold pieces per PC, a suit of +2 *shadow hound armor*, and a +2 *blood drinker* weapon (high tier only). The buckled collar around the umber ravager's neck is actually a *companion's defender*.

The PCs can also loot a total of 3 vials of *bloodstinger poison* (level 3) which they may use for the remainder of the adventure (and which are a consumable item choice as part of their rewards, but may not otherwise be kept after the adventure ends). See the New Rules appendix for details on these items.

ENCOUNTER 2: “THE AMBUSH” STATISTICS (LOW LEVEL)

Drow Bloodstinger	Level 5 Lurker
Medium fey humanoid	XP 200
Initiative +9 Senses Perception +8; darkvision	
HP 49; Bloodied 24	
AC 20; Fortitude 16, Reflex 18, Will 15	
Speed 6	
m Short Sword (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
+10 vs. AC; 1d6 + 4 damage, and the drow bloodstinger makes a secondary attack against the target. <i>Secondary Attack:</i> +8 vs. Fortitude; ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).	
R Hand Crossbow (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
Ranged 10/20; +10 vs. AC; 1d6 + 4 damage, and the drow bloodstinger makes a secondary attack against the same target. <i>Secondary Attack:</i> +8 vs. Fortitude; ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).	
C Cloud of Darkness (minor; encounter)	
Close burst 1; the burst creates a cloud of darkness that remains in place until the end of the drow's next turn. The cloud blocks line of sight, squares within it are totally obscured, and creatures entirely within it are blinded until they exit. The drow is immune to these effects.	
Combat Advantage	
The drow bloodstinger deals an extra 1d6 damage on melee and ranged attacks against any target it has combat advantage against.	
Alignment Evil	Languages Common, Elven
Skills Stealth +10, Thievery +10	
Str 14 (+4)	Dex 17 (+5) Wis 12 (+3)
Con 13 (+3)	Int 8 (+1) Cha 8 (+1)
Equipment leather armor, short sword, hand crossbow, bolts (20)	

Umber Ravager (Level 8)	Level 8 Brute
Medium natural magical beast	XP 350
Initiative +5 Senses Perception +6; darkvision, tremorsense 5	
HP 105; Bloodied 52	
AC 20; Fortitude 21, Reflex 19, Will 20	
Speed 5, burrow 2 (tunneling)	
m Claw (standard; at-will)	
Reach 2; +13 vs AC; 1d10 + 6 damage.	
M Claw Flurry (standard; at-will)	
The umber ravager makes two claw attacks.	
C Crushing Gaze (standard; at-will) ♦ Psychic	
Close blast 3; targets enemies in blast; +11 vs. Will; 3d8 + 1 psychic damage, and the target falls prone.	
R Dismaying Gaze (minor; recharge 6)	
Ranged 3; +11 vs. Will; the target is stunned (save ends).	
Alignment Unaligned	Languages understands Deep Speech
Str 19 (+8)	Dex 13 (+5) Wis 14 (+6)
Con 15 (+6)	Int 5 (+1) Cha 11 (+4)

Note: This creature is a Drow Shadowblade (from the adventure *Mole Hunt*) with the addition of the effects of *bloodstinger poison* to its weapons (to represent a scaled-down version of true drow poison).

ENCOUNTER 2: “THE AMBUSH” STATISTICS (HIGH LEVEL)

Drow Bloodstinger (Level 7)	Level 7 Lurker
Medium fey humanoid	XP 300
Initiative +10 Senses Perception +9; darkvision	
HP 61; Bloodied 30	
AC 22; Fortitude 18, Reflex 20, Will 17	
Speed 6	
m Short Sword (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
+12 vs. AC; 1d8 + 5 damage, and the drow bloodstinger makes a secondary attack against the target. <i>Secondary Attack:</i> +10 vs. Fortitude; ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).	
R Hand Crossbow (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
Ranged 10/20; +12 vs. AC; 1d8 + 5 damage, and the drow bloodstinger makes a secondary attack against the same target. <i>Secondary Attack:</i> +10 vs. Fortitude; ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).	
C Cloud of Darkness (minor; encounter)	
Close burst 1; the burst creates a cloud of darkness that remains in place until the end of the drow's next turn. The cloud blocks line of sight, squares within it are totally obscured, and creatures entirely within it are blinded until they exit. The drow is immune to these effects.	
Combat Advantage	
The drow bloodstinger deals an extra 1d6 damage on melee and ranged attacks against any target it has combat advantage against.	
Alignment Evil	Languages Common, Elven
Skills Stealth +11, Thievery +11	
Str 14 (+5)	Dex 17 (+6) Wis 12 (+4)
Con 13 (+4)	Int 8 (+2) Cha 8 (+2)
Equipment leather armor, short sword, hand crossbow, bolts (20)	

Umber Ravager (Level 10)	Level 10 Brute
Medium natural magical beast	XP 500
Initiative +6 Senses Perception +7; darkvision, tremorsense 5	
HP 125; Bloodied 62	
AC 22; Fortitude 23, Reflex 21, Will 22	
Speed 5, burrow 2 (tunneling)	
m Claw (standard; at-will)	
Reach 2; +15 vs AC; 1d10 + 7 damage.	
M Claw Flurry (standard; at-will)	
The umber ravager makes two claw attacks.	
C Crushing Gaze (standard; at-will) ♦ Psychic	
Close blast 3; targets enemies in blast; +13 vs. Will; 3d8 + 2 psychic damage, and the target falls prone.	
R Dismaying Gaze (minor; recharge 6)	
Ranged 3; +13 vs. Will; the target is stunned (save ends).	
Alignment Unaligned	Languages understands Deep Speech
Str 19 (+9)	Dex 13 (+6) Wis 14 (+7)
Con 15 (+7)	Int 5 (+2) Cha 11 (+5)

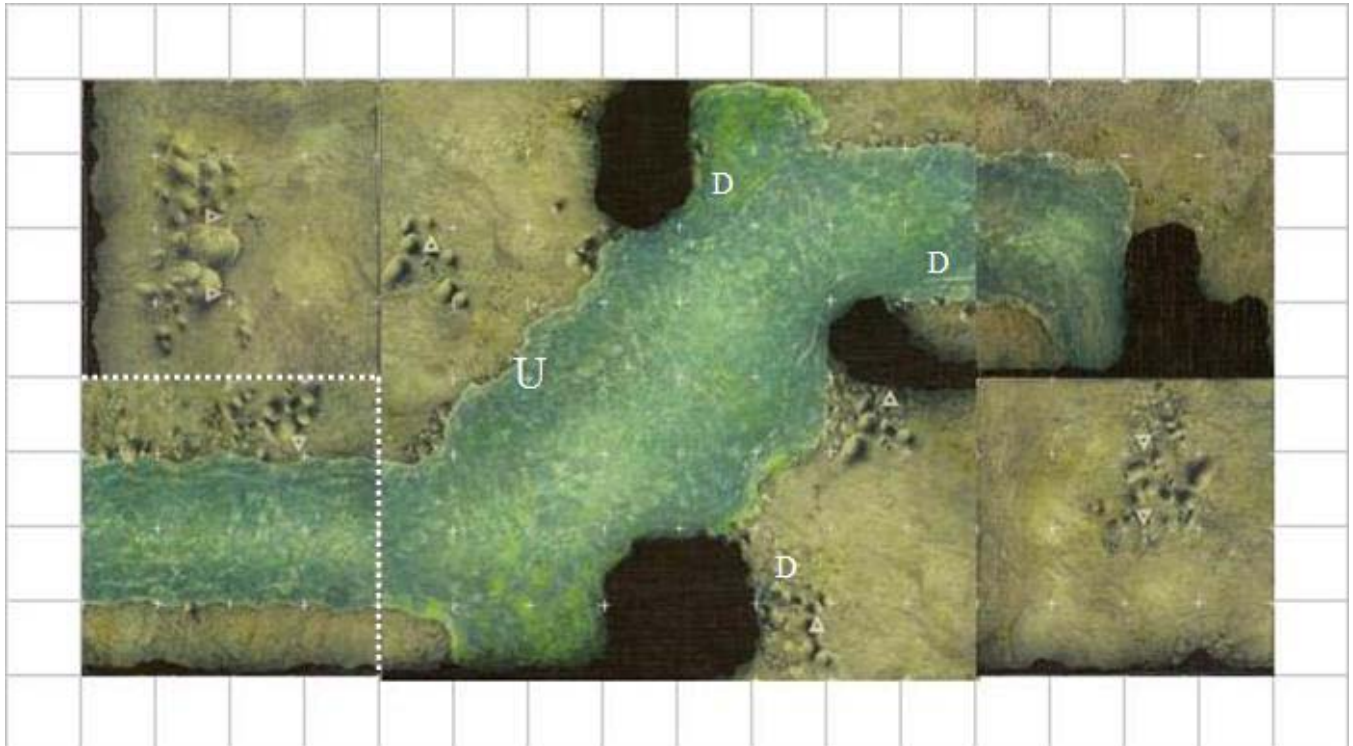
Note: This creature is a Drow Shadowblade (from the adventure *Mole Hunt*) with the addition of the effects of *bloodstinger poison* to its weapons (to represent a scaled-down version of true drow poison).

ENCOUNTER 2: “THE AMBUSH” MAP

TILE SETS NEEDED

DU3: Caves of Carnage

<i>Battle Zone / River Crossing</i>	<i>x1</i>
<i>Cave / Stream</i>	<i>x2</i>
<i>Cave / Cave</i>	<i>x1</i>
<i>Cave / Cave</i>	<i>x1</i>



ENCOUNTER 3: THE PRIZE

ENCOUNTER LEVEL 5 / 6 (1,125 / 1,400 XP)

SETUP

This encounter includes the following creature at the low tier:

4 Lesser Xylarian Zombies (L)

4 Xylarian Zombies (Z)

1 Xylarian Root Pod (C)

This encounter includes the following creature at the high tier:

4 Lesser Xylarian Zombies (level 5) (L)

4 Xylarian Zombies (level 5) (Z)

1 Xylarian Root Pod (level 9) (C)

Boril leaves messages for the Haft as the party progresses through the Underdark. These messages use a unique code and are fairly subtle (stones arranged in certain patterns, a series of scratches on the cave wall, etc.) Those with keen eyes (Perception DC 25) and experience with similar systems of communication (Dungeoneering or Nature DC 20) may recognize them as trail markings, but the code is unique to the Haft, so the PCs cannot decipher them. Using these messages, the Haft monitors the party's progress and makes preparations for the final encounter. If Boril is asked about what he's doing, he relates that it is common for the drow of the upper regions of the Underdark to use such markings, and he is just trying to confuse any pursuit by sending the drow off in the wrong direction. The PCs may or may not believe him; if they order him to stop leaving these messages, he is surly, but complies.

The party reaches the fungal cavern a few hours after Encounter 2 (assuming they did not take an extended rest). Upon entering the area, read the following:

A pungent smell fills your nostrils. Ahead, your light reveals a large chamber. The air here is a hazy, mustard color and has the bitter scent of saffron. Humanoid forms, made indistinct by the strange fog, shuffle aimlessly throughout the cavern. As you enter, they raise their heads in perfect unison, and begin to slowly and deliberately move towards you.

When a PC approaches within 5 squares of the Xylarian root pod, read the following:

On the ceiling in the middle of the room, a large plant grows up the wall, extending gnarled, yellow tendrils along the wall and hanging down from the ceiling above. Spore pods hang like macabre chandeliers. The floor of the chamber roils and undulates as more roots move beneath the surface.

The PCs can determine the following about these creatures with appropriate checks (Dungeoneering or Nature):

- DC 15: The shambling creatures are easily confused with undead, but are definitely plant-like in nature. Root-like tendrils and odd-looking yellow flowers sprout from their skin. The humanoids are of a variety of different races; humans, drow, kobolds, even an illithid.
- DC 20: Regardless of the cosmetic differences, the different zombies seem to move in similar ways (the PCs can discern the difference between the lesser zombies and the zombies with this check). Some of the smaller zombies appear to be bloated and look as though they might burst when struck, spraying spores in all directions (the lesser zombies' *death burst* ability). The larger zombies have long tendrils where their arms should be, and look capable of rooting foes to the ground (the zombies' ability to immobilize with a *tendril slam*).
- DC 25: The humanoid creatures appear to be under the control of the large, bulbous root pod, though its means of communication is unclear. Perhaps it involves the spores themselves, similar to the way myconids communicate.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

This area has a few important features.

Illumination: As before, the only light that exists in this room is that which the PCs have brought with them.

Spores: Due to the heavy amount of spores in the air, non-adjacent targets are considered to have concealment (-2 penalty to attack rolls), and targets further than 5 squares have total concealment (-5 penalty to attack rolls). Note that the Xylarian monsters have blindsight, negating these penalties.

Floor: The floor is devoid of significant obstacles, save for the spore pods that are spread throughout the room. The spore pods do not obstruct movement or vision. The walls of the pods are translucent and vaguely humanoid shapes can be seen within, slightly stirring. Destroying a pod is a standard action.

Pool: The pool of water is 10 feet deep. It is unexceptional, but does require characters to swim if they want to traverse these squares.

Ceiling: The ceiling is 30 feet high, with the Xylarian root pod hanging down 10 feet, leaving 20 feet between it and the floor. It has a reach of 4 squares with its tendrils, so it can reach to the ground.

TACTICS

The party begins the encounter in the area marked by the dotted white lines on the map.

So long as the root pod is alive, the zombies will use basic tactics; mostly attempts to herd PCs into range of the pod's attacks, though they will also recognize and exploit opportunities to flank PCs. However, once the root pod is defeated, any remaining zombies will simply attack the nearest enemy. They fight to the death.

The lesser zombies will swarm targets and use *clutch* to make PCs easier to successfully attack by both the other zombies and the root pod.

The root pod uses *root lash* to grab any characters that come within its reach. It can then either hold them at ground level and use *constrict* to squeeze them for more damage while the zombies pound on them, or it can use *pulling roots* to yank them up into the air, holding them near the roof of the cavern (whereupon it can drop them for falling damage, and it drops everything it is grabbing if it is stunned or killed). The root pod does have a speed, and it moves across the ceiling as needed to get as many PCs as possible within its reach.

As before, Boril does not participate in the combat. He has never seen the effects of the Xylaria lichen on living creatures and so is not able to give the PCs any information about the creatures' capabilities. The last time he came to this cave, he just took some samples of the lichen and left. He is terrified by the monsters and cowers outside the cavern until the fight is over.

SCALING THE ENCOUNTER

Make the following adjustments to the combat based on the number of PCs present.

Four PCs: Remove one Xylarian zombie.

Six PCs: Make the Xylarian root pod elite (double its hit points, but do not change its attacks, defenses, or other statistics).

ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

The encounter ends when all enemies have been defeated.

Once all the zombies and the root pod have been destroyed, the PCs are free to harvest and prepare the

lichen samples for travel. (The root pod is what they are after; a DC 14 Dungeoneering or Nature check is sufficient to realize that the root pod is the source of the spores, and the zombies are the results of creatures being infected by the root pod.)

The journey from here to their final destination will take approximately another day and a half of travel. Boril knows a nearby cave that is well hidden and would serve as a suitable place for an extended rest.

CHECKING FOR EXPOSURE

At the end of this encounter, all the PCs have been exposed to the Xylaria lichen spores (because of the spore-filled air in the cavern, if nothing else). Each PC must roll a single saving throw to determine if he or she has been infested by the spores (this works identically to a disease, so characters that are immune to disease do not have to make this saving throw). Even if a character does not need to breathe (such as a warforged) he or she can still be infested by the lichen spores, because they are able to burrow into any living, organic substance.

On a successful save, the PC has not been infested. On a failed save, the PC has been infected, and loses one healing surge. During an extended rest, have all infected PCs attempt a DC 19 Endurance check. On a success, congratulate the player that his or her character does not get any worse... yet. On a failure, there is no additional immediate ill effect, but you should write some notes down and laugh evilly to yourself. The incubation period before an infested character will be transformed into one of the zombies is unknown, so play this up for the paranoia factor.

If the PCs have the ability to use an appropriate ritual, such as Cure Disease, then any exposed PCs can be cured; treat the lichen as if it were a level 7 disease for this purpose.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

For defeating the Xylarian monsters, each PC earns 225 / 280 experience points.

TREASURE

If the PCs search the room, they locate various coins worth 20 / 40 gold pieces. Among the possessions of the hapless zombies are a *badge of the berserker* +2 and a pair of *boots of bounding*.

ENCOUNTER 3: “THE PRIZE” STATISTICS (LOW LEVEL)

Lesser Xylarian Zombie		Level 4 Minion
Medium natural animate (plant)		XP 44
Initiative +5		Senses Perception +1; blindsight 10
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion		
AC 19; Fortitude 17, Reflex 16, Will 16		
Speed 6		
m Slam (standard; at-will)		
+8 vs. AC; 4 damage		
M Clutch (standard; at-will)		
+8 vs. Reflex; target is grabbed and suffers -1 on attacks and all defenses (including AC) per lesser Xylarian zombie that is grabbing it.		
Death Burst (immediate reaction; when reduced to 0 hit points)		
All living, non-plant creatures adjacent to the lesser Xylarian zombie suffer 4 poison damage.		
Alignment Unaligned		Languages --
Str 17 (+5)	Dex 16 (+5)	Wis 8 (+1)
Con 10 (+2)	Int 2 (-2)	Cha 3 (-2)

Note: This creature is a reskinned Zombie of Iuz from the adventure *Return to the Moathouse*.

Xylarian Zombie		Level 4 Soldier
Medium natural animate (plant)		XP 175
Initiative +8		Senses Perception +2; blindsight 10
HP 55; Bloodied 27		
AC 20; Fortitude 17, Reflex 19, Will 16		
Speed 8, climb 4		
m Tendril Slam (standard; at-will)		
+11 vs. AC; 1d6 + 4 damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends)		
M Bite (standard; at-will)		
Target must be immobilized, stunned or unconscious; +9 vs. AC; 3d6 + 4 damage, and the target is stunned (save ends)		
Alignment Unaligned		Languages --
Str 14 (+4)	Dex 19 (+6)	Wis 11 (+2)
Con 15 (+4)	Int 2 (-2)	Cha 4 (-1)

Note: This creature is a reskinned Ghoul from the *Monster Manual*.

Xylarian Root Pod		Level 6 Controller
Large natural animate (plant)		XP 250
Initiative +6		Senses Perception +9; blindsight 10
HP 72; Bloodied 36		
AC 20; Fortitude 18, Reflex 19, Will 17		
Speed 4		
m Root Lash (standard; at-will)		
Reach 4; +11 vs. AC; 1d6 + 5 damage, and the target is grabbed. The root pod can have up to three targets grabbed at a time.		
M Constrict (standard; at-will)		
Targets all creatures the root pod is grabbing; +10 vs. Fortitude; 3d6 + 5 damage, and the root pod sustains the grab.		
Pulling Roots (move; at-will)		
The root pod shifts 2 squares and pulls any creature grabbed by it into a square adjacent to it. The root pod can pull creatures vertically as well as horizontally with this ability.		
Alignment Unaligned		Languages --
Str 14 (+5)	Dex 17 (+6)	Wis 13 (+4)
Con 16 (+6)	Int 2 (-1)	Cha 6 (+1)

Note: This creature is a reskinned and upgraded Tainted Root Pod from *Dragon Magazine* #382.

ENCOUNTER 3: “THE PRIZE” STATISTICS (HIGH LEVEL)

Lesser Xylarian Zombie (Level 5)	Level 5 Minion
Medium natural animate (plant)	XP 50
Initiative +5	Senses Perception +1; blindsight 10
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion	
AC 20; Fortitude 18, Reflex 17, Will 17	
Speed 6	
m Slam (standard; at-will)	
+9 vs. AC; 4 damage	
M Clutch (standard; at-will)	
+9 vs. Reflex; target grabbed and suffers -1 on attacks and all defenses (including AC) per lesser Xylarian zombie that is grabbing it.	
Death Burst (immediate reaction; when reduced to 0 hit points)	
All living, non-plant creatures adjacent to the lesser Xylarian zombie suffer 4 poison damage.	
Alignment Unaligned Languages --	
Str 17 (+5)	Dex 16 (+5) Wis 8 (+1)
Con 10 (+2)	Int 2 (-2) Cha 3 (-2)

Note: This creature is a reskinned Zombie of Iuz from the adventure *Return to the Moathouse*.

Xylarian Zombie (Level 5)	Level 5 Soldier
Medium natural animate (plant)	XP 200
Initiative +8	Senses Perception +2; blindsight 10
HP 63; Bloodied 31	
AC 21; Fortitude 18, Reflex 20, Will 17	
Speed 8, climb 4	
m Tendril Slam (standard; at-will)	
+12 vs. AC; 1d6 + 4 damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends)	
M Bite (standard; at-will)	
Target must be immobilized, stunned or unconscious; +10 vs. AC; 3d6 + 4 damage, and the target is stunned (save ends)	
Alignment Unaligned Languages --	
Str 14 (+4)	Dex 19 (+6) Wis 11 (+2)
Con 15 (+4)	Int 2 (-2) Cha 4 (-1)

Note: This creature is a reskinned Ghoul from the *Monster Manual*.

Xylarian Root Pod (Level 9)	Level 9 Controller
Large natural animate (plant)	XP 400
Initiative +7	Senses Perception +10; blindsight 10
HP 96; Bloodied 48	
AC 23; Fortitude 21, Reflex 22, Will 20	
Speed 4	
m Root Lash (standard; at-will)	
Reach 4; +14 vs. AC; 1d8 + 6 damage, and the target is grabbed. The root pod can have up to three targets grabbed at a time.	
M Constrict (standard; at-will)	
Targets all creatures the root pod is grabbing; +13 vs. Fortitude; 3d8 + 6 damage, and the root pod sustains the grab.	
Pulling Roots (move; at-will)	
The root pod shifts 2 squares and pulls any creature grabbed by it into a square adjacent to it. The root pod can pull creatures vertically as well as horizontally with this ability.	
Alignment Unaligned Languages --	
Str 14 (+6)	Dex 17 (+7) Wis 13 (+5)
Con 16 (+7)	Int 2 (+0) Cha 6 (+2)

Note: This creature is a reskinned and upgraded Tainted Root Pod from *Dragon Magazine* #382.

ENCOUNTER 3: "THE PRIZE" MAP

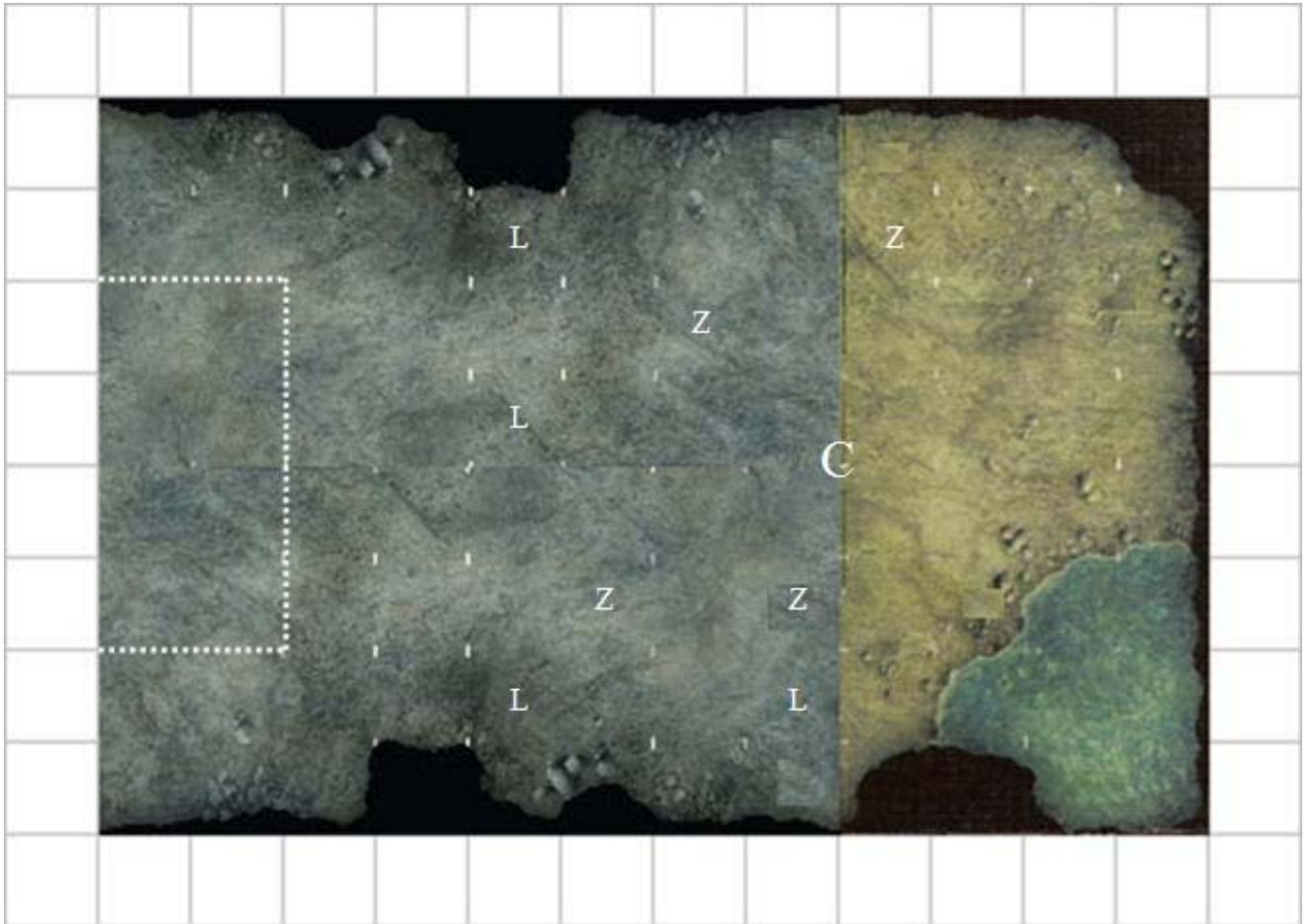
TILE SETS NEEDED

Lost Caverns of the Underdark

Cave Wall / Tunnel Bend x2

DU3: Caves of Carnage

Large Cave / Large Stream



ENCOUNTER 4: THE REWARD

SETUP

Fidmis (male dwarf militia commander; Bluff +14)

Boril (male dwarf tracker; Dungeoneering +15)

After successfully acquiring the Xylaria root pod, Boril leads the party to the Haft's Underdark garrison. It takes the party about eight hours of travel to reach this location from the lichen cave.

If the PCs specifically ask about the route, which is different from the route that they took to get to the cave from Eartheart, Boril says that this path is faster, but more dangerous, which is why he didn't come this way originally. However, (peering at any PCs who were infected by spores), *"some of you don't look so good,"* so getting back to the surface more quickly is worth the extra risk.

If the PCs choose to part ways with Boril at this point and head directly back to Eartheart, they can, but they will miss the rest of the adventure and will never learn about the Haft's true motivations, so try to avoid that. Boril's main objective is to get the root pod back to Fidmis, but now that the PCs know the location of the cave, he doesn't want them to just leave, either.

Boril approaches a seemingly inconspicuous expanse of wall and runs his fingers over it. A moment later, there is an audible click and he pushes the wall aside, filling the tunnel with the sound of stone grinding against stone. You are temporarily blinded as the tunnel is flooded with light from the room beyond.

Very Important: Don't allow the party to split up at this point. Either everybody goes into the room with Boril or everybody stays in the tunnel. There's no turning back for those who go in, and no easy way for those who don't go in to get in once the door closes, so you can't let that happen or half the PCs are going to miss the rest of the adventure while the other half are likely going to be slaughtered. The rest of the adventure assumes that the PCs go through the door. If they don't go in, Boril asks what's the problem and urges them to follow; but eventually he goes in without them. In this case, Fidmis goes ahead and unleashes the greater zombie, which rampages out the door and attacks the PCs in the 20-foot-wide tunnel; improvise an encounter map and run Encounter 5, but without the dwarven alchemists (the PCs don't get XP for creatures they don't fight). In this case, by the time the PCs defeat the zombie and get into the secret complex, all the dwarves are gone.

Assuming the PCs accompany Boril, continue:

Following Boril through the secret door, you find that you have entered the lower level of a tall cavern. The stone has been smoothed and worked, creating a twenty foot deep pit, and you are at the bottom. Tall, iron-bound doors stand closed on the far side of the room. The secret door closes behind you, blocking your return to the Underdark, but Boril seems unconcerned.

What little you can see of the level above is filled with dwarves in lab coats bustling about, tending to various alchemical equipment. An acrid smell fills the room from various substances that are being burned and boiled and piped through glass tubes. There are a number of lab tables on the upper level, and humanoid forms in various stages of dissection lie on the tables. It's hard to tell from here, but the bodies look like they are covered with roots and yellow flowers, similar to the lichen-transformed creatures you just fought.

"Welcome, my friends!" cries a familiar voice. Fidmis stands on the upper level, looking down at you. "I trust that you have not returned empty-handed?" Although the voice is that of your employer, the tone and phrasing are much more cultured and proper than you remember from your first meeting.

Boril removes his backpack and tosses it up to Fidmis, who opens it and looks inside, smiling broadly when he sees the root pods. "Ah, wonderful! I just knew that would be money well spent." The dwarf chuckles to himself and then turns to you again, his voice shifting back into the lower-class, heavily accented tone that you recall from your earlier meeting.

"I knew ya wouldn't let me down! I hope it weren't too much trouble fer ya, but then again, what else would we be payin' ya fer? Ha!" The dwarf chortles loudly. "Speakin' of which, now that ye've seen what our little friend here can do," (he pats the backpack containing the root pod), "what d'ye think? Pretty impressive, eh?"

All the PCs to respond however they wish. Assuming they don't immediately attack, Fidmis listens to whatever they have to say. (If they do take hostile action, proceed to Encounter 5.) As long as they don't threaten him directly or threaten to report him to the authorities, Fidmis decides to try and recruit them as permanent members of the Haft. Read the following:

Fidmis shifts back to the high-born tone, which seems to be his true voice. "Now, I'm a reasonable man. There's no need for further pretense between us. You've proven that you can withstand the dangers of the Underdark, and that makes you useful. You even killed a few drow along the way, and that makes you practically kinfolk.

Speaking of drow, what would you say if I told you that I plan to use this very special lichen to eradicate all the drow in the Underdark? Imagine it: every single drow, dead and gone. We're going to turn them into those plant-monsters and unleash them on their own kind. Do you think that's a cause you might be able to support?"

(If there are any drow PCs in the party, he adds: *"Of course, you'll have to eliminate your inky friend there, but that shouldn't be much of a problem, right?"*)

Assuming the PCs are at least willing to hear him out, Fidmis is surprisingly open about the Haft's plans. (If they aren't willing to hear him out, then proceed directly to Ending the Encounter.)

Fidmis will offer the following information:

- Fidmis is an officer in an organization called "the Haft." They have one and only one purpose: **"to eradicate all drow from the Underdark, and indeed, to scour the vile race entirely from Faerun."**
- Of course, destroying all drow everywhere is a lengthy task. As far as immediate goals, the Haft is determined to rid the East Rift of the drow threat and rightfully take back what belongs to the dwarven people, beginning with the abandoned city of Underhome. **"The leaders of Earthheart are too timid, so we must take decisive action on our own. History will remember us as heroes! True dwarven patriots!"**
- This complex is one of many similar facilities used by the Haft. They have been experimenting on the Xylaria lichen, attempting to refine it into something that can be used as a weapon against the drow. They have finally perfected the process and can now control the zombies.
- With this last sample recovered by the PCs, the Haft have a large enough quantity of Xylaria to unleash the spores on the drow that dwell beneath Underhome, transforming them into Xylarian zombies. The Haft will then take control of these zombies, sending them to attack other drow settlements. With each attack, the transformations will continue, until the army grows so large that even the major drow cities will be unable to withstand the assault.
- Yes, those are bodies on the lab tables. They are test subjects who were deliberately exposed to the lichen, allowed to transform, and then killed for study. They were, for the most part, **"former employees whose services were no longer required, but who could still serve the cause in one very important way..."**

- Oh, were the PCs also exposed to the lichen as part of recovering the root pods? **"How unfortunate. The transformation is invariably fatal, and all evidence gathered to date indicates that it is an excruciating way to die. Not to worry, however, the Haft has developed a cure. Naturally, it's only available to members..."**
- Speaking of membership, would the PCs be interested in joining the cause? For those PCs who do wish to join, a few oaths are all that's required, to ensure their loyalty and the preservation of the Haft's secrets. Then they will be able to take full part in the glorious destruction of the drow! And, it would be a shame for Fidmis to have to "silence" them, after everything they've done to help the Haft.
- Of course, any drow PCs will have to be killed; the whole point is to wipe out the drow, after all.
- (Insight DC 15): Although Fidmis insists that the Haft can control the Xylarian zombies, he seems a little bit unsure of himself. Perhaps they haven't entirely perfected the process yet? Nevertheless, his xenophobia and megalomania are on full display, so it's clear that he intends to go forward with his plan no matter what.
- (Dungeoneering / Nature DC 15): The PCs might wonder if unleashing Xylaria on a large scale in the Underdark could threaten the surface. Although the Haft claims to be able to control the zombies, should even a single one of these creatures escape into a populated area, the consequences could be devastating. If the PCs point this out to Fidmis, he scoffs. **"We have complete control over the creatures, and in any case, it's worth the risk. This is our best opportunity to wipe out the drow, and I'm not going to give up this weapon just because a few innocents might find themselves in harm's way."**

In the end, Fidmis puts the question to the PCs: Do they want to join the Haft? The answer should be obvious; even if some of the PCs might agree with the ultimate objective, accepting Fidmis's offer would be an evil act. It's clear that he and the Haft make no distinction between the drow they claim they want to destroy and the potentially innocent lives that they might have to sacrifice to achieve their objectives. However, if there are PCs on both sides, allow the players a few minutes to debate in character whether this is a good idea or not. No matter what they say, in the end Fidmis is a little bit too paranoid to allow them to go through with it.

ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

The encounter ends when either the PCs say yes or no to Fidmis's offer to become members of the Haft, or when they get tired of talking and someone announces that they are rolling initiative.

If the PCs say yes, they want to join the Haft, read the following:

"That's fantastic! I'm sure that you will be a huge asset. I can't tell you how pleased I am that you understand the righteousness of our cause. Hmmm... in fact, I think I know the best way you can serve. Starting immediately! I promise that your names will be honored among the Haft for all time."

If the PCs say no, then read the following:

"Ah, that's a pity. Still, I can't say I am surprised. You look like the moralizing sort. Well, since you've been to the lichen cave, and seen this lovely facility, not to mention hearing our plans, I'm afraid that I can't just allow you to leave."

Either way, continue with the following:

"It's been a pleasure chatting with you," says Fidmis, "but I have important preparations to make for the upcoming operation. Busy, busy! Boril, I've enjoyed working with you. I'm sorry to see it end like this. You know what you need to do. I'll tell your story!"

After finishing his speech, Fidmis flees the complex via the secret tunnel (marked "S" on the Encounter 5 map) on the northern wall. If the PCs launch an attack, allow one and only one character (whoever rolls the highest initiative) to use a power on Fidmis. Assume that he has an AC of 19/21 and all other defenses of 17/19. Should the PCs manage to pull Fidmis into the arena, the fall kills him. If they are able to teleport him into the pit, then the greater zombie kills him when it kills Boril (see Encounter 5). Otherwise, no matter what they do to Fidmis, the dwarven alchemists grab him and hustle him out of the complex before the PCs are able to do anything else. This does not count as a surprise round, it's just an opportunity for the PCs to take a shot at Fidmis before he gets away. Any encounter or daily powers used against Fidmis are, of course, unavailable for the battle in Encounter 5, which starts immediately.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

The PCs do not earn any XP for this encounter, and it does not count towards a milestone.

TREASURE

None.

ENCOUNTER 5: THE ESCAPE

ENCOUNTER LEVEL 5 / 9 (1,225 / 2,000 XP)

SETUP

This encounter includes the following creatures at the low tier:

Boril (B)

1 Greater Xylarian Zombie (Z)

8 Dwarven Alchemists (D)

This encounter includes the following creatures at the high tier:

Boril (B)

1 Greater Xylarian Zombie (level 7) (Z)

8 Dwarven Alchemists (level 6) (D)

Once Fidmis escapes or is struck down by the PCs, read the following:

Boril pulls open a hidden panel in the wall, exposing a small, unassuming-looking lever.

"We can't have ya runnin' back topside, tellin' everyone 'bout what we're doin' down here," he sighs slightly to himself, "so I'm afraid it's come to this."

He pulls the lever and the large iron-bound door at the opposite end of the pit slides slowly open with an ear-shattering shriek; a cloud of yellowish vapor surges from its depths. A long, slender vine lashes out from the darkness, and snares Boril, pulling him screaming through the door.

The air is filled with his cries of terror, and then there is a sudden, bone-breaking, crunching noise.

The cloud of spores swirls, and a monstrous creature slowly and deliberately enters the enclosure. It looks as if someone had taken the bodies of a number of drow and mashed them together to create a grotesque, disfigured flesh golem, and then infused it with the corruption of the lichen, causing the mass of flesh to transform into a much larger version of the zombies you fought before. The monster possesses a pair of flailing, vine-like tendrils that emerge from its shoulder blades, each tipped with a razor-sharp barb.

Most of the dwarven alchemists have fled the complex with Fidmis, but a few remain, positioning themselves around the edge of the pit, grabbing flasks and other combustible substances from the various lab tables, preparing to bombard you.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

This area has a few important features.

Illumination: The area is well lit by multiple torches and lamps.

Arena: The checkered floor is an "arena" 20 feet lower than the upper level of the complex. The walls are made of smooth, slick stone (DC 25 Athletics to climb).

Doors: The secret door through which the PCs entered vanishes seamlessly into the stone wall. The PCs are not able to exit through this door during the battle. Beyond the double doors through which the greater zombie emerged is nothing more than a 10x10 alcove filled with broken bodies and Xylaria lichen spores. There is a grating in the ceiling (still 20 feet up) that can be broken with 20 points of direct damage or a DC 15 Strength check, and the walls in this area are rough stone, much easier to climb (DC 15 Athletics) so this might provide a route to the upper level if the PCs are unable to climb the walls of the pit.

Ceiling: The ceiling in this space is 20 feet high, which means that PCs in the pit are 40 feet below the ceiling.

Furnishings: Multiple tables and chairs fill the laboratory portion of the main chamber. These tables and chairs are considered difficult terrain. Moving through these squares is hazardous (see Alchemical Tables).

Alchemical Tables: Characters moving through squares containing tables disrupt the table's contents, releasing noxious fumes. PCs moving through the tables' squares are subject to an attack roll (+8 / +10 vs. Reflex). On a hit, the target takes 1d8 + 4 acid, cold, fire, and poison damage. Tipping the table over changes the range of the effect to close blast 2 from the space that the table occupies and that table no longer makes attacks against creatures moving through its space. The contents of a table may also be used as improvised grenade weapons. If a creature attempts to use the table in this fashion, the creature may make an attack roll (Ranged 10, Dexterity vs. Reflex) to deal 5 acid, cold, fire, or poison damage.

TACTICS

The party begins the encounter in the area marked by the dotted white lines on the map. However, if the PCs used a power against Fidmis, it's possible that instead of attacking him, they used a teleportation effect that brought one or more PCs to the upper level. Don't force them into a pre-defined starting area if there is a justifiable reason to let some or all of them start elsewhere. The door behind them cannot be reopened, however.

The greater zombie is much more autonomous than those previously encountered, and has a rudimentary intelligence. It ignores anything that the dwarves do, focusing entirely on the PCs, but any dwarves that are unfortunate enough to end up in the pit are attacked just as readily as the PCs. The zombie focuses its attacks on characters that mark it, but it is capable of going after multiple PCs on each of its turns, using *flailing vines* every round and *spore blast* whenever that power is recharged.

The alchemists focus on opponents who are not currently engaged in melee with the zombie (who are likely to be ranged attackers and healers). However, if any PCs are able to get to the upper laboratory floor, all of the alchemists will shift their attention to the invading PCs. If confronted in such a fashion, they purposely take cover behind the lab tables, in an attempt to force PCs to move through them and suffer damage. They will also tip the tables over should a PC be in range of such an attack (close blast 2). They will do all in their power to remain more than 2 squares away from each other, to reduce their losses from area effects.

SCALING THE ENCOUNTER

Make the following adjustments to the combat based on the number of PCs present.

Four PCs: Reduce the greater Xylarian zombie's hit points by 60 / 85.

Six PCs: Increase the greater Xylarian zombie's hit points by 60 / 85.

ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

When the greater Xylarian zombie and the dwarven alchemists have been defeated, the encounter ends. Searching through laboratory reveals surprisingly little. The Haft was very careful in its record keeping, and it is likely that this is one of many research facilities. Whatever incriminating information existed was either destroyed or removed prior to the party's arrival.

CHECKING FOR EXPOSURE

At the end of this encounter, any PC that was struck for damage by the greater Xylarian zombie has been exposed to the lichen. Each affected PC must roll a single saving throw to determine if he or she has been infested by the spores (this works identically to a disease, so characters that are immune to disease do not have to make this saving throw). Even if a character does not need to breathe (such as a warforged) he or she can still be infested by the lichen spores, because they are able to burrow into any living, organic substance.

On a successful save, the PC has not been infested. On a failed save, the PC has been infected, and loses one healing surge. Any exposed PCs can be cured either after this battle or when they get back to Eartheart; treat the lichen as if it were a level 7 disease for this purpose. However, all PCs that suffered exposure in this encounter or Encounter 3 gain the story object **EAST17 Xylarian Infection** at the end of the adventure. (The authorities insist on casting Cure Disease on the PCs at the end of the adventure if they didn't use it on themselves, to avoid any risk of contamination.)

EXPERIENCE POINTS

For defeating the greater zombie and the alchemists, each PC receives 245 / 400 experience points.

TREASURE

Unfortunately, there is little for the PCs to find insofar as details of the Haft's operation (no membership lists or documents explaining their plans). However, there is a *tome of striking lightning* and a ritual book of Ancestral Whispers tucked away on one of the bookshelves. A total sum of 40 / 60 gold pieces per PC can be scavenged from the bodies of the alchemists. (Note that Fidmis never paid the PCs the rest of the money he promised them; if they have not earned the maximum possible gold from other encounters, then Boril has enough cash on his body to make up the difference so that everyone gets maximum gold from the adventure).

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

The PCs have become the first witnesses to survive the plot hatched by the Haft. Each PC receives the story award **EAST16 The Haft Exposed**.

Even though the PCs aren't able to find much in the way of incriminating documents, their own testimony, combined with the bodies of the dwarven alchemists, Boril, and perhaps even Fidmis, along with the lichen samples, the mutilated test subjects, and the terrifying form of the greater Xylarian zombie, is more than enough to convince the authorities of Eartheart that the Haft is a serious threat. However, if the PCs ask specifically what the authorities plan to do about the Haft, they are given nothing more than vague assurances that "proper precautions will be taken," the samples will be analyzed to develop an antidote in the event of Xylaria exposure among the general populace, and so forth. As with all true conspiracies, the Haft has enough influence in high places to leave the PCs feeling unconvinced that their report will be taken seriously, meaning that if this organization is to be stopped, it will most likely have to be the PCs themselves who do it.

ENCOUNTER 5: “THE ESCAPE” STATISTICS (LOW LEVEL)

Greater Xylarian Zombie	Level 4 Solo Soldier
Large natural animate (plant)	XP 875
Initiative +5 Senses Perception +10; darkvision	
Tangle Roots aura 3; all non-plant creatures treat the area as difficult terrain	
HP 240; Bloodied 120	
AC 22; Fortitude 21, Reflex 18, Will 19	
Resist 10 poison	
Saving Throws +5	
Speed 4	
Action Points 2	
m Vine Whip (standard; at-will)	
Reach 2; +11 vs. AC; 2d8 + 4 damage.	
M Flailing Vines (standard; at-will)	
Make up to four vine whip attacks, but it cannot attack the same target more than twice. If two vine whip attacks hit the same target, that target is knocked prone.	
C Spore Blast (minor; recharge 5 6)	
Close burst 3; targets non-plant creatures; +9 vs. Fortitude; the target begins to sprout roots that grow through its skin; this deals ongoing 5 damage and the target is slowed (save ends both).	
Alignment Unaligned	Languages Common, Elven
Str 19 (+6)	Dex 12 (+3) Wis 16 (+5)
Con 20 (+7)	Int 6 (+0) Cha 12 (+3)

Note: This creature is a reskinned Horrid Timber from *Dungeon Magazine*, issue 156.

Dwarven Alchemist	Level 4 Minion Artillery
Medium natural humanoid	XP 44
Initiative +4 Senses Perception +2; darkvision	
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion	
AC 16; Fortitude 17, Reflex 16, Will 14	
Speed 6	
m Mortar and Pestle (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
+9 vs. AC; 4 damage.	
A Alchemical Bomb (standard; at-will) ♦ Acid, Cold, Fire, Poison	
Ranged 10; +9 vs. Reflex; 4 acid, cold, fire, or poison damage.	
Alignment Unaligned	Languages Common, Dwarven
Str 17 (+5)	Dex 14 (+4) Wis 11 (+2)
Con 7 (+0)	Int 14 (+4) Cha 10 (+2)

Note: This creature is a reskinned and heavily modified version of an Orc Pyromaniac (*Dragon Magazine*, issue 374)

ENCOUNTER 5: “THE ESCAPE” STATISTICS (HIGH LEVEL)

Greater Xylarian Zombie (Level 7)	Level 7 Solo Soldier
Large natural animate (plant)	XP 1,500
Initiative +6	Senses Perception +11; darkvision
Tangle Roots aura 3; all non-plant creatures treat the area as difficult terrain	
HP 340; Bloodied 170	
AC 25; Fortitude 24, Reflex 21, Will 22	
Resist 10 poison	
Saving Throws +5	
Speed 4	
Action Points 2	
m Vine Whip (standard; at-will)	
Reach 2; +14 vs. AC; 2d8 + 5 damage.	
M Flailing Vines (standard; at-will)	
Make up to four vine whip attacks, but it cannot attack the same target more than twice. If two vine whip attacks hit the same target, that target is knocked prone.	
C Spore Blast (minor; recharge 5 6)	
Close blast 3; targets non-plant creatures; +12 vs. Fortitude; the target begins to sprout roots that grow through its skin; this deals ongoing 5 damage and the target is slowed (save ends both).	
Alignment Unaligned	Languages Common, Elven
Str 20 (+8)	Dex 13 (+4) Wis 17 (+6)
Con 21 (+8)	Int 7 (+1) Cha 13 (+4)

Note: This creature is a reskinned Horrid Timber from *Dungeon Magazine*, issue 156.

Dwarven Alchemist (Level 6)	Level 6 Minion Artillery
Medium natural humanoid	XP 63
Initiative +5	Senses Perception +4; darkvision
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion	
AC 18; Fortitude 19, Reflex 18, Will 16	
Speed 6	
m Mortar and Pestle (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
+11 vs. AC; 5 damage.	
A Alchemical Bomb (standard; at-will) ♦ Acid, Cold, Fire, Poison	
Ranged 10; +11 vs. Reflex; 5 acid, cold, fire, or poison damage.	
Alignment Unaligned	Languages Common, Dwarven
Str 17 (+6)	Dex 14 (+5) Wis 11 (+3)
Con 7 (+1)	Int 14 (+5) Cha 10 (+3)

Note: This creature is a reskinned and heavily modified version of an Orc Pyromaniac (*Dragon Magazine*, issue 374)

ENCOUNTER 5: “THE ESCAPE” MAP

TILE SETS NEEDED

Dungeon Tiles

Tavern Floor x1

Dire Tombs

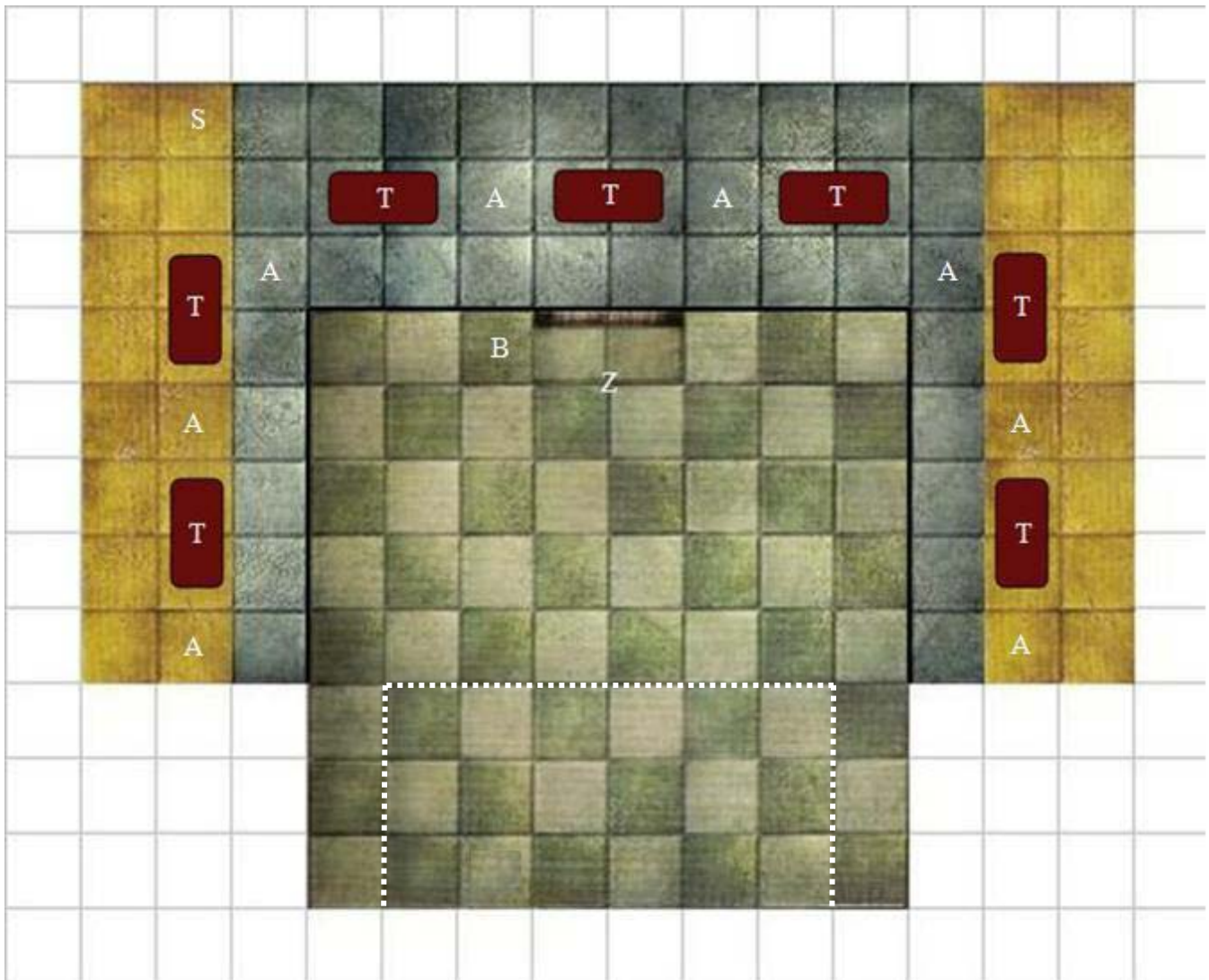
Floor w/crevasse x1

DT7: Fane of the Forgotten Gods

Checkerboard floor/Outdoor Shrine x1

Table & Chairs / Alcove x1

Closed Wood Doors / Open Wood Doors x1



Note: There is no difference between the yellow and gray squares; they are all part of the upper level. However, due to the angle of the pit walls, only creatures within 2 squares of the edge of the pit (which includes all the starting squares for the alchemists, as well as the lab tables) can be attacked by or make attacks against creatures in the pit.

REWARDS SUMMARY

At the conclusion of the adventure, the PCs earn experience points, treasure, and possibly story awards. All totals listed here are per PC. A number before the slash is the low-level value; after the slash is the high-level value.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

Give PCs a full award for each encounter they successfully completed, and a half award if they were unsuccessful. Give no award if the characters did not play the encounter at all.

Encounter 2: The Ambush

170 / 280 XP

Encounter 3: The Prize

225 / 280 XP

Encounter 5: The Escape

245 / 400 XP

Total Possible Experience

640 / 960 XP

Gold per PC

100 / 150 gp

(Encounter 1: 10 / 10 gp, Encounter 2: 30 / 40 gp, Encounter 3: 20 / 40 gp, Encounter 5: 40 / 60 gp)

TREASURE

Each PC receives treasure in the form of gold pieces as well as one share from a treasure bundle. The treasure bundle may give the PC more gold, a magic item, or something else of value. Each player makes one and only one selection for their character; players may choose the same treasure bundle. Note that it is possible (and likely) that some characters will not select a bundle for each session of play.

If characters buy or sell magic items or other gear during the adventure (or pay for services) add or subtract that amount from the total gold the PC receives at the end of the adventure. If a player selects an option that gives their character more gold, add that amount to that character's base gold award. It is possible and permissible for a character who spends more gold than he or she earns to have a negative total for the adventure. PCs receive 20% of the item's market price when they sell any magic item or consumable. They receive 50% of the market price for ritual books and alchemical formulas.

If a player selects a magic weapon or suit of armor for their PC that is not specific on the type of item listed,

they must select the exact item at the time they choose that bundle. For example, if a *duelist's weapon +1* is listed as a choice in a bundle, a player selects the form of the weapon amongst the choices possible for that magic item (light blades). If the player selects the item as a *+1 duelist's dagger*, the player writes that information down on the PC's adventure log and the item is forever after that specific weapon.

An asterisk next to a magic item means that it is an item that appears in the **New Rules** section.

EACH PC SELECTS ONE OF THE FOLLOWING BUNDLES:

Bundle A: *badge of the berserker* +2 (level 7)

Found in Encounter 3

Bundle B: +1 *tome of striking lightning* (low-level only) (level 4) or +2 *tome of striking lightning* (high-level only) (level 9)

Found in Encounter 5

Bundle C: *boots of bounding* (level 6)

Found in Encounter 3

Bundle D: +2 *shadow hound armor* (level 7)

Found in Encounter 2

Bundle E: +2 *blood drinker weapon* (high-level only) (level 9)

Found in Encounter 2

Bundle F: *ritual book of Ancestral Whispers*

Found in Encounter 5

Bundle G: *companion's defender* (level 5)

Found in Encounter 2

Consumable plus Gold: If a player doesn't want to select one of the bundles listed above for their character, they can choose to add three (3) vials of *bloodstinger poison* (level 3) plus 35 / 120 gp, or one (1) vial of *bloodstinger poison* (level 8) plus 0 / 125 gp to their rewards from this adventure. The player should write the consumable gained on their adventure log. That character (and only that character) then receives the consumable plus the listed amount of gold (if any) instead of any other treasure bundle. Consumable items obtained in this fashion do not take up found magic item slots.

More Gold: If a player doesn't want to select one of the bundles listed above for their character, they can choose to add 125 / 250 gp to their rewards from this

adventure. That character (and only that character) receives more gold instead of any other treasure bundle.

STORY AWARDS

Award these if the PC completes the condition for the award in the adventure. Pass out certificates to the players for their story awards. Normally, if a PC earns three awards, they may only have 2 of them and must pick which two they want before ending the session (exceptions to this will be noted in the story award text).

EAST16 The Haft Exposed

You have exposed the Haft, a secret group bent on reclaiming the city of Underhome and eradicating the drow who dwell beneath the East Rift, no matter the cost. By taking down at least one small part of their operation, you have drawn the organization's ire. They will no doubt keep a close eye on your future dealings, and who knows what allies they might have in high places in Earthheart?

However, you now know of the conspiracy's existence and will be able to keep watch for signs of their activities. The final confrontation between you and the leadership of the Haft may still be some ways off, but you can't help but feel that you have not seen the last of these "dwarven patriots."

If you are a drow, the Haft has marked you for special vengeance, and you will be a primary target in any future combat encounters with their agents.

This story award marks the beginning of a Major Quest that will be continued in future East Rift regional adventures dealing with the Haft and their machinations.

EAST17 Xylarian Infection

You were infected by the spores of a strange Underdark lichen known as Xylaria. As far as anyone can tell, you were cured before the infestation could spread. However, very little is known about this rare lichen, or its long-term effects on those who are exposed to it. Should you suffer any future exposure to Xylaria, the consequences could be both unpredictable and unpleasant.

ADVENTURE QUESTIONS

Mark the answers to the following adventure questions on the tracking form.

1. In Encounter 1, did the party determine that Fidmis wasn't telling them the whole truth?

- a. No.
- b. Yes.

2. How did the PCs fare against the drow patrol?

- a. The PCs easily dispatched the drow and the umber ravager.
- b. The PCs did not suffer any losses, but it was a tough fight.
- c. The PCs managed to prevail, but at a cost: one or more of the characters were killed.
- d. The PCs were forced to retreat (with or without character deaths).
- e. The umber ravager and its drow handlers made short work of the party (total party kill).

3. Did the PCs obtain the Xylaria samples (Encounter 3)?

- a. Yes. The root pod and its guardians posed no threat.
- b. Yes, although the monsters gave them a run for their money.
- c. No. It wasn't the best day for the party.

4. Were the PCs able to escape from the Haft's complex (Encounter 5)?

- a. No. The Haft's forces were too much for the party to handle and the PCs fell to their might.
- b. Yes. The greater Xylarian zombie was tough, but the PCs were tougher.
- c. Of course. The alchemists and the zombie were dispatched without the PCs breaking a sweat.

5. Did the PCs capture/slay Fidmis?

- a. No. He managed to successfully flee the complex.
- b. Yes. The party took advantage of his monologue and did the deed.

NEW RULES

Badge of the Berserker +2

Level 7

This fearsome badge, crafted from bits of bone and leathery flesh, is favored by those who savor taking the fight to the enemy.

Lvl 7 +2 (2,600 gp)

Item Slot: Neck

Enhancement: +2 Fortitude, Reflex, and Will

Property: When you charge, your movement made as part of the charge doesn't provoke opportunity attacks.

Reference: *Adventurer's Vault 2*

Blood Drinker +2

Level 9

You know when to feed your weapon, because it growls when it's hungry.

Lvl 9 +2 (4,200 gp)

Weapon: Axe, Heavy Blade

Enhancement: +2 attack rolls and damage rolls

Critical: +2d6 damage.

Property: If you make an attack using this weapon and miss all targets, the blood drinker deals 5 damage to you, and the next attack you make before the end of your next turn deals 2d6 extra damage to the first target it hits.

Reference: *Adventurer's Vault 2*

Bloodstinger Poison

Level 3, 8

This inky toxin inflicts wounds that burn long after the initial blow is struck.

Level: 3 (30 gp) or 8 (125 gp)

Alchemical Item

Power (Consumable, Poison): Standard Action. Apply the bloodstinger poison to your weapon or one piece of ammunition. Make a secondary attack against the next target you hit with the coated weapon or ammunition: +6 vs. Fortitude; on a hit, the target takes ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).

Level 8: +11 vs. Fortitude

Reference: *Adventurer's Vault*

Boots of Bounding

Level 6

These lightweight canvas boots are perfect for athletes, greatly increasing the length of leaps.

Lvl 6 (1,800 gp)

Item Slot: Feet

Property: You gain a +2 item bonus to Athletics checks to jump.

Power (Encounter): Move Action. You make an Athletics check to jump as if you had a running start. You add 3 squares to the distance jumped for a long jump, or 2 squares for a high jump.

Reference: *Adventurer's Vault 2*

Companion's Defender

Level 5

This belt is constructed from woven bones and enhances a companion's defensive ability while adjacent to you.

Level: 5 (1,000 gp)

Item Slot: Companion

Property: While adjacent to you, your companion gains a +1 item bonus to all defenses.

Reference: *Adventurer's Vault*

Shadow Hound Armor +2

Level 7

Crafted from the hide of a massive shadow hound, this armor lets you fade away from danger when you suffer a grievous wound.

Lvl 7 +2 (2,600 gp)

Armor: Hide

Enhancement: +2 AC

Power (Daily): Immediate Reaction.

Trigger: You become bloodied.

Effect: You become insubstantial until the end of your next turn.

Reference: *Adventurer's Vault 2*

Tome of Striking Lightning

Level 4 / 9

Sparks leap between the covers of this copper-bound tome.

Lvl 4 +1 (840 gp)

Lvl 9 +2 (4,200 gp)

Implement (Tome)

Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls

Critical: +1d6 lightning damage per plus.

Property: When you use a wizard lightning attack power through this tome, you can score a critical hit on a roll of 19-20.

Property: This tome contains two wizard daily lightning powers. Both powers must be of a level equal to or lower than that of the tome. You must choose these powers when you acquire the tome; they can't be changed later. You can add these powers to your spellbook.

Power (Daily): Free Action. You choose a power contained in the tome and expend an unused wizard daily attack power or an equal or higher level. You gain the use of the chosen power. The power is lost if you don't use it before the end of the encounter.

Reference: *Adventurer's Vault 2*

Ancestral Whispers (Ritual)

Level 6

You commune with the ancestral spirits, seeking their wisdom and experience to aid your cause.

Component Cost: 140 gp

Market Price: 360 gp

Key Skill: Religion (no check)

Time: 1 hour

Category: Divination

Duration: 24 hours

You invite the spirit of an ancestor to inhabit your body for a time. Choose one skill in which you are not trained. For the ritual's duration, you are considered trained in that skill.

The greater the hero who calls the spirits, the more the spirits demand. The component cost of this ritual increases to 700 gp for an 11th-level caster, 3,600 gp for a 16th-level caster, 18,000 gp for a 21st-level caster, and 90,000 gp for a 26th-level caster.

Reference: *Eberron Player's Guide*