

Drow of Vyxhiar: Part 1

Herding Rothe

A band of Drow have taken several surface dwellers prisoner, and attempt to make the trip back home. But the Underdark is a dangerous place, and there are plenty of dangers lurking in the shadows, as well as out in the open.

A 4-6 hour adventure for 1st to 4th level characters

By Hillel Genesove



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Introduction

This is the beginning of an ongoing series of adventures for a Drow-based campaign setting. All events take place surrounding the fictional Drow city of Vyxhiar in the Forgotten Realms. Vyxhiar is not an official FR setting, but it does use many themes from FR, such as the Underdark, Drow, and several Drow deities.

Before you begin your journey as a dangerous denizen of the Underdark, you must be prepared for what you are about to face. This is a campaign where the players are Drow, Dark Elves that live their lives in the Underdark of Faerun. These are not your everyday, run-of-the-mill adventurers. Evil will most likely be committed for selfish purposes.

The goal of such a campaign is to break from what is expected of a D&D game, and role play something different. Drow societies are Matriarchal, religiously-zealous, power-hungry, and involve things such as backstabbing and slavery.

As the DM, it is important that you're players are willing to take part in such a campaign. It is also important to discuss the rules and limitations of such a campaign.

Sample Rules for a Drow Campaign

These are recommended rules and limitations while running a serious Drow campaign. It is not necessary to follow these, but it is good to keep these in mind.

Gender

Drow cities are commonly structured as Matriarchal. This means that the rulers are women, and that women have the most power. This is why it is important to consider as a DM whether it is appropriate

to allow your players to play as the opposite gender.

In a campaign setting such as this one, gender has a very important role to play in the characters status in society. It is also an option to ease this restriction, and at a table of all male players, allow one person to play a female. Be very careful who you give this option to, as it can be abused in the wrong hands.

Race

Generally, non-Drow races of Faerun are not treated kindly in Drow populated cities. Artemis Entreri himself realized that no matter how great a fighter he was, he will always be 20,000 and 1 in a city of 20,000 Drow.

An adventuring party from a Drow city would normally be filled with Drow. It is possible that an adventuring party would have a non-Drow race along with it. As a DM, consider whether this character is with the party as a willing member, or as a servant.

Class

Not every class fits into the Lolth-obsessed Drow society. There are several classes that worship things other than Lolth such as nature or demons.

For these reasons, the classes of Druid and Warlock should be forbidden for players to use in a Drow campaign such as this.

It is Lolth's will that only females are the clerics of her faith. Male characters cannot play as clerics, or other religious-based classes in such a society.

While the PHB version of the Ranger class describes it as a worshipper of nature, it can easily be turned into an Inquisitor of Lolth.

Part 1

An adventuring party heads out to the greatest unknown there is, the Underdark. They seek adventure in a land where all has been discovered above land, and all that is left is below. But that is not you. You are the people lurking in the shadows waiting to ambush these foolish adventurers. A scout of your city spotted them and reported back to you. What they get for stepping into unknown territory is not reward, but slavery.

The players have been sent off by their Matron to capture humans that have been travelling the Underdark. Each player is prepared with 2 poison bolts (DMG page 258) and a potion of healing.

The party faces a group consisting of a wizard named **Morten Gracatile**, and three **guards**. The party gets an automatic surprise round. The fight itself should be an easy encounter. Morten is using a Light spell to see through the Underdark, which has a limited range compared to what the players as Drow would have with their Improved Dark Vision.

Morten Gracatile has gone to the Underdark to search for spell components, and hired several guards to assist him. The wizard has

The cavern is a long channel spanning 100 feet in length and 40 feet across. The wizard has cast Light, which reaches a distance of 40 feet. It is very easy for the players to have the upper hand in this fight. Remind the players that their goal is to knock the enemies unconscious, and a hit from a ranged weapon that takes an enemy to 0 hit points will kill the enemy.

Ask the players how they are going to take these people back to the city. It is important to understand several issues:

- How are the prisoners being held? Are they using rope? Are the prisoners restrained together or individually?
- Are the players taking the prisoners gear and weapons? Who is carrying these items?

Playing the prisoners

The prisoners are all human, and without equipment are blind. Even if they wanted to escape, they are at a large disadvantage. When the prisoners are near a light source, they will use it to their advantage and assess their situation. It is possible that Morten will be willing to help the players in a fight if he knows that the alternative is death in the darkness. If the players tie Morten's hands, he asked to be freed from his bonds to cast spells.

It is a day's journey back to Vyxhiar. On the way, the party faces several encounters and obstacles.

The first encounter is inside of an open cavern. The stalactites cover the ceiling, and hide a **darkmantle** that is biding its time, waiting for food to pass by. When it is not moving, it is impossible to recognize it between the stalactites.

The tunnels you have been wandering have opened up into a large cavern. Many stalactites cover the ceiling above you. All is quiet. The cavern ceiling above you disappears into a globe of black darkness. The globe descends and envelopes the prisoners. You are blind to what is happening on the inside, but you can hear the muffled screams of someone being eaten alive.

The darkmantle is after food, and the easier choice is the best. The creature puts a darkness spell in the middle of the prisoners, and attempts to eat the Rogue. If the players drop the darkmantle to less than 10 hit points, it detaches itself and tries to flee. After 2 rounds, if the darkmantle has not fled, it succeeds in devouring the **Guard**, and then leaves.

At this point, several hours of passed, and a rest is required. As they stay in one spot to rest, Morten will begin to talk to them. He is trying to gain an understanding of the characters, and find someone he can convince to free him. Morten will say the following:

- Ask the players who their characters are.
- Ask them where they are taking Morten and the others.
- Humanize the situation. The wizard asks for the characters' names. The wizard tells the character his own name, Morten Gracile.
- Discuss the player's sense of morality and compassion.

While this is happening, remember that the character's initial reaction is supposed to be that of distrust to anyone that lives above the surface. If he does treat the adventurer with sympathy, that player will lose 1 point of honour in their society. More on the concept of honour can be found in the *DMG*, or *Menzoberranzan: City of Intrigue*.

Part 2

On the second half of their trip, the party is stalked by people attempting to thwart their plans of reaching the city. They have convinced a band of goblins to waylay the party.

The goblins attempt to raid the party. They block off the path and redirect the party in

order to gain a better vantage point for an ambush.

While this is happening, the players are crossing a bridge that spans the gap of a lower level of the cavern floor. The lower level is home to a carrion crawler, it crawls through the Underdark via several holes it has access to. The carrion crawler's lair is littered with decomposing bodies and skeletons.

The cavern leads you to a narrow bridge made out of rock. It is easy for you to pass on your own, but may prove difficult to the prisoners if you are not careful.

The bridge itself is 20 feet long, and only 5 feet wide. The cavern is 50 feet wide, and there is 15 feet of space on each side of the upper level from the exits to the lower level. The lower level is 10 feet deep. A short drop down for those looking to explore.

As the players walk across the bridge, they feel a tremor in the rocks. Have the players make Dexterity (Acrobatics) checks with a DC of 12. Also have the prisoners make the same save with a DC of 15. On a fail, the person loses their balance and falls into the pit. Anyone who succeeds on their check can help anyone who fails with a Strength check with a DC of 12 to hold him. If anyone falls into the pit, read the following:

From below, a creature begins to crawl its way out of a hole in the wall. It is walking on dozens of legs, and is heading straight to its next meal.

After travelling for another hour, it is clear to see what caused the tremors earlier. The path you were traveling is blocked by a rockslide. There is another way to reach the city, but it is a detour that will take another full day's journey.

After several hours, the party stumbles past an entrance to a long forgotten temple. The entrance begins to glow with faerie fire as Drow approach it for the first time in a century. A symbol begins to glow on top of the entrance. An Intelligence (Religion) check with a DC of 15 reveals that this is a temple to the god Ghaunadaur. As the cavern continues, the party can tell that a structured path was built inside.

As the players investigate the symbols a band of goblins attempts to waylay them.

The path you were following is obstructed by a band of goblins. The one at the centre is wearing a simple cloth mask covering his face.

“You stop! You give us wizard! You run, you die! Eeeeeeeeeee!”

One **Goblin Boss**, and eight **Goblins** attack the party.

If the party does manage to defeat the goblins, the Goblin Boss is holding 20gp in various gems and jewellery. If the party defeats the goblins, they hear more coming from the distance.

The temple walls glow with a purple radiant light that gives the prisoners the ability to see if the players haven't been using torches. As the illumination of the temple walls give them bearings, they will use the opportunity to escape. If the party is not in the same room as the prisoners, they make Strength checks in order to break free of their bonds. A Natural 20 is the only way that a success is possible. Whichever guard frees himself first will automatically attempt to free Morten. If they manage to escape, they attempt to join the goblins. If the goblins have been defeated, they return the way they came.

If there are two or more guards alive when Morten manages to escape, he leaves one behind to distract the players. This can be done by having the guard still tied in ropes, or by Morten casting Firebolt on the Guard to injure him. If the players search for the prisoners in this situation, skip to Part 3B

1. **Temple Entrance**

The walls of entrance is filled with inscriptions in faerie fire. On the back wall of the first room, words are inscribed:

And from him the sludge of the earth was born.

And he was the first.

And through worship we will be worthy of the slime of existence.

There are two other doors inside this room that lead to other areas in the dungeon. The door on the left leads to the acolytes' chambers, while the door on the right leads to the chambers of the high priest. The door of the high priests chamber has inscribed on it the same symbol of Ghaunadaur that was at the front entrance to the temple.

2. **Acolyte Chambers**

What was once a bed chamber for worshippers of Ghaunadaur is now occupied by spiders. It contains a nest woven by a **giant spider**, as well as d4+4 other **spiders**. The front entrance is covered in webbing, and must be destroyed in order to enter and see into the room. Inside the room, the players can see the remains of bedding, now the nests of small spiders, as well as webbed skeleton remains of long dead worshippers. The spiders attack the players when they enter the room.

3. **High Priest's Chamber**

This room was used as the chamber and study of the high-priest. The door from the first room is locked, and requires a

Thieves' Tools check with a DC of 12 to open. The priest's chamber used to contain holy books to Ghaunadaur, but they have long been turned to dust due to a lack of use over the past century.

This room is also used to hold religious valuables and gold for the temple. There is a total of 50gp of valuables around the room. In addition, there is also a chest. The chest contains one healing potion, a scroll of Shield of Faith, and 200 gp.

At the four corners of the room are the **skeletons** of four drow. The armour they were wearing have long since been worn out. The skeletons react to players stepping near the treasure chest. After defeating the skeletons, the players can make an Intelligence (Religion) check with a DC of 12 to spot the symbol of Ghaunadaur on the skeletons tattered tabard.

The chest has is rigged with an acid trap. On a Wisdom (Perception) check of 12, the players notice the trap. On a Dexterity (Thieves Tools) check of 12 the trap is disabled. If the trap springs, have the player standing in front of the chest to make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 12. On a fail, the player takes 2d6 poison damage. On a success, it has no effect.

There is a secret entrance with a hallway that leads to the main temple in room 5. It can be spotted using a Wisdom (Perception) check, with a DC of 12. Inside the secret hallway are two **hidden pit** traps (DMG page 122), both are marked on the map with "X"s.

4. Preparation Chamber

Before followers of Ghaunadaur are able to enter the temple, they must first enter this room that reminds them of the power of their god. The hallway into room 4 opens

up into another hallway with access to a small prison, kitchen, and the next step in reaching the main temple.

The faerie fire on the walls is painted to represent humanoids worshipping large oozes. In some of the paintings, the oozes are holding humanoid figures in their tentacles.

This area has two other rooms. 4a is a prison for both animals and humans. All that is left are rusted bars and skeletal bones. 4b was for storing food. There is very little of value in any of these rooms at this point.

5. Testing Room

This room is used as a test for acolytes to pass through before being allowed entrance into the main temple. At the end of the room are pressure tiles that lead to the next door.

Pressure plates span the floor in front of you. Written on each tile are letters from the common alphabet.

The players have to step on the tiles to spell out Ghaunadaur. On a misstep, the player makes a Constitution save with a DC of 11. On a failed the player takes 1d6 poison damage as a spray of poison shoots out from the floor beneath them.

As the players go near the tiles, written words appear on the wall to the left side of the tiles.

*And you shall know his name,
For it is universal, as is life that crawled
from inside.*

The path is organized as follows:

W	A	N	R	Z
E	K	O	U	H
M	A	D	A	T

A N I S L
H U A H I
V D A G L

The correct path spells out “GHAUNADAUR,” starting with the G at the bottom. Included with this adventure is a handout to show players where they are going.

6. Main Temple

The main temple is a large room dedicated to Ghaunadaur. At the end of the room is a dais with an altar. The altar that is flanked by two bronze braziers. There are four black pillars near each corner of the room. Any magical properties that the altar and the pillars had before are now gone. There is a secret door to the high priest’s chamber, as well as another secret door that leads to an exit back to the Underdark.

On top of the altar is a ceremonial dagger. The dagger glows when it is near ooze. As the party takes the dagger, it begins to glow an orange hue. This is a sign that the **ochre jelly** is approaching. The stats for the dagger are in the rewards section after the adventure.

The **ochre jelly** pours out from cracks in the altar. It attacks whoever is holding the dagger.

7. Secret Exit

At the back of the temple is a secret door that leads to an exit back to the Underdark. The Ochre Jelly is inside of this room, and moves out when the dagger is removed from the altar.

Part 3A

Upon the players leaving the temple, and if they did not defeat the goblins from Part 2, they see the dead remains of the goblin pack that ambushed them. Most of the

goblins are butchered, further, when the players head back to the direction of the city, they see a lone Drow standing on top of the Goblin leader.

You can hear the high pitched screams of mercy from a familiar voice. A voice that only recently had a sense of authority in its throat. You can see the leader of the goblin pack on its back, struggling for breath. Above him, a lone drow stands, with a sword edging ever closer to the goblin’s heart.

The Drow goes by the name of Valas. He is a **Spy** for the new clergy of Vhaeraun. He was in charge of using the goblins to take the prisoners from the players. After the plan ended, regardless of the outcome, Valas had the goblins killed, and saved the leader for last. The rest of his company returned to their headquarters.

When confronted by the party he tries to con the party into thinking that he is just a common scout of Vyxhiar. He kills the goblin, and leaves in the opposite direction, stating that he has more work to be done.

If the prisoners ran away, and the players asks Valas about them, he claims that the rest of his company took them back to the city, and he remained to make sure none of the goblins were still alive.

Part 3B

There is a lot of various possibilities that could happen if any of the prisoners manage to escape.

If the players have lost their prisoners while searching the temple, and decide to search for them, the following happens:

You hear screams from the room behind you. In your search, you have left behind

the prisoners you were dragging along, and something has happened. You go back to see broken rope, and a single human screaming his pain and holding his knee.

If the players ask the **guard** what happened, he begins swearing out loud about betrayal. On a Charisma based skill check with a DC of 10, the **guard** explains that his fellow managed to free himself from the ropes, and then free Morten Gracitile. When it was time for someone to help himself, Morten cast firebolt on the guard to distract the players and give himself a chance to escape.

If the players leave the temple to search for the missing prisoners, have them make Widsom (Survival) checks with a DC of 10. On a success, they are able to discern what direction they went. After several minutes they can spot a faint light in the distance. The closer they reach the light, the clearer it is to hear sounds of combat.

If the players go further, they enter a large cavern where a battle is taking place between a company of Drow and the goblins the players faced beforehand. The Drow soldiers are from a temple to the Drow god Vhaeraun. The Drow were using the band of Goblins to take the prisoners from the hands of the players. Once the goblins fail, or complete their task, the Drow party kills them all.

At this point is the drow party which is led by a **Spy**, and consists of four **Drow**, against the goblins, which is led by the **Goblin Leader**, and consists of four **Goblins**.

This event can go in several different directions. If Morten dies in the combat, the drow leave, their mission having failed. If the players manage to regain their

prisoners, none of them know what the goblins and drow were talking about as they don't speak Undercommon. If the players wait for the battle to end, the drow are victorious, although two **Drow** fall in the battle.

If the players asks for the drow to hand them the prisoners, they refuse. They do not reveal who they are unless they are defeated in battle. They do not reveal the location of their temple, at any cost, even if it means death.

Back to Vyxhiar

After half a day of travelling, the players finally reach the city that they call home. Vyxhiar is clearly visible from the glow of faerie fire that covers the city. It is set inside of a large cavern, passable by a single large bridge that crosses a deep chasm. While there are many ways to reach the city, there is only one way to enter. This is only partially true, as there are secret entrances inside of several noble houses.

When the party returns to their house's compound, they are summoned by their house matron, Matron Jhulae Zemirae. Matron Jhulae is the sister of the current head Matron of the city, and made the decision to separate from her house and start on her own.

The compound of House Zemirae was previously occupied by the original noble House Zemirae that was wiped out by a different House several decades ago. Some say it is bad luck to occupy the compound of a destroyed House. Time will tell if they are right.

The compound is home to the players, their Matron, and an additional score of soldiers, as well as double as many slaves. The gates are... upon your arrival, the guards notify

you that your Matron, Matron Jhulae Zemirae, requests your audience, and to bring the prisoners from your mission.

She has them bring whatever prisoners they have acquired to her meeting hall, where she would normally greet guests. The Matron is testing the players to prepare them for the challenges of social politics.

The matron has the prisoners kneeling before her, she holds a knife in her hand, and waves it in a care-free manner. "So these are the pathetic creatures you brought back to me." She brings the blade close to the throat of one of the prisoners. "And why should I deem such a pathetic excuse for life worthy of licking my boots. What good is he to the spider queen?"

Matron Jhulae threatens to kill one of the prisoners. She attacks the one that is the least valuable (goblins, then the guards, then Morten). The players can try to persuade the matron otherwise. Have whoever is arguing roll a Charisma (persuasion), with a DC of 10. Males attempting to make this check add 5 to the difficulty. This skill check requires three successes be done with several as the party tries to negotiate with their matron.

Matron Jhulae is strict on the players not only for being male, but also because she is working hard to start gaining a reputable status in the city. Any mistake the party does looks bad on her. In fact, she has prepared a meeting to ally herself with another house in a day's time.

In addition to the prisoners, Matron Jhulae demands that half of the gold that the players obtained during the adventure be given to the House's treasury. She explains that everything the players do is for the house, and in the house's name.

Alternative

If there are no prisoners by the end of the adventure, or if you want to do something different, have the players convince Matron Jhulae to allow them to keep the **Dagger of Ghaunadaur** from the temple. If the players fail three Charisma (Persuasion) checks, Matron Jhulae has the dagger destroyed.

Rewards

The party receives experience for each of the following:

Darkmantle – 100xp

Drow – 50xp

Carrion Crawler – 450xp

Goblin Boss – 200xp

Goblins – 50xp each

Giant Spider – 200xp

Spider – 10xp each

Morten Gracatile – 100xp

Guards – 25xp each

Skeleton – 50xp each

Ochre Jelly – 450xp

Spy – 200xp

For each prisoner that survives the adventure – 25xp

The party also receives 50gp for each guard, and 250gp for the wizard. If the party also managed to enslave any of the goblins, they receive 10gp for each one.

Half of all of the money obtained during the adventure goes to the House treasury.

Dagger of Ghaunadaur

The dagger is magical, giving a +1 to attack and damage rolls. When attacking an ooze, the dagger has a +3 bonus to attack and damage rolls. When the dagger is within 30 feet of an ooze type creature, it begins to glow a bright green.

Monster stats

All generic monsters that are in bold can be found in the Monster Manual. The stats for Morten Gracatile are as follows:

Morten Gracatile

Human, Medium

Armor Class 12 (15 with mage armor)

Hit Points 10

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (-1)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	16 (+3)	15 (+2)	13 (+1)

Saving Throws Int +5, Wis +3

Skills Arcana +5, History +5

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Spellcasting. Morten is a 2nd-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with Spell Attacks). Morten has the following spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): Firebolt, light, mage hand, prestidigitation

1st level (3 slots): Detect magic, mage armor, magic missile, shield

Actions

Quarterstaff. Melee Attack: +1 to hit. Hit: 4 (1d8-1) bludgeoning damage.

Thank You for Playing!

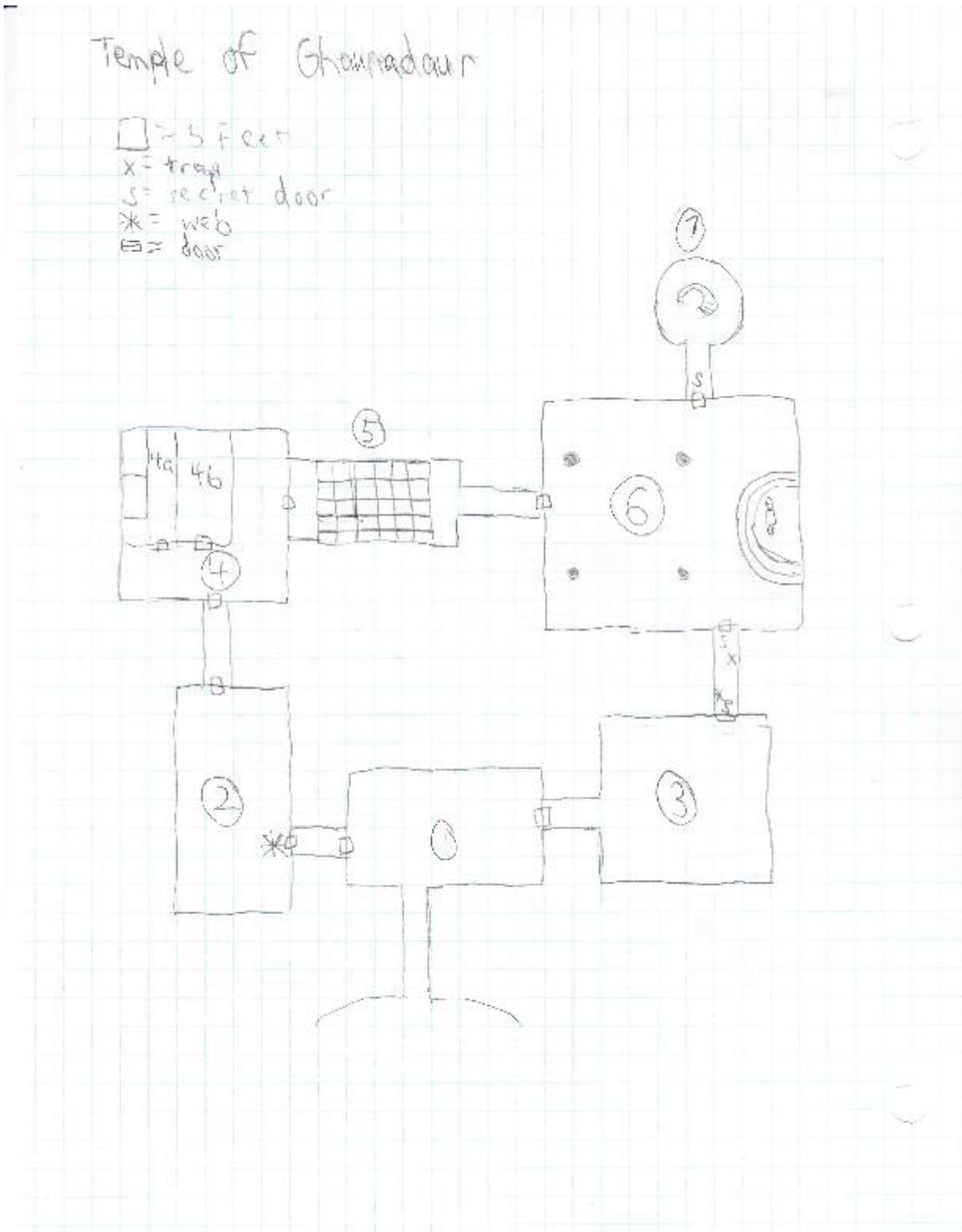
The author would like to you for playing and taking an interest in his work. Also thanks to the play-testers that took this adventure through its tracks, as well as Wizards of the Coast and OneBookShelf for making this possible.

Your support helps in the creation of more adventures and the expansion of the city of

Vyxhiar in greater detail. Feel free to rate this adventure however you see fit. Share it with your friends and enemies, and follow me on Twitter at @SirCarlethan. To find out when the next adventure will be published.

Until the next adventure is written.

Temple Map



Tiles Handout

W	A	N	R	Z
E	K	Y	U	H
M	A	D	A	T
A	N	I	S	L
H	U	A	H	I
V	D	A	G	L