

MITHRILPUNK

AGAINST THE MINDFIRE QUEEN



A 5TH EDITION ADVENTURE FOR 10TH LEVEL CHARACTERS

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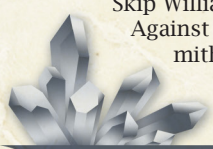
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AGAINST THE MINDFIRE QUEEN



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When Skyfall loses touch with one of its fortress towns in the far jungles, the party must investigate. Will they find the truth when the Mindfire queen decides to take them as drones?

A 5th Edition Adventure for 10th Level Characters

MITHRILPUNK

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Skyfall is generally regarded as the only truly habitable place on the Besieged Cliffs. While this is substantially true, the city could not survive for long without watch posts, border forts, and other farther flung outposts. The largest of these settlements are the fortress towns, small walled towns and keeps inhabited by tough, adventurous souls who value freedom over the security of living in the city proper.

A month ago, the fortress town of Hadley's Folly was due to report in. While delayed messengers are not unheard of, when two more weeks go by without word, a team of hardened rangers was dispatched. As of yesterday, the rangers have not returned.

Senator Diwern Strongbow's youngest and most promising son, Kaller, was on the ranger team sent to investigate. Luckily, a skilled crew (the party) has just come off a job and is available to help him sort out this mess.

Senator Diwern Strongbow - Dwarven Senator, a former member and strong supporter of the rangers that watch topside. He is part of a vocal minority pushing for a standing army in Skyfall.

Sergeant Mathias Alhews - the no-nonsense human leader of the rangers originally dispatched to Hadley's Folly. He is every inch the professional soldier and expects his team to give him nothing less than their best. In return, he would gladly lay down his life for them.

Kaller Strongbow - a junior ranger sent out two weeks ago to investigate the loss of communication with Hadley's Folly. Son of Diwern, reports to Sergeant Mathias.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY:

This adventure sees the party tasked with handling a major threat to Skyfall. They must investigate the truth behind the disappearance of a town full of people, prepare and defend the town from an onslaught of Mindfire wasps and their servitors, and finally take the fight to the queen herself. Should they fail to destroy the queen, it's game over, man.

Throughout this adventure, the party will take on the role of the rangers originally sent to slay the queen via three cut scenes, in addition to their own characters.

CAPTURING THE FEEL: *ALIENS*

Often, we call out specific movies or other pop culture references to specific scenes, encounters, characters, or other important parts of our adventures. For *Against the Mindfire* queen, we decided to use a much broader brush. This whole adventure is something of an homage to one of our favorite 80's movies, *Aliens*.

From the core mission of investigating a loss of communication with a settlement to an

insectoid enemy that uses humanoids to reproduce in a horrifying way to a group of hardened military warriors sent to handle a threat far more dangerous than expected, this module owes a lot to the film. We will call out specific references to help you hit the tone.

We have found in our groups, players tend to enjoy being somewhat in on the "gimmick" and often go out of their way to recreate moments from the film at the table. We encourage you to invite your table to take full advantage of the homage. That said, there are some groups out there that might not enjoy this level of pop culture reference; if your group is one of the latter, please tweak, omit, or downplay the references to fit your table.

EPISODE 1 – LIFE ISN'T ABOUT THE JOURNEY

We jump into the adventure with the party having arrived in the locale of Hadley's Folly. They have some time to investigate the missing citizens. It should not take too long for the party to realize something very dangerous is growing in the nearby jungle.

Encounter 0 – Getting Started

This adventure jumps right into the action by dropping the party in the middle of the dangerous topside jungles. We do this for two reasons: first, by tenth level, the party should be capable of getting through even this deadly landscape with limited difficulty. Second, by this point the GM probably has a pretty firm grip on what the players prefer when it comes to starting an adventure and can handle suiting the intro to the group.

We have included the details of the hiring and payment here to either build a hiring scene (if your players like that sort of thing), or for reference when they wonder how much they are getting paid for nearly getting killed in this forsaken death jungle.

The party's Mission:

- The party has been hired by the Senate proper, with the stated goal of reestablishing contact with Hadley's Folly, and investigating the circumstances surrounding the lack of communication.
- If Hadley's Folly has fallen, they are to fortify it as best they can and send word back so the Senate can deploy a much larger team until permanent residents can be located.
- Find the group of rangers that were originally sent to survey the town. Recover them, or return with proof of their fate.

The Reward

Depending on what they find, and how well they handle it when they do, the party will gain favor with the Senate in Skyfall. The results of that favor can be far reaching, especially if they ask the right Senator for a favor that



might somehow further that Senator's own agenda. In addition, should they manage to rescue Kaller Strongbow and return him safely to Skyfall, Senator Strongbow will consider himself deeply indebted to the party.

SIDEBAR: THE RANGERS

Throughout the adventure, the scene of reference will change to the rangers, whom the party is working to rescue. The first ranger cut scene begins as Episode 1 ends, and will have more details about the rules of the cut scene, the rangers, and how to run those scenes. However, it will help if you have a timeline of the rangers' activities as the adventure progresses. It is important to note that the party does not know the cause of the disappearances until the first cut scene at the end of Episode 1, where the rangers launch a doomed assault on the Mindfire Hive. Then, in Episode 2, while the party is fortifying Hadley's Folly, the rangers are attempting to make their way out of the hive and run into trouble. After the party fights off the assault in the second half of Episode 2, the rangers manage to create an opening, allowing a member of the team to escape and try to find help (namely, the party). Throughout these three cut scenes, the rangers learn how the queen is controlling such a massive hive. Finally, as the party makes their assault on the queen, the rangers fight their way deep into the hive and eliminate the source of the queen's power, giving the party a chance to defeat her.

EXPANDING THE ADVENTURE

Should you want to build out the overland trek to extend this adventure, we suggest you use both the monsters from this adventure as well as other appropriate foes from our bestiary *available at Mithrilpunk.com* to build additional encounters.

Consider the other dangers of the jungle, such as poisonous plants, heavy rains, and a lack of clear trails when designing the trek.

If you wish to really keep your players on their toes, hit them frequently at night to eliminate the benefit of long rests and force a battle of attrition.

Exploring the lower town

Reference the map spread for the various locations the party might visit. Do not feel your players have to explore every single area; let it flow naturally from their choices. Pay special attention to areas marked A, B, and C, as they each have specific encounters.

Map Area A

The jungles of the Besieged Cliffs are deadly, even close to the walls of civilization. The party has a chance to

deal with a threat now to prevent a larger threat later.

Though technically outside the town, this pack of clawthryl is near enough to be a threat. Originally, they roved further in the jungle, but with the townsfolk gone they have set up near the gates.

This encounter is designed to reward thorough players. It is possible, even likely, to avoid this encounter in this act. If the players do not deal with the clawthryl, the Mindfire army will control them in Episode 2.

Read or Paraphrase if the party nears the clawthryls' hunting ground.

You get the sense you are being hunted. You aren't exactly sure from where or by what, but suddenly the ominous jungle feels downright hostile. The ever-present background buzz and chirp of life has gone strangely quiet.

The clawthryl are excellent stalkers, roll opposed Stealth and Perception checks to allow the party to spot the clawthryl pack before combat starts.

Setup

8 Clawthryl

Tactics: The clawthryl are terrifying pack hunters. They are immune to their own psychic blasts, and almost always work in pairs to bring down their targets. The clawthryls will fight until 6 of them are killed, then attempt to retreat.



HADLEY'S FOLLY

Fortress - This modest fortress is where the Orc Chieftain Cagan Stormslayer has moved his tribe. This is also where the party will need to hold off the mindfire army.



Storage Silos - These round stone buildings store the provisions for Hadley's Folly. They appear to have been recently looted.

The House - This house doesn't match the rest of the dwellings in Hadley's Folly. It is appointed with nicer furnishings, some clearly brought all the way from Skyfall. An oil painting of a strange mountain rising over windswept purple plains adorns one wall and a fine china tea set and antique silverware. Who lived here and why is left to the GM.

Well - A simple sturdy stone lined well with cool water at the bottom. If investigated, a child's toy is found floating in the water.

See Encounter for Map Area C.

The bridges - The two bridges in Hadley's Folly are light and sturdy. In the event of a sieged they can be quickly pulled up or pushed out to delay attackers. The lower bridges could support a horse and wagon, the upper bridge is designed for humanoid only.

See Encounter for Map Area B.

Homes - Most the buildings of Hadley's Folly are the homes of the hearty folk who live here. Sturdily constructed of wood and stone they hold the tools, supplies, and weapons of their owners as well as spartan furnishings.

See Encounter for Map Area A.



Map Area b

In the lower town, there is a threatening monster that has taken up residence.

An owlbear den mother has moved into what used to be a small tavern. She has several of her cubs with her. She is fiercely protective and will violently charge any creature that approaches her cubs.

Read or Paraphrase when the party nears the Tavern:

Something is clearly amiss in the tavern. The heavy wood door hangs loosely from its hinges. A low growl breaks the silence of the abandoned town.

If the party backs off, the growling stops; if they continue their approach, give them one additional warning by indicating the growling getting louder and angrier. If they approach after that, what happens next is on them.

Items of Interest

- The owlbear has made a nest in the bar area; smashed clay mugs and shattered ale barrels litter the floor. The place reeks of soured beer and pungent animal musk.
- There are 4 owlbear cubs here, crawling behind the bar, playing strange and adorable wrestling games. Unless the party uses magic, a very successful handle animal check, or extreme stealth, the den mother is attacking before the party can really take in the scene.
- If the party avoids this fight, or manages to defuse the fight once it happens, the den mother will be a nasty surprise for the wasp army as it enters the town. She may not be a tactical fighter, but she will shred anyone (including the party's enemies) that approaches her young.

Setup

1 Owlbear Den Mother
4 Owlbear Cubs

Tactics: The den mother fights exactly like you'd expect a mother protecting her young to fight. The cubs will try to fight as well, but are effectively non-combatants. Should anyone in the party attempt to attack one of the cubs, the den mother flies into a rage and immediately tries to destroy whoever attacked her cubs at all costs. If the party runs, she will not give chase, but if they stay she will fight to the death to defend her young.

Map Area c

The party runs into an orc patrol. The orcs are outmatched and flee. The goal here is to suggest (while having plenty of proof to the contrary) that the orcs are the reason the townsfolk are gone.

Read or Paraphrase the following when the party catches a glimpse of the patrol:



Out of the corner of your eye, you see something. A huge orc, covered with swirls of glowing paint, stares at you. It clutches a massive razor sharp stone-edged club. Suddenly, it bolts the opposite direction!

Despite possible appearances, these orcs are neither a threat to the party nor responsible for the disappearance of the townsfolk. They are fleeing the Mindfire hive, and decided to make a defensive stand here in the town.

The orcs assume the party are being controlled by the hive and run. If the party lets them go, or at least avoids an outright slaughter, proceed to the "Orc Parlay"

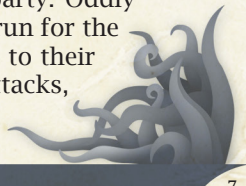
If the party gives chase, narrate the scene as the orcs try to take a direct route to the upper town. The party might catch some of the details of the town as they run through. Use the descriptions on the map to provide details.

If the party attacks while chasing, the orcs put up a poor defense. They are clearly more concerned with escaping.

Setup

10 Orc Scouts

Tactics: The orcs are no match for the party. Oddly enough, they realize this immediately and run for the keep. Their goal is to survive and get word to their chieftain, Cagan Stormslayer. If the party attacks,



they will employ hit-and-run tactics, but will not stop to fight.

ORC PARLAY

This is a roleplaying scene dealing with the leader of the orcs. If everything goes well, the party will earn powerful allies in the fight against the Mindfire assault. If the party missteps or has slaughtered the patrol, this parlay could very well turn into a battle.

When to run the parlay

If the party encountered the orc patrol (map area C), and at least one member of the patrol escape, the orcs in the Keep prepare for the party's arrival. After a few minutes, drumbeats echo through the town. These drumbeats grow in intensity until the party arrives at the keep or ten minutes have passed.

A History check of DC 12 will reveal the drums are ceremonial and a method of summoning a rival tribe to a parlay. If the party does not approach in ten minutes, the orcs will consider it a declaration of war. Once the parlay has been "refused," the orcs will not talk with the party unless the party succeeds at a Diplomacy check, DC 15.

SIDEBAR: THE ORC CHIEFTAIN

Cagan Stormslayer is something of a rarity amongst orcs. He is every inch the powerful warrior, of course, but he is also wise and intelligent. Under his strict rule, the tribe has survived, even thrived, in the jungles that Skyfall deems uninhabitable.

He is also terrified of the Mindfire hive. He has lost many of his people to their raids, and came to Hadley's Folly hoping to ally with the residents. When he found the open gates and empty houses, he immediately feared the worst.

He puts on a brave face, telling his people they are here to make a stand and defeat the wasps. In reality, he believes his tribe is doomed.

How the Parlay Works

This is a roleplaying scene. You can run it entirely without mechanics if you choose. We have provided this framework to assist you.

The question at the core of this scene is: can the party gain the trust of the orcs? To determine the answer, consider the following factors and how well the roleplaying goes.

If you want to track this scene mechanically, tally the number of points the party gains throughout the scene. If you prefer to not handle this scene with mechanics, simply keep a general idea of how well the party is doing as you go along.

The party should have some evidence the orcs

are to blame for the disappearance:

- The orcish symbols throughout town
- A few buildings have damage consistent with stone blades.
- The simple fact the orcs have moved in.

Unless the party saw through the obvious signs, they should at the very least be suspicious of the orcs.

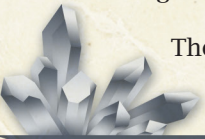
How the party handled the patrol

Cagan Stormslayer understands that misunderstandings arising from opposing factions meeting in hostile territory often result in combat.

- If the party waited to see what the patrol did, and did not attack, Cagan is impressed (+3).
- If the party attacked, but did not continue attacking when the patrol fled, Cagan understands (+1).
- If one member of the patrol died, but the party stopped attacking, Cagan is angry (-1).
- If more than one member of the patrol was slain, Cagan is enraged (-4).

The orcs initially believe the party is controlled by the hive. They will ask them to doff their armor and cloaks and submit to inspection for wasps.

- If the party does this, Cagan trusts (+2) them.
- If they refuse, Cagan suspects a trap (-2).



Beyond these initial reactions, the direction the parlay proceeds is up to the party. It is impossible to score out every action or statement, so here are general guidelines.

Cagan Stormslayer:

Likes (+1 to +2)

- Direct talk of taking action
- Respect for his people
- Military Strategy
- Reverence for Nature
- Half orcs among the party.

Dislikes (-1 to -5)

- “Clever wordplay” (puns are evil acts)
- Any assumptions the party is in charge
- Disrespect, especially to his people
- Not taking the situation seriously
- Standing behind a single speaker.

Once the roleplaying stops being engaging, or when you are ready to move on, call for a Diplomacy check. Anyone that spoke to the orcs should make a roll.

Add a number of points based on each final result according to this chart:

1-5	-3 points
6-10	-2 points
10-12	0 points
13-15	1 point
16-18	2 points
19-20	3 points
20+	4 points

Now consider the final tally of points (or just your general feeling of how it went):

0 or less points	The orcs will not help the party. If the orcs are angry at this point (GM discretion) they might attack.
1-5 points	The orcs will not directly help, but won't hinder the party. The party does not get any orc Lair Actions, but the orcs will be independently fighting against the wasps.
6-10 Points	The orcs agree to work with the party as allies.
10-15 Points	The orcs work with the party and look to them for guidance.
16+ points	The orcs feel the party is vastly more capable in this situation and follow them loyally until the wasp siege is over. They will also give the party a token of their appreciation: the Spear of Ghig-Hem (see Magic Items).

If the orcs attack, use the following setup:

Setup

- 1 Orc Chieftain (Cagan)
- 6 Orc Warriors
- 8 Orc Scouts

Cut Scene – A Bad Call

In this cut scene, the party will take on the role of several rangers from the large band sent by the Senate to investigate Hadley's Folly. They've tracked the townspeople to a massive hive of Mindfire wasps, and are preparing an assault on the hive to attempt a rescue. Little do they know, the townspeople are all dead...or worse.

Read or Paraphrase:

You've heard of some crazy plans before, but assaulting the biggest hive of Mindfire wasps you've ever seen really takes the cake. But hey, the Sarge says jump...

UNIQUE MECHANICS

At this point, explain the cut scene to the party. They'll be playing members of the rangers, under the leadership of Sergeant Mathias Alhews. Refer to the Ranger Handouts in the Player Handouts section of the appendix. Each player should pick a role, as well as a race, then roll for an interesting quirk (or come up with their own!). The role they choose determines their abilities, while their race modifies those abilities and adds flavor to their ranger. Effectively, they are building characters to play for the remaining cut scenes. Note that the rangers will be facing dire odds, and death is more likely than it would be for their normal characters. In the event that a ranger dies, that ranger's player should generate a new ranger. Depending on the scene, it may make sense for the new ranger to arrive immediately, or for the new ranger to show up for the next cut scene. Once the party has created and named their rangers, continue the scene.

Sergeant Alhews briefs the rangers as separate units. In total, there are about 40 rangers in the forests outside the Mindfire hive. The party will lead the assault, attempting to take and hold the main entrance to the hive. Once they have the main entrance, the remaining rangers will rush into the hive and attempt to rescue the townsfolk and get them into the cover of the forest.

Once the party is ready, **Read or Paraphrase:**

You've crept carefully to the end of the forest, preparing to make your assault on the hive entrance. Just before the Sergeant gives the signal, a human man walks out of the hive entrance, heading slowly in your direction. The Sergeant signals for quiet. As the man approaches, something in his disjointed



stride makes the hair on the back of your neck stand up. A moment later, the man stumbles and you can see why. A massive wasp the size of a large dog is attached to the man's back, with its stinger embedded deep into his spine. Before the revulsion can really get to you, the Sergeant gives the signal. GO!

Setup

2 Bloodfire Wasp Swarms

6 Soulfire Wasps

2 Dominated Villagers



Tactics:

The man is unarmed, but will attempt to make unarmed strikes against anyone who comes near him. He is effectively a non-combatant, and collapses after the first round. The other two villagers attack violently. As soon as the rangers reveal themselves, a massive droning erupts from the hive, along with a swarm of Mindfire

wasps. The wasps assault the entire group of rangers, but one group in particular attacks the party. All of the wasps fight to the death.

CAPTURING THE FEEL

As the party is fighting their group of wasps, describe the other rangers in pitched battles with other wasp swarms and worse. Picture an unexpected assault on an outnumbered force in a war movie, and you've got the right idea. The rangers as a whole are losing, and hard.

Once the party defeats the group of wasps attacking them, **Read or Paraphrase:**

Cutting through the sounds of combat and the screams of your fallen comrades, you hear Sergeant Mathias shouting. "Into the hive, NOW! Stop goofing around rangers! Get in the hole and show these bugs who's boss!" You turn to follow his orders and begin cutting your way into the hive...

EPISODE 2 – BUILD IT UP, THEY'RE GOING TO TEAR IT DOWN

As Episode 1 ends, the rangers have just begun to realize their true error. However, the party isn't faring much better. To the north, they can see a cloud of wasps dominating the skyline. The wasps have amassed a small army of dominated creatures, and are marching and flying toward Hadley's Folly. In Episode 2, the party must fortify the town and turn back the wasp assault, hopefully with the help of the orcs. After hours of battle defending Hadley's Folly and scraping by with their lives, the party must give chase to the retreating wasps to prevent a Mindfire resonator from reaching the queen before it's too late.

CAPTURING THE FEEL

This episode is structured a bit differently than a typical encounter-based adventure. We recommend reading through it carefully, as it will require more adaptation and "on the fly" thinking than usual.

In Part 1 of this episode, the party will be tasked with fortifying the town and doing everything in their power to hinder the oncoming army. This is intended to give the players a chance to be creative in setting up their defenses and planning their tactics, but that very creativity means you'll need to use the material presented here to adapt to your player's plans. Everything they do

should have some impact, even if only narratively.

Part 2 of this episode is the assault on Hadley's Folly itself. We will present 5 encounters, but how and when most of those encounters occur will be up to you. It's important to factor your player's actions in Part 1 into these encounters as best you can. Between the encounters, the party will not have time to rest. Narratively, the party is acting as a "response unit" to major problems as they arise (these are the encounters), but when not dealing with a major problem, they are constantly needed to bolster the fighters on the walls, heal the wounded, hold the gate, and more. The *Capturing the Feel* section in Part 2 will expand upon this as well.

Part 1 - The Best Offense...

In this section, the party knows the wasps and their dominated minions are coming, but they don't know how long it will take them to get to Hadley's Folly. They should spend that time fortifying the town, recruiting potential nearby allies, setting traps, and anything else they can think of. Rather than set up rules for what the players can do in this scene, instead allow them to be creative, and say "Yes" as often as you can. Below, you'll find guidelines and ideas to help you flesh this scene out based on your player's actions.

UNIQUE MECHANICS

Time is the key factor in anything the players try to do. A party of 10th level characters shouldn't have to roll to determine how well they reinforce the gates. Instead, you can safely assume that if the party decides to reinforce the gates, those gates are successfully reinforced. The question becomes, *how long did it take?* In this section, we present a variety of ideas that your players might come up with (or a variant of them), as well as ways to engage your players and present them with options they might not have considered. In all of these scenarios, they should be required to make group checks to determine how long each task takes. When the party makes a group check, read the entry in the table below for the highest result. Then, when rolling to determine how many hours the task takes, subtract one hour for each additional success after the highest result. The minimum time for a given task should be based on the task itself, but no task should be faster than 1 hour.

Group Check Highest Result	Time for Task (in hours)
1 - 4	1d12 - # of extra successes
5 - 9	1d10 - # of extra successes
10 - 14	1d8 - # of extra successes
15 - 19	1d6 - # of extra successes
20+	1d4 - # of extra successes

For example, if a party of four characters attempt a DC 12 group Persuasion check, and the results are 4, 8, 14, and 17, you would check the table for the time at 17, which is 1d6 minus the number of additional successes. The other three characters in the group contribute one additional success (the 14), so you would roll 1d6-1 to determine the number of hours the task took. The minimum time for any task is 1 hour.

CAPTURING THE FEEL

It's important to make sure that this series of scenes doesn't devolve into mindless "roll a group check, count the time spent, repeat". Instead, nearly all of these scenes should be described in narrative detail. You should engage the players and ask how they contribute to the success of the scene, and describe those successes narratively. Then at the end of the scene, have the group roll the relevant group check to determine how long it took.

You should reward great roleplaying and great ideas with advantage. Depending on the players' actions, you may also need to substitute certain skills rather than using the suggested option. For example, if "Reinforcing the Gate" is a group Athletics check, but the wizard wants to instead search Hadley's Folly for stronger materials, the wizard could make an Investigation check against the same DC instead. It is absolutely vital to spend as much of this section as possible saying "yes" to player ideas, and incorporating them into your narrative on the fly.



Running this Scenario

To help you run this scenario, rather than give you instructions we've created and categorized examples that will help give you the tools you need to run this scene based on how the players at your table respond to the situation.

Whenever the party attempts to do something, it will take time. Using the rules above and the skill suggestions below, you should be able to determine how long each task takes. Once a total of 16 hours has passed, you should move to the boxed text at the end of this section, then continue to Part 2.

For each of the options below, there is no set structure, or exact times when certain events will happen. They can happen in any order, or not at all, based entirely on your table's actions. Both Parts 1 and 2 assume the party successfully recruited the orcs to their cause in Episode 1. If the party failed to do so, you'll need to adapt some of the content in Part 1, and remove the Orc Lair Action from Part 2 entirely. This will make the siege noticeably more difficult.

Obvious Options

To start, there are a few obvious options available to the party. These are ideas that the Orcs will suggest right away, even if the party doesn't think about them.

Reinforcing the Gate

The orcs will immediately suggest reinforcing the gate if it isn't the first thing the party decides to do. The town originally fell to the wasps through trickery, as a soulfire wasp dominated one of the gate guards. To prevent this, the orcs suggest barricading the gate. If the party decides to barricade the gate, they should make a group Athletics check at DC 13 to determine how long it takes. Since the orcs help with gusto, you should use the time one step better on the Task Time Table. If the gate is reinforced, the "Hold the Gate!" encounter in Part 2 is less challenging.

Organizing the Troops

The orcs will want to have a say in their dispositions, and the party might need to step in and take charge once they start bickering. Simply put, the orc scouts would do better on the walls, while the orc warriors hold the gate, and the party responds to major threats (see Part 2). Of course, the party may have different or better ideas! Either way, this should be resolved with roleplaying. Then, you can either estimate the time (roughly an hour if the party was decisive), or you can have them make a group social check (their choice of Persuasion, Intimidation, etc.) at DC 12 and check the Task Time Table. If the party roleplays this scene well or comes up with a creative way to use their troops, the Orc Lair Action in Part 2 will be improved.

Good Options

These options are less obvious, but should always result in a positive impact on the party's ability to fight off the assault. Most of your group's ideas will probably fall into this category, and you should use these examples as guidelines for how their actions can make future encounters easier.

Siege Defense

Ideas the party might come up with that fall into this category include boiling oil on the walls,

planting spikes outside the walls, or setting up a bridge to collapse. The party has plenty of stone and wood available from the buildings in the city, as well as anything non-perishable left behind by the prior inhabitants, so resources shouldn't be an issue. Since this option varies greatly in how the party can approach it, any number of skills could apply here. Finding resources could be an Investigation check, tearing down buildings could be an Athletics check, etc. All checks for this should be at DC 13. If the party succeeds at building any siege defenses, remove the dominated giant goat from the "Breach!" encounter, and describe the others as "covered in oil" or "run through with spikes" from the defenses they had to fight through.



Recruiting Allies

The party is not necessarily alone in this fight. There could be any number of creatures in the surrounding wilderness that know the wasp army will destroy them just as readily as the beings in Hadley's Folly. Because the party has no real way to know this, you can give them a small push toward this option, especially if it seems like they are running out of ideas or struggling with the scene. Maybe they see a large tree in the



nearby forest suddenly move toward the city while they are working on the siege defenses. If they chose to investigate, they could negotiate with the treant to help them fight the wasps. Or perhaps, if the party chooses not to slaughter the orc patrol in Episode 1, one of the orcs in that patrol mentions that their tribe's shaman refused to enter the city, but might be willing to help, since he is her great grandson.

In either case, this should be a heavy roleplaying scene with the party trying to recruit an ally to join them in battle. In both of the examples, the party would use roleplaying to convince them (which should work), and a Persuasion group check at DC 14 to determine how long it took. Since there is additional travel time to reach these allies, increase the time required on the Task Time Table by 2 hours. If the party successfully recruits a powerful ally, that ally will take part in defending the town narratively, as well as making the encounter "They Came From...Behind!" less challenging.

Detailed Tactical Planning

Some groups may find setting up detailed battle plans very enjoyable, and should be rewarded for doing so. Any ideas the players have that include things like setting up a reserve, scenario planning such as how the orcs respond to air attacks, etc., should fall under this category. This might require Persuasion, History, or Intelligence checks to determine the time required, or you could handle this as a purely roleplaying scene and estimate the time required to complete this task. If you do require checks, the DC should be 13. If the party really digs into the tactical planning, the Orc Lair Actions in Part 2 will be even more improved.

Setting Traps in Hadley's Folly

Nearly everything else the party comes up with will probably fall into this category, and it is extremely broad. This could be anything from digging spiked pits, setting snares, and rigging dart traps to casting spells like Glyph of Warding. Much like the Siege Defenses option, this could require nearly any type of check based on the type of trap being set. If the party is creative in their trap setup, remove one of the Mindfire wasp swarms from the "Burrowing is Practically Cheating!" encounter, and describe the effects of the traps on the remaining combatants narratively (covered in blood, darts sticking out of them, etc.). If the party was especially creative with their traps you should also focus on narrating the success of those traps any time you describe the wasp army's assault against the orcs.

Interruptions

While everyone is in a rush to complete their preparations for the upcoming assault, you should throw in some complications. These interruptions can be roleplaying scenes or combat scenes as you see fit. We provide an example of each below.

Roleplaying Interruption

While the party is in the middle of their preparations, one of the orcs, a scout named Kragg, has what he thinks is a brilliant idea. He wants to pull the orcs off of the wall and set up an ambush in the nearby

forest, then make an orderly retreat to the walls. Any characters with tactical experience (such as Fighters) should realize this is extremely risky, but you don't need to push them away from the idea. Let the players decide and handle everything in this scene through roleplaying. If the party decides to use the ambush instead of having the orcs man the walls, remove one of the Soulfire wasps from the "Hold the Gate!" encounter and reduce the dominated minotaur's hit points by 30. However, the orcs are almost immediately overrun after they launch their ambush, so the party will not have access to the Orc Warriors Lair Action in Part 2.

Combat Interruption

During the party's preparations, a wasp scouting party suddenly erupts from the nearby forest and rushes them. While a normal scouting party would try to avoid the enemy, these wasps share a hive mind. This scouting party is sacrificing itself to relay information on the party's capabilities back to the Mindfire resonator that remains hidden in the forest.

Setup

2 Mindfire Resonators (one hidden in forest)
1 Mindfire Borer
2 Soulfire Wasps

Tactics: The wasps attack with seemingly mindless ferocity, simply trying to push the party into revealing their capabilities. They fight to the death while one of the Mindfire resonators stays hidden, gathering the information being relayed by the dying wasps before returning to the wasp army.

Wrapping Up Part 1

Once the party has reached the time limit or completed their preparations, **Read or Paraphrase:**

As you finalize your preparations for the upcoming assault, there is a commotion near the gate. One of the ranger scouts you've been looking for has returned at a dead sprint. As soon as he catches a spare breath he shouts, "They're coming!" As he does, you look to the north, and can just make out the dark mass of bodies at the vanguard of the wasp army. Moments later, you hear the awful buzzing drone of hundreds of wasps taking flight.

Cut Scene - Separated

In this scene, the party has been separated from the surviving rangers in the hive. They are trying to find their way to an exit, and run into a bit of trouble. **Read or Paraphrase:**

You've been stuck in this damned hive for hours, separated from the Sergeant. After taking a turn, you see signs of your own passage, and realize that you've been going in circles. You quickly find your mistake and start heading into unexplored sections of the hive. As you do, you realize you haven't seen any wasps in far too long...





The wasps are moving through the walls, ceilings, and floors, preparing to ambush the rangers. Give the rangers a group Perception check at DC 13. If at least half the party succeeds, they won't be surprised.

Setup

- 1 Mindfire Resonator
- 2 Bloodfire Wasp Swarms
- 4 Soulfire Wasps

Tactics: The wasps are moving through the hollowed-out walls, floors, and ceilings. If they achieve surprise, they will erupt from the walls directly in the midst of the rangers. Otherwise, they leave the walls within 20 feet of the rangers. The wasps are trying to capture the rangers to dominate them, but will fight to the death.

Once the rangers defeat the wasps, **Read or Paraphrase:**

You finish off the last of the wasps and pause to catch your breath, only to hear the buzzing wings of more wasps behind you. No time to rest, you need to find a way out of here now!

Part 2 – ...Is Being Not Dead

In this section, the party has run out of time for preparations, and the battle is at hand. The party will be heavily involved in the defense of Hadley's Folly narratively, as well as dealing with bigger problem encounters as they crop up. Once they have pushed off the last wave of attackers, they'll need to sally forth from the walls to eliminate the last Mindfire resonator and prevent it from returning to the hive to warn the queen.

CAPTURING THE FEEL

Trying to run a massive combat with the party, their orc allies, and an army of deadly wasps and their dominated thralls would be an exercise in frustration. Rather than trying to manage all of those combatants, we recommend running this scene as an extended narrative encounter punctuated by more normal combat encounters. To do that, you need to set the scene and help the players understand their role in this scenario. They are easily the most powerful faction on the battlefield, and they should feel like it. Describe the harsh sounds and sights of an army wading through traps and defenses to reach the walls and the party's allies rallying to hold them off. Be as visceral as your group is comfortable with. If they are okay with heads flying past them, blood and worse slicking the stone of the wall, and the screams of the dying, use that to sell just how deadly this pitched battle is.

Structurally, this scene shouldn't be too difficult to run. Encounters 4.1 through 4.4 can occur at any time you like, in any order. These encounters represent the wasps trying to circumvent the party's defenses and eliminate the biggest threat they face. They are challenges only the party can solve, especially since the orcs will be quite busy on their own. In between those encounters, the party doesn't get a moment's rest. You should use those breaks to narrate waves of attackers assaulting the walls. Take advantage of their preparations to give your descriptions more impact. If they set up a rolling log trap, narrate the trap being set off and smashing through a group of dominated farm hands, for example. Present minor problems and ask individual characters how they solve them narratively. Give them an opportunity to

shine individually in these moments, and don't worry too much about skill checks or attack rolls unless they help build the tension or energy of the scene (like someone trying something incredibly risky like leaping off the walls onto the back of a dominated minotaur). Let them use resources like spell slots to do cool things, but don't let these narrative scenes become a drain on the party's resources to the point that they only have cantrips or similar abilities to handle the final encounter of this section.

UNIQUE MECHANICS

To represent the orc forces, the party will have access to two separate Orc Lair Actions. Unlike a monster's Lair Action, these don't just occur automatically on a given initiative. Instead, to use one of these Lair Actions, a party member must use their action to command the orc scouts or orc warriors to use the Lair Action. This represents orcs being extremely busy manning the walls, holding the gate, and keeping the skies clear. They don't have time to focus on the needs of the party unless they are given direct orders. Each group has a separate Lair Action described below, and each Lair Action can only be used once per round. The orcs don't have any more time to spare.

Orc Scouts Lair Action – Player Handout

To use one of the following actions, you must use your action to command the orc scouts, then select an ability below. Once the orc scouts have been given a command, they cannot be commanded again until the next round.

Focus Fire. Choose one creature within 150 feet of the walls and make an attack roll at +8. On a hit, the creature takes 4d8 piercing damage, or half that amount on a miss. If the party did well organizing the troops, this ability deals 6d8 damage instead.

Cover Fire. Choose a point within 150 feet of the walls. Each enemy creature within 30 feet of that point must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, or take 2d8 piercing damage. In addition, each ally within 30 feet of that point gains a +1 bonus to Armor Class. If the party was creative during tactics planning, this is a +2 bonus to AC instead.

Orc Warriors Lair Action – Player Handout

To use one of the following actions, you must use your action to command the orc warriors, then select an ability below. Once the orc warriors have been given a command, they cannot be commanded again until the next round.

Rampage. Choose one creature within 60 feet of the walls, and within 10 feet of the ground. A group of orc warriors charges that creature and attempt to damage and distract it. Make an attack roll with a +8 bonus. On a hit, the orcs deal 3d12 slashing damage to the creature, and that creature has disadvantage on attack rolls against anyone but the orcs for one round. If the creature attacks the orcs, they will take one attack before retreating (AC 15). If the party did well organizing the troops, this ability deals 5d12 damage

instead.

Blood Frenzy. The orcs begin a chant, calling on their blood fury. Each member of the party gains a +4 bonus to damage against any creature adjacent to one of the party members or their allies for one round. If the party was creative during tactics planning, this bonus increases to +6. The damage bonus applies to weapon attacks and damaging cantrips, and deals the same type of damage as the attack being made.

Encounter 2.1 – Hold the Gate!

In this encounter, a massive dominated minotaur rams through the barricaded gate. The party must defeat the minotaur and any other creatures that made it through while the orcs rush to close off the gate again.

Read or Paraphrase:

You find yourselves in a lull in the battle and step back to catch your breath. Moments later, a massive boom erupts from the direction of the gate. A second boom follows, and you hear a distinct bellowing roar as a minotaur charges through the gate, with more monsters close behind.

If the party successfully reinforced the gate in Part 1, the minotaur starts this encounter with 15 less health. If the party killed all of the clawthryls from Map Area A in Episode 1, remove 2 dominated clawthryls from this encounter.

Setup

1 Dominated Minotaur
4 Soulfire Wasps
3 Dominated Clawthryls

Tactics: The minotaur immediately charges the party member closest to the gate. The soulfire wasps try to surround the party and pick off anyone who strays from the group. If all of the clawthryls are present, they pick one target and focus on it unless a larger threat presents itself. If only one clawthryl is present, it will focus on the same target as the minotaur. All of these creatures fight to the death.

Encounter 2.2 – They Came From... Behind!

In this encounter, an assault team of wasps zips over the wall before the rangers can get a bead on them. This is the wasps' first attempt to directly destroy the party at all costs, as they have now realized that the party is the biggest threat they face.

Read or Paraphrase:

A shout of warning erupts from the west wall, cutting across the din of battle. A group of large wasps has broken past the archers manning that section of the wall and is heading straight for you.

If the party successfully recruited an ally in Part

1, that ally will destroy one of the Mindfire resonators before it reaches the party, then return to the main battle on the walls. Perhaps the treant snaps the resonator out of the air, crushes it, then charges over the wall in a rage to give the party breathing room. Or maybe the orc shaman unleashes a bolt of black energy, utterly destroying the resonator, but collapses from the exertion required to cast the spell.

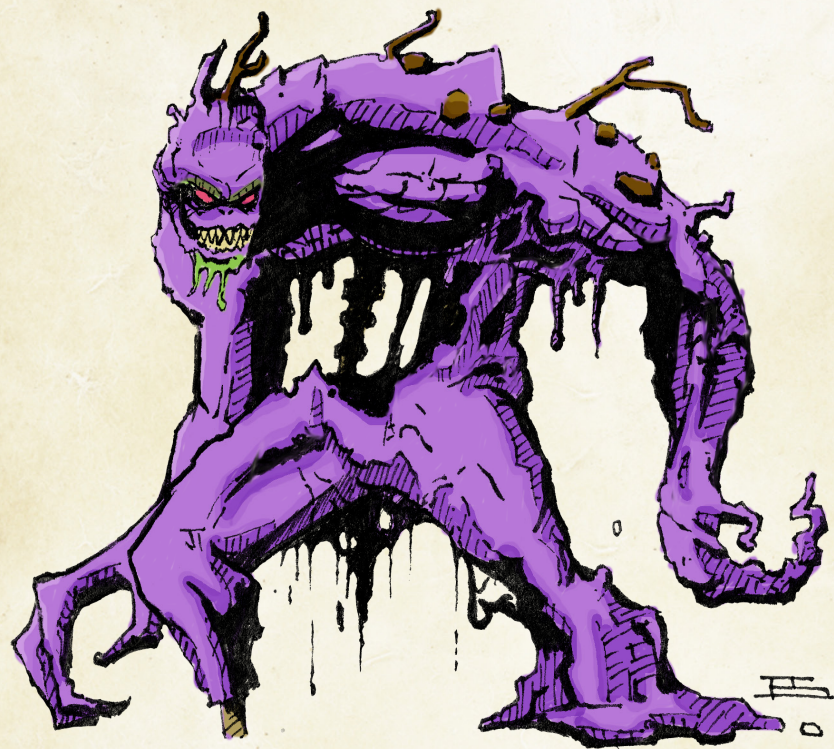
Setup

1 Mindfire Borer Swarm
3 Mindfire Wasp Swarms
2 Mindfire Resonators

Tactics: This encounter is an assassination attempt, and nothing else. The wasps attack with utter fearlessness, trying to eliminate as many party members as they possibly can before dying.

Encounter 2.3 – Burrowing is Practically Cheating!

In this encounter, a Mindfire desecrator sends a group of soulslain zombies burrowing under the wall in an attempt to surprise the party. The party will need to destroy the zombies and the desecrator before they can go back to the battle.



Read or Paraphrase:

A shriek of terror from behind you sends a chill down your spine. Turning toward the cry, you see some undead monstrosity clawing its way out of the ground, with a massive wasp not far behind. Another zombie begins to surface as you turn to face them.
A swarm of wasps surges up after them.

If the party successfully set traps during Part 1, remove one of the Mindfire wasp swarms from this encounter. Be sure to describe the signs of other traps these monsters had to overcome to reach this point.

Setup

1 Mindfire Desecrator
2 Soulslain Zombies
2 Mindfire Wasp Swarms

Tactics: The zombies fight following the instructions of the desecrator, and so have more tactical ability than a normal zombie. The wasp swarms try to focus on spellcasters, while the desecrator uses its Command Undead ability and tries to pick off the weakest members of the party with its sting.

Encounter 2.4 – Breach!

In this encounter, the wasps have found a weak spot in the walls and knock out a section, allowing their forces to enter. The orcs rush to hold the gap, but will fall quickly if the party doesn't step in.

Read or Paraphrase:

A loud crack resonates through the walls of the keep, echoing ominously across the courtyard. With no further warning, a 10-foot wide section of the southern wall collapses inward, and dominated monstrosities begin to stream through the gap.

If the party took the time to set up some siege defenses in Part 1, remove the dominated giant goat from this encounter. Again, be sure to describe the effects those defenses had on this group of monsters (splashed with oil, covered in blood, etc.).

Setup

1 Dominated Giant Goat
1 Dominated Brown Bear
1 Dominated Ranger
1 Dominated Clawthryl
1 Mindfire Borer Swarm

Tactics: The swarm moves from target to target until it finds someone who fails the save against its Flesh Bore ability, then focuses on them, trying to Dominate them. The dominated beasts and ranger charge the party, attempting to deal as much damage as possible before being slain. All creatures in this encounter fight to the death.

Wrapping Up Part 2

After the party has made its way through the four previous encounters, shift the tone of your last stretch of narrative combat. Describe the tide of the battle shifting in favor of the defenders as the wasps slowly begin to withdraw. Throw a couple more minor problems the party's way, then **Read or Paraphrase:**

It feels like you've been fighting for days, weeks even, but you know only 7 or 8 hours have passed at the most. Hundreds of wasps and their dominated

thralls litter the battlefield. It takes you a moment to realize that nothing else is coming toward you. The assaulting army failed to take Hadley's Folly, and is retreating even now. However, as you watch Cagan jog toward you with a haggard look on his face, you know this battle isn't quite over.

Cagan quickly relays his most recent scouting report: one of the Mindfire resonators has survived and is trying to escape back to the hive. The party needs to destroy the Mindfire resonator before it gets back to the hive to relay the results of the battle to the queen.

CAPTURING THE FEEL

A grid map will help make the following combat much easier to run. The fight is a running battle, and rather than tracking actual locations on the map, you should use the grid to track distances between the various monsters and the characters in the party.

Encounter 2.5 – Sally Forth

The party must chase down the Mindfire resonator before it escapes. Luckily, it was injured in the battle, and can barely fly. Unfortunately, it has a large number of minions ready to lay down their lives to stop the party from reaching the Resonator in time.

At the start of this encounter, the party has started chasing the resonator and its minions, and has closed to within 60 feet of the resonator itself. The remaining monsters in the encounter should be spread out between the resonator and the party. If the party left the owlbear den mother alive in Episode 1, she arrives at the start of round three. She will charge and attack one of the dominated creatures and tear it to shreds, removing it from the combat. You should narrate her destructive rage and the obvious fear as the wasps abruptly change course after their dominated ally is destroyed.

Setup

- 1 Mindfire Resonator
- 1 Mindfire Borer Swarm
- 2 Dominated Rangers
- 2 Dominated Clawthrills

Tactics: The resonator is trying to escape at all costs. The various other monsters in the encounter are trying to do everything they can to slow down the party. This means they will try and use Shove actions and Grapple actions if they don't have any other abilities that would hinder the party. Each round, the resonator moves 40 feet away from the party, but it can't get enough lift to stay in the air for more than a round at a time, so it never flies more than 10 feet off the ground. If the resonator is ever more than 200 feet away from all members of the party, it escapes. This will have harsh consequences in Episode 3.

Cut Scene 3 – Escape!

In this cut scene, the surviving rangers have found an

exit and are trying to reach the nearby forest to make their escape and find help. Unfortunately, the wasps are hard on their heels. **Read or Paraphrase:**

Finally, escape is in sight! You've made your way through this god-forsaken wasp hive, and you can breathe fresh air at last. Unfortunately, a swarm of wasps and a bigger one block your way to cover of the nearby forest.

In this encounter, the rangers need to cross the 300 feet to the forest. Only one ranger needs to survive this scene to get word to the party about the location of the hive. Once the rangers reach the forest, they can lose the wasps through stealth and cunning.

Setup

- 1 Mindfire Borer Swarm
- 1 Mindfire Resonator

Tactics: The wasps are only interested in preventing the rangers from escaping. As such, they will focus on whichever ranger is closest to the forest, and they will die to prevent the rangers from reaching it. Since the borer swarm is so much stronger than the individual rangers, the party's best chance at success is to have one ranger break for the forest while the others sacrifice themselves to hold off the wasps.

Once the scene is over, the players return to controlling their normal characters.

Back in Hadley's Folly

Then Read or Paraphrase:

After chasing after the Resonator, you've been busy seeing to the wounded and destroying any surviving wasps. You've just returned to the keep when an orc scout calls out a warning. Someone is coming from the forest to the northeast.

The "someone" is the surviving rangers from the cut scene. Allow the party to roleplay meeting their ranger characters, and relay the location of the hive, as well as the location of the entrance they escaped from. The hive is massive, but their escape route took them fairly close to a hidden rear entrance near the queen.

If the party is defeated during Cut Scene 3, someone will still arrive to tell the party where the hive is. However, this ranger's wits are addled from his time in the hive. He will give the party the location of the hive, but will also provide some misinformation if the party asks any questions. He doesn't do this maliciously; he just isn't thinking straight.



EPISODE 3 – WHO NEEDS A POWER LOADER?

In this episode, the party, now armed with the location of the hive, must make their way through to the queen's chamber and destroy her.

The Mindfire Hive

The party should arrive at Area 1 on the map. This section of the hive is an abandoned hobgoblin fortress built into the hills. Note that the hive is much larger than this map represents. To the north of the queen's chamber, the hive extends deep underground. The fortress is hardly recognizable. Nearly every surface is covered in a sticky brown resin that is stronger than most wood.

The main entrances to the hive are open to the air to allow the wasps room to fly (areas 1, 2, and 3 on the map). The remaining areas are part of the fortress, and are covered by 10 to 15 foot ceilings. There is no natural light within the fortress.

Map Area 1 - Entrance

This is the entrance to the hive. The ground slopes steeply downward toward the entrance to Area 4, with a small path going north to Area 2 and a curved path through the resin canyon to the south leading to Areas 3 and 5.

Read or Paraphrase.

As you make your way into the hive, taking care to move silently, you can hear the buzz of wasps to the north and the shuffling of humanoid feet to the south.

As the party enters, have them make a group Stealth check (assuming they are interested in approaching quietly). If the group check succeeds, the party can approach Areas 2, 3, or 4 without being detected. However, if the check fails, the wasps from Area 2 will fly down to investigate and call for reinforcements from the dominated humanoids in Area 4, who arrive two rounds later.

Map Area 2 – Fresh Resin

This area contains a pair of wasps excreting resin to finish a massive wall closing off Area 8. Assuming the party successfully snuck through Area 1, the party should be able to surprise these two wasps. You'll need to adjust the boxed text below if the wasps are not surprised.

Read or Paraphrase.

As you move north the buzzing grows louder until you can see two wasps the size of large dogs hovering near a resin wall. They seem to be excreting more resin, thickening the wall, and haven't noticed you yet.

Setup

2 Soulfire Wasps

Tactics: The wasps engage the party and try to dominate one of them, while also calling to the dominated humanoids from Area 3. If the party kills, stuns, or incapacitates the wasps before they act in combat, they do not call for assistance. If they do call, the dominated humanoids arrive 2 rounds later.

Map Area 3 – Work Crew

This area contains a small group of humanoids dominated by the wasps. Assuming the party is able to sneak through Area 1 successfully, they will see the humanoids using pickaxes to hollow out a new room in the resin wall to the south, and they should be able to surprise the humanoids. If they don't, you'll need to adjust the boxed text below.

Read or Paraphrase.

Moving south, you hear the sound of humanoid labor, the regular thump of hammers and pickaxes and heavy breathing. However, none of the other sounds you'd expect are present. No one speaks to coordinate the work, the silence only pierced by the muffled thud of pick on resin.

Setup

6 Dominated Villagers

Tactics: The dominated villagers here are not paying much attention to anything beyond the task at hand. However, once the party engages, the soulfire wasps dominating them bend the workers to their will and confront the party fiercely. They will fight to the death.

Map Area 4 – Probably Harmless

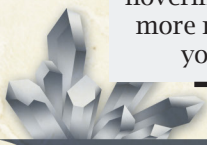
This area is the main entrance to the hive proper. The signs of a wasp infestation grow stronger from here on in. To the north is a room covered in egg sacs (see below). To the south is a resin-covered double door leading to Area 5, and there is an open hallway to the east.

Read or Paraphrase.

The entrance to the hive is relatively quiet. To the north, you can just make out a large rectangular room covered in some kind of bulbous protrusions. To the south is a resin-covered set of double doors, and a hallway leads into the darkness to the east.

Hungry Hungry...

If the party explores the room to the north, they will quickly realize that the room is covered in large egg sacs. Two rounds after the first person enters the room, or as soon as anyone deals damage to an egg sac, the sacs burst open, launching half-formed wasps at the party in suicidal attempts to poison and kill the party.



wasps attack.

Setup

2 Mindfire Borer Swarms

Tactics: The swarms wait until at least two creatures are within 15 feet of the well, or until they suspect they have been detected, then launch an assault on the party. The swarms fight to the death.

Map Area 6 – Fresh Resin

This small room is filled with feeding wasps. Humanoid remains line the walls, stuck in place with resin. As soon as the party opens the door to this area, the wasps attack.

Read or Paraphrase.

You manage to get the door open, tugging hard against the caked resin. The second you do, you wish you hadn't. The walls of the room beyond are covered in humanoid remains in various states of decomposition, each held to the wall with thick globs of resin. And if that weren't bad enough, the wasps feeding on them immediately surge toward you in a flurry of buzzing wings.

Setup

1 Mindfire Resonator

4 Soulfire Wasps

2 Mindfire Wasp Swarms

Tactics: The wasps are ready for the party because of the borer swarm assault just outside this room in Area 5. They attack in a frenzy, doing everything they can to destroy the people invading their hive.

Map Areas 7 and 8 – So Many Eggs

These two rooms are both covered from floor to ceiling in egg sacs. These eggs are as close to hatching as those from Area 4, and are no real threat to the party. However, if the party carefully searches Area 8 (DC 15 Investigation), they can find a skeleton with two Runescrolls (audrak, feguln), and an Iron Bear Essence potion (see Magic Items).

Map Area 9 – Trapped Hallway

This hallway is designed as a trap, and the last line of defense before intruders can reach the queen's chamber. To the east are two rooms, containing dominated beasts who will assault anyone who falls victim to the trap in this hallway.

Trapped Hallway

The floor of this hallway appears to be the same resin as the party has seen thus far. However, this false floor will collapse if more than one person stands on it at a time. If the party ever has two people standing in this hallway at the same time, the trap triggers and the floor collapses, dropping them 20 feet into a darkened pit (and causing falling damage as normal). The party can detect this trap with a DC 17 Perception check, and can bypass it by walking across it one at a time, or finding another way across without using the floor (levitate, fly, etc.).

If the trap is triggered, the dominated beasts from Area 10 rush out to attack the party, diving into the pit with reckless abandon. If the trap is not triggered, the beasts will attack if anyone opens the doors to either room.

Map Area 10 – Beast Pens

These two small rooms act as pens for a group of dominated beasts, controlled by a pair of soulfire wasps. If the trap from Area 9 is triggered or either door is opened, the beasts launch into an assault immediately.

Setup

2 Soulfire Wasps

1 Dominated Brown Bear

2 Dominated Clawthryls

Tactics: The wasps stay back and let the beasts weaken the party, then swoop in and try to dominate any creatures who are still standing. The beasts and wasps fight to the death to protect the queen's chamber. If the trap from Area 9 was triggered, the beasts dive down





Mindfire Queen



onto any party members in the pit (this diving attack should deal bonus damage equal to the falling damage the beast takes).

Map Area 11 – The Queen’s Chamber

The queen is in the process of trying to spawn a new queen using the body of Kaller Strongbow. As the party enters the room, the queen is cocooning his body, leaving her brood warriors to hold off the party. The queen will only fight once the Brood Warriors have been slain. A large tunnel to the north leads to the main body of the hive.

Read or Paraphrase.

As you enter this chamber, a horrific sight greets you. The body of a dwarven ranger is encased from the waist down in resin at the back of the massive cavern. The queen is slowly encasing him further as you watch. Between you and the queen are a pair of massive creatures shaped like humanoids. However, these creatures could never be mistaken for a human. Their heads are that of a wasp, their bodies are covered in chitinous armor, and they carry massive stone halberds.

Setup

2 Bloodfire Brood Warriors

Tactics: The brood warriors engage the party immediately, and will fight to the death to defend the queen. They will use their reaction ability to protect her as much as they can. The queen does not engage until the brood warriors have been slain.

Once the party defeats the brood warriors, **Read or Paraphrase:**

As the last brood warrior falls, the queen unleashes a massive bellow as she turns to face you. You can feel her rage in your bones as the resin walls tremble.

Setup

1 Mindfire Queen

Tactics: The queen fights carefully, trying to isolate the weakest members of the party and kill them quickly. She uses her legendary actions to paralyze her attackers as often as she can. She will fight to the death. The body encased in resin is Kaller Strongbow, who is alive but unconscious.

After defeating the queen, the party can search her cavern while freeing the Senator’s son from the resin. In her chamber is a resin covered bench chest, roughly 7 feet long, 1 foot deep, and 1 foot wide. After breaking the resin away, the party can find the Staff of the Hive and the Waspwing Mantle (see Magic Items). Though the players may not realize it, the queen used a portion of her power to craft these items for the next queen, who would be born from the corpse of Kaller Strongbow if the party hadn’t intervened. In return for his

life, Kaller will also give them his Politician’s Ring (see Magic Items). He doesn’t have much use for it, but it was a gift from his father. He considers the ring a token of his immense gratitude and a symbol of the debt he owes the party.

SIDEBAR: ZURGAR THE COLLECTOR

The jungles of the Besieged Cliffs are some of the most dangerous terrain anywhere in the known world. For most of the history of the city, the jungles have been untamed and free of any unified force. From time to time, some would-be warlord conquers a small portion, and holds sway for a few years or perhaps a decade. Zurgar the Collector is the one exception to that rule.

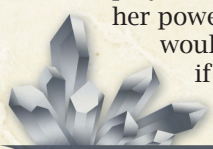
Four hundred years ago, a hobgoblin tactician from across the sea conquered vast swathes of the jungles near Skyfall. His forces seized border fortresses, outlying farms, and cleared the ruins of ages long past from the jungles. Though he never turned his sights on the city proper, many believe he could have invaded Skyfall if he set his mind to it.

Scholars debate why he turned north and delved deeper into the jungles, and none know for sure. The most common hypothesis is that he searched for lost artifacts of the prior age. It is well documented that Zurgar was a collector of art objects and relics of antiquity. His collection rivaled that of the Necromancers’ and Bankers’ hordes combined. His fortresses, though stern from the outside, were filled with beautiful art from dozens cultures. The value of his total collection is likely hundreds of thousands of gold pieces. He spread his collection across his fortresses holdings, vaults, and temples throughout the jungles.

Though none are sure why he suddenly vanished, or where his armies went, most agree his art collection (or parts of it) remain out in the jungle. From time to time, a piece will arrive in the city; auctions are held and bankers, merchants, and Senators pay through the nose for the chance to own a piece from Zurgar’s collection. If even a single one of his store houses could be recovered, the wealth from the sale of that hoard could set a crew up for life.

If the party decides to spend an additional hour searching the queen’s chamber, they will find an area where the resin coating the walls has worn thin. Through the resin, they can just make out an ancient looking map. Though extensively damaged due to the passage of time, not to mention the wasp resin, they can recover pieces of the map, including one with Zurgar’s sigil still intact. A DC 18 History check will reveal much of the story of Zurgar the Collector, while a DC 10 Intelligence check will provide some information about the last Zurgar piece that was auctioned, but very little else.

Should the party retrieve the map and return to



Skyfall with it, they can find a historian to provide the above information if they don't know it already. The value of the map is up to you. The party could auction it to a collector, but it is extensively damaged, so shouldn't fetch too high a price (no more than 8000 gold pieces). Or, you could expand the adventure by giving the party enough of an intact map that they think they could follow it to another location (setting up a treasure-hunting adventure in the jungles surrounding Skyfall). Note: At your discretion, hanging around to search for an extra hour or two could force the party to face another encounter.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

Having defeated the queen, the party is left to pick up the pieces.

- Assuming the party defeated the queen and did not flee, they are able to find the bodies of most of the Hadley's Folly residents. A few survived and are plastered into the resin in the hive, destined to be food or hosts. They can be freed and escorted back to the town.
- The Senator's son may have survived. If so, both Kaller and Senator Strongbow are deeply indebted to the party. The Senator can be relied on for favors, and Kaller will surely remember the party should they ever need his help.
- Hadley's Folly is now nearly deserted. The party will likely be asked to fortify it until such time as the city can send new residents. Depending on your campaign plans, Hadley's Folly could become something of an adventure hub as the party seeks to pacify the surrounding wilds.
- What about the orcs? Depending on your desires, and how well the party got on with Cagan Stormslayer, the orcs could be allies or foes. With some discussion and persuasion, the orcs might be convinced to stay in Hadley's Folly as new residents. Though they would be well suited to survive the jungle, they are not used to the types of political responsibilities they would have to the city.
- What drove the queen to this area? It is probable that something even more terrible and evil stirred the hive and pushed them toward Hadley's Folly. What that is, or what its long-term plans are, could make for excellent follow up adventures.

SIDEBAR: TREASURE

You may have noticed that this module doesn't mention monetary treasure anywhere. That isn't an oversight! At this level, monetary treasure can be good, but we feel that the greater reward is in favor and debts owed. If you still want to give out gold, the Senate is willing to provide the party with up to 6000 gold pieces, assuming they

successfully destroyed the queen and rescued Kaller.

However, the favors, debts, and boons can be much more interesting, especially if they expand on the story. For instance, maybe the favor from Senator Strongbow gives them the first crack at a rumored lost hoard of treasure. Or perhaps an NPC approaches them with a unique business opportunity, only for the party to find out they've been roped into a criminal conspiracy!



APPENDICES

The following section contains the Bestiary, Magic Items, and Player Handouts.

Bestiary

BLOODFIRE BROOD WARRIOR

Large monstrosity, chaotic evil

Armor Class 19

Hit Points 108

Speed 30 ft., fly 15 ft.

STR 20 (+5)	DEX 12 (+1)	CON 15 (+2)
INT 10 (+0)	WIS 12 (+1)	CHA 10 (+0)

Saving Throws Str +8, Cha +3

Skills Athletics +8, Perception +4

Damage Immunities psychic

Senses Blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive

Perception 14

Languages Telepathy 60 ft.

Challenge 6

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The brood warrior makes two attacks with its stone halberd.

Stone Halberd. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2d10+5 (16) slashing damage.

Drone (Recharge 5, 6). Each enemy creature within 30 feet of the brood warrior must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, a creature takes 4d8 (18)

psychic damage and is restrained until the end of its next turn. A creature who succeeds on the save takes half that damage and is not restrained.

REACTIONS

Guardian of the Blood. As long as this creature is alive and within sight of the Mindfire queen, it can use its reaction whenever the queen would take damage to protect her. When the brood warrior uses this reaction, a shield of blood forms between the queen and her attacker, granting the queen a +4 bonus to her Armor Class, and granting advantage on any saving throws made against the attack that would damage her. This can cause the attack to miss. Activating this ability deals 10 damage to the brood warrior.

BLOODFIRE WASP

Tiny beast, neutral evil

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 5

Speed 10 ft., fly 50 ft.

STR 6 (-2)	DEX 16 (+3)	CON 10 (+0)
INT 6 (-2)	WIS 10 (+0)	CHA 8 (-1)

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages -

CR 1/8

Strange Whispers. A creature poisoned by a Bloodfire Wasp is subjected to strange whispers in their minds. The whispers are little more than an annoyance.

ACTIONS

Sting. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 1 piercing damage. The target must make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or take 2 (1d4) poison damage, and become poisoned. A poisoned creature must make the saving throw again at the end of each turn. On a success, the effect ends.

BLOODFIRE WASP SWARM

Medium swarm of Tiny beasts, neutral evil

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 28

Speed 10 ft., fly 50 ft.

STR 6 (-2)	DEX 16 (+3)	CON 9 (-1)
INT 6 (-2)	WIS 8 (-1)	CHA 12 (+1)

Skills Perception +1

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, slashing

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained, stunned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages -

CR 1

Swarm. The swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through any opening large enough for a Tiny wasp. The swarm can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

Maddening Whispers. A creature poisoned by a Bloodfire Wasp Swarm is subjected to maddening whispers in their mind. A poisoned creature cannot concentrate on spells or take reactions.

ACTIONS

Sting. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 0 ft., one creature in the swarm's space. *Hit:* 7 (2d6) piercing damage, or 3 (1d6) piercing damage if the swarm has half of its hit points or fewer. The target must make a DC 11

Constitution saving throw, or take 7 (2d6) poison damage and gain the poisoned condition.

CLAWTHRYL

Medium monstrosity, neutral evil

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 35

Speed 40 ft.

STR 16 (+3)	DEX 14 (+2)	CON 15 (+2)
INT 4 (-3)	WIS 14 (+2)	CHA 8 (-1)

Skills Perception +4

Damage Immunities psychic

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages -

Challenge 1

Pack Tactics. The clawthryl has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the clawthryl's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The clawthryl makes two claw attacks.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d6+3 (6) slashing damage.

Psychic Blast (Recharge 5-6). The clawthryl unleashes a blast of mental anguish in a 15-cone. Each creature in the area must make a DC 13 Charisma saving throw, taking 2d8 psychic damage on a failed save, or half that amount on a successful one.

DOMINATED BROWN BEAR

Large monstrosity, neutral evil

Armor Class 11

Hit Points 34

Speed 40 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR 19 (+4)	DEX 10 (+0)	CON 16 (+3)
INT 2 (-4)	WIS 13 (+1)	CHA 7 (-2)

Skills Perception +3

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, slashing

Senses passive Perception 13

Languages -

Challenge 3

Feel No Pain. The bear has resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage (included in the creature's statistics). Critical hits ignore these resistances.

Hivemind. The bear has access to the wasp hivemind, and can communicate with wasps and other dominated creatures within 60 feet telepathically.

Of Two Minds. The bear has advantage on Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma saving throws, and is immune to charm effects.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The bear makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 1d8+4 (8) piercing damage.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 2d6+4 (11) slashing damage.

DOMINATED CLAWTHRYL

Medium monstrosity, chaotic evil

Armor Class 14



Hit Points 35
Speed 40 ft.

STR 16 (+3)	DEX 14 (+2)	CON 15 (+2)
INT 4 (-3)	WIS 14 (+2)	CHA 8 (-1)

Skills Perception +4
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing
Damage Immunities psychic
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14
Languages -
Challenge 2

Feel No Pain. The clawthryl has resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage (included in the creature's statistics). Critical hits ignore these resistances.

Hivemind. The clawthryl has access to the wasp hivemind, and can communicate with wasps and other dominated creatures within 60 feet telepathically.

Of Two Minds. The clawthryl has advantage on Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma saving throws, and is immune to charm effects.

Pack Tactics. The clawthryl has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the clawthryl's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The clawthryl makes three claw attacks.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d6+3 (6) slashing damage.

Psychic Blast (Recharge 5-6). The clawthryl unleashes a blast of mental anguish in a 15-cone. Each creature in the area must make a DC 13 Charisma saving throw, taking 2d8 psychic damage on a failed save, or half that amount on a successful one.

DOMINATED GIANT GOAT

Large monstrosity, neutral evil

Armor Class 11
Hit Points 19
Speed 40 ft.

STR 17 (+3)	DEX 11 (+0)	CON 12 (+1)
INT 3 (-4)	WIS 12 (+1)	CHA 6 (-2)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, slashing
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11
Languages Abyssal
Challenge 1

Charge. If the goat moves at least 20 feet straight toward a target and then hits it with a ram attack on the same turn, the target takes an extra 5 (2d4) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Feel No Pain. The goat has resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage (included in the creature's statistics). Critical hits ignore these resistances.

Hivemind. The goat has access to the wasp hivemind, and can communicate with wasps and other dominated creatures within 60 feet telepathically.

Of Two Minds. The goat has advantage on Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma saving throws, and is immune to charm effects.

Sure-Footed. The goat has advantage on Strength and Dexterity saving throws made against effects that would knock it prone.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The goat makes two ram attacks.

Ram. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 2d4+3 (8) bludgeoning damage.

DOMINATED MINOTAUR

Large monstrosity, chaotic evil

Armor Class 14
Hit Points 76
Speed 40 ft.

STR 18 (+4)	DEX 11 (+0)	CON 16 (+3)
INT 6 (-2)	WIS 16 (+3)	CHA 9 (-1)

Skills Perception +7
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, slashing
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 17
Languages Abyssal
Challenge 5

Charge. If the minotaur moves at least 10 feet straight toward a target and then hits it with a gore attack on the same turn, the target takes an extra 9 (2d8) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 14 Strength saving throw or be pushed up to 10 feet away and knocked prone.

Feel No Pain. The minotaur has resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage (included in the creature's statistics). Critical hits ignore these resistances.

Hivemind. The minotaur has access to the wasp hivemind, and can communicate with wasps and other dominated creatures within 60 feet telepathically.

Labyrinthine Recall. The minotaur can perfectly recall any path it has traveled.

Of Two Minds. The minotaur has advantage on Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma saving throws, and is immune to charm effects.

Reckless. At the start of its turn, the minotaur can gain advantage on all melee weapon attack rolls it makes during that turn, but attack rolls against it have advantage until the start of its next turn.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The minotaur makes two greataxe attacks.

Greataxe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 2d12+4 (17) slashing damage.

Gore. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 2d8+4 (13) piercing damage.

DOMINATED RANGER

Medium monstrosity, neutral evil

Armor Class 15
Hit Points 28
Speed 30 ft.

STR 15 (+2)	DEX 16 (+3)	CON 12 (+1)
INT 10 (+0)	WIS 12 (+1)	CHA 8 (-1)

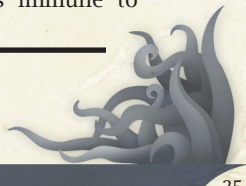
Skills Perception +3
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, slashing
Senses passive Perception 13
Languages Common
Challenge 3

Feel No Pain. The ranger has resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage (included in the creature's statistics). Critical hits ignore these resistances.

Hivemind. The ranger has access to the wasp hivemind, and can communicate with wasps and other dominated creatures within 60 feet telepathically.

Of Two Minds. The ranger has advantage on Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma saving throws, and is immune to charm effects.

ACTIONS



Multiattack. The ranger makes three melee or ranged attacks.

Short Sword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 1d6+3 (6) slashing damage.

Longbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 1d8+3 (7) piercing damage.

DOMINATED VILLAGER

Medium monstrosity, chaotic evil

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 14

Speed 30 ft.

STR 15 (+2)	DEX 12 (+1)	CON 13 (+1)
INT 8 (-1)	WIS 10 (+0)	CHA 8 (-1)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, slashing

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Common

Challenge 1/2

Feel No Pain. The villager has resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage (included in the creature's statistics). Critical hits ignore these resistances.

Hivemind. The villager has access to the wasp hivemind, and can communicate with wasps and other dominated creatures within 60 feet telepathically.

Of Two Minds. The villager has advantage on Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma saving throws, and is immune to charm effects.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The villager makes two melee attacks.

Pick. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d8+2 (6) piercing damage.

MINDFIRE BORER SWARM

Large swarm of Tiny monstrosities, chaotic evil

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 72

Speed fly 40 ft. (hover)

STR 8 (-1)	DEX 18 (+4)	CON 14 (+2)
INT 4 (-3)	WIS 11 (+0)	CHA 7 (-2)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, slashing

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained, stunned

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages Telepathy 60 ft. (can't speak)

Challenge 5

Maddening Whispers. Creatures in the swarm's space cannot concentrate on spells or other abilities that require concentration.

ACTIONS

Stings. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 0 ft., one creature in the swarm's space. *Hit:* 4d6 (14) piercing damage, or 2d6 (7) piercing damage if the swarm has half of its hit points or fewer. The target must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw, taking 8d6 (28) poison damage on a failed save, or half that amount on a successful one.

Flesh Bore. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 0 ft., one creature in the swarm's space. *Hit:* 4d6+4 (18) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, some of the wasps burrow into the target's flesh, dealing 2d6 (7) piercing damage. Magical healing of any kind expels the wasps. If a creature fails this saving throw three times before the wasps are expelled, that creature is dominated (per the spell

Dominate Monster) until the wasps are expelled.

MINDFIRE QUEEN

Huge monstrosity, chaotic evil

Armor Class 17

Hit Points 192

Speed 40 ft., fly 30 ft.

STR 22 (+6)	DEX 12 (+1)	CON 22 (+6)
INT 14 (+2)	WIS 10 (+0)	CHA 17 (+3)

Saving Throws Dex +6, Con + 11, Wis +5, Cha +8

Skills Perception +10

Damage Immunities psychic

Senses blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 20

Languages Telepathy (range limits unknown)

Challenge 13

Legendary Resistance (3/day). If the queen fails a saving throw, she can choose to succeed instead.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The queen can use her Overwhelm ability. She then makes three attacks: one with her sting and two with her claws.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 2d6+6 (13) slashing damage.

Sting. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 10 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 1d10+6 (11) slashing damage, plus 3d6 (10) poison damage.

Overwhelm. Each creature of the queen's choice within 120 feet must make a DC 14 Charisma saving throw. A creature failing this save becomes stunned until the start of the queen's next turn. Once a creature has been stunned by this ability, it has advantage on the saving throw for the next 24 hours.

Mind Rend (Recharge 5-6). The queen unleashes a blast of psychic energy. Each enemy within 30 feet must make a DC 19 Wisdom saving throw, taking 12d8 (54) psychic damage on a failed save, or half that amount on a successful one.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The Mindfire queen can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action can be used at a time, and only at the end of another creature's turn. The Mindfire queen regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Detect. The queen makes a Perception check.

Sting. The queen makes a Sting attack.

Hold Monster (Costs 2 Actions). The queen attempts to crush the will of a single creature within 60 feet. That creature must make a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, that creature is paralyzed for 1 minute. A paralyzed creature can make a new saving throw at the end of its turn, ending the effect for itself on a success.

MINDFIRE RESONATOR

Small monstrosity, chaotic evil

Armor Class 16

Hit Points 45

Speed fly 50 ft. (hover)

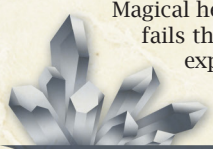
STR 8 (-1)	DEX 16 (+3)	CON 12 (+1)
INT 7 (-2)	WIS 8 (-1)	CHA 18 (+4)

Saving Throws Charisma +5

Damage Immunities psychic

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained, stunned

Senses blindsight 60 ft., passive Perception 11



Languages Telepathy 500 ft. (can't speak)
Challenge 3

Enhanced Hivemind. Wasps from the same hive as a Mindfire resonator have their telepathy range increased to 500 feet as long as they are within 500 feet of the resonator.

Gift of the Swarm. The desecrator is immune to multiple conditions because of its connection to the Mindfire queen's hivemind (included in the monster's statistics). In addition, the desecrator has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Mind Over Matter. The resonator projects a mental shield at all times. Its Armor Class is always at least 16.

ACTIONS

Sting. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 1d4+4 (6) piercing damage.

Psychic Blast. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +6 to hit, range 120 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 1d10+4 (9) psychic damage, and the next attack against the target deals an additional 2d6 (7) force damage.

MINDFIRE WASP

Small beast, neutral evil

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 9

Speed 10 ft., fly 50 ft.

STR 8 (-1)	DEX 14 (+2)	CON 12 (+1)
INT 8 (-1)	WIS 10 (+0)	CHA 10 (+0)

Skills Perception +0

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages -

CR 1/4

ACTIONS

Sting. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 4 (1d4+2) piercing damage. The target must make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned. A poisoned creature must make the saving throw again at the end of each turn. On a success, the effect ends.

Command. The wasp projects a telepathic command to each creature currently poisoned by it within 30 feet. Each affected creature must make a DC 10 Charisma saving throw, or follow one command given by the wasp (as the command spell) this round. A creature with an Intelligence score less than 5 has disadvantage on this saving throw.

ORC CHIEFTAIN (CAGAN STORMSLAYER)

Medium humanoid (orc), chaotic neutral

Armor Class 16

Hit Points 55

Speed 30 ft.

STR 18 (+4)	DEX 10 (+0)	CON 18 (+4)
INT 9 (-1)	WIS 15 (+2)	CHA 12 (+1)

Skills Intimidation +3, Perception +4

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages Common, Orc

Challenge 3

Aggressive. As a bonus action, the orc can move up to its speed toward a hostile creature that it can see.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The chieftain makes two melee attacks.

Greatsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft.,

one target. *Hit:* 2d6+4 (11) slashing damage.

BONUS ACTIONS

Sudden Demand. The chieftain calls on one of his orcs within sight. That orc can immediately use its reaction to move up to its speed and make one melee or ranged attack.

ORC SCOUT

Medium humanoid (orc), chaotic neutral

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 15

Speed 30 ft.

STR 13 (+1)	DEX 15 (+2)	CON 16 (+3)
INT 7 (-2)	WIS 12 (+1)	CHA 8 (-1)

Skills Intimidation +1

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Common, Orc

Challenge 1/2

Aggressive. As a bonus action, the orc can move up to its speed toward a hostile creature that it can see.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The scout makes two melee or ranged attacks.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d6+2 (5) slashing damage.

Shortbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d6+2 (5) piercing damage.

ORC WARRIOR

Medium humanoid (orc), chaotic neutral

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 22

Speed 30 ft.

STR 16 (+3)	DEX 12 (+1)	CON 17 (+3)
INT 7 (-2)	WIS 10 (+0)	CHA 10 (+0)

Skills Intimidation +2

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Common, Orc

Challenge 1

Aggressive. As a bonus action, the orc can move up to its speed toward a hostile creature that it can see.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The warrior makes two melee attacks.

Greataxe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d12+3 (9) slashing damage.

OWLBEAR CUB

Medium monstrosity, unaligned

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 10

Speed 30 ft.

STR 13 (+1)	DEX 12 (+1)	CON 13 (+1)
INT 2 (-4)	WIS 10 (+0)	CHA 10 (+0)

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages -

Challenge 1/4

Keen Sight and Smell. The owlbear has advantage on Perception checks that rely on sight or smell.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The owlbear cub makes two attacks: one with its beak and one with its claws.

Beak. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d4+1 (3) piercing damage.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d4+1 (3) slashing damage.

OWLBEAR DEN MOTHER

Large monstrosity, unaligned

Armor Class 15

Hit Points 118

Speed 40 ft.

STR 20 (+5)	DEX 12 (+1)	CON 18 (+4)
INT 4 (-3)	WIS 14 (+2)	CHA 7 (-2)

Skills Perception +4

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages -

Challenge 6

Den Mother's Fury. An owlbear den mother who takes damage from an attacker within 100 feet of an owlbear nest with young or eggs present flies into a terrifying rage. A raging den mother can make an additional claw attack when it uses the Multiattack action. In addition, each of its attacks deals extra damage equal to its Constitution modifier (+4 damage, included in the den mother's attacks).

Keen Sight and Smell. The owlbear has advantage on Perception checks that rely on sight or smell.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The owlbear makes two attacks: one with its beak and one with its claws. If it is raging, the owlbear instead makes three attacks: one with its beak and two with its claws.

Beak. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d10+5 (10) piercing damage, or 1d10+9 (14) piercing damage if the den mother is raging.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2d8+5 (14) slashing damage, or 2d8+9 (18) piercing damage if the den mother is raging.

SOULFIRE DESECRATOR

Large monstrosity, chaotic evil

Armor Class 15

Hit Points 132

Speed fly 30 ft. (hover)

STR 13 (+1)	DEX 17 (+3)	CON 16 (+3)
INT 10 (+0)	WIS 16 (+3)	CHA 12 (+1)

Saving Throws Dexterity +6, Constitution +6

Damage Immunities necrotic

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained, stunned

Senses blindsight 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Telepathy 60 ft. (can't speak)

Challenge 7

Death Burst. When the desecrator dies, it explodes in a wave of necrotic energy. Each creature within 5 feet of it must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 4d6 (14) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half that amount on a successful one.

Gift of the Swarm. The desecrator is immune to multiple conditions because of its connection to the Mindfire queen's hivemind (included in the monster's statistics). In addition, the desecrator has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

ACTIONS

Sting. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 2d6+3 (10) piercing damage. The target must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 4d6 (14) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half that amount on a successful one. If this damage reduces a creature to zero hit points, that creature dies. At the start of its next turn, it rises as a soulslain zombie under the desecrator's control.

BONUS ACTIONS

Command Undead. The desecrator chooses one undead creature under its control within 120 feet. That creature can immediately use its reaction to move its speed, then make one melee or ranged attack.

SOULFIRE WASP

Medium beast, neutral evil

Armor Class 11

Hit Points 16

Speed 10 ft., fly 50 ft.

STR 14 (+2)	DEX 15 (+2)	CON 12 (+1)
INT 11 (+0)	WIS 8 (-1)	CHA 14 (+2)

Skills Perception +1, Athletics +4

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages -

CR 1/2

Latch On. A Soulfire Wasp that hits a non-grappled creature with its Sting attack can make a grapple attempt as a bonus action.

ACTIONS

Sting. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 5 (1d6+2) piercing damage.

Inject. A target currently grappled by a Soulfire Wasp must make a DC 12 Constitution save, or gain the poisoned condition. The poisoned condition ends when the Soulfire Wasp is no longer grappling with the target. If a poisoned target breaks free from the grapple, it takes 5 (1d6+2) piercing damage as the barbed stinger is ripped free.

Dominate. This ability may only be used on a creature that is currently both grappled and poisoned by the Soulfire Wasp. The creature must make a DC 12 Charisma save, or be totally dominated by the Soulfire Wasp. A dominated creature mentally and physically fused with the wasp; removal of the wasp will kill the creature, while the death of creature will kill the wasp. The wasp controls the dominated creature's actions completely. The fused creature retains all of its proficiencies, skill bonuses, and physical ability scores. Use the mental ability scores of the creature or the wasp, whichever is higher.

SOULSLAIN ZOMBIE

Medium undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 11

Hit Points 70

Speed 30 ft., burrow 30 ft.

STR 19 (+4)	DEX 12 (+1)	CON 16 (+3)
INT 2 (-4)	WIS 6 (-2)	CHA 5 (-3)

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8

Languages cannot speak or understand spoken language, but can receive telepathic instruction

Challenge 2

Soulslain. A soulslain zombie has no will of its own. Without active command (such as from a necromancer or

soulfire desecrator, for instance), the zombie will stand in place. If attacked, it will defend itself, but only as long as it is actively being attacked. It will not pursue attackers.

Undead Fortitude. If damage reduces the zombie to 0 hit points, it must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5 + the damage taken, unless the damage is radiant or from a critical hit. On a success, the zombie drops to 1 hit point instead.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The zombie makes two claw attacks.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 1d6+4 (7) slashing damage.

Magic Items

STAFF OF THE HIVE

Staff, very rare (requires attunement by a spellcaster)

This resin-coated staff is burnt umber, and always feels mildly sticky to the touch. When wielded, the staff gives off a barely audible buzzing hum, like the wings of a wasp.

This staff can be wielded as a magic quarterstaff that grants a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with it. In addition, while holding the quarterstaff, you gain telepathy with a range of 30 feet.

The staff has 10 charges. When you hit with a melee attack using it, you can expend one or two charges. If you expend one charge, the target is affected as though you cast the command spell. If you expend two charges, the target is affected as though you cast the crown of madness spell. In both cases, the target receives saving throws as normal for the spell, using your spell save DC. You can expend one additional charge to give the target disadvantage on the first saving throw they make against the spell. The staff regains 1d6+4 charges each day at dawn.

WASPWING MANTLE

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)

This cloak appears to be made from plain grey cloth. When activated, the cloak blurs into a set of wasp wings, which immediately send you surging into the skies.

You can activate this cloak as a bonus action on your turn. When you do, you can immediately fly 60 feet without provoking attacks of opportunity. If you do not end your movement on a solid surface, you fall as normal. At any point in your movement, you can make a melee attack against an adjacent creature with advantage. If both attack rolls would hit the creature, it takes an additional 1d12 poison damage from the attack, and is poisoned until the end of your next turn. Once you use this ability, you must complete a short or long rest before using it again.

POLITICIAN'S RING

Ring, rare (requires attunement)

This platinum ring appears simple, but carries an understated elegance. Though often worn as a pinkie ring, it will shape itself to fit any normal digit.

While wearing this ring, you have advantage on Deception and Persuasion checks. In addition, you can tell a lie and activate this item as you do. As long as the lie is plausible (as determined by your GM), any creatures who hear you believe the lie (or at least believe that you believe the lie to be true). This ability does not function on creatures hostile to you, or on creatures immune to charm effects. Once you use this ability, you must complete a long rest before using it again.

SPEAR OF GHIG-HEM

Weapon, very rare (requires attunement)

This frog spear is made from rough-hewn wood, with a forked spearhead carved from the bone of some great bovine beast. It is carved with orcish symbols, and a bundle of feathers and fur is tied to the haft just below the spearhead.

You gain a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon. As an action, you can activate the spear's enchantment and make a thrown attack with it. If you hit, the target is restrained. A restrained target can use their action to remove the spear. As soon as the spear is no longer restraining a creature or you use a bonus action to end the restrained condition, the spear dissolves into swamp water and reappears in your hand or stowed (your choice). It also dissolves and reappears if you miss.

RUNESROLLS

Wondrous item (runesroll), varies

Runesrolls are a special type of magical scroll. Unlike normal scrolls, these runesrolls cannot be used to cast spells, and can be used by anyone. To activate a runesroll, you display the rune on the scroll and shout the name of the rune as an action. When you do, the runesroll ignites (and is destroyed), and draws on your natural resilience to unleash a specific magical effect. Many runesrolls cause effects that require saving throws. When they do, the saving throw DC equals 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Constitution modifier. There are many types of runesrolls; those present in this adventure are detailed below.

Audrak Runesroll

Wondrous item (runesroll), rare

As an action, you shout the name of this rune, igniting the scroll and expelling a wave of flame and weakening energy in a 20-foot cone. Each creature in the area must make a Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, a creature takes 4d6 fire damage and has disadvantage on Strength-based attack rolls for one minute. A creature that succeeds on the save takes half the damage and does not suffer disadvantage. Creatures under the weakening effect of this runesroll receive a new save at the end of each of their turns, ending the effect for themselves on a success.



Feguln Runesroll

Wondrous item (runesroll), rare

As an action, you shout the name of this rune, igniting the scroll and surrounding yourself in a nimbus of fiery energy. You gain resistance to fire damage for one minute. In addition, once during the duration when you would take fire damage, you can use your reaction to instead gain temporary hit points equal to the damage you would have taken. If you do, you also expel a cloud of poisonous gas in a 10-foot radius around you. Creatures other than you in the area must make a Constitution saving throw, taking 3d6 poison damage on a failed saving throw, or half that amount on a successful one.

IRON BEAR ESSENCE

Potion, rare

This potion is a pale golden brown, and appears to be thick and syrupy.

When you drink this potion, you regain 2d6 hit points. In addition, you gain resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage until the end of your next turn. While you have resistance from this potion, you can make a Shove attempt as a bonus action.



PLAYER HANDOUTS

RANGER QUIRKS

1. Constantly chews a wad of mildly hallucinogenic leaves. As things get worse, he may over-do it and have a panic attack (Game Over Man, Game Over!)
2. Proud Dwarven Warrior, longing to die in glorious combat to honor his ancestors.
3. Insane, thinks he hears the voice of a god. He's sure he'll survive, not so much his friends (the good lord says he can get me out of this, but he's pretty sure you're f'ed).
4. Funny guy, always telling jokes, even when faced with certain death.
5. Tattooed from head to toe; when faced with certain death is filled with unholy rage and charges headlong.
6. Cautious, always checking corners and blind spots, probably the first one to die.
7. Silent, never loses their cool, won't give the enemy the satisfaction of a death cry.
8. Reflective, likely to offer deep philosophical revelations right before getting dismembered.
9. Deeply allergic to something in this area of the jungle, always sneezing.
10. Angry at the world, challenges the wasps to fight.
11. Is his first mission, doesn't want to fail or be seen as frightened.
12. Has a pouch full of lucky charms, throws them out as they prove to not work. By the end will have an empty pouch.
13. Profuse swearer, every other word or more.
14. Constantly corrects foul language, "What would your mother say if she heard that?"
15. This is nothing. Remember that time we fought that tetrataun? Always relating the situation to some other "Much Worse" situation
16. Grizzled vet, not as strong or fast as you used to be, but twice as smart as these kids you're stuck with. You'd lay down your life for them though.
17. Took too many nerve calming potions, way too calm.
18. Joined the rangers to avoid jail time. Rethinking that choice.
19. Constantly wondering aloud if this is going to rate hazard pay, or triple hazard pay.
20. Quarrelsome, always picking a fight with another ranger to distract them (and you) from the terror of the situation at hand.



BRUISER

Medium humanoid, neutral

Armor Class 17

Hit Points 40

Speed 30 ft.

STR 17 (+3)	DEX 12 (+1)	CON 15 (+2)
INT 10 (+0)	WIS 12 (+1)	CHA 10 (+0)

Skills Athletics +5

Senses Any racial senses, passive Perception 11

Languages Common plus any racial languages

Challenge 2

Bruiser. Your melee attacks are devastating. Whenever you hit a creature with a melee attack, it deals an additional 1d6 damage of the same type as the weapon (included in your attacks).

ACTIONS

Maul. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3d6+3 (13) bludgeoning damage.

Awesome Blow (Recharge 5-6). You make a maul attack. If the attack hits, the target is pushed 15 feet away from you and knocked prone.

MENDER

Medium humanoid, neutral

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 30

Speed 30 ft.

STR 10 (+0)	DEX 14 (+2)	CON 14 (+2)
INT 10 (+0)	WIS 16 (+3)	CHA 12 (+1)

Senses Any racial senses, passive Perception 11

Languages Common plus any racial languages

Challenge 2

Beast Speech. You can speak with non-hostile beasts.

Once per short rest you can cast the animal messenger spell, using Wisdom as your spellcasting ability score.

ACTIONS

Dagger. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d4+2 (4) slashing damage.

Entangle (Recharge 5-6). You cast the spell *entangle*.

Thunderwave (Recharge 5-6). You cast the spell *thunderwave*.

BONUS ACTIONS

Mending (Recharge 5-6). You cast the spell *healing word*.

SAPPER

Medium humanoid, neutral

Armor Class 15

Hit Points 30

Speed 30 ft.

STR 14 (+2)	DEX 15 (+2)	CON 12 (+1)
INT 12 (+1)	WIS 12 (+1)	CHA 10 (+0)

Skills Athletics +4

Senses Any racial senses, passive Perception 12

Languages Common plus any racial languages

Challenge 2

Sapper. Your explosives deal an additional 1d8 fire damage (included in your attacks).

ACTIONS

Grenade. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d4+2 (4) bludgeoning damage. The target and any creatures within 5 feet of it must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 2d8 (9) fire damage on a failed save, or half that amount on a successful one.

Dagger. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d4+2 (4) slashing damage.

STALKER

Medium humanoid, neutral

Armor Class 15

Hit Points 36

Speed 30 ft.

STR 12 (+1)	DEX 17 (+3)	CON 14 (+2)
INT 10 (+0)	WIS 14 (+2)	CHA 10 (+0)

Skills Stealth +5

Senses Any racial senses, passive Perception 12

Languages Common plus any racial languages

Challenge 2

Stalker. You can Hide as a bonus action.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The stalker makes two longbow attacks.

Longbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d8+3 (7) piercing damage.

Dagger. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d4+3 (5) slashing damage.

Deadly Shot (Recharge 5-6). You make a longbow attack. If you are hidden from the target and you hit, the target takes 3d6 additional piercing damage.

STALWART

Medium humanoid, neutral

Armor Class 18

Hit Points 45

Speed 30 ft.

STR 18 (+4)	DEX 10 (+0)	CON 15 (+2)
INT 10 (+0)	WIS 12 (+1)	CHA 10 (+0)

Senses Any racial senses, passive Perception 11

Languages Common plus any racial languages

Challenge 2

ACTIONS

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d8+3 (7) slashing damage.

BONUS ACTIONS

Shield Bash. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d4+3 (5) bludgeoning damage, and the target is pushed 5 feet away from you.

REACTIONS

Stalwart. Whenever a creature hits you with a melee attack, you can use your reaction to halve the damage you take from that attack.

RANGER RACES

Dwarf

Senses darkvision 60 ft.

Additional Languages Dwarven

Special: You have advantage on saving throws against poison, and resistance to poison damage. You have 5 additional hit points.

Half-Orc

Senses darkvision 60 ft.

Additional Languages Orc

Special: The first time you would be reduced to 0 hit points in this scene, you are instead reduced to 1 hit point.

Halfling

Additional Languages Halfling

Special: You can move through the space of a creature that is of a size larger than yours. Once during the cutscene, you can choose to reroll one d20 roll of your choice. You must take the result of the new roll.

Dragonborn

Damage Resistance fire, lightning, or acid (your choice)

Additional Languages Draconic

Special: You can expel a 5 ft. by 30 ft. line of fire, lightning, or acid (must be the same as your resistance) as an action. Creatures in the area must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking

4d6 damage of the selected type on a failed save, or half that amount on a successful one. You can use this ability once per cutscene.

Grothik

Senses darkvision 60 ft.

Additional Languages Grothik

Special: You can take the Dash action as a bonus action.

Troll-Blooded

Senses darkvision 60 ft.

Additional Languages Giant

Special: Your melee weapon attacks deal an additional 2 points of damage. In addition, if you start your turn below half health, you regain 1 hit point.

Tiefling

Senses darkvision 60 ft.

Damage Resistance You have resistance to fire damage.

Additional Languages Abyssal

Special: Once per cutscene, you can cast the spell *hellish rebuke*. Your spell save DC is 12.

Forest Elf

Senses darkvision 60 ft.

Additional Languages Elven

Special: Your speed increases by 5 feet. In addition, you can attempt to hide when lightly obscured.





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A DARK CLOUD

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Against the Mindfire Queen is a 5th edition adventure intended for characters of 10th level. Those characters will explore the town of Hadley's Folly, fight in a pitched battle, and face the Mindfire Queen at the heart of her hive.