



DM'S CHALLENGES™ HIGH-LEVEL OPTION

# HORRORS NEVER DIE

## DM'S CHALLENGE 1

A Two-Round DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® LIVING  
GREYHAWK™ DM'S CHALLENGES™ HIGH-LEVEL OPTION  
Adventure Packet for 16<sup>th</sup>- to 20<sup>th</sup>-Level Characters  
LIVING GREYHAWK™ DM'S CHALLENGE 1  
for the HORRORS NEVER DIE Story Arc (2006 -2007)

**Development:** Steven Conforti, LIVING GREYHAWK™ Circle, Pierre van Rooden, Jeffery A. Dobberpuhl

**Resources:** *Tomb of Horrors* [Gary Gygax], *Return to the Tomb of Horrors* [Bruce R. Cordell], *Tome of Magic* [Mathew Sernett, Ari Marmell, David Noonan, Robert J. Schwalb], *Crypt of Lyzandred the Mad* [Sean Reynolds].

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

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Visit the LIVING GREYHAWK website at [www.wizards.com/rpga](http://www.wizards.com/rpga).

For questions specific to this document please e-mail [scon40@aol.com](mailto:scon40@aol.com).

For LIVING GREYHAWK DM'S CHALLENGE HIGH-LEVEL OPTION campaign questions email [rpgahq@wizards.com](mailto:rpgahq@wizards.com).

## WHAT'S A DM'S CHALLENGE ADVENTURE?

DM'S CHALLENGE adventure packets are a part of the LIVING GREYHAWK DM'S CHALLENGES HIGH-LEVEL OPTION. Unlike other RPGA adventures, the DM'S CHALLENGE adventure is not something you download or buy and run as printed with little to no modification. Instead, you get basic guidelines, a special session tracking, and a basic Adventure Record (AR) for an adventure that you write or modify and run.

### RPGA-SANCTIONED PLAY

Most likely you ordered this adventure as part of an RPGA event from the RPGA website, or you received it from your senior gamemaster. To play this adventure as part of the LIVING GREYHAWK DM'S CHALLENGES HIGH-LEVEL OPTION campaign—a worldwide, ongoing D&D campaign set in the GREYHAWK setting—you must sanction it as part of an RPGA event. This event could be as elaborate as a big convention, or as simple as a group of friends meeting at the DM's house.

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

By sanctioning and reporting this adventure you accomplish a couple of things. First, it is an official game, and you can use the AR to advance your LIVING GREYHAWK DM'S CHALLENGES HIGH-LEVEL OPTION character. Second, it allows the RPGA to track and record what characters did during the adventure, and future adventures will be written with what a majority of the players did in mind – in this way characters' actions shape the future of the campaign. Lastly, players and DMs gain rewards for sanctioned RPGA play if they are members of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS REWARDS program. Playing this adventure is worth two (2) points.

This adventure retires from RPGA-sanctioned play on December 31, 2007.

To learn more about the LIVING GREYHAWK DM'S CHALLENGES HIGH-LEVEL OPTION character creation and development, RPGA event sanctioning, and DUNGEONS & DRAGONS REWARDS, visit the RPGA website at [www.wizards.com/rpga](http://www.wizards.com/rpga).

## WHAT DO I RUN?

The simple answer to this, whatever you want! The DM'S CHALLENGE adventures are a chance for you, the DM, to let your creativity shine.

This might mean creating an adventure or a group of adventures totally from scratch, giving your home group an exciting sub-plot within the LIVING GREYHAWK DM'S CHALLENGES HIGH-LEVEL OPTION campaign where they can affect the outcome in ways no possible before in campaign-style play. It might mean that you have an interesting adventure idea to run at a show. Maybe a small sub-plot using NPCs or events detailed in published GREYHAWK or LIVING GREYHAWK adventures that have inspired you to build an adventure that will dazzle players and add depth to the campaign as a whole. Even still, it might mean that you have a favorite adventure from a published source that you twiddle with to fit into the GREYHAWK setting and LIVING GREYHAWK DM'S CHALLENGES HIGH-LEVEL OPTION campaign to create a fun and exciting session without hours upon hours of work. The choice is yours. The story is yours. Have fun with it!

## WHAT CAN'T I DO WITH A DM'S CHALLENGE?

DM'S CHALLENGE adventure packets allow you to run your own adventure for a group of 4 to 6 players. It does not give you license to produce and distribute (for sale or for free) your own GREYHAWK adventures. Following the d20 System License (see [www.wizards.com/d20](http://www.wizards.com/d20)) grants you the ability to write D&D compatible works, but all of the GREYHAWK setting, and many of the GREYHAWK specific rules are not covered in that license.

That said, the intent of the DM'S CHALLENGE is for you to create and present exciting GREYHAWK adventures to a small group of players, anything more than that is really beyond the scope of the DM'S CHALLENGES program.

## ADVENTURE GUIDELINES

Of the standard rules for RPGA adventures also hold true for DM'S CHALLENGE adventures. DM'S CHALLENGE adventures have to be ordered and sanctioned just like other adventures, and thus must be played at RPGA-Sanctioned events if you are playing it as part of the LIVING GREYHAWK DM'S CHALLENGES HIGH-LEVEL OPTION campaign.

When running a DM'S CHALLENGE as part of an RPGA-Sanctioned event, you must follow the RPGA general rules, and the rules detailed in the LIVING GREYHAWK DM'S CHALLENGES HIGH-LEVEL OPTION Rules Document and other campaign documents.

When you design the adventure, design it for an eight-hour time slot—this is especially true if you are running it as part of a public event.

## LEVEL OF PLAY

Each DM'S CHALLENGE adventure packet (and all LIVING GREYHAWK DM'S CHALLENGES HIGH-LEVEL OPTION adventures) is optimized for a certain level. The optimized level determines the general levels you should design your adventure at. It also determines the general level of rewards granted for adventure success.

This DM'S CHALLENGE adventure is optimized for 16<sup>th</sup>-level play, so you should design your challenges for four 16<sup>th</sup>-level characters. You'll also want to scale the adventure for up to 20<sup>th</sup>-level characters, as there is a good chance that you will have a range of character levels playing in the adventure, and in those cases you'll want to increase the challenges.

That said, as DM you have discretion when it comes to fitting the challenges of the adventure to your group. If your group finds the challenges too easy or too difficult, feel free to increase or decrease the level of challenge appropriately. The goal is to challenge the PCs and entertain the players, not to overwhelm or even underwhelm them. The most enjoyable D&D games are ones where failure and character death are possible, but success and reward are attainable through daring and smart play.

## HOW MANY ENCOUNTERS?

Some of this depends on your style as a DM, but here are some general guidelines crafted by Andy Collins from his "Craft (Adventures)" column featured on the RPGA website. Andy estimates in that column that the average RPGA round of play contains actually only 200 minutes of actual play time:

"At the highest levels of play, combat can become grindingly slow as characters search through their lists of equipment, spells, and abilities to find just the right choice. Even the most experienced players need time to evaluate a complicated battlefield, and less-experienced players can easily become overwhelmed by the options available. Even the "basic fighter" becomes a complex character requiring many rolls. A full attack by a fighter of this level might include a dozen rolls or more, including up to four or five sets of attack rolls, miss chances, critical hit confirmations, and damage rolls. Spellcasters routinely cast two spells per round, control multiple summoned creatures or active spell effects, track durations on a half-dozen spells simultaneously, and so on.

You can expect each character's turn to take at least two minutes, and sometimes as long as five minutes. Even the number of rounds in a typical combat becomes difficult to anticipate. 10-round fights aren't terribly

uncommon, especially against foes with the ability to teleport into and out of combat with ease. In the hands of an unprepared GM, a single encounter at this level can take up most of a slot, and even experienced, battle-hardened GMs find themselves hard-pressed to run more than a couple such encounters in the space of 200 minutes."

Since each DM'S CHALLENGE adventure packet is designed for two-rounds of play; you should estimate about 400 minutes of play time when you design this adventure. Each DM'S CHALLENGE adventure packet is designed to award a set amount of experience – 4,500 xp per PC. As a rough guideline to assigning this experience to challenges in the adventure, we recommend a ratio of 50% for combat challenges, 25% for traps, puzzles, skill, and class ability challenges, and 25% for roleplaying challenges.

You may want to check out all of the "Craft (Adventures)" columns by Andy Collins ([www.wizards.com/default.asp?x=rpga/arch/articles](http://www.wizards.com/default.asp?x=rpga/arch/articles)) and the "Adventure Builder" columns by Wolfgang Baur ([www.wizards.com/default.asp?x=dnd/arch/ab](http://www.wizards.com/default.asp?x=dnd/arch/ab)) for other good advice on creating adventures for RPGA events. These columns offer a wealth of good advice.

## TREASURE

At the end of the adventure, all treasure is converted into gold pieces, and split between the PCs. As a basic rule of thumb, for a 16<sup>th</sup>-level optimized adventure don't stock your adventure with significantly more than 20,000 gp worth of treasure per PC. Be sure to include treasure the PCs can find useful during the adventure (such as healing magics and such).

If you are scaling the adventure for up to 20<sup>th</sup>-level characters, the amount of treasure per PC available in the adventure should increase as well. The following lists the gp cap on treasure an individual PC can receive in an adventure, based on their character level: 16<sup>th</sup>-level = 20,000 gp, 17<sup>th</sup>-level = 25,000 gp, 18<sup>th</sup>-level = 35,000 gp, 19<sup>th</sup>-level = 45,000 gp, 20<sup>th</sup>-level = 55,000 gp.

At the end of the adventure, you can also give out magic item access via the Adventure Record provided with this DM'S CHALLENGE adventure packet. Fill in the blanks provide with items from LIVING GREYHAWK DM'S CHALLENGES HIGH-LEVEL OPTION campaign approved sources that the PCs have encountered during the adventure. List the name of the item and the approved source it is from. If you know the specific PCs who will be participating in your adventure, it is highly recommended to tailor the rewards (and thus the adventure) to their specific needs. If you know you are writing the adventure for a party of fighters, including treasure only usable by spellcasters is probably a bad idea!

## HORRORS NEVER DIE STORY ARC (2006-2007)

The HORRORS NEVER DIE Story Arc (2006-2007) deals with the awakening of yet another danger to Oerth at the Tomb of Horrors, one of the Flanaess' most fabled locales. The arc consists of four adventures, three of which are DM'S CHALLENGE adventure packets and one of which is a fully written adventure. The HORRORS NEVER DIE Story Arc (2006-2007) is:

1. DM'S CHALLENGE 1 (released December 2006).
2. DM'S CHALLENGE 2 (released January 2007).
3. RETURN TO THE TOMB (released February 2007).
4. DM'S CHALLENGE 3 (released March 2007).

It is best to run this DM'S CHALLENGE adventure packet first, before players participate in the second or third DM'S CHALLENGE adventures of this story arc and especially before they play RETURN TO THE TOMB (the two-round LIVING GREYHAWK DM'S CHALLENGES HIGH-LEVEL OPTION adventure premiering at **D&D Experience** (formerly **Winter Fantasy**), February 15-18, 2007). DM'S CHALLENGE 1 and 2 lead into RETURN TO THE TOMB and DM'S CHALLENGE 3 concludes the story.

### WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE?

From *Return to the Tomb of Horrors* by Bruce R. Cordell:

"The legend of the tomb first trickled into civilized lands centuries ago. Whispers of lost treasure and undisturbed burial catacombs lured scores of adventurers over the years to cross unmapped lands in search of fortune and glory. Few ever found the tomb, and fewer still ever returned; the legend of Acererak's last resting place remained a vague rumor of wealth and danger.

Then some twenty years ago, reports of the tomb spread far and wide, for reasons that were unclear at the time. Ironically, its reputation as a dungeon from which few if any explorers ever returned tempted those who consider themselves exceptionally skilled, clever, or lucky. Undeterred by warnings of lethal traps, labyrinthine mazes, and the malevolent sorcerer who lingered beyond life to guard the crypt of his final rest, they came from many lands to match themselves against Acererak's challenge. Those who found the tomb and penetrated its grim darkness soon realized that the legends had not been wrong; death was the reward for the cautious and the foolhardy alike. Some turned back, and many more perished during their explorations. Very few successfully navigated the tomb to find the husk of Acererak's physical form: the demilich. Only then did these brave few discover their true peril; the demilich could wrench their eternal souls from their corporeal flesh through the malevolent power of its gaze alone!

Those who survived the horrors finally emerged from the tomb. Some were missing companions, limbs, or both, but all felt lucky to see the sun once more. From these hardy souls the tale of Acererak's unyielding crypt spread, frightening away some but enticing still others to venture into the darkness ... Those who were drawn to the area were less and less interested in exploring the depths of the tomb. Instead, they were drawn by the legend of Acererak himself ... As time wore on, a community of like-minded grew up around the mound of the tomb located in the Vast Swamp ... They were, in fact, almost all practitioners of the foul dark arts: necromancy. This was Skull City born."

Acererak himself was behind the spreading of the legend and rumors of his Tomb. For he was an ancient lich (and then demilich) whose quest for power over undead had led him to his greatest discovery – a means to achieve eternity by merging his essence with the Negative Energy Plane, this giving him the ability to possess and control any undead being with a link to that plane anywhere in the cosmos. To power this merge, he required the souls of powerful adventurers, and he used his Tomb to lure them to him. Acererak was nearly successful, but the last group of adventurers he chose to power his Apotheosis proved his undoing.

These adventurers fought their way to his Fortress of Conclusion and destroyed both Acererak's physical form and plunged his Phylactery, the key to his Apotheosis and the container for all of the souls he had stolen, into the depths of the Negative Energy Plane, where it was thought destroyed or lost forever. Acererak's spirit was shattered by this act, trapping him between life and death, eternal power and nothingness. He became a Vestige (see *Tome of Magic* by Matthew Sernett, Ari Marmell, David Noonan, and Robert J. Schwalb), a spiritual power to be summoned and used by beings called binders.

The necromancers of Skull City have continued their research at the Tomb to this day, although they find they can no longer enter very far into the Tomb (see Entering the Tomb below). This is because Acererak's departure shattered the Tomb, dropping most of it into a state halfway between the Physical and the Negative Energy Plane. Over time, all of it would eventually disintegrate into the nothingness, if not for recent events. The necromancers of Skull City are mentioned here as reference only ... by the time the PCs reach the Tomb in RETURN TO THE TOMB, the threat of the necromancers will already have been resolved (by LIVING GREYHAWK players in COR7-01 *Wrath of the Tomb of Horrors*).

What now keeps the Tomb from breaking apart completely and dissolving into the Negative Energy Plane? A new threat has arrived in the form of another Vestige; one called Tenebrous, The Shadow That Was. Tenebrous is the vestige of the divine power the demon lord Orcus once wielded, as he recovered his power and

his domain after being usurped by another power. Tenebrous has sought a means to gain back this divine power, and he has searched through sites and locales Orcus long ago abandoned to find the means to do so. On an excursion to the City of Moil, a location that Orcus long ago cursed to a miserable fate, he found the City almost completely absorbed into the Negative Energy Plane. Acererak had used Moil and its undead inhabitants to build his Fortress of Conclusion and act as a gateway between his Tomb and his Fortress. Tenebrous used binders faithful to him to determine what had happened in Moil, and he realized quickly that Acererak's plan was the key to his own salvation.

Tenebrous has since recovered Acererak's lost phylactery from the Negative Energy Plane and used it to stabilize what remains of the Fortress, City, and Tomb. Now he needs powerful adventurers to revisit the Tomb and power the device. This is where the PCs come in.

## THE FORCES AT WORK

There are a number of individuals and groups which the PCs will interact with during the HORRORS NEVER DIE Story Arc (2006-2007). PCs can choose to ally with any or none of these forces, and their choices will influence their rewards and the conclusion of this Story Arc. The key forces at work are:

- Agents of the Vestige Tenebrous (Chaotic Evil) – These agents will do all they can to lead the PCs to the Tomb of Horrors. Depending on the party of adventurers, they may try to trick the PCs into “working for them”, attack them to lure them in the direction of investigating the Tomb, drop information in places the PCs are likely to visit that lead them to the Tomb, or whatever other ideas you may come up with. If you have access to *Tome of Magic*, the agents should be led by powerful binders; otherwise, you can have them led by clerics with the Death and Evil domains.
- Agents of the Vestige Acererak (Chaotic Evil) – These agents will eventually discover that someone new is using the Tomb of Horrors for their own twisted purpose. Acererak knows he can no longer use his Phylactery for Apotheosis, that path has been lost to him. But he will not allow another to steal his greatest idea. Once these agents learn of the happenings at the Tomb, they will seek out the PCs in an attempt to get them to thwart whoever is using the Tomb now. They'll follow many of the same actions as the Agents of the Vestige Tenebrous above and should be designed similarly.
- Agents of the Lyzandred the Mad (Lawful Neutral) – Thought a legend by most of the inhabitants of the Flanaess (at least amongst the few who know of him at all), this lich is very

real and extremely dangerous to those who oppose his goals. He is as old as Acererak, but his life and unlife took a different path. He discovered a demiplane early in his career that he has made his own. His quest to remove powerful magic items from the hands of those who abuse them (the results of an encounter in his youth with slavers who killed or sold his entire hometown with a *rod of beguiling*) took a dangerous turn as Lyzandred discovered the demiplane he used to keep those items away from others has somehow mixed with his own magics to slowly drive him insane each time he left his demiplane. He chose to remain on the demiplane from that point forward, and he now uses agents and his powerful magics to bring volunteers into his service and continue his quest to keep magic items away from those who would abuse them. Lyzandred learned of Acererak's near miss at gaining Apotheosis from the adventurers who defeated the demilich, and he has carefully monitored the situation at the Tomb of Horrors since then. His fears are realized as his divinations have him now convinced that Acererak's Phylactery has been returned to the Fortress of Conclusion and that someone plans to try to use it once more. Lyzandred will stop at nothing to have that foul artifact brought to his demiplane to be buried forever from the hands of others. Thus he will try to enlist the PCs help in this endeavor. Lyzandred's agents are all former or current adventurers who have volunteered to serve him out of a shared belief in ridding Oerth of dangerous magic items or in payment for him saving their lives.

## ENTERING THE TOMB

The PCs cannot enter the Tomb until the RETURN TO THE TOMB adventure. The powerful magical forces that are keeping the Tomb stabilized between Oerth and the Negative Energy Plane prevent anyone from entering the Tomb unless they carry an *Amulet of the Void* and are permitted entry by Tenebrous' agents. The PCs won't have both of these requirements met until the end of DM'S CHALLENGE 2.

## HOW TO INTERGRATE

You are free to write the adventure you choose to write for this DM'S CHALLENGE with the following stipulations:

1. The PCs should meet at least one surviving member of the adventuring party which defeated Acererak. They should learn of the fate of the Phylactery at the time of Acererak's defeat (a giant multi-faceted gemstone which was dropped through a gate directly to the Negative Energy Plane and thought destroyed.

2. The agents of the Vestige Tenebrous should begin to test the PCs to see if they are powerful enough to be worthy of using them to fuel the Apotheosis. Assuming they find them worthy, they should begin to point them in the direction of the Tomb of Horrors by misdirecting them to seek out agents of the Vestige Acererak; they hope to convince the PCs that Acererak is behind this plot and also to have them gain an *Amulet of the Void* from Acererak's followers.
  3. The agents of Lyzandred will begin to observe the PCs. Careful PCs may notice their observers and try to interact with them. The agents will keep their reasons to themselves at this time. They will avoid combat, but they will defend themselves if need be.
  4. The adventure should conclude with a difficult encounter with the agents of the Vestige Acererak. If the PCs overcome these agents, a top agent will arrive to offer them a deal to work together against whoever has control of the Tomb. Clever PCs will hear the offer and gain the knowledge that Acererak may not be behind the troubles brewing. Head-strong PCs may kill the top agent beforehand. In either case, they can gain an *Amulet of the Void* here and some parties might take an oath of cooperation along with the top agent.
- b. Yes, most of it.
  - c. No, little of it.
  - d. No, none of it.
  4. Did the PCs recover an *Amulet of the Void*?
    - a. Yes.
    - b. No.
  5. Did the PCs observe they were being watched by agents of Lyzandred?
    - a. Yes.
    - b. No.
  6. Did the PCs attack the top agent of Acererak on sight?
    - a. Yes.
    - b. No.
  7. Did the PCs negotiate with the top agent of Acererak?
    - a. No, they slew him.
    - b. No, they interrogated him.
    - c. Yes, they parlayed with him but did not agree to cooperation.
    - d. Yes, they parlayed with him and agreed to cooperation.
    - e. Yes, the parlayed with him and swore the oath of cooperation.

## ADVENTURE QUESTIONS

To enable the Campaign to track the results of this adventure and this apply these results to the development of future adventures in the story arc, please email your answers to the following questions to Steven Conforti, LIVING GREYHAWK Circle, at [scon40@aol.com](mailto:scon40@aol.com).

1. Did the PCs successfully complete the adventure objectives?
  - a. Yes, total success.
  - b. Yes, mostly successful.
  - c. No, mostly failed.
  - d. No, total failure.
2. Did the PCs successfully complete the adventure encounters?
  - a. Yes, total success.
  - b. Yes, mostly successful.
  - c. No, mostly failed.
  - d. No, total failure.
3. Did the PCs successfully recover the treasure in the adventure?
  - a. Yes, all of it.

## ADVENTURE RECORD

You'll want to print out a copy of the Adventure Record for each player.

Fill in the blanks provide on the Adventure Record with magic items from LIVING GREYHAWK DM'S CHALLENGES HIGH-LEVEL OPTION campaign approved sources that the PCs have encountered during the adventure.

Circle the correct gp cap amount for each PC based on their character level when they began this adventure.

If the PCs did not gain an *Amulet of the Void*, cross it off on the Adventure Record. If they accepted the offer of cooperation with the top agent of Acererak and are willing to swear an oath on the arrangement along with the top agent, they gain the **Oath of Cooperation - Acererak** on the Adventure Record; otherwise, cross it off.

