



Advanced Encounters

Alternate Objectives

By Matthew J. Hanson

4e Compatible

A 4e Resource
and Advice Book

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Advanced Encounters: Alternate Objectives

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Introduction: About This Book



Welcome to the Alternate Objectives, the second of the Advanced Encounters series. Like all books in the series, it provides advice and tools for the DM to create more memorable encounters. Alternate Objectives focuses on creating encounters where the PCs have combat goals beyond just slaying the bad guys.

The rest of this introduction describes what alternate objectives are and why you might use them.

Chapter 1: Objective Types details several types of objectives and things to consider when building them.

Chapter 2: Other Consideration describes other elements that could be relevant in a range of encounters containing alternate objectives but are not tied to specific objectives.

Chapter 3: Sample Encounters provides six sample encounters along with adventure hooks and variations.

What are Alternate Objectives?

In most D&D games, the goal of each combat encounter is simple: kill the bad guys (or force them to surrender or run away).

Alternate objectives are other goals that you can include in your combats. These encounters still feature bad guys to fight, but they also feature other tasks for the PCs to complete. This could be anything from rescuing hostages, to destroying an evil relic, to just holding on to a scrap of land long enough for reinforcements to arrive.

Why use Alternate Objectives?

You can include alternate objectives in your adventures for a range of reasons.

Story Suggests It

At Sneak Attack Press, we believe that a good story is at the heart of any good adventure or encounter, so the best reason to include alternate objectives is because the story suggests that the PCs should attempt something other than just beating up their foes. This creates a richer experience for the players, and prevents the meta-game separation of roleplaying from combat.

For example, perhaps your story tells of a powerful artifact, the Spear of Slaughter, a terrible weapon once wielded by the patron god of orcs. Now an orcish army is growing and its war-leader has dispatched a small team to track down and retrieve the spear. The PCs must race against the orcs through an ancient tomb in a quest to regain the spear. When they finally reach the spear's resting spot, the heroes discover that the orcs have beat them to it, but just barely. The head of the orcish expedition has just opened the casket containing the spear and claimed it as his prize.

While you could run the ensuing fight as typical battle (the orcs fight the PCs), the story suggests that it would be better to run with an alternate goal. The orc leader takes the spear and flees, while he orders the rest of his group to hold off the PCs. The goal is not just to kill the orcs, but to prevent the leader from escaping.

A Change of Pace

As players grow accustomed to their characters, they likely develop tried and true tactics. While this helps them work efficiently, it also can cause stagnation as battles against different monsters replay themselves in similar ways.

Alternate objectives can shake this up by giving the PCs something new to deal with. Their tactics work great when slaying monsters, but they might need to adjust to achieve their new goal.

In our example featuring the Spear of Slaughter, the PCs may need to alter their tactics to prevent the orc leader from escaping. An archer who normally uses mobility to avoid her foes might need that same mobility to chase the orc.

A Chance of Failure

When the goal of the battle is simply to kill all foes, the foes' goal is kill the heroes. This means that the PCs either win, retreat, or are wiped out.

Alternate objectives can create a third option. The heroes need not worry only about saving their own skin, but also completing a secondary task (or prevent foes from completing their task). In this case the PCs might fail the secondary objective, but still live to tell the tale. Such a failure often leads to further adventures, rather than rolling up new PCs.

In our orc example, the PCs might succeed in slaying most of the orcs, but only after the leader escapes with the spear. The PCs failed this initial stage of their quest, but this opens up other possibilities. They might hunt down the orc leader, or defend the local village from the orc assault that they know is coming.

Chapter 1:

Objective Types



To help you create encounters with alternate objectives, we've classified some of the most common objectives into broad categories.

In Achieve encounters the PCs attempt to complete some kind of task. In Escape encounters the characters must flee from a danger they cannot defeat. A variation of Escape is Breach, in which the PCs are fighting past foes instead of running away from them. In Hold encounters the heroes seek to protect an area for a limited amount of time. Prevent encounters are the reverse of Achieve encounters, in that the PCs seek to stop their enemies from completing a task. Protect is a variation of Prevent, where the goal is to stop the villains from killing an ally or destroying an object.

Because many encounter do not fit these definitions precisely, this chapter also includes information

about combining elements from different objective types.

Achieve

In an Achieve encounter the PCs have a goal that they need to accomplish that eats up their actions. Often, working toward this goal achieves little else (tactically) until the end of the encounter. The PCs might be struggling to release a chained silver dragon from its bonds or convincing an opposing general that he has been tricked into fighting you.

Skill Check or Action

In many Achieve encounters the goal requires that the PCs make skill checks. There should typically be multiple skills that the PCs can use. For example, convincing

the enemy general of the party's innocence might allow characters to use Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate, or History. For more about skills see the Skills section in Chapter 2.

Some objectives might not require the PCs to make a skill check simply to spend an action in the appropriate location. For example, if they need to quell a god's anger by returning her three sacred statues, they might simply need to carry one statue to each of the three holy daises and set the statues there.

In some circumstance the PCs might even use attacks to achieve their objective. If they are trying to collapse a tunnel to prevent an invasion from the Underlands, you might allow them to attack the support beams and rule that the tunnel collapse after the PCs have dealt a certain amount of damage.

Other Achieve encounters might require the PCs spend another resource, such as sacrificing a healing surge to activate an artifact powered by blood magic or inserting a gem into an altar dedicated to the god of greed.

Multiple Steps

An Achieve encounter should rarely be accomplished in a single action, Instead there are typically multiple steps for the PCs to complete. These may may be similar (such as activating all seven mystical pillars), or each step might be something different (first somebody needs to use Athletics to move a large bar blocking the door, then Thievery to unlock it, and finally Arcana to dispel the magical wards).

Consider creating additional consequences as the PCs complete each step of the encounter. More enemies might appear, enemies already present might gain additional powers, or the the environment might change around the PCs. For example, as the PCs try to close a planer gate to Hell, legions of devils scramble through the gate hoping to stop them.

Activation Locations

Sometimes the PCs can work toward the victory condition of the Achieve encounter from any location, while other scenarios will require them to be at specific spot. Sometimes these choices are obvious. If the goal involves talking, the heroes can accomplish it from nearly anywhere on the battlefield. But should an objective require the heroes to move a pedestal, they probably have to be next to the pedestal. In other encounters the answer might not be quite as obvious.

Stats With That

For each objective type, we've included a sidebar with game statistics to show how you might implement one or two of the examples mentioned in the main advice section. These are meant to easily scale, and thus refer to Skill DCs by their difficulty (consult your core rulebook for more details). In addition, each has a sample level that you could immediately use, where the DC is provided.

A few of the sample stats also include reference to damage based on level. To calculate average damage, add eight to the level, and then multiply the total by one and one-half ($[L+5] \times 1.5$). You can then cover the average damage to a number of dice plus a static number. A d6 has an average damage of 3.5, so the average damage would be 20, you could covert it to $4d6 + 6$).

Maybe the PCs need to manipulate a magical aura to stop an arcane time bomb. Do the PCs need to touch the device to manipulate the aura or do they just stand close to it? If they need to come close, how close?

If it makes sense to do so, you should spread out the components and require that no two of them can be activated from same location. This encourages the PCs to move throughout the battle, possibly splitting the party into multiple groups and offering interesting tactical choices.

Reactive Opponents

It's possible to a run an achieve encounter where the monsters just happen to be attacking the PCs while they work to complete their task. However, it is more dramatic if the enemies actively oppose the PCs as they try to accomplish their goal. Enemies might focus their attacks on the PC who is working hardest to accomplish the goal. If the objective requires that the heroes reach a particular place on the battlefield, the enemies might form a protective line to stop the PCs from reaching that point.

There might even be some kind of way for the foes to actively undo the PCs' progress. For example, if the heroes need to place the orbs of light on three altars to cleanse the temple of an evil curse, enemies might seek to remove the orbs once the PCs have placed them. This can encourage the PCs to act creatively, possibly by leaving one person to guard the orbs or by having three PCs each take an orb and activate them simultaneously.

Stats With That: Achieve

Tricked Foe (Sample Level 12): A powerful general hunts the PCs for crimes they did not commit. To convince the general of their innocence, the PCs may attempt to use make a Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate, or History check against a moderate DC (20). Each check requires a minor action and each PC may attempt such a check only once per round. If the PCs manage eight successes before three failures, they convince the general and he orders his men to stand down. If they fail three times, the general is convinced of their guilt and nothing can change his mind.

Doomsday Clock (Sample Level 7): An ancient device is ticking down the time to when it sets off a massive volcanic eruption that will likely destroy the nearby city. The clock has only one hand, which starts pointing toward the six. At the end of each round the hand advances one number. Any creature within five squares of the clock may attempt to wind it back by making a moderate DC (16) Arcana check as a standard action, or a high DC (23) check as a minor action. Each PC may gain a single success per round. For each success, the hand moves back one number.

If clock's hand reaches twelve, the arcane device explodes, dealing level based damage ($3d8+11$) to everybody within a burst 5. It also triggers the aforementioned volcanic eruption. If the hand reaches one, the device deactivates and is no longer a threat.

Escape

In an Escape scenario, the PCs must flee an area while battling monsters and avoiding traps and hazards. The heroes might dash up the steps of a mage's flooding tower or flee an orcish encampment after their magical disguises have worn off.

Constant Danger

For an Escape encounter to work it needs to be clear to the PCs that the danger is too great for them to defeat. You might accomplish this through the sheer number of or power of foes. For example, the PCs might be in the heart of a city teeming with drow or they have awakened a sleeping dragon that is far beyond their pay grade.

Environmental dangers can also motivate the PCs to make a quick exit. This might be the cave that collapses around the heroes or toxic fumes that quickly fill the area. Environmental dangers work well when they are either clearly increasing in danger (such as the collapsing cave) or that are clearly expanding in a direction toward where the PCs want to go (such as toxic

fumes). These environmental dangers rarely are dangerous enough to kill a PC instantly. But constant exposure will quickly wear them down (about 5 to 10 points of damage per tier is plenty to keep a PC motivated).

When you pair monsters with environmental hazards, consider including monsters that have no fear of the environment. The monsters might simply not know enough to recognize the danger (often the case with constructs and undead) or the creature might be adapted to the conditions. For example, salamanders are immune to spreading fire and amphibious creatures are not threatened by a flooding dungeon.

Light at the End of the Tunnel

To help motivate the players, they generally should have a rough idea of how far their characters need to go to escape. Frequently, characters escape the same way that they came in. In this case they know exactly where they need to go.

Other times the characters need to escape through a different route. In these cases you can find other ways to give the PCs clues about how far they are from their goal. In an open setting (wilderness or urban area) they might be able to see their objective a long ways off. In more confined settings (dungeons) you can drop hints based on the types of foes they face (more professional warriors near the exits) or the environment around them (the smell of fresh air wafts in from an opening).

Room to Run

Determined PCs can cover a lot of ground in a single turn. A basic elf who runs and uses a double move can go 18 squares. Characters who invest in movement can go much farther. Because of this, maps for Escape encounters need to be significantly bigger than for standard encounters.

Establish the minimum number of rounds you want the encounter to last. As a rule of thumb, assume that your PCs will be able to dedicate a move action each round to fleeing, so multiply the slowest PC's speed by the number of rounds you want the encounter to last, and use this as your starting point for the size of escape path. For example, if you want the encounter to last six rounds, and the slowest PC has a speed of 5, the escape path should be at least 25 squares. This does not necessarily mean that the encounter map has to be 25 squares on a side, only that the total path the PCs must run is 25 squares. You may add considerable length to the escape route by placing twists and turns in the path and forcing the PCs to double back.

Speed Bumps

In an Escape scenario there should also be numerous “speed bumps” to slow the PCs down. These may be simple terrain features such as difficult terrain, small walls, or shallow pits, or they might be more complex terrain such as magical fields that increase gravity (and slow the PCs) or animated vines that entangle the PCs.

Creatures can also serve as speed bumps. The PCs need to expend actions to slay the monsters or risk being attacked as they run by. The creatures might also possess powers that can slow the PCs. Grabbing the PCs can also be quite effective, but beware powers that immobilize, stun, or dominate, as these deny the PC the opportunity to run for their lives that they so desperately need. If you include any of these effects, they should only last a single round.

Traps also work well to slow down the PCs. These frequently force them to choose whether they wish to risk damage from swinging blades and gouts of flame, or take the time to delicately disarm the trap while the world falls apart around them.

Minions, Ranged Attackers, and Exit Guards

A large number of standard enemies (or worse, elite or solo monsters) take too long to kill for an Escape encounter to work well. Because of this, most monsters in an Escape encounter should be minions. This forces the PCs to spend an action to attack the minion (preventing a double move), but then allows the PCs to move freely after slaying it.

One exception is to include a standard monster or two that focuses on ranged attacks (artillery and some controller type monsters). These monsters might chase behind the PCs firing arrows or slinging spells at them and the PCs must choose to either attack back or ignore the monster and just keep running.

Finally you may place just about any kind of monster just before the exit. This presents a major obstacle just before the PCs earn their freedom and has great potential for drama. Do the heroes try to slip by, possibly leaving an ally at the mercy of the monster, or do they finish off their enemy yet risk being overtaken from behind by the advancing lava flow? These exit guards should still be less challenging than a full encounter, possibly using one to three standard monsters or one elite with levels equal to or lower than the PCs.

Variation: Breach

A breach objective describes the PCs trying to enter an area. This may be storming an enemy stronghold or

breaking into a treasure vault. It is essentially just an escape in reverse, and most of the advice for an escape still applies.

Just as with an Escape encounter, the PCs need to be in constant danger to prevent the PCs from just slaying all the monsters before waltzing in unopposed. Though environmental dangers are possible, in a breach encounter the threat more frequently comes from monsters. One fairly easy strategy to force upon the PCs is for slain enemies to be quickly replaced. For mundane creatures, this might represent enforcements coming to stop the PCs. Likewise, undead creatures might reanimate and outsiders might be constantly summoned.

In a breach encounter, the PCs are more likely be running toward their opponents than away from them, so you may well be able to give monsters more defensible positions. Minions should still constitute the majority of the foes, though you can place a standard monster or two at choke points to slow down the heroes.

Another main point to consider when running a breach encounter is what happens to the PCs once they break into their target. Again, a large portion of this depends on the story that you are trying to tell. It may well be that even after the heroes make it inside, they are still at risk of attack from the same or different enemies. In this case you may wish to look at a phased encounter (see Combinations later this chapter).

Foes do not always follow the PCs after a breach. The heroes might be able to seal the entrance behind them, preventing their enemy from coming through, or the enemy might not want or be able to come through. For example, creatures defending the breach might be too large to enter or the breach encounter might take place underwater and the the monsters they fought might not be able to survive on land. Finally, you might allow the PCs to hide in a safe spot and catch their breath.

Hold

In the Hold objective the characters must defend a particular area against foes for a duration of time. The heroes might fight off undead until sunrise or protect a group of NPCs until they complete a crucial ritual.

Ticking Clock

The hold objective depends on the heroes remaining in a location for a given amount of time. The main options for this are a set number of rounds or the PCs succeeding a certain number of skill checks.

When using a set number of rounds, keep track of

how many rounds pass. As long as the PCs can make it to the final round, they succeed. This might be a situation where the PCs are waiting for reinforcements to arrive or charging up a super weapon. The advantage of this is that PCs are free to focus on shoring up their defenses and slaying their foes. It also reduces the chance that a few bad rolls will force the PCs into an even more grueling combat.

The other option is that heroes need to actively succeed at skill checks and when they reach that number of successes, they “win” the encounter. This might represent the PCs performing a ritual or trying to break through a stone wall that blocks their escape route. These checks should either be minor actions, or actions that have one DC as a minor action and another (easier) DC as a standard action (see **Skills** in **Chapter 2**

for more). You likely want to limit either the number of successes that the PCs can achieve or skill checks they can attempt each round. This prevents the PCs from completing the challenge too quickly. The advantage of the skill check approach is it actively involves the PCs in bringing the encounter to a close, and PCs who might not have much to do while defending the fortress can participate in the skill challenge.

Whichever method you chose, it helps to let the PCs know ahead of time how long they have until the defeat the encounter. This provides a sense of a story arc for the players and ramps up tension as the end comes into sight.

Unending Horde of Foes

In a Hold encounter, the PCs should never be able to slay all of their foes because there should always be new ones coming. This might mean a consistent stream of a monster or two each round, or there might be waves of more foes with a few rounds of nothing in between them. For a truly prolonged battle, you might have minutes pass between waves (be careful to decide if it is long enough for a short rest).

Typically, the battle starts with the weakest foes, such as minions and standard monsters of the PCs’ level or lower. Then as the battle continues, introduce higher level monsters and elites. You might even throw in a solo at the very end of the adventure just to scare the players. Just as the power of the foes increases each round, the number of foes that enter the battle also increases, until the heroes are clearly faced with overwhelming numbers.

Defensible Position

Hold encounters work best when the PCs begin in a defensible position. This might be a traditional fortress, a cabin in the woods, or even a single room in a dungeon. The area should, at a minimum, have a limited number of entrances that foes can enter through (probably one to three). You should consider including extra defenses such as arrow slits or siege weapons that the PCs can use. If you grant the PCs time to prepare the area, they will likely come up with their own defenses. For example, PCs might want to use tables and chairs in the area to create a barricade. In cases like this you might allow them to simply add terrain to the battle, or call for a skill check to see how successful they are. The barricade might be blocking terrain that the foes have to climb over or break through. Perhaps the PC in charge of construction makes a Dungeoneering check that sets the

Stats With That: Escape

Flooding Tower (Sample Level 5): The ancient wizard’s tower sank into the swamp, still full of treasure and magic, so the PCs enter through a hatch in the former roof (now on ground level) and descend. The tower is seven stories, but each floor is only thirty feet across. After the PCs reach the bottom of the tower it begins to flood.

At the end of each round, the water rises five feet (one square). Each floor of the tower is ten feet (2 squares) high. Any PC caught on a floor while the water is five feet high may choose to swim with a moderate Athletics check (*DC 15*) or treat the area as difficult terrain. When the water is 10 feet high the PCs must swim. To make matters worse, as soon as the tower begins to flood, several air and water elementals bound by the wizard escape and attack the PCs.

The Orc’s Camp (Sample Level 3): The PCs used magic disguises to infiltrate an orcish encampment and gather important intelligence. However, when they least expect it, their magic wears off. Now they must flee the encampment. They know that this band of orcs is particularly afraid of water, and if the PCs can cross the nearby river, the orcs likely will not follow.

As the battle begins, the river is 30 squares away. The orcs are slow to take up the alarm. By each round 2d6 more orcs (minions appropriate to the PCs’ level) emerge from their tents. Two orc champions (standard monsters appropriate to the PCs’ level) await them at the riverbank. The river is a total of 6 squares wide, and swimming across requires an easy (*DC 9*) Athletics check.

Athletics DC that the enemy needs to make in order to burst through the blocking terrain.

The defensible position gives the PCs somewhat of an advantage, but they will need it to compensate for the waves of foes that would otherwise overwhelm them. Choke points will prevent too many monsters from swarming the PCs in case things go poorly the first few rounds.

Breach in the Defenses

Having just said that the PCs should be in a defensible position, if the defense is too strong, the battle can become easy and monotonous. You can prevent this by having creatures who can get past the defenses. There are many ways to do this, but they generally fall into two categories, monsters that can slip past defenses and those that can break them down.

Creatures who can slip past the defenses simply bypass them, but the defenses remain in place to stop other foes. These might be incorporeal wraiths, teleporting mages, or swarms of spiders that can crawl through arrows slits. These creatures serve primarily to distract the players from the threat outside and remind them that they are still vulnerable.

Other threats may destroy the heroes' fortifications or otherwise render them useless so that the entire horde can freely swoop down upon the heroes. These might be specialized creatures, such as a giant to shatter the gate, or a tamed purple worm to tunnel under the

fort. The threat might also come from equipment such as battering rams, siege engines, or ladders. Finally, it may be possible for any foe to slowly chip away at the defenses until they eventually fall.

You can use either or both approaches while building your encounter. If you use both, you should have creatures that slip past the defenses do so before others try to break them down. After all, what is the point of slipping past the defenses if there are already in ruins? Also, consider having both threats attack the PCs at the same time. This might force them to choose between the immediate danger already within the gates or the potential danger outside it.

Finally, if you do have creatures that break down defenses, consider adding several tiers or rings of defense (such as outer and inner gates) as this will add to the arc of the encounter when the PCs seem to lose valuable ground.

Stats With That: Hold

Landing Site (Sample Level 9): The PCs are scouts for a powerful army that will soon be coming ashore. All the heroes need to do is hold the landing site until more troops arrive. Fortunately the landing site also has several defenses, including a 20-foot (4 square) tall wooden palisade (moderate DC [17] Athletics to climb), and two 40-foot (8 square) high watch towers.

Unfortunately, the enemy knows of the landing and is desperate to stop it. It throws wave after wave of soldiers at the PCs. Most are common foot soldiers (minions), but a few are veteran warriors and elite warriors who try to climb the palisade. Finally, an ogre mercenary is enlisted to break down the gate (difficult DC [25] Athletics check).

Obtain

In an obtain encounter, the PCs are trying to get their hands on an object. This might be a sword lodged in a stone, a staff entombed with a powerful wizard, or an amulet worn by one of their foes.

Guards, Competitors, or Squatters

Monsters encountered as part of an Obtain encounter fall into three broad categories: guards, competitors, and squatters. While these are primarily story distinctions, they impact the tactics that the foes use in the battle.

Guards are there specifically to prevent the PCs from obtaining the object that is their goal. They might protect it because they have been assigned this task or



because the object belongs to them. These might be constructs built to guard a wizard's tomb or a dragon protecting its hoard. One of the creatures might even have the object in its possession. Guards actively block the PCs from obtaining the MacGuffin. They target the PC closest to it, and if one of the PCs gets hold of the MacGuffin, they do not rest until that PC is slain. Guards often start between the PCs and the MacGuffin, and use defensive strategies to stop the heroes. Guards often include soldier and controller type monsters.

Competitors also try to get the MacGuffin. They are just as motivated to stop the PCs from reaching the MacGuffin as the guards, but in addition, they want to obtain the MacGuffin for themselves. They focus not only on slowing down the PCs, but also having at least one of their own make their way to the MacGuffin. When one side obtains the object, there will be fierce battles to control it. When PCs face competitors, both sides should start at relatively equal distances away from the MacGuffin. They might be on opposite side of a room or have entered from adjacent tunnels.

Squatters are monsters that occupy the same area as the MacGuffin, but have little interest in it. A band of kobolds might have taken residence in the cave that holds the Sword of Kings, a mythic artifact that has been lodged into a block of stone. The kobolds cannot get the sword out of the stone and have little use for it. That being said, they are still kobolds and will attack anybody who dares enter their warren. Squatters' tactics tend to ignore the MacGuffin. Because squatters are uninterested in the MacGuffin, PCs might find other ways to obtain it, such as by bribing the monsters or scaring them off.

Obtain encounters might combine multiple types of foes in it, such as some guards and some competitors. This makes the fight more complex to run, but also introduces interesting tactical choices for the heroes. Should they focus their attacks on the guards or the competitors, or try to pit the enemies against each other?

What's a MacGuffin?

Several objectives in the book refer to MacGuffins. The term was first popularized by Alfred Hitchcock and refers to an object or person (or sometimes abstract concept) that impels the plot forward. It can be just about anything as long as the main heroes or villains want it badly. Examples of MacGuffins include the golden fleece, the holy grail, the One Ring, and Voldemort's horcruxes.



Hard to Get (But Not Too Hard)

For an obtain objective, it's important to strike a balance between the object being too easy and too hard to obtain. On the one hand, it can be anticlimactic if they obtain it on the first round of combat. But the PCs can also become frustrated if they have to slog through an hour-long battle before they even get a chance to get what they need.

As a rule of thumb, figure it should take about 2 to 3 rounds to obtain an object if that's all that a PC does (completely ignoring monsters) or about 4 to 5 rounds if the hero also spends time attacking foes. You can scale this up or down depending on the impact of what happens when the PCs get it. If it ends the battle, for example, it should take longer than just if the item just grants a bonus.

If you want to slow down the PCs on their way to the object, you can use many of the same techniques listed under the **Speed Bumps** section of **Escape**, including monsters, terrain, and traps. You can also put the object in a container that requires some kind of additional action to retrieve, possibly a skill or ability check. It might be in a locked chest (Thievery), around the neck of an opponent (Athletics or Acrobatics), or im-

paled in a slab of stone (Athletics or Strength).

If the enemies in the battle are also seeking the MacGuffin, this, of course, further complicates the PCs' ability to retrieve it. The PCs and NPCs might try to rip it from each others' hands by using Acrobatics or Athletics checks. The DCs for these might be the target's Reflex or Fortitude defenses, or be a medium DC based on the level of the creature who holds the object.

The object the PCs try to obtain might also inconvenience whoever holds it. A heavy item might slow the creature, while a magic item might lower the creature's defenses or make it vulnerable to damage.

What Happens When They Get It?

To keep an Obtain encounter different from the standard "kill them all" encounter, there must be a reason for the PCs to try to get it before they just slay everybody. If the enemies are competition for the PCs, this is already taken care of, but in other circumstances you should create other incentives for the PCs.

At its most extreme, obtaining the object might end the encounter. If a powerful holy symbol of the Sun King fell into the hands of undead who hope to prevent its use, it might release a blast of light that reduces the undead guardians to dust when the PCs hold it aloft. You can even make obtaining the object the only way of winning the battle. For example, the fallen undead might rise again until the PCs attain the symbol.

Even if obtaining the object does not end the encounter, it can make it easier. You can tailor a magic item's powers and properties to help overcome the monsters, traps, and terrain in the battle. In a fight against ice elementals, the PCs have the opportunity to get a ring that gives them resistance to cold damage. An ancient worm might have a dragonslayer weapon in its hoard.

Instead of giving the PCs a boost when they obtain the object, the foes might gain a bonus while the PCs do not have it. This is likely the case if an opponent possesses the item, but it is not the only such situation. A magical crystal might power a host of traps that plague the characters until they remove it from its pedestal.

Finally, you might create a scenario where the foes are overwhelmingly powerful, and the PCs' only options is to get the item and get out. In these cases there must be a clear story reason for them to want the item (maybe a powerful wizard will pay good coin for it). Try to make it clear early on that the foes will be too difficult for the PCs to defeat in a fair fight or they might not focus on grabbing the item until it's too late.

Prevent

In a Prevent encounter, the heroes must struggle to stop enemies from carrying out a task that will have terrible ramifications. This could be cultists trying to complete a terrible ritual or goblin sappers trying to destroy a dam and flood the cropland.

Threats and Blockers

When you create a prevent scenario, only a small number of foes should actually pose a threat of completing the task the PCs hope to prevent. For example, only the head cultist works on the ritual or two sappers carry the explosive powder.

The rest of the enemies in the fight are blockers. Their job is to keep the PCs from reaching the true threats. These are typically soldier, brute, or melee controller type monsters. Blockers often have powers that punish the PCs for ignoring them or attacking other monsters. When setting up the encounter, the blockers should typically start in between the PCs and the threats.

In some Prevent encounters blockers can change into threats and the other way around. For example if the PCs immobilize one of the goblin sappers, it might pass its explosives to an ally who then dashes toward the vulnerable dam.

Threats are Hard to Reach

Monsters are not the only thing that might keep the PCs from threats. Distance is the most basic way to do this. The threats should begin far enough away that it takes at least a full-round move to reach them.

Traps and terrain also play a critical roll in keeping the PCs away from the threats, or at least deal some damage along the way. Simple examples include rubble, pit traps, and placing the threats on higher ground. More fantastical ideas might include floating islands, or magic chains that bind anybody nearby.

Also consider using terrain to hamper ranged attackers. A cloud of mist may surround the threats, or pillars might block shots from certain angles.

How Much Time?

In some encounters it is easy to tell how close the enemies are to achieving their goals. In the goblin sapper example, the PCs can see how close the explosives are to the dam. With other encounters, such as completing the ritual, things are not quite as obvious. In these encounters it is still a good idea to give the PCs some idea of how close the villains are to succeeding. You might

allow the PCs an Arcana check to let them know how close the ritual is to completion, or you might describe the ritual to give the PCs the impression that it is nearly over. For example, near the end of the ritual a dark portal might appear and slowly expand in size.

Stats With That: Obtain

The Lost Sword (Sample Level 14): The PCs are on a quest to find a powerful sword famed for its ability to slay undead and have tracked it to an ancient crypt. Alas, the sword is surrounded by a hoard of skeletons and lodged in a stone about 15 squares from where the PCs begin. If one of them can fight their way past the skeletons, the PCs must then make either a moderate Religion check (DC 21) or spend a use of channel divinity to prove that their worthiness to wield the sword.

Once drawn, the sword shines with a holy light. Among any other properties it might have, it deals additional 5 radiant damage to undead. At the same time, the skeletons become so enraged that they focus their attacks completely on whoever wields the sword.

The Load Stone of Mire (Sample Level 4): The PCs are sent to retrieve the ancient Load Stone of Mire, but a rival band of mercenaries serving an evil lord arrive at the same time. Both groups begin the battle on opposite sides of a 40-square wide chamber with the loadstone in the middle (20 squares from each side).

The Load Stone Itself has strange magical properties. Though it is no bigger than a man's fist and it can easily be thrown, it weighs down the person who carries it (the target is slowed) and it attracts weapons to it (-2 to defenses against weapon attacks).

A creature can throw the stone with an Acrobatics or Athletics check. It goes a number of squares equal to the result divided by five. If this would cause it to go into another creature's square, that creature may attempt to grab it as an opportunity action by making an easy DC (10) Athletics or Acrobatics check. If the creature does not already have a free hand, he must drop one object he carries to grab the stone.

A creature with a free hand may pick the stone up off the floor or from a willing creature as a minor action, or try to pry it from an enemy as a move action. To take the stone away from an unwilling target the creature must make an Acrobatics check against the creature's Reflex defense, or an Athletics check with a DC equal to the target's Fortitude.



Variant: Protect

A Protect encounter is a kind of Prevent objective when the enemy goal is to slay a particular creature (or creatures) or destroy a particular object (or objects). This could be anything from protecting a noble dignitary from assassins to transporting the precious (but fragile) orbs of light through giant territory. The advice for prevent encounters still applies, plus there are a few additional factors to consider.

A Helpless MacGuffin

Whether it is an NPC or an object, whatever the PCs are protecting should not be able to do much (if anything) to defend itself, and should be rather fragile. It need not die from a single strike, but there should be a genuine fear that it will not survive long if left to itself.

You might also consider having several MacGuffins that all need protection rather than a single one. This serves several purposes. It forces the PCs to split their resources, defending all of the MacGuffins instead of focusing fire on protecting just one. It also allows for gradations of success and failure (rather than a binary win/lose), and can contribute to a dramatic story. If the PCs need only one of the three orb of light to activate the holy defense of the Sun's Temple, they might not mourn the loss of one. The loss of a second might strike fear into them, and they will go all-out to keep the final one safe.

Dedicated Foes

To make a protect encounter work, some of the foes must be dedicated to destroying the MacGuffin. Indeed, they must be so dedicated that they risk their own lives, suffering opportunity attacks and mark punishment from the PCs to fulfill their mission. If none are so dedicated, the PCs may quickly engage the foes and keep them away from the MacGuffin, which removes the risk to the MacGuffin, making the encounter similar to the typical slay all monsters battle.

Combinations

The objectives presented above give a wide range of options for encounters, but alone they do not cover every possible situation you can imagine. Some possible scenarios might be made by combining two or more of the above objectives into a single encounter.

Phases

One way to combine objectives is for the encounter to have multiple phases, and for each phase to feature a different objective. The PCs might need to break into the fortress of the Dark Overlord, steal the a magic sword from his treasure trove, and flee before the bulk of his guards arrive. You might have the encounter begin as breach objectives (to enter the fortress), then become an obtain encounter (to get the sword), and finally switch to an escape encounter once they have the sword.

Most of the time (but not always) the PCs will face different monsters during the different phases of the battle, so you have the option to build it as though it were really two or three separate encounters. However, if you do this, consider giving the PCs an alternate refresher (see Extended Encounters in Chapter 2) so they are not completely out of resources for the second half of the battle.

Simultaneous Objectives

Instead of having different objectives one after each other, the PCs might need complete multiple objectives at the same time. They might need to keep a war band at bay (Hold) while at the same time protecting a key diplomat from phasing assassins (Protect).

Simultaneous objectives often force the PCs to make difficult decisions. Should they continue to guard the gate or attempt to slay the assassins? This often leads to the party splitting to tackle different objectives.

Unlike a phased encounter, calculate your encounter budget as though it were a single encounter (but as a major set piece it will probably be on the higher end).

Stats With That: Prevent

Sappers (Sample Level 2): The heroes must prevent a group of goblin sappers from destroying a dam. At the beginning of the battle a large band of goblins has two bombs. Each is lit and will explode in five rounds. The goblins begin 30 squares away from the dam. The goblins with the bombs spend their entire turn moving, while others engage the PCs. The bombs are too heavy to throw, but another goblin adjacent to bomb can take it as a minor action. A PC can pick up an unattended bomb as a minor action, or try to pry it from a goblin by making an Acrobatics check opposed by the goblin's Reflex or an Athletics check against the goblin's Fortitude.

At the end of the fifth round, the bombs both explode. Each deals level-appropriate fire damage (2d8+6) to everybody with a burst 3. If the dam is within the area of either blast, it begins to collapse.

Multiple Options

An offshoot of simultaneous objectives is granting the PCs multiple paths to victory. The difference from simultaneous objectives is that PCs do not necessarily need to worry about all of the objectives, but any of them could lead to victory. In an encounter with multiple options, slaying all the monsters may well be a viable choice.

For example, the PCs might battle against a horde of undead in the heart of a defiled temple. They could simply slay all the monsters, or they might be able to control the undead if they get their hands on a dark holy symbol in the center of the temple (obtain) or they might be able to reactivate an ancient magic item that fills the temple with holy light that reduces all the undead to dust (achieve).

Blends

Since the objective categories in this book are general guidelines rather than rigid categories, many elements of your story will call for an objective that seems to fit multiple categories. In these cases, feel free to take some elements from each category to create the encounter you want. For example, a rescue mission might include elements of a protect objective (helpless MacGuffin and dedicated attackers) with an obtain objective (guards and difficult to reach).

Unlike phased or simultaneous objectives, in a blend the characters only have one goal. It just contains elements of multiple objectives described above.

Chapter 2:

Other Considerations



There are many elements of encounter building that are relevant to creating encounters with alternate objectives, but which are not tied to a specific objective.

Clear Expectations

It is important for the players and their PCs to know early on that they are dealing with an alternate objective. If they don't know going into the battle, they should discover it within the first round or two of combat. Otherwise, players may get frustrated to discover that after five rounds of combat they are no closer to ending it than when they began.

Depending on your play style you can warn them in character (the wizened sage warns that the necrocrystal constantly animates undead around it until cleansed with divine magic) or out of character (“Hey guys, just

so you know, the undead will keep spawning until you cleanse the crystal”).

Fatal or Important

In a combat encounter, alternate objectives can be fit into two categories, those that will result in a total party kill if the PCs fail (fatal) or they might just be an important to the PCs plans. For example, protecting an ancient sage who knows how to defeat the King of Lies is certainly important, but if the heroes somehow fail, they can go on a quest to discover another means. On the other hand, if the party is rushing to escape from the fire-giant's volcanic fortress before it erupts, failure to escape likely means the PCs are entombed in lava and ash.

While both options provide for a change of pace, only the first option introduces the chance of failure

(without a total party kill). Ultimately, we recommend making the choice that best fits the story. In some cases there will be no way to avoid death. However, when building your encounter, take at least a moment to consider what might happen if the PCs fail. Maybe if they fail to escape the volcanic stronghold, they are not instantly killed, but instead trapped within the fortress. They might be able to find a secret tunnel leading into the Underlands. The heroes must then make the dangerous journey through the Underlands before they return to the surface world and resume their quests.

Extended Encounters

The DMG recommends a certain amount of monsters for a balanced fight, but sometimes the story behind your encounter suggests more monsters. This is particularly appropriate when the PCs face waves of monsters such as in Hold encounters or those with multiple phases. If you run these battles with standard rules, even if the PCs are able to eventually defeat the encounter, they likely will end up with few resources remaining, and be reduced to slowly grinding down their foes with at-will attacks.

To add more energy to these extended encounters, we recommend including some form of alternate refreshers. These alternate refreshers allow the PCs to do things like spend healing surges and regain powers. The simplest way to do this is to state that the PCs gain the benefit of a short rest at a certain point. You might also spread these benefits out over the course of the battle. For example maybe they can spend a healing surge and recharge a single encounter power three times during the encounter.

There are several ways to determine when the PCs are able to refresh their powers. You might simply keep track of how many rounds the encounter lasts and grant the PCs a recharge on certain round. You could also tie the recharge to slaying certain foes or certain numbers of enemies. Recharges for slaying monsters should normally still be given to the whole group and not the individual who made the kill because certain characters are better at dealing out damage. The refresh might also be based on the encounter's objective. In a multiphase encounter, it's easy to have a refresher occur as the encounter switches phases. In an Escape encounter the PCs might gain a bonus when they reach certain way points, while in an Achieve objective the PCs might gain refreshers as they come closer to achieving their goals.

Another strategy you can use to make extended encounters more interesting is to include terrain powers that are tied to the battlefield, such as buckets of flaming oil that the PCs can drop on their enemies or a magical healing font that lets the PCs spend a healing surge. These terrain powers will allow the heroes to continue making interesting attacks without depleting their typical resources.

Skills

Skills play a part in many alternate objectives, and some encounters (especially Achieve encounters) require many skill checks. Three important questions to consider when building encounters with alternate objectives are:

How high should the DC be?

What kind of action should it take to use the skill?

What criteria you want to use to decide when the PCs succeed?

Skills in alternate objective encounters are rarely something that every PC needs to pass, or even attempt, and there is often little consequence for individual failure. Because of this we recommend not using easy DCs,



and instead focus on medium and difficult DCs. (For specific DCs, consult your Core Rulebooks).

Skills also generally take at least some amount of time to use. Some skill use might require a standard action, especially if success has a particularly large impact on the battle. Standard actions are well suited when a success not only works towards accomplishing the final goal, but also has an immediate effect. For example, when trying to convince an enemy to join the PCs' side, a successful skill check might immediately stun the foe for a round and when they reach a total of six successful checks, he is finally convinced to join the PCs.

However, if the encounter requires many uses of such a skill, and if success does not have an immediate impact, PCs might feel like they've "wasted" their action. In these cases it can be nice to let the PCs attempt the check as a minor action, or at least provide it as an option.

One solution that works well is to change the skill DC based on the type of action that the PC uses. If the PC uses a standard action, success requires a medium DC, but if the hero uses a minor action, it requires a difficult DC.

Skill challenges (first presented in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*) are one tool that you can use to determine the PC's success or failure with a more extended skill check. They work well in some situations (particularly diplomatic ones), but in other situations you might want to use a different resolution system. In some encounters it will not matter how many times the PCs fail — only count the successes — and when they have achieved the required number, they "win." In another system the total number of successes might be in flux, such as the doomsday clock that progresses a little each turn (thus requiring more total successes the longer the PCs take to complete the task).

When deciding what criteria to use when the PCs succeed at a multiple skill check challenge, think first about what the PCs are trying to achieve in story terms, and then apply the method that seems most appropriate.

Preparation

Many encounters featuring alternate objectives allow the heroes additional time to prepare for battle. They might be defending a citadel from attack or planning an ambush against enemy supplies. In these cases, consider things that the PCs might be able to do during that time. They might set up traps, build barricades, or gather intelligence on the enemy.

And while it's good to prepare some options for your players, they will likely come up with additional tactics. Try to reward creative players by letting their strategies play out during the ensuing battle.

As a general rule of thumb, the more time that PCs have to prepare, the more advantage they will gain in the coming battle. Therefore, you may wish to give greater time to prepare for more challenging battles. Of course you also want to consider story implications when deciding how much time the PCs have to prepare. When they have been discovered in a cave network by goblin scouts, the PCs might have only rounds or minutes to prepare, but when preparing a city for an invasion, the PCs should have days if not weeks.

Non-Combat NPCs

Many encounters with alternate objectives feature NPCs who are not intended to be combat challenges to the heroes. They might be clients that the PCs are trying to protect, targets they are trying to eliminate, or just innocent bystanders caught in the crossfire.

When the NPC is not intended to challenge the PCs, it's easiest to keep the NPC stats as simple as possible. They likely need little more than defenses and hit points and might not need a single power. If you want the NPC to contribute something to the battle, consider giving him powers that aid the heroes. For example the NPC might be able to heal the hero, grant a bonus to attack or damage rolls, or allow the PC to make a basic attack as a free action.

Rituals

Completing or disrupting rituals are a frequent goal of adventures with alternate objective, however the default rules for rituals do not always make for the most dynamic battles. Some rituals take an extremely long time and you can only have so many battles that conveniently start just a few rounds before the ritual is over.

You may wish to slightly modify ritual mechanics, especially if the PCs are casting them while in combat. Rather than having a set casting time, you might require the ritual casters to achieve a certain number of successful skill checks in order to completely cast the ritual. Failed checks will not cause the ritual to fail, they just mean that the PCs make no progress toward completing the ritual. These skill checks likely eat up actions (see the section on Skills earlier in this chapter), but the casters can otherwise participate in the battle. If you are worried that the heroes might complete the ritual too quickly,

limit the number of attempts or successes that PCs can make each round.

Depending on the nature of the story, you might design a new ritual that is very narrow in focus (such as a ritual designed to open a specific dimensional gate). In this case, you should probably not require the PCs to spend any money to copy the ritual into their ritual books.

Winning without a Fight

When the objective is something beyond slaying all the monsters, the players may come up with a way to achieve their goal without actually making a single attack. This is especially true when the PCs have time to prepare for the encounter ahead of time.

For example, PCs might be on a quest to steal a single gem from the under the nose of a terrible three-headed watch dog. You thought that the PCs would have the fighter engage the dog while a rogue runs to the gem and pockets it. Instead, the PC wizard casts invisibility on the rogue, who sneaks in and lifts the gem without ever being seen.

In most cases, unless the combat is absolutely crucial to the story, we recommend that you at least give the PCs a decent chance for success. Just as you work hard to come up with creative encounters, your players work hard to come up with creative solutions, and you should reward creative play.

That is not to say that you should let them succeed without any risk. They will likely need to make several skill checks to pull off their plan without a hitch. In the above example you would require the rogue to make Stealth checks, and you might also require the heroes to distract the dog at the moment the rogue picks up the gem (so that the dog does not notice the stone disappearing). Perhaps the bard steps up and plays a soothing tune.



Chapter 3:

Sample Encounters



The following encounters all contain alternate objectives. They are designed as examples to help you create your own encounters and as complete encounters that you can drop directly into your game.

Necklace Stealing

This encounter features an Obtain objective with multiple paths to victory. The PC must relieve a noble woman of her necklace. It is recommend for PCs levels 1-4

A woman enters the bar, escorted by three men with swords at their hips. Even under her thick cloak, and layer of “grime” you see the delicate features of a noble birth. More importantly, you see a thin line of gold around her neck.

Adventure Hooks

Stealing from a Thief: The Lady Esthar’s necklace is not rightfully hers. She either stole it herself or paid

others to acquire it. However, because of Lady Esthar’s wealth and political connections, the true owner cannot pursue the matter through standard channels. With no other alternatives, the owner hires the PCs to obtain the necklace.

In a variation of this, the PCs’ employer claims to be the rightful owner of the necklace, but really is just duping the heroes into doing her dirty work.

Holy Relic: While Lady Esthar regards the necklace as another trinket, the followers of the Sun King consider the necklace is a holy relic. A priest who has since risen to sainthood crafted it centuries ago by. The local temple of the Sun King is outraged that Lady Esthar treats the relic so flippantly. To make matters worse, rumors abound that Lady Esthar secretly worships dark gods outlawed in any civilized society.

The Map: Within the intricate patterns engraved on the necklace are directions to the legendary golden city Saldonir. The city is rumored to hold vast treasures

and powerful magic, but since its disappearance, no one has found Saldonir and lived to tell the tale.

Once the PCs obtain the necklace, they may need to find an ancient sage or book to decode it. It is a long and dangerous journey to the mythic city (if it exists).

Preparations

For this encounter the PCs should know that Lady Esthar will be in the tavern to meet a wizard named Calbaro. The reason they meet might depend on your plot hook. Perhaps he is a fence selling more stolen jewelry or a member of Esthar's dark cult. Calbaro likely arrives at the tavern an hour before Lady Esthar.

The heroes should have anywhere from a few hours to a few days to scout the tavern and plot their attack. The heroes should be warned that Lady Esthar's guards are all more powerful than the PCs.

Distraction

It is difficult for the PCs to obtain the necklace while Lady Esthar's guards are at their best, so the PCs may decide (and a friendly NPC might suggest) to create a distraction. Below are a few possible suggestions, but feel free to reward your PCs for creative play.

Bar Fight: The PCs instigate a bar fight, either a staged fight among themselves or by provoking a patron or even one of Esthar's guards. If the fight is real, the distraction automatically succeeds. But if it is merely a staged fight, the PCs must succeed a DC 13 skill check. Possible skills include Acrobatics, Athletics, or Bluff.

Performance: Heroes less prone to violence might try to distract the guard with a performance. To do so the PCs must make a DC 13 skill check. Possible skills might include Acrobatics, Bluff, or Diplomacy. You might also allow a bard (or similar character) to automatically succeed at such a distraction.

Disturbance: The PCs might think to create another disturbance, such as by lighting a small fire or releasing a box of snakes in the tavern. Depending on the plan, you might allow it to automatically succeed, or ask the PCs to make a DC 13 skill check (Nature might be used for the fire or snake examples).

Theft

At some point the PCs have to actually take the necklace from around Lady Esthar's neck. PCs may attempt to do this either through stealth or force. Of the two, stealth is safer.

Stealth: To sneak the necklace off Lady Esthar, a PC adjacent to her must make a Thievery check. If the

distraction succeeded, the PC needs to make a DC 13 check. But if it failed, the hero instead needs to make a DC 20 check. Further, this check only allows the character to get the necklace away from Lady Esthar. The PC must also make a Stealth check with a similar DC (13 with distraction or DC 20 without) to do so without being noticed. A character who fails both checks not only comes up empty handed, but the guards notice and attack the PC.

Force: The heroes may also try to simply snatch the necklace from Lady Esthar. To do so, a PC needs to make either an Acrobatics or Athletics check. The DC is 13 if the distraction succeeded or 20 if it failed. In this case, even if the PC succeeds the guards automatically notice and attack.

Set Up

Lady Esthar (E)

3 Esthar's Body Guards (G)

1 Calbaro, Human Wizard (C)

12 Drunken Brawlers (B)

Tactics

The bodyguards do everything the can to keep Lady Esthar safe. They try to escort her out of the tavern, if possible, or otherwise form a human wall around her. The wizard Calbaro prefers to keep foes away from him, using his icy grasp and ice wall if possible.

The drunken brawlers all just like a good fight and will attack whoever is nearest (maybe other enemies of the PCs).

Terrain

Furniture: The tables and chairs are difficult terrain. A character can tip over a table as a minor action and use it to gain cover.

Variation: Town Guards

To make things more complicated, the town guards could get involved. This might come up during the planning stage of the encounter and the PCs might know about how quickly they arrive. This puts an extra time pressure on the PCs to obtain the necklace and get away quickly. This might also prompt Lady Esthar to depart quickly, as she does not want to be found in a tavern of such low repute.

Depending on the how the encounter plays out, the guards may try to take the PCs into custody when they arrive. The PCs are welcome to fight them or flee, but if they do, the "heroes" become wanted men.

Esthar's Guards **Level 3 Elite Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid (human) **XP 300**

Initiative +5 **Senses** Perception +7
HP 92; **Bloodied** 46
AC 19; **Fortitude** 16; **Reflex** 14; **Will** 15
Speed 5
Saving Throws +2; **Action Point** 1

Standard Actions

⬇ Longsword (weapon) • **At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature) +8 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8 + 6 damage.
Effect: The target is marked.

⬇ Shield Bash (weapon) • **At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creatures) +8 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 6 damage and the target is knocked prone.

⬇ Slash and Bash (weapon) • **At-Will**

Effect: The body guard makes a longsword and shield bash attack against the same target.

↶ Flurry of Blades (weapon) • **Recharge** When First Bloodied

Attack: Close burst 1 (all enemies in burst); +8 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 6 damage.
Effect: The target is marked.

Move Actions

To the Side of My Master • **Encounter**

Effect: The body guard shifts up to its speed (5 squares). It must end this move adjacent to an ally.

Reactions

⬇ **Retributive Strike** (weapon) • **At-Will**

Trigger: An enemy marked by the bodyguard shifts or makes an attack that does not include the bodyguard.
Effect: The bodyguard makes a longsword attack against the target.

Skills Insight +7

Str 18 (+5) **Dex** 15 (+3) **Wis** 12 (+2)
Con 14 (+3) **Int** 10 (+1) **Cha** 9 (+0)
Alignment Unaligned **Language** Common

Lady Esthar **Level 2 Lurker**
Medium natural humanoid (human) **XP 125**

Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +2
HP 22; **Bloodied** 11
AC 14; **Fortitude** 11; **Reflex** 14; **Will** 15
Speed 6

Traits

Noncombatant

Lady Esthar cannot make attacks. Allies flanking with her do not gain combat advantage.

Skills Bluff +9, Diplomacy +9, History +6

Str 9 (+0) **Dex** 14 (+3) **Wis** 12 (+2)
Con 10 (+1) **Int** 11 (+1) **Cha** 17 (+4)
Alignment Evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common

Calbaro **4 Elite Controller**
Medium natural humanoid (human) **XP 400**

Initiative +3 **Senses** Perception +4
HP 104; **Bloodied** 52
AC 18; **Fortitude** 15; **Reflex** 17; **Will** 16
Speed 5
Saving Throws +2; **Action Point** 1

Standard Actions

⬇ **Thunder Staff** (thunder, weapon) • **At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature) +9 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8 + 5 thunder damage and push the target 2 squares.

⚔ **Force Ram** (force) • **At-Will**

Attack: Ranged 10 (one creatures) +7 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d6 + 5 force damage and the target is knocked prone.

❄ **Icy Grasp** (cold) • **Recharge** 5, 6

Attack: Area blast 1 within 10 (all creatures in burst)
Hit: 3d6 + 5 cold damage and the target is immobilized (save ends).

❄ **Ice Wall** (cold) • **Encounter**

Effect: Area wall 6 within 10; The wizard creates a wall of ice 2 squares high in any unoccupied squares within range. The wall is blocking terrain. Each square has 30 hp, it is vulnerable 10 fire, and it automatically hit by any attack that target AC, Fortitude, or Reflex.

Any creature that ends its turn adjacent to the wall takes 1d6 + 5 cold damage. The wall lasts until the end of the encounter.

Skills Arcana +10, Insight +9

Str 8 (+1) **Dex** 12 (+3) **Wis** 15 (+4)
Con 12 (+3) **Int** 18 (+5) **Cha** 10 (+2)
Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Draconic

Drunken Brawler **Level 1 Minion Brute**
Medium humanoid (human) **XP 25**

Initiative +2 **Senses** Perception +0
HP 1; a miss never damage a minion
AC 13; **Fortitude** 14; **Reflex** 13; **Will** 11

Traits

Non-Lethal Combat

A creature reduced to 0 hp by a drunken brawler is knocked unconscious, but is not at risk of dying.

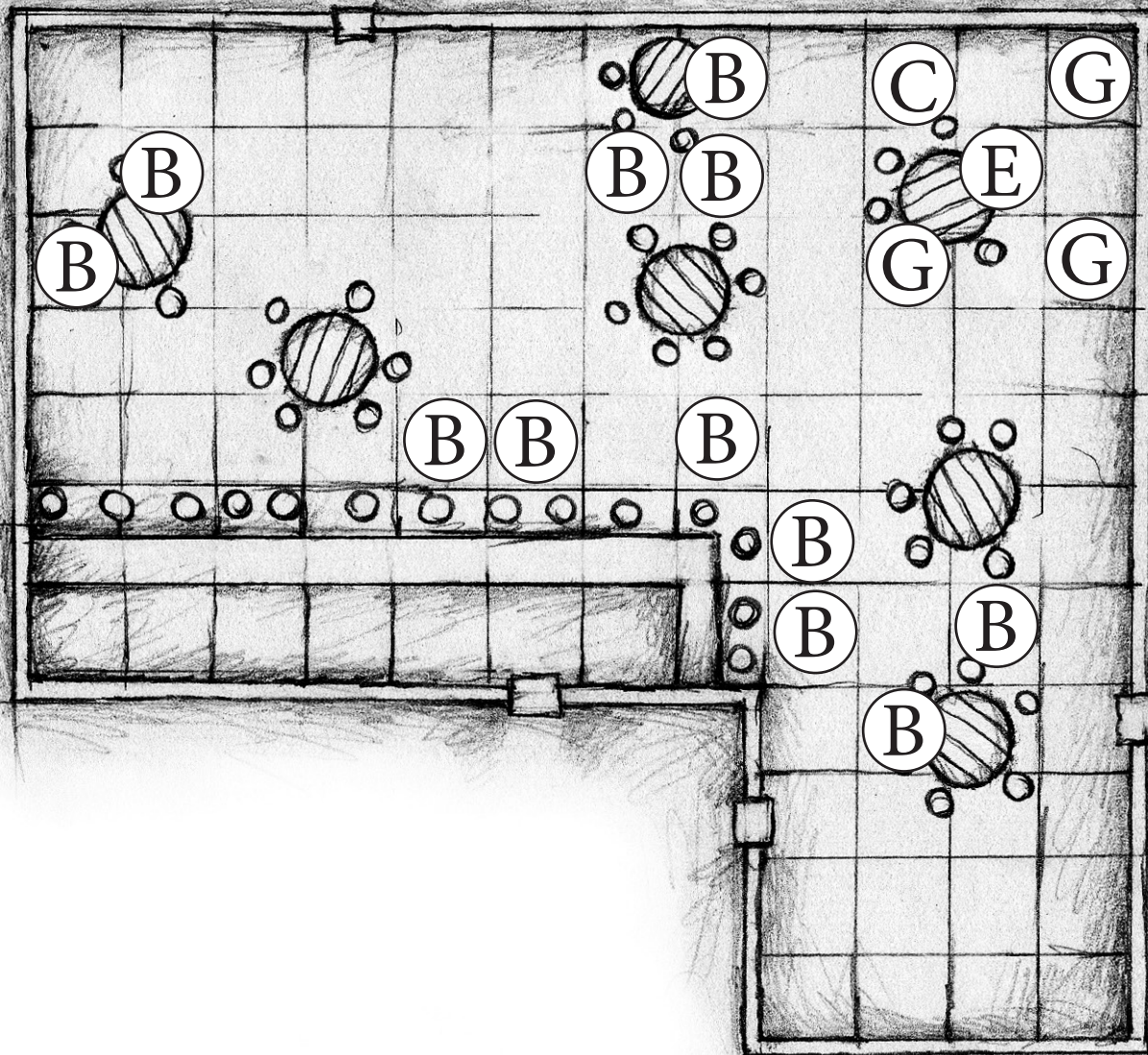
Standard Actions

⬇ **Improvised Weapon** (weapon) • **At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature) +6 vs. AC
Hit: 6 damage.

Skills: Arcana +10, Insight +9

Str 8 (+1) **Dex** 12 (+3) **Wis** 15 (+4)
Con 12 (+3) **Int** 18 (+5) **Cha** 10 (+2)
Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Draconic



Caves of Ice

In this encounter the heroes must escape from a collapsing ice cave. This encounter features an Escape objective, which can be easily modified to a Breach objective (see Variation: Into the Ice Cave). It is recommended for characters levels 3-6.

The massive dome of ice above you begins to buckle, and few icicles crash to the ground. You suspect that the entire cave system will be on your head, in just a few seconds.

Adventure Hooks

Dragon's Lair: The young white dragon Winter Fang has been terrorizing the surrounding community. The heroes track the dragon back to its lair and defeat it in glorious battle, but as it falls, the PCs realize that Winter Fang's life force was tied to the cavern. It collapses

around them while fragments of the dragon's powerful essence animate the ice in the cave walls.

Winter's Kiss: The PCs hear word of a powerful magic item called Winter's Kiss (the item may be a weapon or implement that your PCs would enjoy). As they travel to the caves of ice they encounter yeti, winter wolves, and a band of barbarians that insist the PCs abandon their quest for Winter's Kiss. When they arrive, the caves are eerily quiet, that is until a PC removes Winter's Kiss from its icy casement and the entire cavern begins to fall in.

Ice Above the Fire: A cabal of powerful wizards has discovered an arcane weapon sealed in a long dormant volcano. To guard the weapon, those who hide it constructed magical guardians from the ice that surrounded the volcano's entrance. Unfortunately, these guardians did not stop the cabal. They are now at work in the heart of the volcano attempting to reactivate the weapon.

After the PCs battle their way past the icy guardians, they must battle the wizards from the cabal in the ancient lava tubes and stop them before they reclaim the arcane weapon. (This adventure hook uses the Into the Ice Cave variation listed below.

Cave In

The ice caves begin to collapse on the first round, and the fall expands each additional round. There are two stages to the collapse, partial and total collapse.

Any creature that ends its turn in an area of partial collapse suffers 2d6 points of damage, but is otherwise unhindered. Any creature that ends its turn in an area of total collapse suffers 6d6 points of damage and ongoing 10 cold damage (save ends). Further, the character is buried under several feet of ice. It can attempt to dig itself out with a DC 22 Athletics check (each attempt takes one minute), or friends from above who can locate the character (DC 15 Perception), can dig him out automatically.

At the end of the first round the area marked on the map begins to partially collapse. Each round after

that the area that was partially collapsing totally collapses, and a new zone of partial collapse extends 6 squares down all the tunnels.

Set Up

2 Icicle Casters (C)

12 Icelings (I)

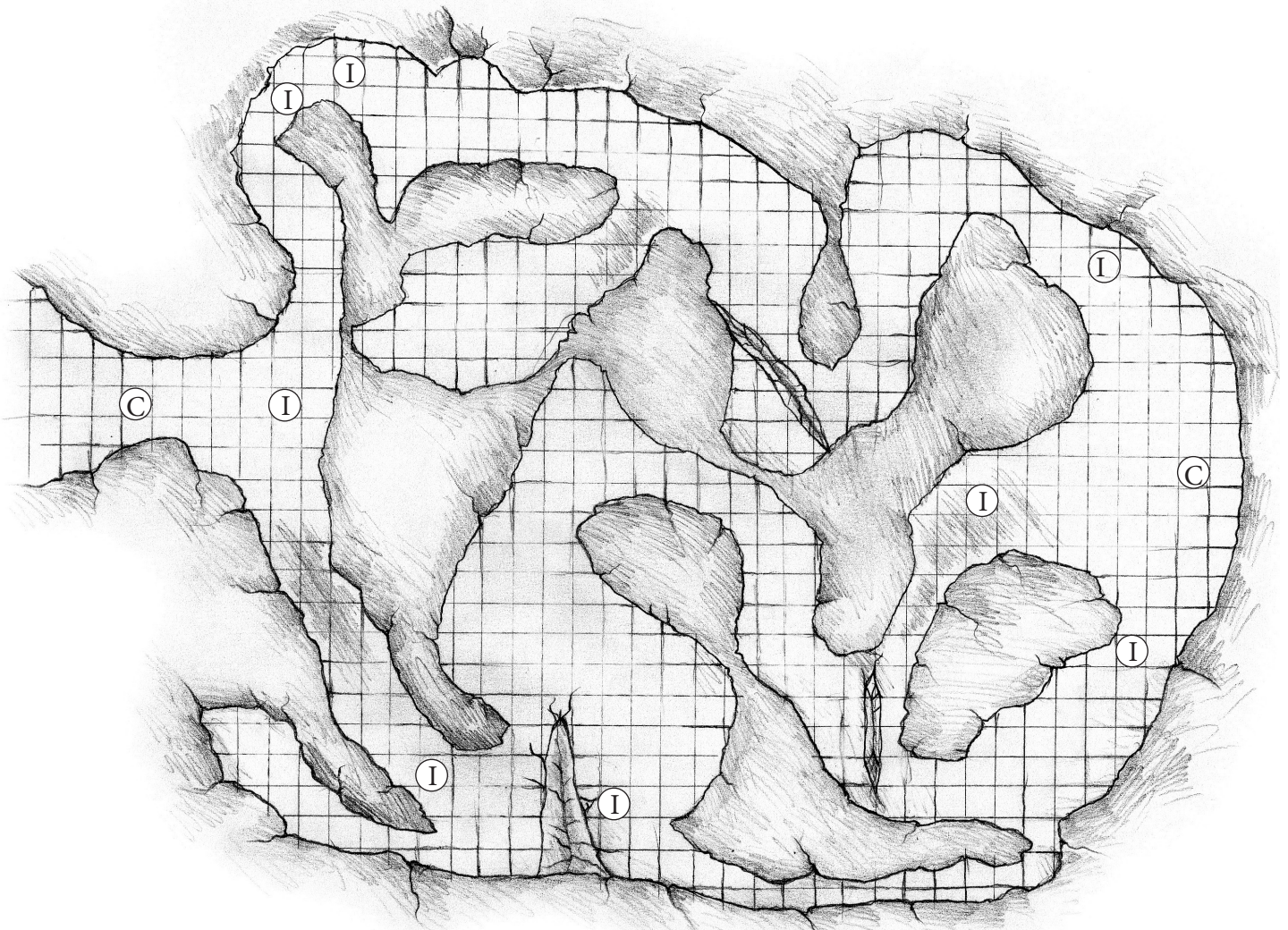
Tactics

The ice elementals are part of an ancient magic meant to trap the intruders in the cave. They do their best to hamper the PCs movement to prevent them from fleeing.

Terrain

Ice Sheet: A character may move safely over the ice sheet by treating it as difficult terrain. A character who treats the ice as normal terrain must make a DC 15 Acrobatics check or fall prone.

Ice Walls: Characters can attempt to burst through any wall, though some are easier than others. All walls are automatically hit by any attack that targets AC, Re-



flex, or Fortitude, and all are vulnerable 10 fire. The thin walls (on borders between squares) have 20 hp per square, while the thick walls (occupying whole squares) have 80 hp per square.

Fissure: The fissures in the ground are 20 feet deep (2d10 falling damage). It requires a DC 10 Athletics check to climb out of one.

Variation: Into the Cave

Instead of the PCs trying to escape from a collapsing cave, they might be trying to fight their way past the guardians. In the **Ice Above the Fire** adventure hook, there should be an opening in the floor of the large chamber at the eastern end of the cave. This is a fifty-foot drop that leads to the volcano below. The same room should be the goal for other breach encounters,

Iceling	Level 6 Soldier Minion
Medium elemental animate (ice)	XP 63
Initiative +8	Senses Perception +5
HP 1; a miss never damage a minion	Darkvision
AC 22; Fortitude 19; Reflex 18; Will 15	
Resist 10 cold	
Speed 8 (Ice walk)	
Traits	
Aura of Cold	
Aura 1; Enemies in the aura cannot shift.	
Standard Actions	
⬇ Icy Grasp (cold) • At-Will	
<i>Attack:</i> Melee 1 (one creature) +11 vs. AC	
<i>Hit:</i> 5 cold damage and the target is slowed	
Triggered Actions	
⬅ Death Burst (cold) • At-Will	
<i>Trigger:</i> The iceling is reduced to 0 hp by an attack that does not deal fire damage.	
<i>Attack:</i> Close burst 1 (all creature in burst) +9 vs. Fortitude	
<i>Hit:</i> 5 cold damage and the target is slowed until the end of its next turn.	
Str 19 (+7)	Dex 16 (+6)
Con 14 (+5)	Int 3 (-1)
Wis 10 (+3)	Cha 8 (+2)
Alignment Unaligned	Languages Understands primordial

and it might hold a powerful magic item, or a prisoner in need of rescue.

As a breach encounter the cave does not collapse around the PCs. To keep the pressure up, the ice elementals instead constantly reform after their destruction. The starting locations for the elementals become their spawn points. At the end of each round, roll 1d6 for each slain elemental. On a result of five or six the enemy reemerges from the ice at its spawning location.

You might describe how a magical glow moves from every destroyed foe into the ice walls of the cave.

Icicle Caster	Level 4 Artillery
Medium elemental animate (ice)	XP 200
Initiative +6	Senses Perception +2
HP 45; Bloodied 22	
AC 16 Fortitude 16; Reflex 17; Will 14	
Resist 10 cold; Vulnerable 5 fire	
Speed 7 (Ice walk)	
Traits	
Aura of Cold	
Aura 1; Enemies in the aura cannot shift.	
Standard Actions	
⬇ Freezing Claw (cold) • At-Will	
<i>Attack:</i> Melee 1 (one creature) +9 vs. AC	
<i>Hit:</i> 1d8 + 5 cold damage.	
⤴ Icicle (cold) • At-Will	
<i>Attack:</i> Ranged 10 (one creature) +11 vs. AC	
<i>Hit:</i> 2d6 + 5 cold damage and the target is slowed.	
❄ Icicle Blast (cold) • Recharge when first bloodied	
<i>Attack:</i> Area burst 1 within 10 (all creatures in burst) +9 vs. Reflexes	
<i>Hit:</i> 1d8 + 5 cold.	
<i>Effect:</i> The blast creates a zone that lasts until the end of the encounter. The zone is difficult terrain, and any creature that ends its turn in the zone takes 5 cold damage.	
Str 12 (+3)	Dex 18 (+6)
Con 15 (+4)	Int 3 (-2)
Wis 11 (+2)	Cha 7 (+0)
Alignment Unaligned	Languages Understands primordial

The Arson

This encounter features the heroes battling to extinguish a raging fire in an abandoned warehouse before the flame spreads to the rest of the city. It is an Achieve encounter and recommended for characters level 7-10.

Onlookers stare at the long-abandoned warehouse as smoke bellow from the windows. Nearby buildings of shoddy construction will likely catch alight soon unless somebody stops the fire.

Adventure Hooks

Exotic Smugglers: A gang of smugglers has been using the abandoned warehouse to store their goods. They brought in the fire beasts for a tiefling pyromancer who wants them for his experiments. While the smugglers frequently deal with dangerous animals, in this case, they underestimated the pens' ability to hold the pyrope and fire bugs. If you want to complicate matters, there might be other strange creatures in the warehouse. They might be caged and needing rescue, or free creatures that threaten the PCs.

If the heroes succeed in extinguishing the fire before things get out of control, they might be able to find more clues about the smugglers and their pyromancer client.

A Burnt Offering: A cult worshiping a primordial lord of fire operated secretly in the city for some time. It kept a low profile while quietly growing in strength. Now the cult seeks to draw their fire lord's attention by setting massive blazes throughout the city.

PCs who pay attention to the crowd outside might notice several of them bear a strange brand on their wrist. These are cult members who have come to witness their holy work. If the PCs fail to notice the cults involvement with this fire, the cult will surely strike again.

Cleansing Flame: The fire creatures were left deliberately in the warehouse to start a fire that looked like an accident. The target was not the abandoned warehouse, but the brothel next door. The perpetrator is an overly zealous priest of the Sun King who despises the house of ill repute and hates himself for succumbing to temptation within.

If the PCs succeed in extinguishing the fire, there may be further attacks against the brothel or the women who work there. If the PCs fail, some of the women who escape the blaze might give the heroes a clue to what really happened.

The Smoke

Any creature that breathes and does not have the fire subtype that ends its turn inside the warehouse risks smoke inhalation. Such a creature must make a DC 12 Endurance check at the end of its turn or lose one healing surge.

The Fire

As the encounter begins, there are 18 squares of fire terrain in the warehouse (marked with and @@ on the map). The fire naturally spreads on its own, but can be put out by clever PCs.

Fire Terrain : Any creature that ends its turn adjacent to a square fire terrain suffers 5 fire damage. Any creature that ends its turn in a square containing fire suffers 10 fire damage.

Spreading the Fire: At the end of each round, roll 1d6 for each square of terrain currently on fire. For each die that results in a 6, the fire spreads to one additional square. Choose the new fire squares in any space adjacent to a current fire square.

If the fire ever spreads to 36 or more squares, the warehouse is beyond redemption, and the fire spreads to adjoining buildings. How devastating the final damage is depends on the DM.

Fighting the Fire

Here a few suggestions of ways that the PCs might be able to combat the fire. Feel free to reward PCs clever ideas for additional ways to combat the blaze.

Unless otherwise stated, PCs using the skills may make a check as a standard action with a DC of 17, or as a minor action with a DC of 26. PCs may attempt as many checks as they have actions for each turn.

Smother the Fire: A character can attempt to smother a single adjacent square of fire. If the character tries to deftly avoid the fire, he may use Acrobatics. If he tries to use force to quench the fire quickly, he may use Athletics. If he tries to resist the heat, he may use Endurance. A character may also chose to ignore the danger and automatically put out the fire, but in doing so takes 10 fire damage (in addition to any damage incurred from ending in or adjacent to fire).

Bucket Brigade: A PC can try to organize nearby citizens to form a bucket brigade to help extinguish the fire. They can attempt this using either Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate. Using this method, the squares nearest the street are extinguished first and one square is extinguished for each successful check.

Cold Attacks: A character can use attacks with the cold descriptor to fight the fire. A square may be targeted as though it were an enemy creature, but the PC does not need to make an attack roll. The character makes an Arcana, Nature, or Religion check depending on whether it is an arcane, primal, or divine power (DM may decide the skill for other powers). If the power also targets an actual creature, treat the DC as though it were a minor action even if the power requires a standard action to use. If the power targets multiple squares, roll for each square separately.

Set Up

3 Pyropedes (P)
10 Fire Bugs (B)

Tactics

The fire creature are motivated by hunger. They are not very intelligent, but their instincts tell them to go after the weakest targets. The pyropedes attempt to flee if reduced to half their bloodied value (24 hp).



Terrain

Fire Squares: See The Fire above.

Odds and Ends: The various crates, boxes, and barrels in the warehouse are difficult terrain.

Variation: Explosive Barrels

If you want to add another factor for the PCs to deal with, you can make some or all of the barrels in the battle potentially explosive. They might be filled with oil, alcohol, or explosive powder.

In this scenario, if at the end of the round (before the fire spreads) an explosive barrel is in a square of fire terrain, it explodes, making the following attack:

C Barrel Explosion

Attack: Close burst 1 (all creature in burst) +11 vs. Reflex

Hit: 2d8 + 7 fire damage.

Effect: The area of the burst is filled with fire terrain.

Pyropede	Level Skirmisher 9
Medium elemental magical beast (fire)	XP 400

Initiative +11 **Senses** Perception +4

HP 97; **Bloodied** 48

AC 23; **Fortitude** 21; **Reflex** 23; **Will** 18

Resist 10 fire

Speed 8; climb 6

Traits

Burning Blood

An adjacent creature that hits the pyropede with a melee attack takes 5 fire damage.

Standard Actions

⬇ Bite (fire) • At-Will

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature) +14 vs. AC

Hit: 1d8 + 8 damage and 1d8 fire damage.

↘ Flaming Spittle (fire) • At-Will

Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +12 vs. Reflex

Hit: 2d6 + 6 fire damage and ongoing 5 fire damage.

↙ Blast of Flame (fire) • Recharge when first bloodied

Attack: Close blast 5 (all creatures in blast); +12 vs. Reflex

Hit: 3d6 + 10 fire damage.

Miss: Half damage.

Move Actions

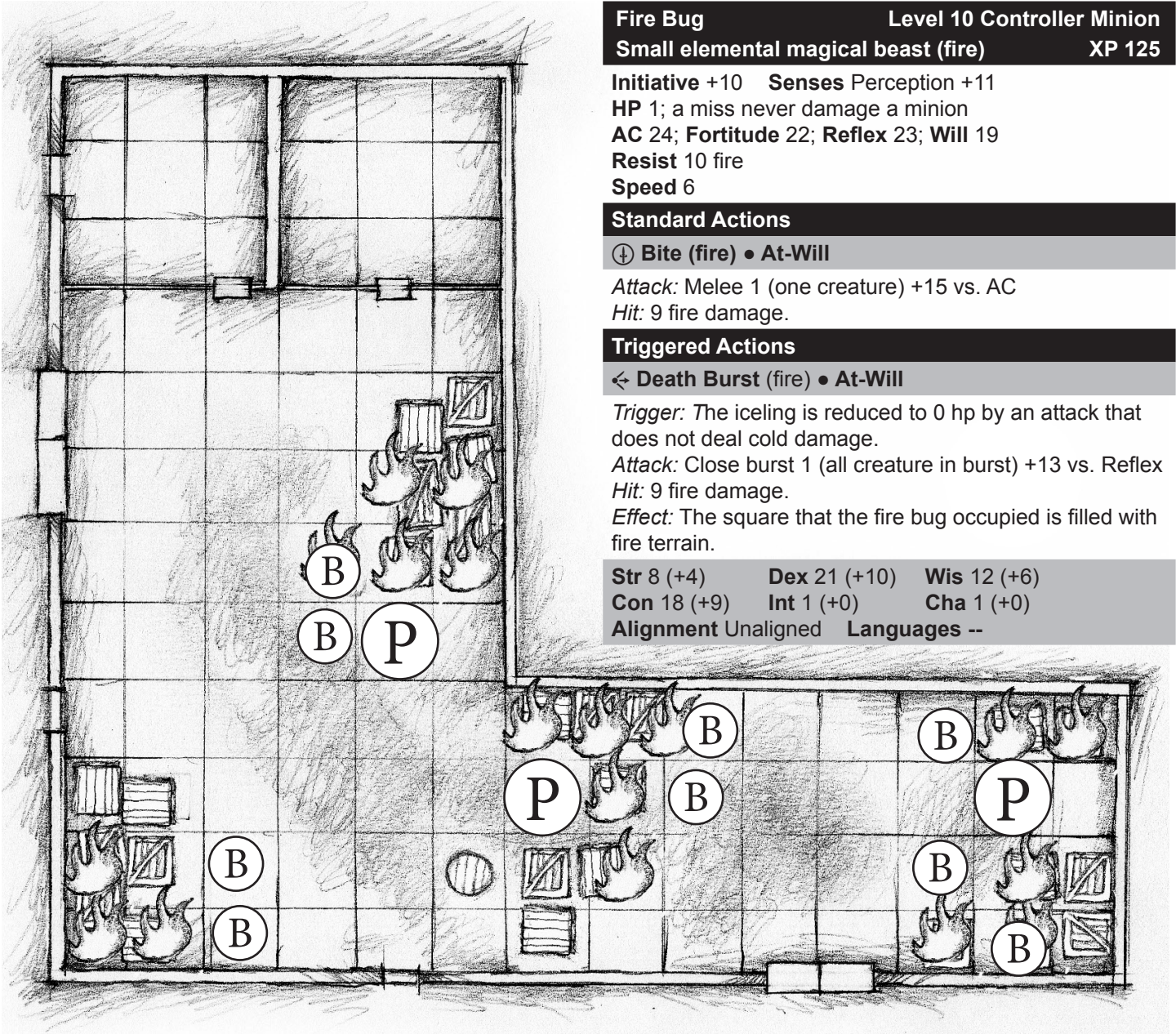
Scuttle • At-Will

Effect: The pyropede shifts half its speed (4 squares).

Str 14 (+6) **Dex** 20 (+9) **Wis** 13 (+4)

Con 17 (+7) **Int** 1 (-1) **Cha** 6 (+1)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** —



Fire Bug **Level 10 Controller Minion**
Small elemental magical beast (fire) **XP 125**

Initiative +10 **Senses Perception +11**
HP 1; a miss never damage a minion
AC 24; **Fortitude 22**; **Reflex 23**; **Will 19**
Resist 10 fire
Speed 6

Standard Actions

⬇ **Bite (fire)** • **At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature) +15 vs. AC
Hit: 9 fire damage.

Triggered Actions

⬅ **Death Burst (fire)** • **At-Will**

Trigger: The iceling is reduced to 0 hp by an attack that does not deal cold damage.
Attack: Close burst 1 (all creature in burst) +13 vs. Reflex
Hit: 9 fire damage.
Effect: The square that the fire bug occupied is filled with fire terrain.

Str 8 (+4) **Dex 21 (+10)** **Wis 12 (+6)**
Con 18 (+9) **Int 1 (+0)** **Cha 1 (+0)**
Alignment Unaligned **Languages --**

The Assassination

In this encounter the PCs must protect a young prince from a dedicated band of assassins. It is a Protect encounter (subset of Prevent) and suggested for characters level 11-13.

As you come around the bend, you see armored warriors protecting a robbed woman who points a glowing staff to you.

Adventure Hooks

A Father's Love: The young Prince Ulgair desires to see his kingdom for what it really is and believes that to do so he must escape his father's guard. Prince Ulgair ran away from the castle in the dead of night to explore the world. The King could simply have his guards bring Prince Ulgair back, but he fears that this will only prompt the Prince to escape again.

Instead the king hires the PCs to act as secret guards. They are to protect Prince Ulgair, but must not reveal the King's role in their protections.

The King expects little more than brigands to trouble the prince, but the King's brother takes the opportunity to eliminate the King's only son, making himself the heir to the throne. Of course the assassin do not truly know who hired them.

The Lost King: The PCs are hired to protect a ragged man who claims to be nothing more than a simple



traveler. However, when the assassins attack, the truth becomes clear. The ragged man is in fact Prince Ulgair, son of the previous King who was disposed and murdered after a civil war some ten years ago.

To complicate matters, Prince Ulgair does not remember being a prince, indeed he remembers nothing from the time before the rebellion. His earliest memories are being raised by a kind but secretive merchant.

The Gray Men

The assassins hired to kill Prince Ulgair are known as the Gray Men. They recruit their members young from orphanages and off the street. The Gray Men hold no allegiance to any kingdom organization, and will take any mission if the client can afford to pay. While the Gray Men in this encounter are all half-orcs, Gray Men come from any race.

Despite the name, there are many women among the Gray Men.

Preparation

At the start of the encounter, the Gray Men war mage, warriors, and initiates are visible in the middle of the road. The assassins lurk in the woods, but PCs with a passive Perception of 25 or higher may notice them.

Set Up

- 1 Gray Men War Mage (M)
- 2 Gray Men Warriors (W)
- 2 Gray Men Assassin (A)
- 3 Gray Man Initiate (I)

Tactics

The Gray Men begin by trying to draw the PCs away from Prince Ulgair. The war mage unleashes a fireball on the party and the initiates open fire with their crossbows. When a sizable portion of the PCs have engaged the main group in melee, the assassins trigger the falling trees and attack Prince Ulgair. The assassins focus entirely on Prince Ulgair, to the point where they ignore PC marks and opportunity attacks.

Terrain

Trees: The trees are difficult terrain and provide cover.
Falling Trees: The assassins have prepared two of the trees to fall with a slight push. As a minor action the trees fall down and block the area in a line between the two trees. In order to make it through the branches and over the trunk, a creature must make a DC 20 Athletics or Acrobatics check, and even then they treat the area as difficult terrain.

Grey Men War Mage **Level 13 Artillery**Medium natural humanoid (half-orc) **XP 800**

Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +6
HP 100; **Bloodied** 50 Low-light vision
AC 25; **Fortitude** 24; **Reflex** 27; **Will** 25
Speed 6

Standard Actions⚔ **Staff** (weapon) • **At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature) +18 vs. AC
Hit: 1d10 + 7 damage.

✦ **Force Explosion** (Force) • **At-Will**

Attack: Area burst 1 within 10 (all creatures in burst); +18 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d8 + 7 force damage and the target is knocked prone.

✦ **Ball of Fire** (Fire) • **Encounter**

Attack: Area burst 3 within 20 (all creatures in burst); +18 vs. Reflex
Hit: 5d6 + 7 fire damage and ongoing 10 fire damage (save ends).
Miss: Half damage.

↔ **Dazzling Blast** (Radiant) • **Recharge when first bloodied**

Attack: Close burst 5 (all creatures in burst); +18 vs. Will
Hit: 3d8 + 7 radiant damage and the target is dazed (save ends).
Miss: Half damage.

Triggered Actions**Ferocious Assault** • **Encounter**

Trigger: The Gray Men war mage hits with an attack
Effect (No action): The attack deals an additional 1d8 points of damage.

Dimensional Retreat • **Encounter**

Trigger: The war mage takes damage from a close or melee attack.
Effect: (Immediate reaction); The war mage teleports 10 squares.

Skills Arcana +17

Str 8 (+5) **Dex** 10 (+6) **Wis** 11 (+6)
Con 16 (+9) **Int** 22 (+12) **Cha** 19 (+10)

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Draconic**Possessions** Staff, robes**Gray Men Warrior** **Level 12 Soldier**Medium natural humanoid (half-orc) **XP 700**

Initiative +11 **Senses** Perception +10
HP 122; **Bloodied** 61 Low-light vision
AC 28; **Fortitude** 26; **Reflex** 22; **Will** 24
Speed 5

Standard Actions⚔ **Battle Axe** (weapon) • **At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature) +17 vs. AC
Hit: 2d10 + 10 damage and the target is marked until the end of the Gray Man warrior's next turn.

🏹 **Crossbow** (weapon) • **At-Will**

Attack: Ranged 15/30 (one creature) +15 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 10 damage.

⚔ **Superior Strike** (weapon) • **Recharge when first bloodied**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature) +17 vs. AC
Hit: 3d10 + 15 damage, and the target is dazed (save ends) and knocked prone.

Triggered Actions**Ferocious Assault** • **Encounter**

Trigger: The Gray Men warrior hits with an attack
Effect (No action): The attack deals an additional 1d10 points of damage.

Warrior's Training • **At-Will**

Trigger: A creature marked by the warrior shifts or makes an attack that does not include the warrior.
Effect: The warrior makes a battle axe attack against the triggering target.

Str 22 (+12) **Dex** 8 (+5) **Wis** 19 (+10)**Con** 18 (+10) **Int** 14 (+8) **Cha** 10 (+6)**Alignment** Evil **Languages** Common, Orc**Possessions** Battle axe, crossbow with 20 bolts, plate armor, heavy steel shield.

Gray Men Assassin **Level 11 Lurker**
Medium natural humanoid (half-orc) **XP 600**

Initiative +14 **Senses** Perception +5
HP 97; **Bloodied** 48 Low-light vision
AC 23; **Fortitude** 23; **Reflex** 24; **Will** 22
Speed 6; teleport 4

Traits

Combat Advantage

The Gray Men assassin deals an extra 2d6 damage whenever it has combat advantage.

Standard Actions

⬇️/⚔️ **Dagger** (weapon) • **At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature) or Ranged 5/10 (one creature); +16 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6 + 8 damage.

⬇️ **Eye Slash** (weapon) • **Encounter**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature) +16 vs. AC
Hit: 3d6 + 8 damage and the target is blinded (save ends).

Move Actions

Dimensional Charge • **Encounter**

Effect: The shadow assassin teleports 10 squares.

Triggered Actions

Ferocious Assault • **Encounter**

Trigger: The Gray Men assassin hits with an attack
Effect (No action): The attack deals an additional 1d6 points of damage.

Str 18 (+9) **Dex** 21 (+10) **Wis** 11 (+5)
Con 14 (+7) **Int** 14 (+7) **Cha** 17 (+8)
Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Orc
Possessions 4 daggers, leather armor

Gray Men Initiate **Level 12 Minion Artillery**
Medium natural humanoid (half-orc) **XP 200**

Initiative +12 **Senses** Perception +8
HP 1; a miss never damages a minion Low-light vision
AC 24; **Fortitude** 24; **Reflex** 26; **Will** 22
Speed 6

Standard Actions

⬇️ **Short Sword** (weapon) • **At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +17 vs. AC
Hit: 10 damage.

⚔️ **Crossbow** (weapon) • **At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +19 vs. AC
Hit: 10 damage.

Str 15 (+8) **Dex** 22 (+12) **Wis** 14 (+8)
Con 19 (+10) **Int** 10 (+6) **Cha** 8 (+5)
Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Orc
Possessions Crossbow with 40 bolts, short sword, leather armor

Prince Ulgair **Level 10 Skirmisher**
Medium humanoid (human) **XP —**

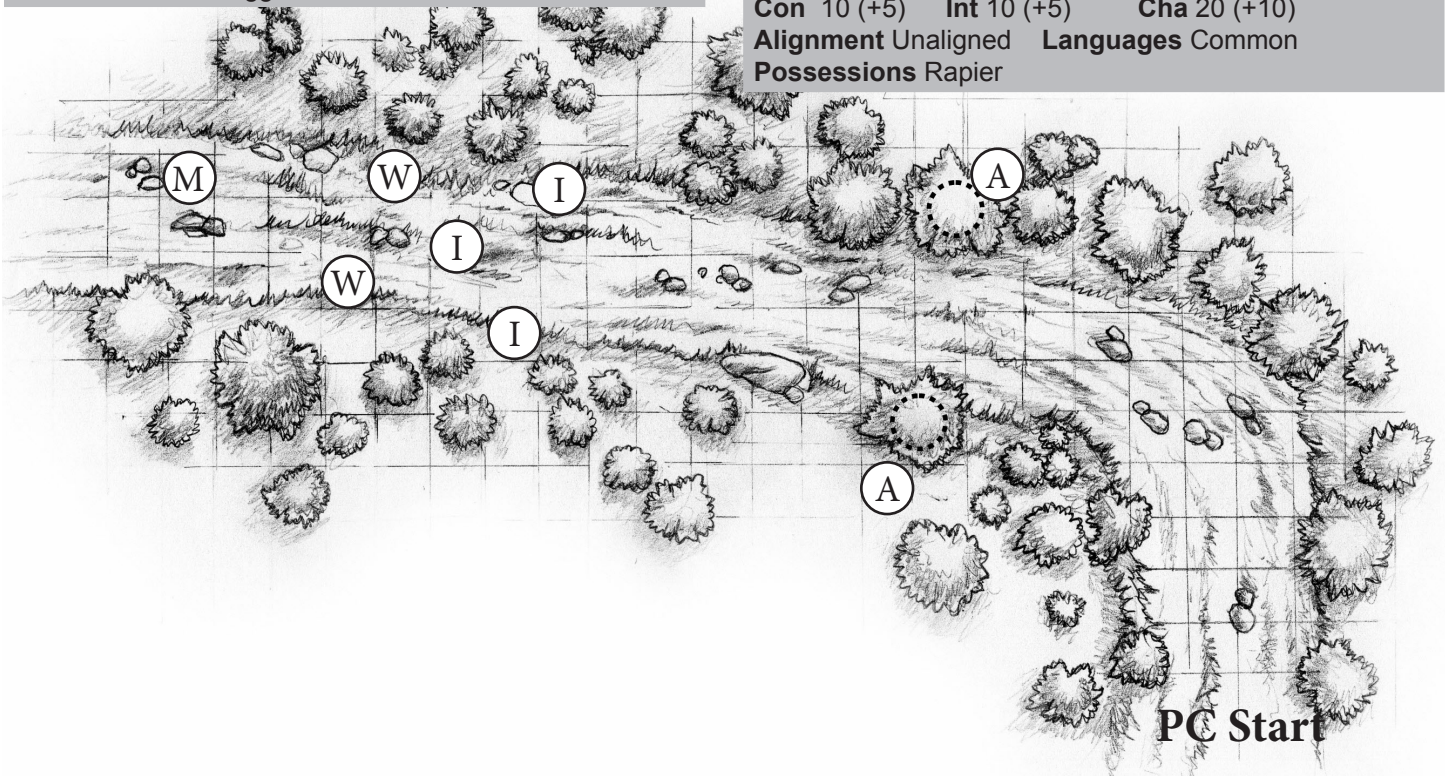
Initiative +8 **Senses** Perception +5
HP 98; **Bloodied** 49
AC 24; **Fortitude** 19; **Reflex** 22; **Will** 23
Speed 6

Standard Actions

⬇️ **Rapier** (weapon) • **At-Will**

Effect: Melee 1 (one creature) 8 damage.

Skills Diplomacy +15, Insight +10
Str 12 (+6) **Dex** 15 (+7) **Wis** 11 (+5)
Con 10 (+5) **Int** 10 (+5) **Cha** 20 (+10)
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common
Possessions Rapier



Escape the City of Brass

As the name implies, in this encounter the PCs must escape the City of Brass. To do so, they must keep efreeti and the servants at bay while the PCs activate a planer portal. This Hold encounter also has some elements of an Achieve objectives, and is designed for characters level 17-20.

You find the planer portal, a circle engraved on the wall surrounded by ten crimson gems. Something is wrong. The portal lies inert, and in its present condition will not take you anywhere.

Noise from behind you alerts you that your pursuers are nearly upon you.

Adventure Hooks

Rescue: Somebody dear to the PCs, such as family member or love interest, was captured by planer slavers and brought to the City of Brass. After the PCs go to the city and rescue their target, the heroes must flee the city. They know of a portal that will take them home, and now they just have to activate it.

Blazing Sword: The Queen of Winter threatens to plunge the world into eternal cold. To defeat her, the PCs must find the magical sword blaze, which is held by a powerful efreet noble who dwells in the City of Brass. After they sneak into the efreet's home and liberate the sword, the PCs must activate the portal to escape the city.

Activating the Portal

In order for the PCs to activate the planer portal, they must energize all ten magical gems around its border. Characters adjacent to the portal can activate a stone as a minor action with a DC 32 Arcana check, or as standard action with a DC 23 Arcana check. Only one stone may be activated each round (once any character has activated a gem, no other PC can activate one until the next round begins).

Once all ten stones have been activated, the portal opens. The PCs have three rounds to enter it before it closes. Once it closes, the foes will be unable to track where the PCs went.

Waves

The enemies continue to enter the battle as it progresses. To simplify things, these attack have been separated into three waves:

Wave 1: Salamanders

Round 1: 2 salamander flame spears

Round 2: 1 salamander flame bows

Round 3: 1 salamander flame spear

Round 4: Nothing

Wave 1 Tactics: The salamanders use fairly straightforward tactics. The flame spears charge forward and attack the front lines, while the flame bow attacks from a distance.

Wave 2: Slaves and Slavers

Round 5: 8 azer bound berserkers

Round 6: 4 azer bound berserkers, 1 efreet slave master

Round 7: 4 azer bound berserkers, 1 efreet pyromancer

Round 8: Nothing

Wave 2 Tactics: The azer berserkers swarm their foes, and those that cannot reach the PCs throw their hammers. If PCs are holding a choke point, the slave master uses his flight to fly over the PCs and then uses his whip to move the PC. The pyromancer flies five squares up (so foes are still in range of his aura) and blasts the PCs from a distance.

Wave 3: The Surge

Round 9: 2 salamander flame spears, 1 salamander flame bow

Round 10: 8 azer bound fighters, 1 efreet slave master, 1 efreet pyromancer

Round 11: 16 azer bound fighters

Round 12: Nothing

Wave 3 Tactics: The opponents use similar tactics in this wave to what they used in the other waves.

Wave N

Since this battle does not end until the PCs escape, more enemies continue to attack after they activate the portal. For round 13, and each round after that, roll on the following table to determine what new foes enter the fray.

1-4	Nothing
5-7	1 salamander flame spear
8-10	1 salamander flame bow
11-13	4 azer bound berserkers
14-16	1 efreet slave master
18-19	1 efreet pyromancer
20	Roll again twice

Terrain

Bronze spheres: There are large bronze spheres in the courtyard near the portal. These spheres are blocking terrain. Any creature can move a bronze sphere as a minor action with a DC 32 Athletics check or as a standard action with a DC 23 check. If successful, the creature pushes the sphere 1 square, plus an additional square for every 5 by which the check beats the DC. Creatures may attempt to climb over a sphere with a DC 23 Athletics check.

Alternate Refreshers

The PCs face far more foes than normal in this battle, so periodically they gain minor benefits similar to (but different from) short rests. These refreshers occur on the following rounds.

Round 4

- Each PC (including unconscious ones) may immediately spend one healing surge and gain hit points as normal.
- The characters earn one encounter toward a milestone (even though they have not completed this encounter). A PC who has already used an action point regains the opportunity to use one this encounter (those who have not used one this encounter gain no benefit).
- Character regains one encounter attack or utility power. (Psionic classes regain 4 power points. Characters from classes that do not possess encounter attack powers may regain one encounter class power).

Round 8

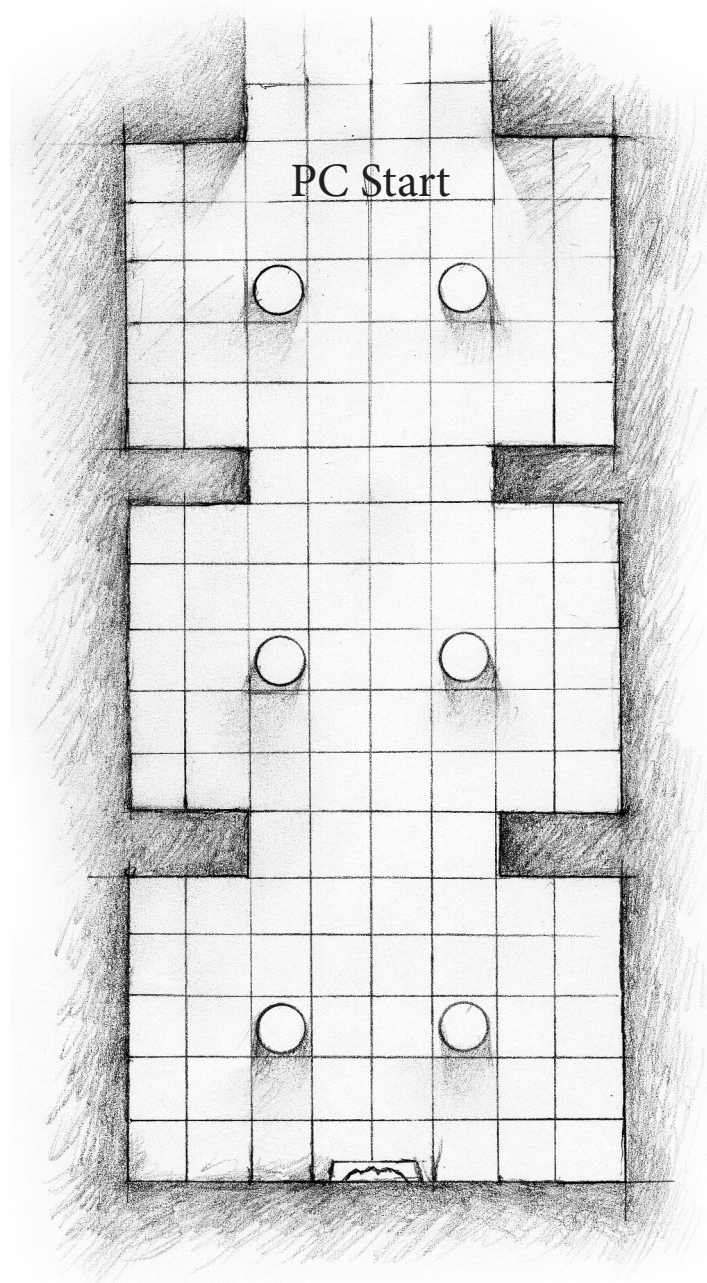
- All PCs may immediately spend one healing surge and gain hit points as normal.
- The characters earn one encounter towards a milestone. A PC who has already used an action point regains the opportunity to use one this encounter.
- PCs who used their second wind regains the ability to do so.
- All PCs regain their racial encounter powers (if applicable) and any encounter powers that are class features. (If the class feature has multiple uses, they gain 1 use if the power deals damage, but otherwise regain all uses).
- Characters regain one encounter attack or utility power.

Variation: Slave Revolt

In this variation the PCs can turn the azer slaves against their masters. To do this the PCs may attempt a DC 23 Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate check as a minor action. If successful, the PC convinces one azer bound berserker to rebel against its slave masters and join the PCs. For every 5 by which the PC's result beats the DC, one additional azer bound berserker joins the PCs.

To make the battle easier to manage, you can mark the turned azers with a token, and allow the player who succeeded the check to control the azer.

This variation presents the PCs with an interesting roleplaying conundrum after the battle: namely what to do with the azers they have freed?



Salamander Flame Bow **Level 15 Artillery**
Large elemental humanoid (fire, reptile) XP 1,200

Initiative +13 **Senses** Perception +11
HP 110; **Bloodied** 55
AC 27; **Fortitude** 25; **Reflex** 26; **Will** 24
Speed 6
Resist 20 fire

Standard Actions

⊕ **Scimitar** (fire, weapon) • **At-Will**

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +20 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 8 damage and ongoing 10 fire damage (save ends).

⊕ **Twin Arrows** (fire, weapon) • **At-Will**

Attack: Ranged 20/40 (one or two creatures); +22 vs. AC
Hit: 1d10 + 8 damage and 1d8 fire damage.

⌘ **Rain of Fire** (fire, weapon) • **Encounter**

Requirement: The salamander flame bow must be bloodied.
Attack: Ranged 20/40 (every enemy within range); +22 vs. AC
Hit: 1d10 + 8 damage and 1d8 fire damage.

Str 16 (+10) **Dex** 23 (+13) **Wis** 18 (+11)
Con 20 (+12) **Int** 12 (+8) **Cha** 10 (+7)
Alignment Evil **Languages** Primordial
Possessions scimitar, longbow, 20 arrows

Salamander Flame Spear **Level 16 Soldier**
Large elemental humanoid (fire, reptile) XP 1,400

Initiative +15 **Senses** Perception +6
HP 156; **Bloodied** 78
AC 32; **Fortitude** 30; **Reflex** 28; **Will** 26
Speed 6
Resist 20 fire

Standard Actions

⊕ **Longspear** (fire, weapon) • **At-Will**

Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +21 vs. AC
Hit: 3d8 + 11 damage and ongoing 10 fire damage (save ends).

Triggered Actions

↓ **Tail Sweep** (fire) • **At-Will**

Trigger: An enemy adjacent to the salamander flame spear shifts.
Attack (Immediate Interrupt): Melee 1 (triggering creature); +21 vs. AC
Hit: 1d10 + 6 fire damage and the target is knocked prone.

Str 24 (+5) **Dex** 21 (+13) **Wis** 17 (+11)
Con 20 (+13) **Int** 10 (+8) **Cha** 12 (+9)
Alignment Evil **Languages** Primordial
Possessions longspear

Azer Bound Berserker **Level 18 minion skirmisher**
Medium elemental humanoid (fire) XP 500

Initiative +16 **Senses** Perception +13
HP 1; a miss never damage a minion
AC 32; **Fortitude** 31; **Reflex** 29; **Will** 28
Speed 6
Resist 20 fire

Traits

Flame Ward

An enemy that starts its turn adjacent to two or more creatures with this trait takes 5 fire damage.

Standard Actions

⊕ **Warhammer** (fire, weapon) • **At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature) +23 vs. AC
Hit: 9 damage plus 5 fire damage; or 11 damage plus 5 fire damage on a charge.

⊕ **Throwing Hammer** (fire, weapons) • **At-Will**

Attack: Ranged 20/40 (one or two creatures); +22 vs. AC
Hit: 1d10 + 8 damage and 1d8 fire damage.

Triggered Actions

Revenge Me

Trigger: The Azer bound berserker is reduced to 0 hp.
Effect: One minion ally within 5 squares makes a basic melee attack or charges the creature that reduced the azer to 0 hp (as an opportunity action). If the ally charges, it does not provoke opportunity attacks from the charge.

Str 25 (+16) **Dex** 20 (+14) **Wis** 18 (+13)
Con 24 (+16) **Int** 10 (+9) **Cha** 9 (+8)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Dwarven, Primordial
Possessions Scale armor, heavy shield, warhammer, 3 throwing hammers.

Efreet Pyromancer **Level 19 Artillery**
Large elemental humanoid (fire) **XP 2,400**

Initiative +14 **Senses** Perception +11
HP 138; **Bloodied** 69
AC 31; **Fortitude** 29; **Reflex** 32; **Will** 31
Speed 6, fly 8 (hover)
Immune fire

Traits

Intense Flame (fire) • Aura 5

Any enemy in the aura loses any fire resistance it possesses. Any enemy immune to fire is treated as though it had resist 20 fire instead.

Flaming Soul (fire) • Aura 1

Any enemy in the aura that takes ongoing fire damage takes an additional 5 fire damage.

Freezing Flame

Whenever the efreet slave master takes cold damage it is slowed until the end of its next turn.

Standard Actions

⬇ **Scimitar (fire, weapon) • At-Will**

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature) +25 vs. AC
Hit: 2d10 + 11 damage and ongoing 10 fire damage (save ends).

✱ **Flame Burst (fire) • At-Will**

Attack: Area burst 1 within 20 (all creatures in burst); +25 vs. Reflex
Hit: 3d8 + 14 fire damage.

↘ **Flame Bolt (fire) • At-Will**

Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +21 vs. Reflex
Hit: 3d6 + 10 fire damage and ongoing 10 fire damage (save ends).

✱ **Consuming Flame (fire) • Recharge 5, 6**

Attack: Close burst 10 within (all creatures in burst currently taking ongoing fire damage); +25 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 5d10 + 14 fire damage.
Miss: Half damage
Effect: Any ongoing fire damage on the target ends.

Skills Arcana +21

Str 17 (+12) **Dex** 20 (+14) **Wis** 14 (+11)

Con 18 (+13) **Int** 25 (+16) **Cha** 22 (+15)

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Primordial

Possessions Staff

Efreet Slave Master **Level 18 Controller**
Large elemental humanoid (fire) **XP 2,000**

Initiative +15 **Senses** Perception +10
HP 170; **Bloodied** 85
AC 32; **Fortitude** 28; **Reflex** 30; **Will** 31
Speed 6, fly 8 (hover)
Immune fire

Traits

Flaming Soul (fire) • Aura 1

Any enemy in the aura that takes ongoing fire damage takes an additional 5 fire damage.

Freezing Flame

Whenever the efreet slave master takes cold damage it is slowed until the end of its next turn.

Standard Actions

⬇ **Scimitar (fire, weapon) • At-Will**

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature) +23 vs. AC
Hit: 3d8 + 10 damage and ongoing 10 fire damage (save ends).

⬇ **Whip (fire, weapons) • At-Will**

Attack: 3d6 + 10 fire damage and the target is knocked prone and pulled 3 squares.

↘ **Flame Bolt (fire) • At-Will**

Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +21 vs. Reflex
Hit: 3d6 + 10 fire damage and ongoing 10 fire damage (save ends).

✱ **Sacrificial Pyre (fire) • Recharge when first bloodied**

Attack: Area burst 1 with 10 centered on a minion ally (all creatures in burst); +21 vs. Reflex.
Hit: 5d6 + 10 fire damage.

Effect: The minion centered in the blast dies. It does NOT trigger any effects normally triggered by it being reduced to 0 hp.

The area of the burst becomes a zone of fire that lasts until the end of the efreet's next turn. Any creature that starts its turn in the zone or willingly enters it takes 10 fire damage.

Skills Intimidate +21

Str 20 (+14) **Dex** 22 (+15) **Wis** 13 (+10)

Con 18 (+13) **Int** 15 (+11) **Cha** 25 (+16)

Alignment Evil **Languages** Primordial

Possessions scimitar, whip

Fallen Angel

In this encounter the PCs must either redeem a fallen angel or slay him. It offers multiple paths to success, including an Achieve or the standard slay objective, (and a variation offers an Obtain objective). The encounter is suited for characters level 22-25.

The angel's once resplendent wings have turned to black and drip with blood. A diabolical host rallies behind it, awaiting the angel's command.

Adventure Hooks

A Fallen Friend: Eligor was once a friend and ally to the heroes. He brought the heroes messages from their god and offered them crucial advice. But somewhere along the way Eligor was tempted to leave the path of righteousness, possibly as an indirect result of the heroes' actions. Now that Eligor has thrown his lot in with Hell, the heroes need to stop him by any means necessary. But many among the heroes believe that Eligor can still be redeemed.

Secret Keeper: Before he turned to the dark side, Eligor went on an important quest for his god to unearth a secret so secure that it was hidden even from



the gods. Eligor's patron believes the angel succeeded, but he fell from grace before delivering the information. Now a messenger of the god asks the heroes to retrieve the information from Eligor.

The messenger refuses to discuss the information Eligor sought. The fact that the angel fell so shortly after learning the secret may not be a coincidence.

Dark Artifact: When he served the cause of good, Eligor helped create defenses for an unholy artifact known as God's Bane. Now that he has fallen, Eligor seeks to steal the blade and use it against the very gods he once served.

If you use this hook, you likely also want to include the variations listed under God's Bane.

Redemption

If the PCs wish to redeem Eligor, the first step is to convince him to join the heroes in their fight. To do so, they must make a series of six DC 29 Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate, or Religion checks. Each check requires a minor action, but a single character may attempt only one check per round.

Any time that a character makes a successful check, Eligor is dazed until the end of that character's next turn or another character fails such a check. If Eligor is already dazed, he is instead stunned.

If the PCs fail three checks before succeeding six times, they lose all hope of convincing Eligor to join their cause. He is no longer dazed or stunned when they make succeed a check.

If the character make six successful checks before three failures, Eligor joins the PCs and attacks the devils. For ease of play you may allow one of the players to run Eligor for the rest of the battle.

Set Up

Eligor, Fallen Angel (E)
3 Barbed Devil Impalers (I)
16 Bearded Devil Legionaries (L)

Tactics

Eligor is an intelligent tactical leader. He begins by dispatching the bearded devils to swarm the heroes. He then orders the barbed devils to teleport behind the PCs' lines and attack vulnerable foes like mages and archers. Eligor himself then strikes where the foes look weakest. He uses his word of god power if he can hit at least three foes even if it also hits an ally or two.

Terrain

Floating Stones: Several large blocks of stone float above the battle field (heights are indicated on the map). Any creature standing on such a stone can attempt to move as a move action by making a DC 27 Arcana or Religion check. Success means that the PC can move the stone 1 square in any direction (including vertically) plus one additional square for every 5 that the PC beats the DC by (32 for 2 squares, 37 for 3 squares, etc).

Variant: *God's Bane*

If you are chosen to run this encounter using the **dark artifact** story hook, you should make a few minor changes to the battle.

First, the sword itself should be placed on the large floating stone in the center of the map (thirty feet elevation). The sword is magically lodged within the stone, and to remove it a character must make a DC 24 Charisma check or a DC 29 Arcana or Religion check as a minor action.

The *God's Bane* also slightly alters the tactics of the battle. In addition to the tactics above, Eligor dispatches one of the barbed devils to retrieve the sword, and if it fails, he goes to retrieve it himself.)

Eligor, Fallen Angel **Level 25 Elite Soldier (Leader)**

Large immortal humanoid (angel) **XP 14,000**

Initiative +19 **Senses** Perception +22

HP 456; **Bloodied** 228

AC 41; **Fortitude** 37; **Reflex** 35; **Will** 39

Speed 8, fly 10 (hover)

Saving Throws +2; **Action Point** 1

Traits

Angelic Presence

While Eligor is not bloodied, enemies suffer a -2 penalty to all attack rolls against him.

Standard Actions

⬇ **Greatsword** (necrotic, radiant, weapon) • **At-Will**

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature) +30 vs. AC

Hit: 2d6 + 19 necrotic and radiant damage, and each enemy adjacent to the target takes 15 radiant and necrotic damage.

⚡ **Words of God** (thunder) • **Recharge when first bloodied**

Attack: Close blast 5 (all creatures in burst); +30 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 6d6 + 19 thunder damage and the target is dazed (save ends).

Effect: Half damage.

✂ **Words of Command** • **At-Will**

Effect: Ranged 10 (one or two allies); the target makes a basic melee attack as a free action.

Triggered Actions

Dominate the Battle • **At-Will**

Trigger: An enemy within 2 squares makes an attack that does not include Eligor.

Effect: Eligor makes a greatsword attack against the triggering enemy.

Skills Religion +22

Str 25 (+19) **Dex** 20 (+17) **Wis** 21 (+17)

Con 20 (+17) **Int** 10 (+12) **Cha** 28 (+21)

Alignment Evil **Languages** Supernal

Possessions: Greatsword.

Barbed Devil Impaler Level 22 Skirmisher
 Large immortal humanoid (devil) XP 4,150

Initiative +19 **Senses** Perception +14
HP 204; **Bloodied** 102
AC 36; **Fortitude** 35; **Reflex** 33; **Will** 33
Speed 7, teleport 7
Resist 20 fire

Traits

Barbs

Any adjacent creature that makes a melee attack against the barbed devil impaler takes 10 damage.

Combat Advantage

The barbed devil impaler deals an additional 2d6 damage when it has combat advantage.

Standard Actions

⬇ **Claws** • **At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +27 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6 + 8 damage.

⬇ **Double Attack** • **At-Will**

Effect: The barbed devil impaler makes two claw attacks. If both hit the target also takes 10 ongoing damage (save ends).

⚡ **Hurl Flames** (fire) • **Recharge 5, 6**

Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +25 vs. Reflex
Hit: 4d6 + 16 fire damage, and the target is dazed and takes ongoing 10 fire damage (save ends both).

Skills Athletics +24, Intimidate +27

Str 27 (+19) **Dex** 23 (+17) **Wis** 16 (+14)
Con 20 (+16) **Int** 13 (+12) **Cha** 22 (+17)

Alignment Evil **Languages** Supernal

Bearded Devil Legionnaire Level 23 Minion Soldier
 Medium immortal humanoid (devil) XP 1,275

Initiative +20 **Senses** Perception +14
HP 1; a miss never damage a minion
AC 37; **Fortitude** 38; **Reflex** 37; **Will** 35
Speed 6
Resist 20 fire

Traits

Threatening Reach

The bearded devil legionnaire can make opportunity attack against any creature within its weapon's reach (2 squares).

Standard Actions

⬇ **Glaive** (weapon) • **At-Will**

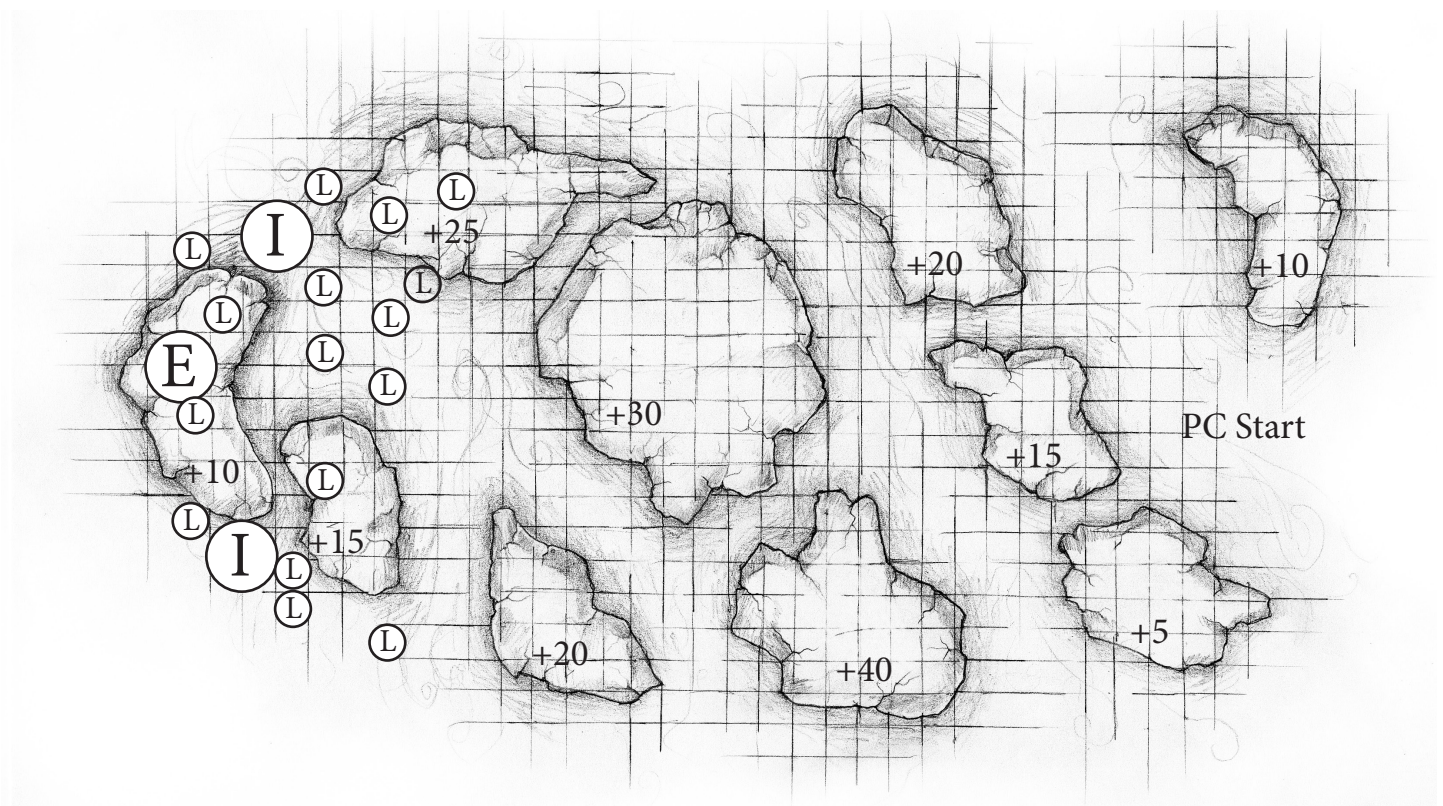
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature) +28 vs. AC
Hit: 15 damage and the target is marked until the end of the bearded devil legion's next turn.

Skills Intimidate +25

Str 27 (+19) **Dex** 24 (+18) **Wis** 16 (+14)
Con 18 (+15) **Int** 10 (+11) **Cha** 20 (+16)

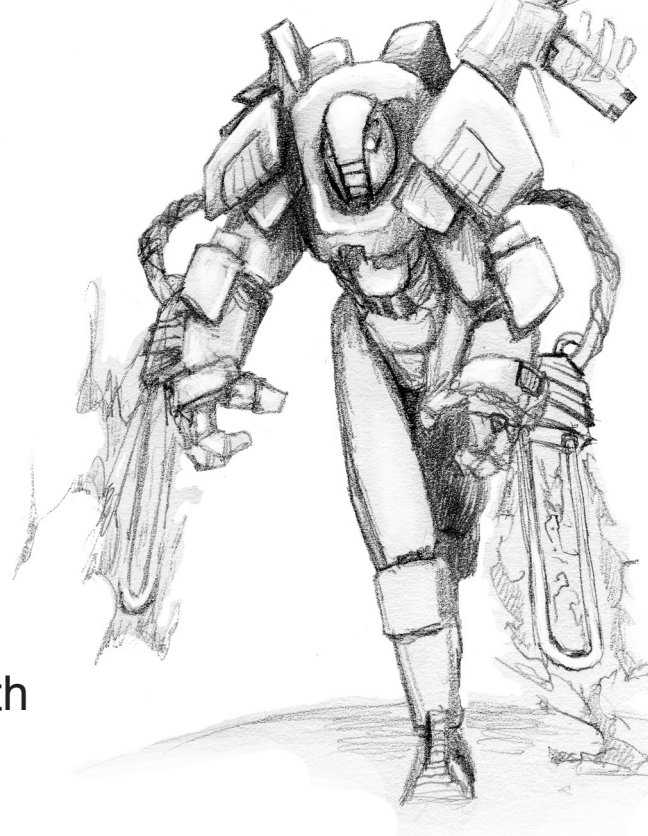
Alignment Evil **Languages** Supernal

Equipment glaive



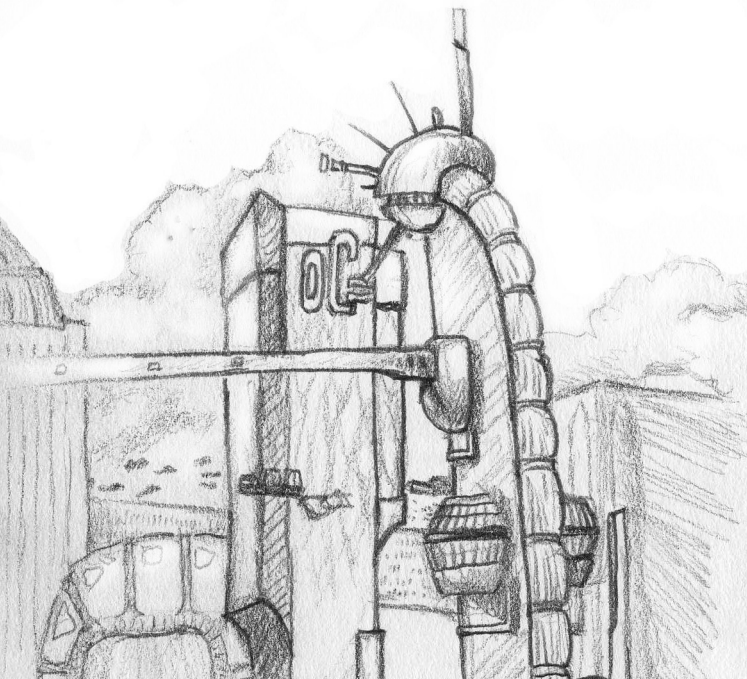
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