

**YOU DON'T PLAY THESE MODULES!
THESE MODULES PLAY YOU!**

A Tome of Two Adventures with Eight Hours of Content for Characters Level 1-4. By: Anthony Joyce



**CCC-AETHER-01-01
CCC-AETHER-01-02**



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Thank you for supporting “The Heir of Orcus” series. Your purchase allows me to continue funding this independent project as I begin to develop Verses III – VI of this storyline. May you find laughter, joy, and friendship throughout these adventures! -Anthony Joyce

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BACKGROUND HOOKS FOR THE HEIR OF ORCUS SERIES

These background hooks help Dungeon Master's and players add immersion to their characters while playing *The Heir of Orcus* series. Dungeon Masters and players are encouraged to adopt these background hooks to create characters fully invested in the storyline.

ACOLYTE

Acolyte's of Tyr and Asmodeus certainly know of the eternal Blood War. Dungeon Masters are encouraged to consider the social attitudes of the Knights of Holy Judgment or Cult of Zariel as friendly towards Acolyte's aligned with their side; Tyr and Asmodeus respectively. Reference Chapter 8 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for more details on social attitudes.

ARCHEOLOGIST

An opportunity to explore a lost Temple of Orcus excites even the timidest of archeologists. It is almost unheard of for anyone to ever enter a Temple of Orcus, let alone escape alive! Archeologists understand the value of exploring such places of ominous mystery.

CLOISTERED SCHOLAR

During their years of study, cloistered scholars come across the works of Ser Thandor, a wise master of lore within the Knights of Holy Judgment. The academic works of Ser Thandor are used as a model of rigor and expertise within the scholarly community.

GLADIATOR

The tale of Nurfenpurf's victory in the "Passage of Arms" tournament in Waterdeep 300 years ago is well known throughout gladiatorial circles. However, as the story goes, Nurfenpurf mysteriously vanished after his rise to fame.

HAUNTED ONE

Nightmares manifested by Orcus, The Heir of Orcus or Cthulhu ravage the minds of haunted ones. Perhaps one of these dark forces has been calling out to these characters all their lives, waiting for them to do their bidding. Why is Cthulhu mentioned here...I mean, what did you expect was behind Chaos?

KNIGHT

All Knights recognize the Knights of Holy Judgment as a righteous order dedicated to Tyr. Characters with the Knight background might even be affiliated with the Knights of Holy Judgment due to their prior experiences.

NOBLE

The Mafisto Twins are well known by noble houses throughout Faerun. The Mafisto Twins regularly host extravagant charity events to raise money for orphanages in the Moonsea Region. They are highly regarded as charitable members of nobility.

OUTLANDER

The Bloodmuck Swamp is home to a variety of dangerous creatures outlanders are familiar with. Many outlanders have seen signs of black dragons taking up residence in the swamp and recognize the warning signs of a black dragon's lair.

SAGE

The tale of Ser Vindictus and her disappearance in the Temple of Orcus is a well-documented legend of lore. Sage's recall the volumes of books written by Ser Thandor on the subject, such as, *To the Abyss and Back*. Ultimately, the scholarly community has not come to an agreement regarding the fate of Ser Vindictus and her Knights of Holy Judgment that mysteriously vanished over a century ago.

SOLDIER

During combat on the frontlines, soldiers often remark, "At least we aren't fighting in the damned Blood War! This shall be over soon enough!" The phrase hints at the eternal struggle of demonic and infernal forces. Soldiers recognize the hidden scars of war that impact one another, friend and foe alike.



**YOU DON'T PLAY THIS MODULE!
THIS MODULE PLAYS YOU!**

A Two-hour Adventure for Tier 1 Characters. Optimized for APL 3. By: Anthony Joyce

CCC-AETHER-01-01



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CCC-AETHER-01-01 *The Heir of Orcus: Verse I*

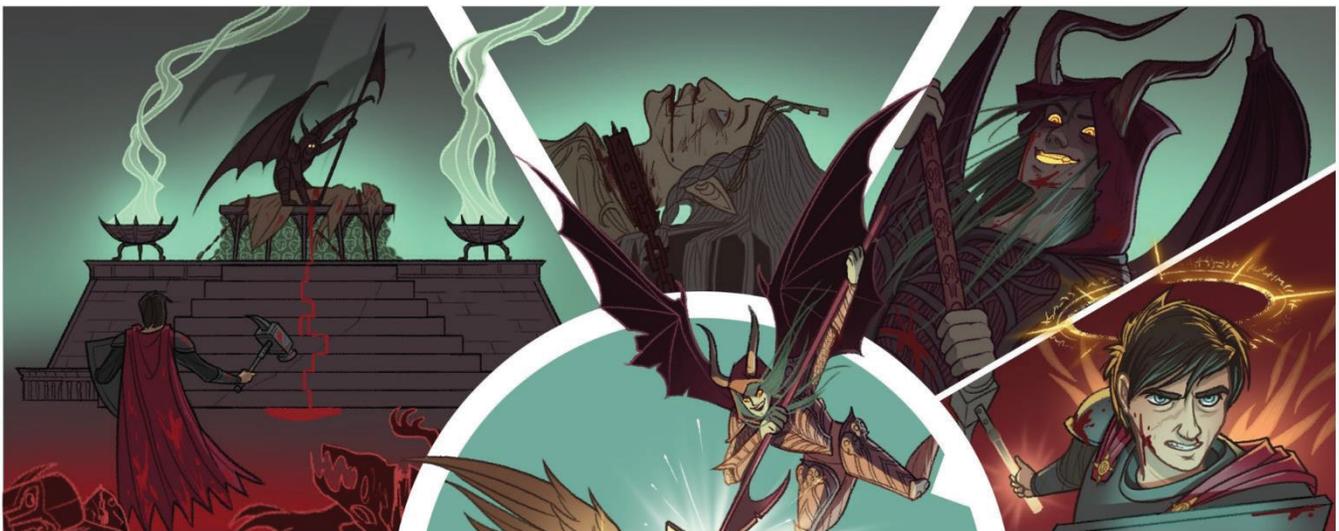
FOOLS! LED TO THEIR DOOM BY THE PROMISE OF JUSTICE.



DID THEY TRULY BELIEVE...



...THEY COULD STOP THE PROPHECY?



MAY THE GODS PITY US,

FOR TODAY THE HEIR OF ORCUS IS BORN!

Adventure Primer

This adventure is structured around players “choosing a side”. Each pillar of play offers ways to achieve the main objectives.

Background

“This is a tale most evil and foul, a horrible tale indeed. There was an angel of Tyr sent without fear, to destroy the Temple of Orcus! **SER VINDICTUS**, Ser Vindictus we can still hear her prayer, as she led her poor knights to their ultimate doom...poor Ser Vindictus...poor Ser Vindictus, no one hears her prayers in that unholy tomb!” –Verse I

The characters begin the adventure in a carriage heading towards **MAFISTO MANOR**. An Incubus and a Succubus disguised as tieflings known as the **MAFISTO TWINS** have called upon the bravest adventurers to help them rescue a lost mythical figure, an angel of Tyr known as Ser Vindictus. The Mafisto Twins are hosting a grand dinner to discuss the details with the adventurers.

Unbeknownst to anyone, three nights ago, the Mafisto Twins ambushed a group of **KNIGHTS OF HOLY JUDGMENT** and stole their map that leads to the entrance of the Temple of Orcus that Ser Vindictus attacked long ago. The Mafisto Twins seek to find Ser Vindictus and turn her into a fallen angel that worships the Archdevil **ZARIEL**.

Now, the Knights of Holy Judgment are hot on the trail of the Mafisto Twins and seek to get their map back. They will stop at nothing to retrieve the map and find Ser Vindictus themselves so they can uncover the fate that befell her and her knights.

Episodes

The adventure is spread over three episodes that altogether take approximately two hours to play. These episodes are initially introduced by a **Call to Action** Episode.

If you’re planning to play the entire adventure at once, you only need to introduce the Call to Action once. However, if you plan to play them over several sessions, you’ll want to revisit the Call to Action each time you play.

- **Episode 1: The Choice (Call to Action).** The Knights of Holy Judgment confront the characters on their way to Mafisto Manor located on the outskirts of MELVAUNT. The characters must

make a choice: join the Knights or face their righteous wrath.

- **Episode 2: Mafisto Manor.** The characters arrive at Mafisto Manor. Characters get the map to the Temple of Orcus at Mafisto Manor. Characters complete Main Objective A upon completing this Episode.
- **Episode 3: Finding the Temple of Orcus.** The characters find and enter the Temple of Orcus beneath the Bloodmuck Swamp. Characters complete Main Objective B upon completing this Episode.

Bonus Objectives

This adventure includes two bonus objectives that the characters may pursue if they have additional time to do so—earning up to an additional 2 **advancement checkpoints** and 1 **treasure checkpoint** in the process. These bonus objectives are found in this adventure’s appendices, as follows:

- **Bonus Objective A: The Fate of the Lost Knights.** Save or kill the lost Knights of Holy Judgment. This bonus objective is found in Appendix 4.
- **Bonus Objective B: Nezzarum’s Lair.** Defeat Nezzarum. This bonus objective is found in Appendix 5.

Adventure Hooks

Players can come up with the best story hooks that intimately build upon their characters’ backstories. Ask the players why their characters are going to rescue Ser Vindictus, a lost angel of Tyr. Is it for nefarious or noble purposes?

Choosing a Side

The characters’ choices and actions will cause them to “choose a side” during this adventure. Below is a description of the three sides:

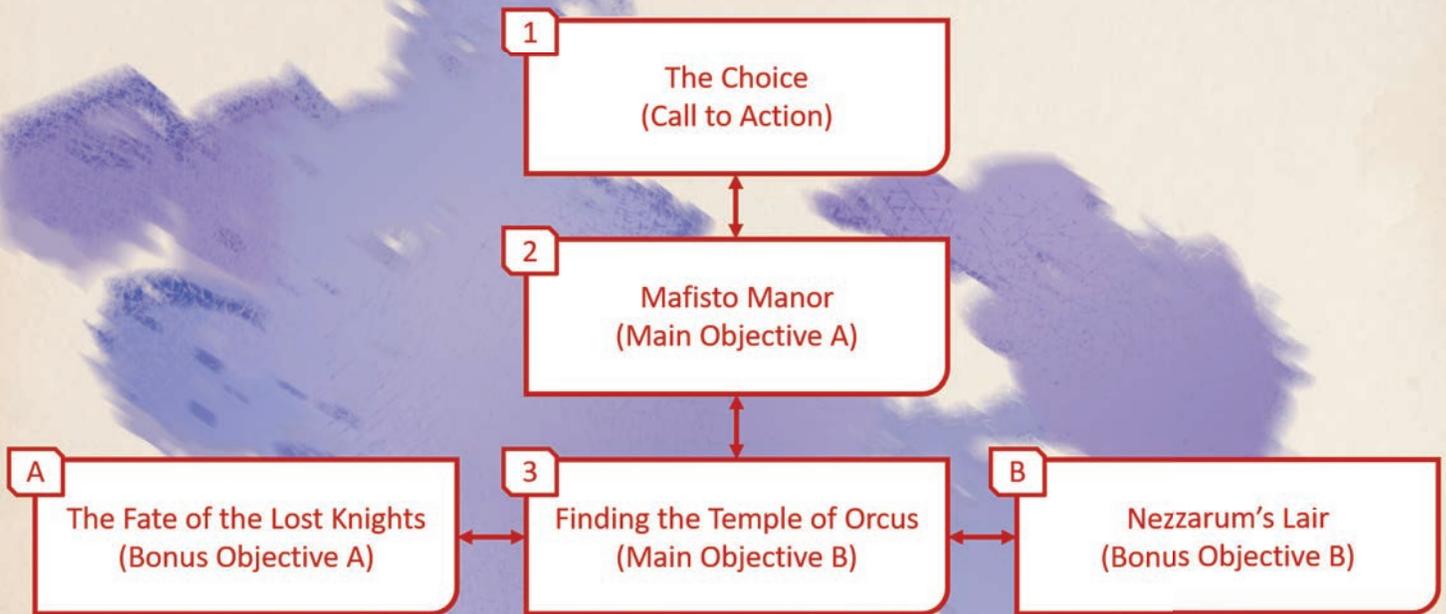
Knights of Holy Judgment. The Knights of Holy Judgment want to recover their stolen map, rescue Ser Gertz, and enter the Temple of Orcus.

Cult of Zariel. The Mafisto Twins want the characters to escort them to the Temple of Orcus, in case trouble arises. They want to enter the Temple of Orcus and see if there is anything inside they can use to their advantage in the Blood War.

Chaos. Players might reject both sides in this adventure and support Chaos!

Episode Flowchart

This adventure plays takes place over 3 Episodes and offers 2 bonus Episodes. Episodes 1, 2, and 3 play out in linear order. Characters can pursue either **Bonus Objectives** once they enter the caves in Episode 3. Characters may complete **Main Objective B** or pursue the **Bonus Objectives** in any order they see fit.



Episode 1. The Choice (Call to Action)

Estimated Duration. 30 minutes

In this Episode, the characters decide if they will side with or against the Knights of Holy Judgment.

Scene A. The Carriage Ride

The characters begin this adventure sitting in a luxurious, horse-drawn carriage trimmed with red paint. The carriage is driven by a small, deformed gnome named **NURFENPURF**. Large warts, blisters, moles, and growths cover his hideous face. He mutters to himself as the carriage travels down the road.

Area Information

The area has the following features:

Terrain & Dimensions. Improved roads, green rolling hills, and pastures on the outskirts of **MELVAUNT**.

Weather. Mild temperatures, with the evening sky looking as if a storm is approaching from the north.

Lighting. Dim light as the sun begins to set across the hillside.

Smells and Sounds. The sound of the horse-drawn carriage echoes in the distance. A low rumble trembles across the sky as thunder roars in the distance, heading ever closer.

Creatures/NPCs

This scene introduces Nurfenpurf, a gnome **cultist** who worships the Archdevil Zariel and serves as a steward for the Mafisto Twins. Nurfenpurf carries a **Master Key** to Mafisto Manor that unlocks any door. He always wears the key on a chain around his neck. A character succeeding in a DC 16 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check can remove the key without Nurfenpurf noticing.

Objectives/Goals. Nurfenpurf wants to make sure the characters arrive at Mafisto Manor and meet with the Mafisto Twins.

What Does Nurfenpurf Know?

- Nurfenpurf knows that the Mafisto Twins run the Cult of Zariel in this region, they are powerful and shouldn't be double crossed.

What do the Characters Know?

- The Mafisto Twins are well known locally for their charitable donations to local orphanages. The

Twins often help arrange placing children with families for adoption.

- While well known, the source of the Mafisto Twins' wealth remains a relative mystery.

Call to Action

The objective of this adventure is for characters to get the stolen map and enter the Temple of Orcus.

Treasure & Rewards

The characters can find the following treasure.

- Nurfenpurf carries a **Master Key** to Mafisto Manor, which unlocks all doors in the manor. The **Master Key** is fashioned from the finger bone of a demon.

Lore the DM should know

Orcus. Orcus is the Demon Prince of Undeath, also known as the Blood Lord. Orcus rules over Thanatos, the 113th layer of the Abyss. For more detailed lore, reference *Mordenkainen's Tome of Foes* or *Out of the Abyss*.

Zariel. Zariel rules Avernus, the first layer of the Nine Hells and the main battlefield in the eternal Blood War. Many eons ago, she was a powerful angel tasked with observing the Blood War on Avernus. The influence of Avernus ultimately corrupted her and she became an Archdevil. For more detailed lore, reference *Mordenkainen's Tome of Foes*.

The Blood War. An eternal conflict between demons and devils that takes place in the lower planes, the war is mostly fought along the River Styx, in between the Abyss and Avernus. For more detailed lore, reference *Mordenkainen's Tome of Foes*.

Tyr. Tyr is the Faerûnian god of justice. His symbol is balanced scales resting on a warhammer. Followers of Tyr see things in terms of black and white, as good or evil. The Knights of Holy Judgment is an order of knighthood devoted to Tyr and seeking out vengeance against all that is evil. These knights wear thin strips of diaphanous cloth over their eyes to remind others of the blindness of justice. For more detailed lore, reference the *Sword Coast Adventurer's Guide*.

Ser. The title "Ser" is a gender-neutral, knightly title used by the Knights of Holy Judgment. This title exemplifies that Tyr's adherence to justice is blind, and anyone, regardless of gender is equally capable of executing justice in Tyr's name.

Scene B. The Knights of Holy Judgment

A group of Knights of Holy Judgment intercept the carriage before the characters arrive at Mafisto Manor. The group is led by **SER TITUS**, a young male human **knight** riding a **warhorse**. He is accompanied by three human **guards** on **riding horses**.

Nurfenpurf brings the carriage to a sudden halt when the Knights approach. Ser Titus, clad in gleaming plate armor and wielding a large maul, gallops toward the carriage riding his majestic white warhorse. He begins shouting to the characters that they are in danger and have been tricked by the evil Mafisto Twins.

Creatures/NPCs

This scene introduces Ser Titus, a handsome, muscular Knight of Holy Judgment who seeks to uncover the mystery behind Ser Vindictus' disappearance over a century ago. Ser Titus is ruthless with enacting justice and will not hesitate to bring the full force of Tyr down upon evildoers! Ser Titus embodies confidence, leadership, and bravery, so it is only natural that when he talks, he shouts.

Objectives/Goals. Ser Titus knows the Mafisto Twins killed several of his Knights to obtain a map that leads to a lost Temple of Orcus. He seeks justice for their crime! He also knows the Mafisto Twins have captured **SER GERTZ**, a young, female half-orc priest in the Knights of Holy Judgment; and he seeks to rescue her!

What Does Ser Titus Know?

Ser Titus shares the following information with the characters in an attempt to gain their assistance:

- Several days ago, a group of Knights of Holy Judgment were attacked while mapping caves in

the Bloodmuck Swamp. The Knights were ambushed after they discovered the location of a lost Temple of Orcus.

- Two Knights who witnessed the attack say the Mafisto Twins enchanted them and forced them to kill their brothers- and sisters-in-arms. The enchantment broke one day later, but they could not recall where the entrance to the lost Temple of Orcus was.
- Ser Gertz is captive at Mafisto Manor.
- The Mafisto Twins ran off with the map that showed the location of the lost Temple of Orcus.

Development: "Choosing a Side"

This first decision should align the characters with one of the three "sides". Make sure the players know their choices matter!

Knights of Holy Judgment. If the adventurers agree to assist Ser Titus, he asks them to follow him to Mafisto Manor.

Cult of Zariel. If the adventurers refuse to assist Ser Titus, he concludes that the adventurers are evil. Tyr does not tolerate evil in Faerûn and his followers seek to vanquish evil wherever it is.

Chaos. The characters may have plans of their own and decide to work against the Knights of Holy Judgment and the Cult of Zariel. Chaos!

Encounter Adjustments:

- **Very Weak:** Remove all **guards** from the encounter
- **Weak:** Remove one **guard** from this encounter
- **Strong:** Add one more **guard** to this encounter
- **Very Strong:** Add two more **guards** to this encounter

Modifications for Ser Titus

Ser Titus wields a maul instead of a greatsword.

Playing the Pillars

COMBAT

The Knights believe that those who do not stand with them are against them. In their righteous zeal, they try to kill or subdue the characters before they go to Mafisto Manor.

EXPLORATION

Characters can attempt to escape using the carriage, or other mounts available to them (if any). A chase should be theatrical and fun! The DM is empowered to run a chase as they see fit.

SOCIAL

Characters who appeal to Ser Titus's sense of Judgment and righteousness have advantage on Charisma (Persuasion) checks with Ser Titus. Characters should have an opportunity to avoid combat using social skills

Episode 2. Mafisto Manor

Estimated Duration: 60 minutes

In this Episode, the characters decide if they will side with or against the Mafisto Twins and get the map to the Temple of Orcus.

Scene A. The Manor

Area Information

The area has the following features:

Terrain & Dimensions. Atop this opulent manor are several stone statues with devilish features. Their pointed snarling faces scowl down at the quaint courtyard filled with intricate, manicured landscaping.

Manor Entrance. The front doorway leading into the foyer is locked. There is a back entrance into the manor via the kitchen. Both doors are locked and require succeeding an DC 10 Dexterity check using thieves' tools to pick the doors' locks, a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check to break the door down, or the doors can be opened with Nurfenpurf's

Master Key to the manor.

Weather. Cool temperatures and a clear night sky.

Lighting. Darkness. The moon shines overhead and the lights from the manor illuminate the windows.

Smells and Sounds. A crow caws overhead as it lands on the roof of the manor and stares at the characters.

Creatures/NPCs

The Mafisto Twins. The Mafisto Twins are inside the manor. **MORDAKAI MAFISTO** is an **incubus** and **ORIANNA MAFISTO** is a **succubus**, both in tiefling form while they occupy the Material Plane. The DM decides which room the Mafisto Twins occupy.

Orianna Mafisto. Orianna is spunky, playful, and seductive. She enjoys corrupting mortals with pleasures of the flesh and their darkest desires, all in the name of fun! Her black hair is worn up in pigtailed, and she adorns her face and horns with elaborate silver jewelry encrusted with blood red sapphires. Her true name is Sharlyss (SHAR-liss).

Mordakai Mafisto. Mordakai is a veteran of the Blood War and suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder. The only thing that cheers him up is Dragonchess, a game he grew to love during his time on the front lines of the Blood War.

During a demonic invasion of Avernus, a demon ripped Mordakai's lower jaw and tongue out of his face. Since that day, **he only communicates with sign language and/or written notes**, he will use telepathy once he knows the characters are friendly.

He wears a crimson scarf to cover up his hideous war wounds and a **Helm of Comprehend Languages** he won at the Avernus Dragonchess Championship, 352 years ago. His true name is Jarixar (JAR-icks-ar).

Objectives/Goals. The Mafisto Twins want the characters to escort them into the lost Temple of Orcus.

What do the Mafisto Twins know?

- The twins want to believe Ser Vindictus is trapped in the Temple of Orcus. They want to find her and covert her into a fallen angel join the ranks of Zariel's Infernal Army.
- Several Knights of Holy Judgment survived the ambush and are lost in the caves under Bloodmuck Swamp. The Mafisto Twins suggest hunting them down so there are no living witnesses.
- **NEZZARUM, a young black dragon**, has a lair underneath the Bloodmuck Swamp near the entrance to the Temple of Orcus. They believe they can bypass the dragon's lair if they are careful.

Encounter Adjustments:

- **Very Weak:** Mafisto Twins each start with 40 hit points
- **Weak:** Mafisto Twins each start with 50 hit points
- **Strong:** Add one more **cultist** to this encounter and Mafisto Twins each start with 75 hit points
- **Very Strong:** Add two more **cultists** to this encounter and Mafisto Twins each start with 90 hit points

Modifications for the Mafisto Twins

Attack. The Mafisto Twins use scimitars while in Tiefling form. These scimitars have +3 to hit and deal 1d6+3 damage.

Ferocious Surge (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). When this creature hits with an attack that isn't a critical hit, it can turn the hit into a critical hit.

Helm of Comprehend Languages. Mordakai always keeps comprehend languages active when visitors are present.

Treasure. Orianna Mafisto carries a **Sapphire Key** that unlocks the chest in the Master Bedroom and the manacles that restrain Ser Gertz. Mordakai Mafisto carries a **Jade Key** that unlocks the display cases in the library.

Objectives

- **Main Objective A:** Characters get the map to the Temple of Orcus.

Area 1. Main Foyer

Area Information

The area has the following features:

Terrain & Dimensions. The floor is made of the purest marble with a white hue and hints of black which sprawl out like wild rivers. There are several large leather chairs in the middle of the room and large hanging paintings depicting a fiery battle scene adorn the walls.

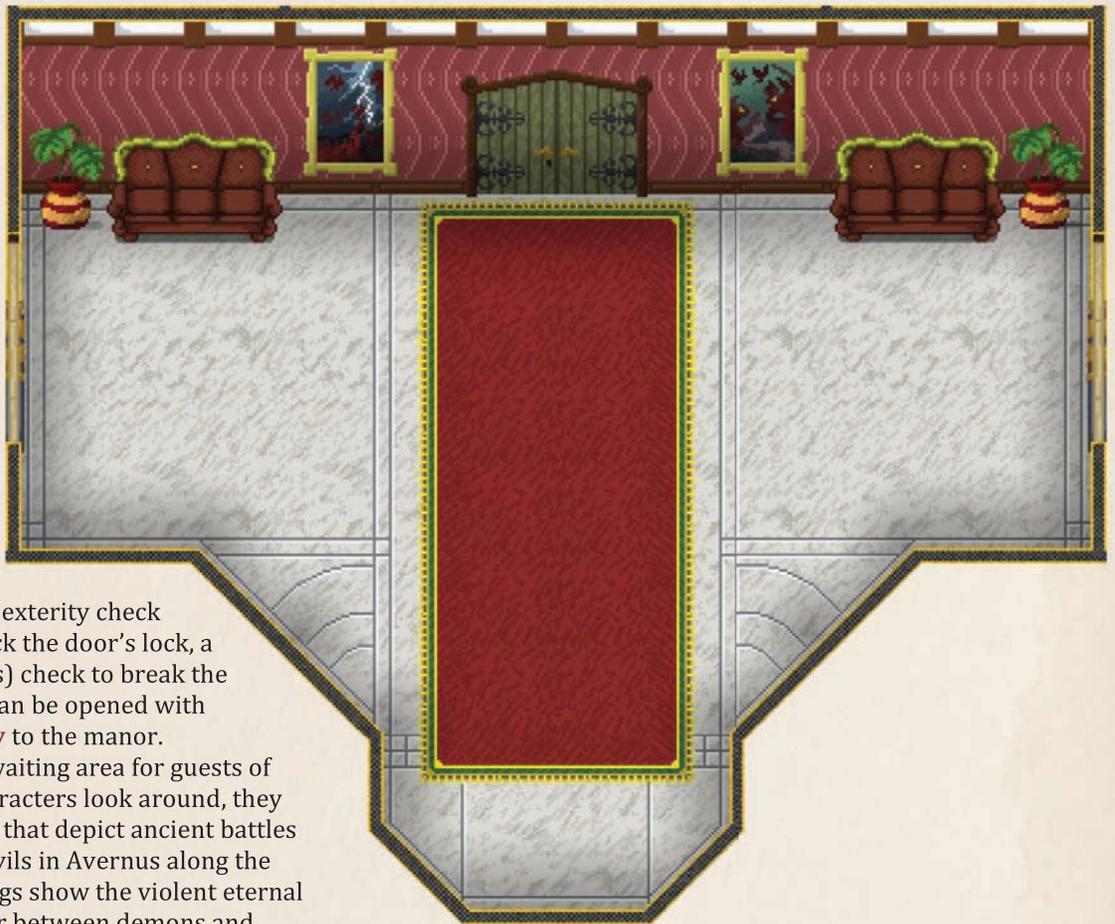
Lighting. Bright light from candles illuminate this room.

Smells and Sounds. The foyer smells of sweet lavender and oils.

Other Features

Characters can enter the manor via the front door that leads directly into the Main Foyer. If Nurfenpurf is present, he unlocks the front door and lets the adventurers enter. If Nurfenpurf isn't present, the door is locked and requires succeeding in an DC 10 Dexterity check using thieves' tools to pick the door's lock, a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check to break the door down, or the door can be opened with Nurfenpurf's **Master Key** to the manor.

The foyer serves as a waiting area for guests of Mafisto Manor. If the characters look around, they see paintings on the wall that depict ancient battles between demons and devils in Avernus along the River Styx. These paintings show the violent eternal struggle of the Blood War between demons and devils. The paintings suggest the devils defending against an infinite onslaught of demonic hordes. A successful DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check on the paintings reveals a young and vibrant Nurfenpurf painted in the backdrop of one of the artworks as a valiant hero, slaying a demon on the front lines of battle in Avernus.



Area 2. Dining Hall & The Feast!

Area Information

The area has the following features:

Terrain & Dimensions. A large dark oak table occupies the center of this large dining hall. Polished silverware and delicious food are set out on the table in preparation for the feast.

Lighting. Bright light; the fireplace illuminates the room in a bright orange hue.

Smells and Sounds. The smell of exotic roasts lingers about the room. The fireplace crackles soothingly.

Other Features

Above the fireplace hangs a painting of a female fallen angel. She is heavily armored, wields a flaming longsword in one hand, and a flaming javelin in the other. Her face is defiant as she looks towards the heavens while leading an Army of devils into battle. Characters that succeed on a DC 12 Intelligence (History) or (Religion) check recognize that this painting depicts the Archdevil Zariel.

Development: “Choosing a Side”

Cult of Zariel. If the characters side with the Cult of Zariel, then “The Feast is Served!” event occurs (see below). During the feast, each guest is served a dish from their respective cultures, which should hint at the fact that the Mafisto Twins have done their homework on their guests.

Event: The Feast is Served!

The Mafisto Twins begin the dinner with small chat. Assume, however, that the twins have gathered information on each of the characters beforehand. One way to convey that the Twins know information about the characters is for the DM to record the “flaws” of each character, using them during the social encounter as a way for the Twins to interact with each character.

Suggested Feast Events

Below are some events that can play out during the feast:

Mordakai Mafisto Feast Events. Mordakai challenges the characters to a game of Dragonchess. If they beat him, he offers them his **Helm of Comprehend Languages** and his **Jade Key** as gifts. He allows the characters to keep anything they want from his display cases in the Library.

Playing Dragonchess

The game of Dragonchess takes place on a three-tiered chess board over five rounds of contests between a character and Mordakai. Each round, a character makes any Ability check within the DM’s discretion versus Mordakai’s Intelligence check, adding +2 to Mordakai’s roll for his proficiency in Dragonchess. The highest total roll in the contest wins the round. The first to win three rounds wins the game. Characters may apply their proficiency bonus to any Ability check if they are proficient with Dragonchess. If Mordakai loses two rounds, he attempts to charm his opponent and telepathically command them to forfeit the game. The DM should encourage fun, creative Ability checks in this scene.

Orianna Mafisto Feast Events. Orianna tries to seduce good-aligned characters. At the DMs discretion, a character who spends the night with Orianna can give a cambion its true name.

Nurfenpurf Feast Events. Nurfenpurf spills food and distracts characters that ask too many questions.

Treasure & Rewards

The characters can find the following treasure.

- Mordakai’s **Helm of Comprehend Languages**.
- Mordakai’s **Jade Key** to the display cases in the library.
- Orianna’s **Sapphire Key**, which unlocks the chest in the Master Bedroom and the manacles that restrain Ser Gertz.

Playing the Pillars

COMBAT

In combat the Mafisto Twins first use their **Charm** action on Ser Titus (if present) and the characters. They try to turn the tides of battle by gaining more charmed allies.

EXPLORATION

A character can leave the feast unnoticed if they succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity (Stealth) check. Characters may pickpocket the Mafisto Twins’ keys with a successful DC 15 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check.

SOCIAL

Characters must succeed on a DC 19 Wisdom (Insight) check to determine the true intentions of the Mafisto Twins. Characters that play Dragonchess with Mordakai have advantage on this check.

Area 3. Kitchen

Area Information

The area has the following features:

Terrain & Dimensions. Platters of exotic cuisine fill every inch of this small kitchen. Bottles of wine line the tops of the cupboards. In the corner of the kitchen, a small iron pot is boiling on a stove. It appears to be some sort of potato stew, a cuisine of gnomes.

Lighting. Bright light, candles and fire from the stove light up the kitchen.

Smells and Sounds. Aromas of garlic, onions, and spiced meat. A boiling pot bubbles on the stove.

Other Features

This kitchen is used to prepare food for the feast. There is a locked door that opens up to the back of Mafisto Manor. This door can be unlocked with a successful DC 10 Dexterity check using thieves' tools to pick the door's lock, a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check to break the door down, or the door can be opened with Nurfenpurf's **Master Key** to the manor.

The other door in the kitchen leads into the Dining Hall.

If Nurfenpurf is around, he tries to kick the characters out of his kitchen; he doesn't like guests disturbing his work area or eyeing his potato stew. Nurfenpurf frequently uses whatever he can find to spice up his stew, including spices from Chult. He keeps spices stored in a cabinet near his stove that characters can find if they search around.



Area 4. Library

Area Information

The area has the following features:

Terrain & Dimensions. A blood-red carpet lines the floor as towering bookshelves line the walls of this room. Ancient tomes and scrolls found only in the most exclusive libraries in Faerun appear in this library.

Lighting. Bright light, glass encased flames flicker above the bookshelves.

Smells and Sounds. There is a pungent smell of leather, old books, and tomes in the Library. The library is silent, except for the occasional screams of Ser Gertz (see “Development” below).

Other Features

The Library is initially locked when the characters arrive. Nurfenpurf opens the Library for the characters after their feast with the Mafisto Twins. If the characters want to enter the Library before Nurfenpurf opens it for them, they must succeed in an DC 10 Dexterity check using thieves’ tools to pick the doors’ lock, a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check to break the door down, or the door can be opened with Nurfenpurf’s **Master Key** to the manor.

The Mafisto Manor library is an elaborate collection of ancient tomes and scrolls. Characters can find several books of use here in the library that allow their characters to learn useful lore on the Blood War and the Nine Hells.

There are three glass display cases in this library. One arcane scroll with a wax seal bearing the symbol of Asmodeus sits atop a black cushion in each case. Two of the display cases hold the following scrolls: Scroll of Absorb Elements, Scroll of Comprehend Languages. The scroll in the third display case is a recipe for “Nurfenpurfs Famous Potato Stew”. Nurfenpurf hides his recipe here to safeguard it against thieves. The display cases can be opened with Mordakai’s **Jade Key**, a successful DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves’ tools, or characters can simply break the glass of the display cases and take the scrolls.

Noticeable Tomes in the Library

Maglaments Musings: the Blood War, a deep red, leather-bound tome, is filled with lore on the Blood War. This describes the eternal battle on the River Styx between Demons and Devils in Avernus. If the Devils ever lose this

eternal struggle, Demons will consume the Multiverse. This tome is written in Infernal.

To the Abyss and Back, a golden book with silver trimming and a symbol of balanced scales resting on a warhammer. This tome is written by Ser Thandor and details the story of Ser Vindictus, an angel of Tyr: 104 years ago the “Knights of Holy Judgment,” holy warriors in the service of Tyr, sent a group of their greatest knights deep into the Bloodmuck Swamp. Ser Vindictus led her Knights on a holy quest to destroy a temple dedicated to the Demon Lord Orcus. The Knights stormed heroically into the depths of the Temple of Orcus to put an end to his presence in Thar once and for all. After the Knights entered the temple they were ever heard from again, and the location of the temple was lost. Ser Thandor believes Ser Vindictus is still alive and trapped within the Temple of Orcus. This tome is written in celestial.

Ashmadai Codex, a fiery red tome with a pentagram emblazoned on the cover details the Ashmadai, a Cult of Asmodeus, and their linkages with the Red Wizards of Thay. The tome explains the political workings of the Nine Hells. This tome is written in Infernal.

Ecology of Bloodmuck, a leaf green book bound by bamboo that details the wildlife surrounding Bloodmuck. Specifically, this book details the Bloodmuck Swamp and mentions that a young black dragon has made a lair deep beneath the swamp. This tome is written in Elvish.

Development

If the characters have not seen or heard Ser Gertz, the following event triggers if the characters are in the Library.

Characters with a passive Wisdom (Perception) of 12 or higher hears faint screaming coming from behind one of the bookshelves. Characters searching for the origins of the screams and succeeding on a DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check notice a black book slightly protruding from the bookshelf. Pulling the book causes the bookshelf to open outward, revealing a small set of stairs leading into a dimly lit cellar (Area 5).

Treasure & Rewards

The characters can find the following treasure.

- Scroll of Absorb Elements
- Scroll of Comprehend Languages
- “Nurfenpurfs Famous Potato Stew” recipe
- Maglaments Musings: The Blood War
- To the Abyss and Back,
- Ashmadai Codex
- Ecology of Bloodmuck

Area 5. Cellar

Area Information

The area has the following features:

Terrain & Dimensions. The cellar is small and has a pentagram etched in the center of the room. Blood-stained floors and occult ritual devices are on a desk in the corner of the room.

Lighting. Bright Light, as hundreds of candles cause shadows to dance about the cellar with glee. The shadows momentarily pause when a character enters the room.

Smells and Sounds. The room smells of iron and blood. If you listen closely, you can hear the whispers of the occult.

Other Features

The cellar is used as a small ritual room where the Mafisto Twins engage in occult activities. The twins plan on sacrificing Ser Gertz in honor of Zariel and pressure the characters to carry out this task.

Creatures/NPCs

Ser Gertz. Ser Gertz, a young female half-orc priest in the Knights of Holy Judgment. She has long, dreadlocked hair, and is known to speak bluntly and act assertively around others. She is calm and thoughtful in everything she does.

Ser Gertz is tied up in the center of the room, sitting on a ceremonial pentagram etched into the floor. She is also restrained by manacles. The manacles can be unlocked with a successful DC 10 Dexterity check using thieves' tools, a DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check, or with Orianna's **Sapphire Key**.

Objectives/Goals. Ser Gertz wants to seek out the remaining lost knights in the caves beneath the Bloodmuck Swamp.

What does Ser Gertz know?

- The Mafisto Twins ambushed the knights, stole their map, and captured her.
- During the ambush, she saw that several Knights were left alive. She fears that without the map they might have gotten lost in the caves beneath the Bloodmuck Swamp.
- Ser Gertz overheard the Mafisto Twins talking about a living sacrifice, and she fears they might be talking about her.

Development - "Choosing a Side"

Cult of Zariel. If the Mafisto Twins believe that the adventures are evil, they try to convince them to sacrifice Ser Gertz in honor of Zariel. Evil characters should receive inspiration for this act. The Mafisto Twins invite the characters to join the Cult of Zariel if they sacrifice Ser Gertz (see **Appendix 7**).

Knights of Holy Judgment. The characters can free the Ser Gertz and enact righteous justice on the Mafisto Twins, or they can try to convince the knights to leave peacefully. If the characters free Ser Gertz and side with the Knights of Holy Judgment against the Mafisto Twins, Ser Titus or Ser Getz recounts the story of Ser Vindictus and asks the characters to join the Knights of Holy Judgment (see **Appendix 6**).

Chaos. The characters can side against both the Cult of Zariel and the Knights of Holy Judgment.

Playing the Pillars

COMBAT

In combat the Mafisto Twins will first use their Charm action on Ser Titus (if present) and then the characters. They will try to turn the tides of battle by gaining more charmed allies. In combat Ser Titus will always use his Leadership action and then attempt to kill the Mafisto Twins.

EXPLORATION

If a character succeeds on a DC 10 Intelligence (Religion) check, they recognize the pentagram as a symbol of the Nine Hells. This symbol is used during sacrificial rituals.

SOCIAL

The Mafisto Twins can be talked out of sacrificing Ser Gertz if the characters succeed on a DC 19 Charisma (Persuasion) or (Intimidation) check, or a DC 19 Strength (Intimidation) check.

Area 6. Guest Quarters

Area Information

The area has the following features:

Terrain & Dimensions. Elegant silk linens adorn the large beds in this room. Paintings of Neverwinter at nighttime hang about the room, the skyline of the large city lighting up the night sky. In one of the paintings, a hooded figure wearing a pentagram around their neck is seen approaching Neverwinter. If characters succeed on a DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check after gazing at the painting, they can feel the figure's eyes under its hood staring back at them... into their soul.

Lighting. Bright Light, candles adorn the walls of these quarters.

Smells and Sounds. The sheets smell of fresh flowers. This room is eerily silent.

Other Features

The Mafisto Twins host many guests at their residence. This room is used exclusively to provide guests a comfortable place to sleep for the night if they choose to stay.

The characters can take a long rest in this room. The beds are extremely comfortable and would only be found in the most luxurious homes throughout Faerûn. This manor is deeply connected to the Nine Hells, its evil permeating throughout the manor.

Long Rests in Mafisto Manor

DMs are encouraged to grant evil-aligned characters Inspiration when they take a long rest here. Non-evil-aligned characters experience nightmares during their rest in the manor and must succeed in a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or suffer long-term madness. Long-term madness lasts 1d10x10 hours.

Detecting Evil. The manor's evil influence is detectable by using *detect good and evil*. The grounds of the manor are desecrated.

Long-term Madness

d20	Madness (Flaw)
1-5	"Without devils and their enduring sacrifices, the material plane would be overrun with demonic hordes."
6-10	"I have an insatiable appetite for power, I'll do anything to gain more power, no matter the costs."
11-15	"The only way to ascend to greatness is to enter into a contract with a powerful devil. I must seek one out."
16-20	"Evil is the only power that can defeat evil. Goodness is weak and will only lead to the demise of the material plane, should it be allowed to flourish."

Development

If the characters have not explored the cellar of Mafisto Manor and the take a long rest, here the following occurs. During their long rest, any character with a passive Wisdom (Perception) of 12 or higher wakes up after hearing the desperate screams of Ser Gertz coming from beneath the floor. If the characters follow the screams, they are led into the library (Area 4). At the DM's discretion, the Mafisto Twins may sacrifice Ser Gertz to Zariel.



Area 7. Master Bedroom

Area Information

The area has the following features:

Terrain & Dimensions. A large, redwood canopy bed with deep purple, satin bedding dominates this room. Deep claw marks scar the otherwise beautiful bedposts. Behind the bed is a large mirror with onyx fixtures in the shapes of flames. In the corner of the room is a desk littered with papers and occult texts. At the foot of the desk is a **black chest** with red trimming and a fiendish eye painted on top that appears to watch the characters as they move.

Lighting. Bright Light, candles on the desks provide illumination.

Smells and Sounds. The sheets smell of fresh flowers. This room is eerily silent.

Other Features

The papers on top of the desk are notes written by Mordakai. The notes include stories of his nightmares from his battles in the Blood War. They appear to be his way of coping with the mental stress of war. Even fiends are affected by the mental and emotional scarring of war.

The Mafisto Twins keep correspondence letters to Victoro and Ammalia Cassalanter and the **stolen map** in a trapped **black chest** within their bedroom. If the characters escort the Mafisto Twins to the temple entrance, the Mafisto Twins collect the map to take on their journey before they leave the Manor.

Traps and Puzzles

The **black chest** is trapped with a **poison needle**. Characters that examine the chest and succeed on a DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check notice that the eye is painted as an optical illusion. The chest can only be unlocked by using Orianna's **Sapphire Key** or by disabling the trap.

This simple **poison needle** trap is meant to keep looters away. The small spring-loaded poison needle is hidden in exterior of the chest. After the trap is triggered, it needs to be manually reset and will not trigger again until it is reset.

Detection and Disabling. A successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals the needle, but only if the character inspects the exterior of the

chest. A successful DC 20 Dexterity check using thieves' tools disables the needle, and a check with a



total of 10 or lower triggers the trap.

Trigger. Any attempt to open the chest without the use of thieves' tools or without Orianna's **Sapphire Key** triggers the trap. A Dexterity check using thieves' tools with a total of 10 or lower triggers the trap. If a character covers the painted eye on the trap, they trigger the trap.

Effect. The triggering character must make a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, the creature takes 14 (4d6) damage and is poisoned for 10 minutes. While poisoned in this way, the creature is paralyzed. On a successful save, the character takes half as much damage and isn't poisoned.

Treasure & Rewards

The characters can find the following treasure.

- Map to the Temple of Orcus

Area 8. Nurfenpurf's Bedroom

Area Information

The area has the following features:

Terrain & Dimensions. This small bedroom is immaculate, thoroughly cleaned, and maintained. There is a small bed, appropriately sized for a gnome or small child. Hanging above Nurfenpurf's bed is a poster depicting a "Passage of Arms" tournament in Waterdeep. The year on the poster for the tournament is 300 years ago.

Lighting. Dim Light, a lonely candle is the desk.

Smells and Sounds. The smell of dirty feet, potatoes, and body odor fill this room.

Other Features

Nurfenpurf lives in this small room. It is the only sanctuary he has. Beside the bed is a small table with a hand drawn sketch of a homely looking female gnome with a phrase written in gnomish, "Until we meet again my champion. -Love Migly."

If characters investigate the room and succeed on a DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check, they notice that one of the legs on the bed appears to have a secret compartment built into the bed leg. If they open the secret compartment, they find the contract Nurfenpurf signed with the Warlock **XANDAGAST** 300 years ago. The details of the contract layout Nurfenpurf's desire to win the "Passage of Arms" tournament and become a famous celebrity. As a consequence of signing the contract, Nurfenpurf's soul belongs to Zariel for all eternity.

The Sad Tale of Nurfenpurf

300 years ago, in his youth, Nurfenpurf sought to become a mighty warrior of legend. Determined to prove his worth, he signed up for a "Passage of Arms" tournament in the city of Waterdeep. In these tournaments, participants send out a proclamation declaring themselves an open challenge for 24 hours. Anyone may face the participant in combat, with all styles of combat allowed. The last one standing after the 24-hour period expires is declared the winner.

The eve before his tournament, he prayed for strength, martial prowess, and victory! His plea was heard in the dead of night by a powerful Warlock named Xandagast who offered Nurfenpurf all he desired, so long as the gnome gave himself to Zariel. Nurfenpurf took the deal, binding himself in service to Zariel for eternity. He went on to become the first

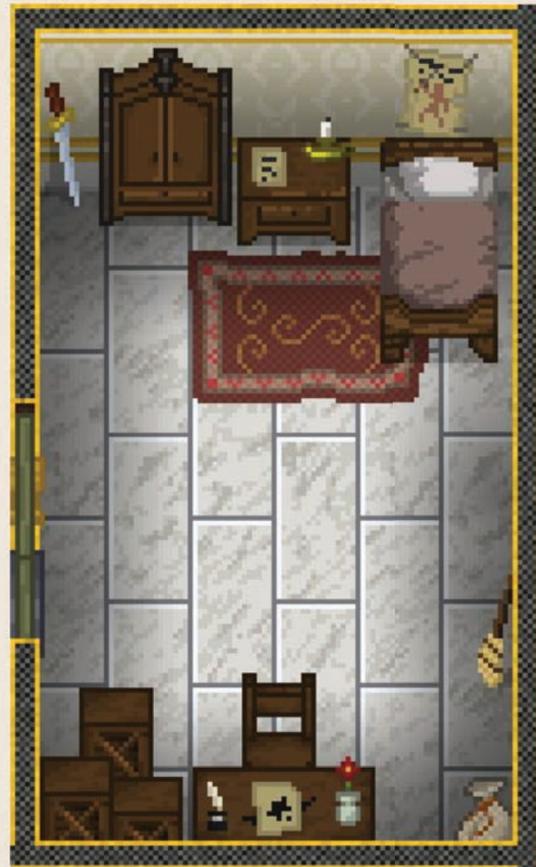
gnome to ever win a "Passage of Arms" tournament and became a celebrity within the social circles of Waterdeep.

One hundred years later his payment came due. Nurfenpurf was summoned to the front lines of the Blood War in the River Styx. The fighting in the depths of the Nine Hells was so grotesque, so evil, that it left his body and mind deformed beyond recognition. Nurfenpurf is a disfigured monstrosity of his former self, driven mad by what he has seen, what he has become... and by what he has lost forever.

Treasure & Rewards

The characters can find the following treasure.

- Sketch of Migley
- Contract between Nurfenpurf and Xandagast the Warlock
- "Passage of Arms" Tournament poster



Scene B. Leaving Mafisto Manor

The characters should have explored Mafisto Manor and chosen a “side” prior to leaving Mafisto Manor.

Development: “Choosing a Side”

Knights of Holy Judgment. If the characters side with the knights, Ser Titus recommends they rest for the night to recover (see the *Long Rests in Mafisto Manor* sidebar *Area 6. Guest Quarters*, above). The Knights leave Mafisto Manor whenever the characters are ready to leave. If the characters do not obtain the map from the Mafisto Twins’ chest (in *Area 7. Master Bedroom*), reference the *You Forgot the Map?!* sidebar in Episode 3, Scene A.

Cult of Zariel. If the characters side with the Cult of Zariel, they are asked to stay the night and take a long rest (see the *Long Rests in Mafisto Manor* sidebar *Area 6. Guest Quarters*, above). The party escorts the Mafisto Twins to the Temple of Orcus in the morning. The Twins bring the map from the chest in their master bedroom on the journey.

Chaos. If an onslaught of madness occurs and both the Knights of Holy Judgment and Cult of Zariel are no longer in play, the characters can still continue to the Temple of Orcus on their own. If the characters do not obtain the map from the Mafisto Twins’ chest (in *Area 7. Master Bedroom*), reference the *You Forgot the Map?!* sidebar in Episode 3, Scene A.



What happens if Nurfenpurf dies?

If characters side with the Knights of Holy Judgment or Chaos, Nurfenpurf’s soul returns to Avernus where he takes the physical form of a lemure. Zariel favors Nurfenpurf for his faithful service and promotes him to a lesser devil, an **imp**. The DM may have Nurfenpurf reappear at will during the remainder of this adventure to hunt down the characters for their treachery.

If characters side with the Cult of Zariel, Nurfenpurf’s soul returns to Avernus, where he takes the physical form of a lemure. Zariel favors Nurfenpurf for his faithful service and promotes him to a lesser devil, an **imp**. The DM may have Nurfenpurf reappear at will during the remainder of this adventure to accompany the adventurers into the Temple of Orcus.

What happens if Ser Titus or Ser Gertz die?

If characters side with the Knights of Holy Judgment, at the DM’s discretion, Ser Titus or Ser Getz can reappear at will during the remainder of this adventure as a **sword wraith warrior**. Ser Titus and Ser Gertz seek to find out what happened to Ser Vindictus before they can fade into the afterlife with honor.

If characters side with the Cult of Zariel or Chaos, they utter a curse at the character who deals the killing blow before perishing, marking that character as their adversary. This curse should be foreboding and serve as a warning of what is to come. At the DM’s discretion, they can appear at will during the remainder of this adventure as a **revenant**, seeking to kill their adversary. If they knock their adversary unconscious, they continue attacking that character until they fail three death saving throws. Once they kill their adversary, they crumble into dust and their soul fades into the afterlife.

What happens if the Mafisto Twins die?

If characters side with the Knights of Holy Judgment or Chaos, the Mafisto Twins disappear in a cloud of sulfurous smoke or dissolve into a pool of ichor, instantly returning to Avernus where they reform at full strength. At DM discretion, the Mafisto Twins may reappear at will during the remainder of this adventure to hunt down the characters for their treachery.

If characters side with the Cult of Zariel, the Mafisto Twins disappear in a cloud of sulfurous smoke or dissolve into a pool of ichor, instantly returning to Avernus where they reform at full strength. At DM discretion, the Mafisto Twins may reappear at will during the remainder of this adventure to accompany the adventurers to the Temple of Orcus.

Episode 3. Finding the Temple of Orcus

Estimated Duration: 30 minutes

In this Episode the characters travel to the Temple of Orcus and enter it.

Scene A. Travel to the Temple of Orcus

Area Information

The area has the following features:

Terrain & Dimensions. The shallow water in the swamp is putrid and black as dead fish float about, staring lifelessly into nothingness.

Light. Dim light as the sun begins to set across the hillside.

Weather. The swamp is humid and hot. This makes wearing armor uncomfortable.

Smells and Sounds. The swamp smells of sulfur. Wolf cries, the snarls of creatures, and constant splashes in the swamp are all around you.

Other Features

The characters travel **35 miles** from to the Bloodmuck Swamp from Mafisto Manor. If the characters acquired the map to the cave entrance from the Mafisto Twins, they arrive without issue at the cave entrance that leads to *Scene B. Temple Entrance*.

When the characters arrive at the entrance of the foreboding cave, they see pestilent water from the swamp emptying into the mouth of the cave as a thick fog billows along the floor.

On a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) or Intelligence (Arcana), (Nature), or (Survival) check, the adventurers recognize these as signs that a black dragon has made its lair nearby. Rangers with dragons as favored enemies and characters that read *Ecology of Bloodmuck* they make this check with Advantage.

You Lost the Map?!

If the adventurers lose the map, they must succeed on a DC 20 Wisdom (Survival) check to find the cave entrance that leads to the Scene B. Temple Entrance. If the adventurers fail this check, they are unlucky and find a cave entrance that leads to Nezzarum's Lair (Appendix 5).



Playing the Pillars

COMBAT

At the DM's discretion, NPCs may appear for revenge. See Episode 2, Scene B. Leaving Mafisto Manor for details about bringing back dead NPCs for their revenge. It is recommended DMs do this only once per adventure.

EXPLORATION

Travel through the Bloodmuck Swamp is arduous. Characters must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or suffer one level of exhaustion. If a Ranger with swamp as their favored terrain is with the characters, everyone makes the check with advantage.

SOCIAL

During travel, at the DM's discretion, the characters may meet a swamp dweller who sells equipment listed in Chapter 5 of the *Player's Handbook*. All the equipment the swamp dweller sells is from failed expeditions in the swamp.

Scene B. Temple Entrance

Area Information

The area has the following features:

Terrain & Dimensions. The caves are smooth as shallow water flows throughout them. The caves are attached to an underground lake, and the many cave tunnel branches lead deep into the Underdark.

Light. Darkness, there is not light this deep into the cave system.

Weather. The air inside the caves is humid and cool.

Smells and Sounds. The caverns echo with the trickling of water as it flows along the cave floor. Death and decay fill the air, a pungent smell that sours the nostrils.

Other Features

This cave entrance avoids Nezzarum's lair and leads directly to the entrance of the Temple of Orcus. When the characters enter the cave, they travel several miles in the cave until they come upon the entrance to the Temple.

The Temple entrance is two massive marble doors that loom over the cavernous tunnels. Adjacent to the door is an onyx lever and a decapitated, skeletal corpse with a satchel around its torso.

Skeletal Corpse. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Medicine) check reveals this female high elf corpse has been here for at least 50 years. If the characters examine the satchel, they find a **set of thieves' tool** (not usable outside this adventure) and a blood-soaked journal with a repeated phrase written in Abyssal that translates as, "Behold the Heir of Orcus is born, undeath incarnate is here!" Several feet from the corpse is a skull with its mouth ajar in utter surprise.

The Temple Doors. The Temple doors open when the trap is disabled and the lever is pulled. An aura

of evil bathes over the characters, what is inside the temple is truly frightening.

Traps & Puzzles

The lever adjacent to the door is trapped. If a character pulls the lever without disabling the trap, a razor sharp **hidden blade trap** springs forth from the wall and attempts to decapitate anyone standing within five feet of the lever.

Detection and Disabling. If a character mentions some connection between the decapitated skull and the lever, they can discover the trap with a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check, rolled with Advantage. Disarming the trap for 24 hours requires a successful DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools. After 24 hours, the trap resets.

Trigger. If the lever is pulled, a retractable blade attempts to decapitate anyone standing within 5 feet of the lever. The blade resets unless the trap has been disabled. If a character fails the DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools twice in a row or fails by 10 or more the trap triggers and then resets.

Effect. Characters within 5 feet of the lever must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or take 22 (4d10) slashing damage from the blades. On a success the character is able to dodge the blades. If a character is reduced to zero hit points from this attack, they are decapitated. The blade resets after the lever is pulled.

Tunnel to Nezzarum's Lair

Near the Temple entrance, the cave tunnel continues south. This takes them to Appendix 5. Nezzarum's Lair.

Objectives

- **Main Objective B:** The Characters enter the Temple of Orcus.

Playing the Pillars

COMBAT

At DM discretion, NPCs may appear for revenge. See Episode 2, Scene B. Leaving Mafisto Manor for details about bringing back dead NPCs for their revenge. It is recommended DMs do this only once per adventure.

EXPLORATION

A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals information on the skeletal corpse and trapped lever. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) reveals information on the tunnel to Nezzarum's Lair.

SOCIAL

NPCs may be convinced to pull the lever near the temple doors if the characters succeed on a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion), (Intimidation), or (Deception) check or a DC 15 Strength (Intimidation) check.

Wrap-Up: Concluding the Adventure

Once the characters enter the Temple of Orcus, the doors close behind them. They must explore deeper into the Temple to find what happened to Ser Vindictus and her Knights.

Characters begin with any NPC allies who entered the Temple with them if they play CCC-AETHER-01-02, *The Heir of Orcus: Verse II*.

Adventure Rewards

Upon completing the adventure, the characters each receive rewards based upon their accomplishments. These rewards include advancement and treasure, and may include special rewards, such as story awards or new downtime activities, as follows:

Advancement Checkpoints

The characters receive 1 advancement checkpoint and 1 treasure checkpoint for each **story objective** that they complete, as follows:

- **Main Objective A:** The characters explore Mafisto Manor and leave to the Temple of Orcus.
- **Main Objective B:** The Characters enter the Temple of Orcus.

The characters receive 1 advancement checkpoint and 1 treasure checkpoint for each **bonus objective** that they complete, as follows:

- **Bonus Objective A: The Fate of the Lost Knights.** The characters save or kill the lost Knights of Holy Judgment.
- **Bonus Objective B:** Defeat Nezzarum.

Treasure Checkpoints

The characters receive a treasure checkpoint for completing **both main objectives** and/or **both bonus objectives**. There is a maximum of four treasure checkpoints for this adventure.

Magic Item Unlock

Characters unlock this magic item if they complete **both main objectives**.

Helm of Comprehend Languages. This elaborate helm is made of Avernium, a black metal found only

in Avernus. The helm has the appearance of a crown with spikes. The inner circle of the helm has an inscription in Infernal which reads, "Avernus Dragonchess Champion". This item can be found in **Appendix 8**.

Story Awards

During this adventure, the characters may earn the following story award:

Knight of Holy Judgment. You are now a member of the Knights of Holy Judgment! As a Knight of Holy

Judgment, you swore a solemn oath to uphold justice, hunt down the wicked, and to serve as a stalwart guardian against devils and demons. May Tyr guide you as you devote yourself to the cause of justice, to the righting of wrongs, and the deliverance of vengeance! More information can be found in **Appendix 6**.

Cultist of Zariel. Sacrificing Ser Gertz has earned you the favor of the Archdevil Zariel. Go forth and recruit more souls in the name of Zariel! More information can be found in **Appendix 7**.



DM Rewards

In exchange for running this adventure, you earn advancement and treasure checkpoints and downtime as though you played the adventure, but none of the other rewards listed above.

However, this adventure may qualify for rewards earned by completing DM Quests. See the ALDMG (Adventurers League Dungeon Master's Guide) for more information about DM Quests.

Appendix 1: Locations & NPCs

The following NPCs and locations feature prominently in this adventure. The NPCs are listed and shown below in order of appearance.

NPCs

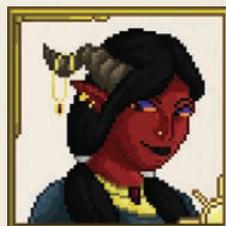
- **Nurfenpurf (NURF-en-PURF)**. The steward for the Mafisto Twins and their manor. Gnome male.
Objective: Earn the favor of Zariel and the Mafisto Twins.
Personality: "I'm bitter and angry."
Ideal: "One day I'll earn Zariel's favor."
Bond: "I'll do anything for my Masters."
Flaw: "I spy on everyone."
- **Ser Titus (Ser TIE-tuss)**. Commander of the Knights of Holy Judgment. Always shouts when he talks. Human male.
Objective: Discover what happened to Ser Vindictus in the Temple of Orcus.
Personality: "JUSTICE, VENGEANCE, TYR!!"
Ideal: "RETRIBUTION FOR EVIL DOERS!!"
Bond: "SER GERTZ MUST BE SAVED!!"
Flaw: "JUSTICE IS NEVER WRONG!!"
- **Orianna Mafisto (ORR-ee-ANN-a ma-FIST-oh)**. A succubus disguised as a tiefling who contracts the adventurers to escort her and Mordakai to the Temple of Orcus. A servant of the Archdevil Zariel.
Objective: Recruit others into the Cult of Zariel and use them to enter the Temple of Orcus.
Personality: "I love to play and get my way."
Ideal: "I want others to love me."
Bond: "Mordakai has always been here for me."
Flaw: "I'll do whatever it takes to corrupt others."
- **Mordakai Mafisto (MORE-da-kigh ma-FIST-oh)**. An incubus disguised as a tiefling who contracts the adventurers to escort him and Orianna to the Temple of Orcus. A servant of the Archdevil Zariel.
Objective: Recruit others into the Cult of Zariel and use them to enter the Temple of Orcus.
Personality: "My soul is weary of war."
Ideal: "I want this eternal conflict to end."
Bond: "Dragonchess is my only solace."
Flaw: "I am willing to wager anything on a game of Dragonchess."

Ser Gertz (Ser GERTS). A member of the Knights of Holy Judgment. Half-orc Female.
Objective: Discover what happened to Ser Vindictus in the Temple of Orcus.
Personality: "It's best to be blunt and to the point."
Ideal: "I will prove myself as a great Knight."
Bond: "I am true to the ways of Tyr."
Flaw: "There is good in everyone, I don't care what others say."

- **Nezzarum (ne-ZAR-rum)**. A young black dragon with a lair near the entrance to the Temple of Orcus.
Objective: Defend his hoard of treasure and eat fairies to gain their power.
Personality: "Everyone is out to get my treasure!"
Ideal: "Power is all I need to gain more treasure!"
Bond: "I have named every single coin in my treasure hoard, they are my children."
Flaw: "I am easy to laugh, and when I laugh I can do little else."

Locations

- **Mafisto Manor (ma-FIST-oh MAN-or)**. The home of the Mafisto Twins located on the outskirts of Melvaunt. The entire grounds of the manor are desecrated, and evil radiates throughout the manor.
- **Bloodmuck Swamp (BLOOD-MUCK Swamp)**. A pestilent, decaying swamp located in the heart of Thar, 35 miles from Mafisto Manor. Below the swamp is the lair of Nezzarum, a black dragon who lives near the entrance to the Temple of Orcus.



Appendix 2: Creature Statistics

Cultist

Medium humanoid (any race), any non-good alignment



Armor Class 12 (leather armor)

Hit Points 9 (2d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

Skills Deception +2, Religion +2

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages any one language (usually Common)

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Dark Devotion. The cultist has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened.

Actions

Scimitar. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) slashing damage.

Guard

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment



Armor Class 16 (chain shirt, shield)

Hit Points 11 (2d8 + 2)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

Skills Perception +2

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages any one languages (usually Common)

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Actions

Spear. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) piercing damage.

Riding Horse

Large beast, unaligned



Armor Class 10

Hit Points 13 (2d10 + 2)

Speed 60ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	2 (-4)	11 (+0)	7 (-2)

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages -

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Actions

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

Imp

Tiny fiend (devil, shapeshifter), lawful evil



Armor Class 13

Hit Points 10 (3d4 + 3)

Speed 20 ft., fly 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (-2)	17 (+3)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)

Skills Deception +4, Insight +3, Persuasion +4, Stealth +5

Damage Resistances cold; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons that aren't silvered

Damage Immunities fire, poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Infernal, Common

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Shapeshifter. The imp can use its action to polymorph into a beast form that resembles a rat (speed 20 ft.), a raven (20 ft., fly 60 ft.), or a spider (20 ft., climb 20 ft.), or back into its true form. Its statistics are the same in each form, except for the speed changes noted. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It reverts to its true form if it dies.

Devil's Sight. Magical darkness doesn't impede the imp's darkvision.

Magic Resistance. The imp has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Actions

Sting (Bite in Beast Form). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage, and the target must make on a DC 11 Constitution saving throw, taking 10 (3d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Invisibility. The imp magically turns invisible until it attacks or until its concentration ends (as if concentrating on a spell). Any equipment the imp wears or carries is invisible with it.

Knight

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment



Armor Class 18 (plate)

Hit Points 52 (8d8 + 16)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Saving Throws Con +4, Wis +2

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages any one language (usually Common)

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Brave. The knight has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.

Actions

Multiattack. The knight makes two melee attacks.

Greatsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) slashing damage.

Heavy Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, range 100/400 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d10) piercing damage.

Leadership (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). For 1 minute, the knight can utter a special command or warning whenever a nonhostile creature that it can see within 30 feet of it makes an attack roll or a saving throw. The creature can add a d4 to its roll provided it can hear and understand the knight. A creature can benefit from only one Leadership die at a time. This effect ends if the knight is incapacitated.

Reactions

Parry. The knight adds 2 to its AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so, the knight must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

Priest

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment



Armor Class 13 (chain shirt)

Hit Points 27 (5d8 + 5)

Speed 25 ft.

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

Skills Medicine +7, Persuasion +3, Religion +4

Senses passive Perception 13

Languages any two languages

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Divine Eminence. As a bonus action, the priest can expend a spell slot to cause its melee weapon attacks to magically deal an extra 10 (3d6) radiant damage to a target on a hit. This benefit lasts until the end of the turn. If the priest expends a spell slot of 2nd level or higher, the extra damage increases by 1d6 for each level above 1st.

Spellcasting. The priest is a 5th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). The priest has the following cleric spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *light*, *sacred flame*, *thaumaturgy*
1st level (4 slots): *cure wounds*, *guiding bolt*, *sanctuary*
2nd level (3 slots): *lesser restoration*, *spiritual weapon*
3rd level (2 slots): *dispel magic*, *spirit guardians*

Actions

Mace. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage.

Revenant

Medium undead, neutral



Armor Class 13 (leather armor)

Hit Points 136 (16d8 + 64)

Speed 30ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Str +7, Con +7, Wis +6, Cha +7

Damage Resistances necrotic, psychic

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned, stunned

Senses darkvision 60ft., passive Perception 13

Languages the languages it knew in life

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Regeneration. The revenant regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn. If the revenant takes fire or radiant damage, this trait doesn't function at the start of the revenant's next turn. The revenant's body is destroyed only if it starts its turn with 0 hit points and doesn't regenerate.

Rejuvenation. When the revenant's body is destroyed, its soul lingers. After 24 hours, the soul inhabits and animates another corpse on the same plane of existence and regains all its hit points. While the soul is bodiless, a wish spell can be used to force the soul to go to the afterlife and not return.

Turn Immunity. The revenant is immune to effects that turn undead.

Vengeful Tracker. The revenant knows the distance to and direction of any creature against which it seeks revenge, even if the creature and the revenant are on different planes of existence. If the creature being tracked by the revenant dies, the revenant knows.

Actions

Multiattack. The revenant makes two fist attacks.

Fist. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature against which the revenant has sworn vengeance, the target takes an extra 14 (4d6) bludgeoning damage. Instead of dealing damage, the revenant can grapple the target (escape DC 14) provided the target is Large or smaller.

Vengeful Glare. The revenant targets one creature it can see within 30 feet of it and against which it has sworn vengeance. The target must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, the target is paralyzed until the revenant deals damage to it, or until the end of the revenant's next turn. When the paralysis ends, the target is frightened of the revenant for 1 minute. The frightened target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, with disadvantage if it can see the revenant, ending the frightened condition on itself on a success.

Succubus/Incubus

Medium fiend (shapechanger), neutral evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 66 (12d8 + 12)

Speed 30ft., fly 60ft.



STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	17 (+3)	13 (+1)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	20 (+5)

Skills Deception +9, Insight +5, Perception +5, Persuasion +9, Stealth +7

Damage Resistances cold, fire, lightning, poison, bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Senses darkvision 60ft., passive Perception 15

Languages Abyssal, Common, Infernal, telepathy 60ft.

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Telepathic Bond. The fiend ignores the range restriction on its telepathy when communicating with a creature it has charmed. The two don't even need to be on the same plane of existence.

Shapechanger. The fiend can use its action to polymorph into a Small or Medium humanoid, or back into its true form. Without wings, the fiend loses its flying speed. Other than its size and speed, its statistics are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It reverts to its true form if it dies.

Actions

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

Charm. One humanoid the fiend can see within 30 feet of it must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or be magically charmed for 1 day. The charmed target obeys the fiend's verbal or telepathic commands. If the target suffers any harm or receives a suicidal command, it can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on a success. If the target successfully saves against the effect, or if the effect on it ends, the target is immune to this fiend's Charm for the next 24 hours.

The fiend can have only one target charmed at a time. If it charms another, the effect on the previous target ends.

Draining Kiss. The fiend kisses a creature charmed by it or a willing creature. The target must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw against this magic, taking 32 (5d10 + 5) psychic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. The target's hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. This reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0.

Etherealness. The fiend magically enters the Ethereal Plane from the Material Plane, or vice versa.

Sword Wraith Warrior

Medium undead, lawful evil

Armor Class 16 (chain shirt, shield)

Hit Points 45 (6d8 + 18)

Speed 30 ft.



STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	12 (+1)	17 (+3)	6 (-2)	9 (-1)	10 (+0)

Damage Resistances necrotic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, frightened, poisoned, unconscious

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages the languages it knew in life

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Martial Fury. As a bonus action, the sword wraith can make one weapon attack. If it does so, attack rolls against it have advantage until the start of its next turn.

Actions

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) slashing damage, or 9 (1d10 + 4) slashing damage if used with two hands.

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

Warhorse

Large beast, unaligned



Armor Class 11

Hit Points 19 (3d10 + 3)

Speed 60ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	2 (-4)	12 (+1)	7 (-2)

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages -

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Trampling Charge. If the horse moves at least 20 feet straight toward a creature and then hits it with a hooves attack on the same turn, that target must succeed on a DC 14 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone. If the target is prone, the horse can make another attack with its hooves against it as a bonus action.

Actions

Hooves. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

Young Black Dragon

Large dragon, chaotic evil



Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 127 (15d10 + 45)

Speed 40 ft., fly 80 ft., swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	14 (+2)	17 (+3)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Dex +5, Con +6, Wis +3, Cha +5

Skills Perception +6, Stealth +5

Damage Immunities acid

Senses blindsight 30 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages Common, Draconic

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Amphibious. The dragon can breathe air and water.

Actions

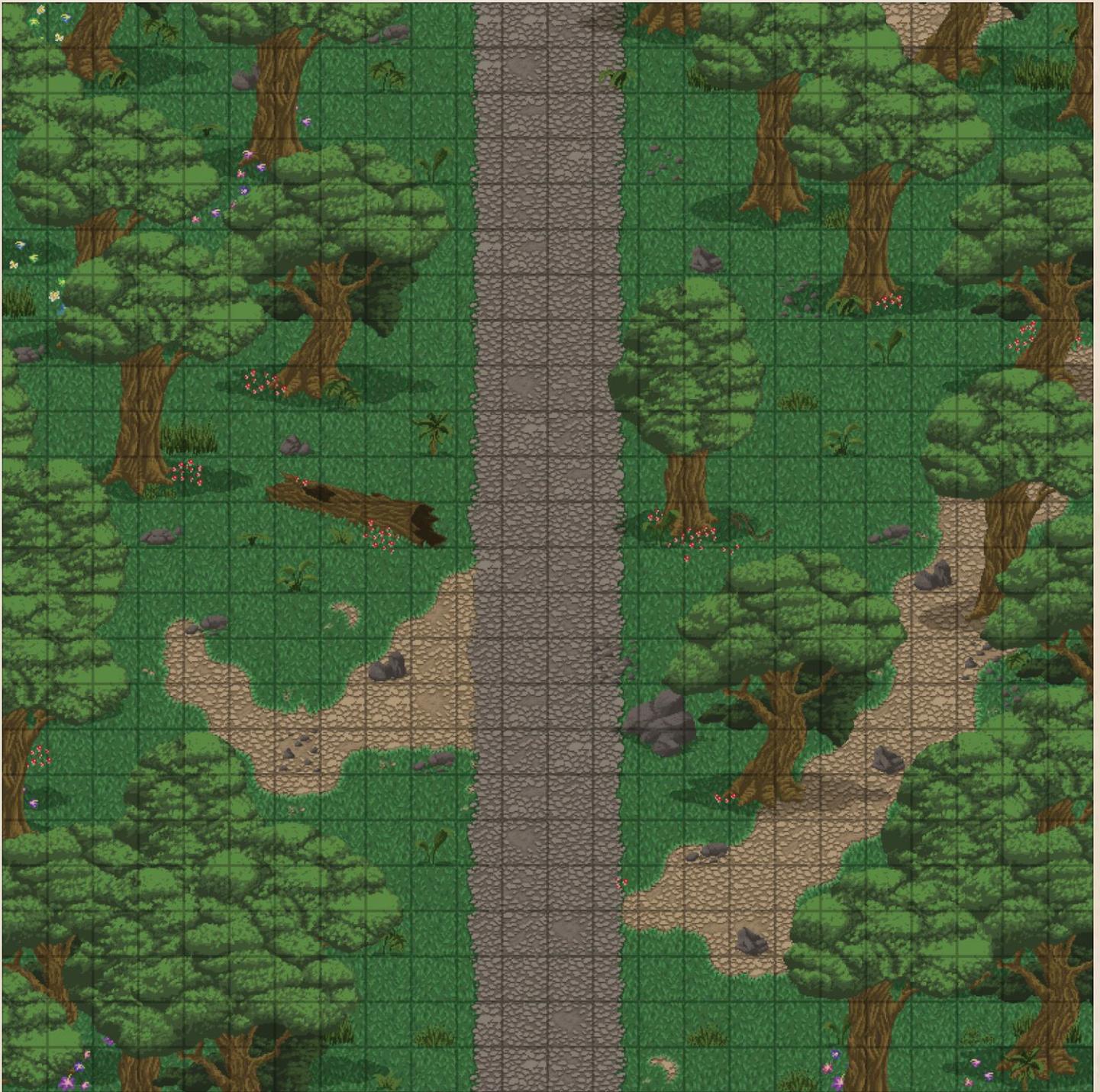
Multiattack. The dragon makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d10 + 4) piercing damage plus 4 (1d8) acid damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage.

Acid Breath (Recharge 5-6). The dragon exhales acid in a 30-foot line that is 5 feet wide. Each creature in that line must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, taking 49 (11d8) acid damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Appendix 3A: Map - Episode 1 Battle Map



Appendix 3B: Map - Mafisto Manor and Cellar



Appendix 3C: Map - Tagged Map of Mafisto Manor and Cellar

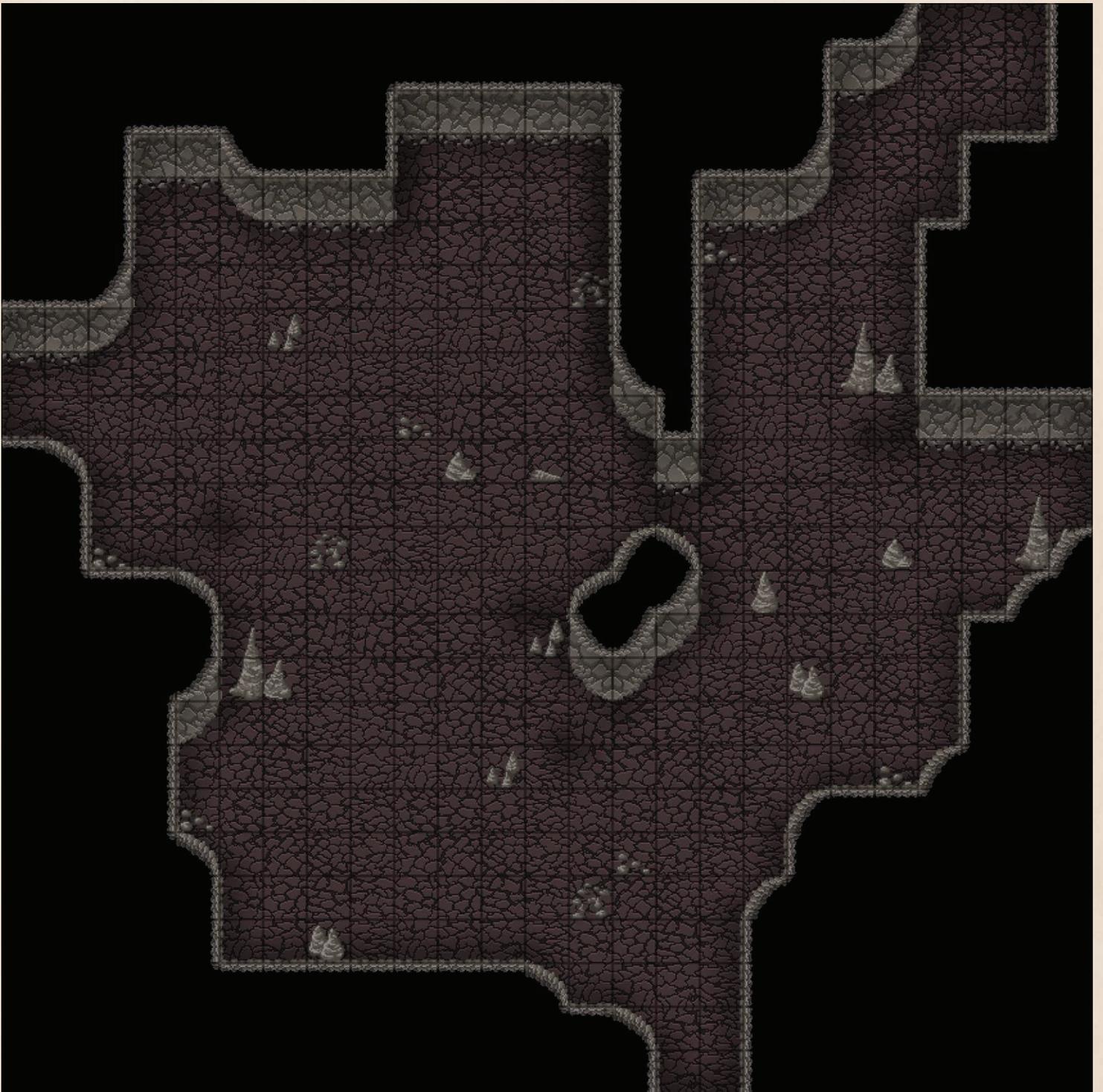


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CCC-AETHER-01-01 The Heir of Orcus: Verse I

Appendix 3D: Map - Temple Entrance and Nezzarum's Lair



Appendix 3E: Map - Bonus Objective A Battle Map



Appendix 4: The Fate of the Lost Knights (Bonus Objective A.)

Estimated Duration: 60 minutes

This is an optional bonus Episode. In this Episode, the characters kill or save the lost Knights.

Scene A. Finding the Lost Knights

Area Information

The area has the following features:

Terrain & Dimensions. The caves are smooth as shallow water flows throughout the caves.

Light. Darkness, there is not light this deep into the cave system.

Weather. The air in the caves is humid and cool.

Smells and Sounds. The caverns echo with the trickling of water as it flows along the cave floor.

Finding the Lost Knights

The characters must succeed on a DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) check to track the lost knights. A successful check leads them to one of obstacles listed below. A failed check results in the characters wandering the caves aimlessly for one day (rations check!), after which they can repeat the check. The characters discover the Knights after they successfully pass all the obstacles.

Obstacles

The characters can choose to avoid these obstacles on their way out of the caves once they successfully pass them.

The Crevasse. This crevasse drops three miles into the **UNDERDARK**. The ledges near the crevasse are extremely narrow. Players can cross with a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check as they hold onto the cave walls and cautiously move across. A character failing this check must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or plummet 20 feet onto a ledge below, taking 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage from the fall.

The Steaming Air Tunnel. This tunnel rhythmically releases steaming air from a nearby

lava pool every few seconds. The characters must move through this tunnel to continue their journey. Characters must succeed on a DC 12 Intelligence or Wisdom (Nature) check to accurately time the rhythmic releases of steaming air and pass through the tunnel unscathed, taking no damage. Characters that fail the check take 3 (1d6) fire damage or 7 (2d6) fire damage if they fail the check by 5 or more.

The Fungi Cavern. This cavern is full of luminescent fungi. Specifically, there are mature barrelstalks that line the walls of the cavern. These barrelstalks spew out poisonous spores. Characters moving through this cavern must succeed on three separate DC 10 Constitution saving throws, taking 2 (1d4) poison damage for each failure. Additionally, if any character failing all three saving throws is **poisoned** for 24 hours.

Creatures/NPCs

The group of lost knights is composed of one **knight** and five **guards**. They are severely dehydrated and weak from their aimless trek in the caverns.

Lost Knights Exhaustion

The lost knights suffer from 4 levels of exhaustion after wandering for days in these austere caves. Therefore, they each: (1) have disadvantage on ability checks, (2) move at half their speed, (3) make attack rolls and saving throws at Disadvantage, (4) have their hit point maximums halved, and (5) are delirious from exhaustion and believe the characters are devilish fiends!

Objectives

- **Bonus Objective A: The Fate of the Lost Knights.** Save or kill the lost Knights of Holy Judgment.

Playing the Pillars

COMBAT

If combat ensues, the knights fight to the death and chase the characters through obstacles during combat.

EXPLORATION

Characters that come up with creative solutions to the obstacles should be given Advantage on their checks.

SOCIAL

Characters can convince the lost Knights that they are not devilish fiends with a successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) or (Deception) check.

Appendix 5: Nezzarum's Lair (Bonus Objective B.)

Estimated Duration: 60 minutes

This is an optional bonus Episode. In this Episode the characters defeat Nezzarum.

Scene A. Enter Nezzarum's Lair

Area Information

The area has the following features:

Terrain & Dimensions. The lair is filled with water that is 2 feet deep. Nezzarum enters and exits his lair via a deep, underwater tunnel that goes several miles underground and exits in the Bloodmuck Swamp. The entire lair counts as difficult terrain, due to the water. The ceiling in this section of the cave is 100 feet high.

Weather. Thick fog **lightly obscures** everything in the lair. It is moist and humid in the lair. Characters make Wisdom (Perception) checks at Disadvantage while in the fog.

Light. Complete and utter darkness.

Smells and Sounds. The air is stale and smells of pus, rot, and rancid flesh.

Other Features

If the characters attempt to enter Nezzarum's Lair, they must succeed in a DC 16 Dexterity (Stealth) check to move about unnoticed by the black dragon.

Creatures/NPCs

Nezzarum is a **young black dragon** that has made his lair near the entrance of the Temple of Orcus. Unbeknownst to Nezzarum, the demonic influence of the temple has warped his mind, causing him to go utterly insane. If Nezzarum hears or sees the characters, he assumes that they are magical fairies from the Feywild. In his madness, he may laugh uncontrollably or become enraged at actions made in his presence.

Defeating Nezzarum. The DM should play Nezzarum as a completely insane dragon. Once he spots the characters, he calls out to them, as he believes they are fairies and wants their "power". If a character replies, they must make a DC 13 Ability (Performance) check. On a success, Nezzarum enters into a **fit of laughter**, complaining how much the laughter hurts. On a failure, Nezzarum becomes enraged and attacks the characters.

The character defeat Nezzarum if they kill him, block him from entering his lair, or make him leave his lair.

Encounter Adjustments:

- **Very Weak:** Nezzarum begins combat with 60 hit points
- **Weak:** Nezzarum begins combat with 92 hit points
- **Strong:** Nezzarum begins combat with 165 hit points
- **Very Strong:** Nezzarum begins combat with 195 hit points

Nezzarum's Fit of Laughter

Nezzarum may only take the following actions if he is in a fit of laughter:

Dodge. Nezzarum laughs so hard he becomes more difficult to hit due to his erratic movements.

Fall Prone. Nezzarum falls to the floor in a fit of laughter and rolls around.

Ready an Action. Nezzarum readies an action to attack the first "fairy" that does not make him laugh during the next **fit of laughter** check.

Objectives

- **Bonus Objective B: Nezzarum's Lair.** Defeat Nezzarum.

Playing the Pillars

COMBAT

The fight with Nezzarum should be deadly for the characters. At the beginning of each round in combat, the characters may make a DC 13 **group** Ability (Performance) check to see if Nezzarum enters a fit of laughter.

EXPLORATION

Nezzarum hunts for food in the swamp at DM discretion and returns after 2d4+1 rounds. A successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals stalactites that, if broken, can block the underwater tunnel. The stalactites have AC 17 and 50 hit points.

SOCIAL

Characters have advantage on Ability (Performance) checks if they spend their action in combat to play instruments, tell jokes, or any other gesture at DM discretion. Nezzarum leaves his lair if the characters pass five DC 13 **group** Ability (Performance) checks.

Appendix 6: Story Award - Knight of Holy Judgment (Player Handout 1)

Knight of Holy Judgment

You are now a member of the Knights of Holy Judgment! As a Knight of Holy Judgment you swore a solemn oath to uphold justice, hunt down the wicked, and serve as a stalwart guardian against devils and demons. May Tyr guide you as you devote yourself to the cause of justice, to the righting of wrongs, and to the deliverance of vengeance!

Joining the Knights of Holy Judgment

When a character joins the Knights of Holy Judgment, they are given a thin strip of diaphanous cloth to wear over their eyes. Characters can see normally while the cloth covers their eyes. This shows their blind devotion to justice and Tyr.

Any armor or equipment the characters own can be emblazoned with the symbol of Tyr: a set of scales resting atop a warhammer. Characters may also take the Oath of the Knights of Holy Judgment to show their devotion to this knightly order.

The oath is recited out loud in the language of your choice with a weapon raised towards the heavens.

Oath. "Without justice there is darkness. Without order there is lawlessness. I am a keeper of the law, no mortal is above it. My vengeance upon the wicked shall be swift and my Judgments upon them shall show no mercy. Tyr be praised!"

Appendix 7: Story Award - Cult of Zariel (Player Handout 2)

Cultist of Zariel

Sacrificing Ser Gertz has earned you the favor of the Archdevil Zariel. Go forth and recruit more souls in the name of Zariel!

Joining the Cult of Zariel

When a character joins the Cult of Zariel they are branded in the arm with a pentagram during an occult ritual. Their armor and equipment is emblazoned with the symbols of Zariel: a flaming sword and spear. Initiation into the cult is complete when everyone present repeats the "Chant to Zariel" aloud.

Chant to Zariel. "You are the protector of the Nine Hells. All that stands between the demonic incursion and planar devastation is your will and might. Praise be to Zariel, our most fierce and brave leader, rightful ruler of Avernus. Eternal death to all who oppose her noble goal."

Appendix 8: NPC Background Handouts (Player Handout 3)

NPC Handouts for Players

These handouts serve as a tool for the DM to enhance gameplay immersion at their table. DM's don't have to keep telling players who the NPC's are or what they look like. Enjoy!



TIEFLING
LAWFUL EVIL

Mordakai Mafisto

MORDAKAI IS A VETERAN OF THE BLOOD WAR AND SUFFERS FROM POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER.

THE ONLY THING THAT CHEERS HIM UP IS DRAGONCHESS, A GAME HE GREW TO LOVE DURING HIS TIME ON THE FRONT LINES OF THE BLOOD WAR.



DRAGON
CHAOTIC EVIL

Nezzarum

NEZZARUM IS A YOUNG BLACK DRAGON THAT HAS MADE HIS LAIR NEAR THE ENTRANCE OF THE TEMPLE OF ORCUS.

UNBEKNOWNST TO NEZZARUM, THE DEMONIC INFLUENCE OF THE TEMPLE HAS WARPED HIS MIND, CAUSING HIM TO GO UTTERLY INSANE.



GNOME
LAWFUL EVIL

Nurfenpurt

LARGE WARTS, BLISTERS, MOLES, AND GROWTHS COVER HIS HIDEOUS FACE.

HE MUTTERS TO HIMSELF CONSTANTLY.

NURFENPURT IS A GNOME CULTIST WHO WORSHIPS THE ARCHEVIL ZARIEL AND SERVES AS A STEWARD FOR THE MAFISTO TWINS.



TIEFLING
LAWFUL EVIL

Orianna Mafisto

ORIANNA IS SPUNKY, PLAYFUL, AND SEDUCTIVE.

SHE ENJOYS CORRUPTING MORTALS WITH PLEASURES OF THE FLESH AND THEIR DARKEST DESIRES, ALL IN THE NAME OF FUN!

HER BLACK HAIR IS WORN UP IN PISTAILS, AND SHE ADORNES HER FACE AND HORNS WITH ELABORATE SILVER JEWELRY ENCRUSTED WITH BLOOD RED SAPPHIRES.



HALF-ORC
LAWFUL GOOD

Ser Gertz

SER GERTZ IS A YOUNG FEMALE HALF-ORC PRIEST IN THE KNIGHTS OF HOLY JUDGMENT.

SHE HAS LONG, DREADLOCKED HAIR, AND IS KNOWN TO SPEAK BLUNTLY AND ACT ASSERTIVELY AROUND OTHERS.

SHE IS CALM AND THOUGHTFUL IN EVERYTHING SHE DOES.



HUMAN
LAWFUL GOOD

Ser Titus

SER TITUS IS A HANDSOME, MUSCULAR KNIGHT OF HOLY JUDGMENT WHO SEEKS TO UNCOVER THE MYSTERY BEHIND SER VINDICTUS' DISAPPEARANCE OVER A CENTURY AGO.

SER TITUS IS RUTHLESS WITH ENACTING JUSTICE AND WILL NOT HESITATE TO BRING THE FULL FORCE OF TYR DOWN UPON EVILDOERS!

HE EMBODIES CONFIDENCE, LEADERSHIP, AND BRAVERY, SO IT IS ONLY NATURAL THAT WHEN HE TALKS, HE SHOUTS!

Appendix 9: Magic Item

Characters completing this adventure's objective unlock this magic item.

Helm of Comprehend Languages

Tier 1, 8 treasure checkpoints

While wearing this helm, you can use an action to cast the comprehend languages spell from it at will. This item is found on **Magic Item Table B** in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

This elaborate helm is made of Avernium, a black metal found only in Avernus. The helm has the appearance of a crown with spikes. The inner circle of the helm has an inscription in Infernal which reads, "Avernus Dragonchess Champion."



Appendix 10: Dungeon Master Tips

This adventure is designed for **three to seven 1st-4th level characters** and is optimized for **five characters with an average party level (APL) of 3**. Characters outside this level range cannot participate in this adventure.

New to D&D Adventurers League?

<http://dnd.wizards.com/playevents/organized-play>

New to Being the Dungeon Master?

<http://dndadventurersleague.org/start-here/dungeon-masters/>

To DM an adventure, you **must** have 3 to 7 players—each with their own character whose level is within the adventure’s level range. Characters playing in a **hardcover** adventure may continue to play to but if they play a different hardcover adventure, they **can’t return** to the first one if they’re outside its level range.

Preparing the Adventure

Before you start play, consider the following:

- Read through the adventure, taking notes of anything you’d like to highlight or remind yourself of while running the adventure, such as a way you’d like to portray an NPC or a tactic you’d like to use in a combat. Familiar yourself with the adventure’s appendices and handouts.
- Gather any resources you’d like to use to aid you in running this adventure—such as notecards, a DM screen, miniatures, and battlemaps.
- Ask the players to provide you with relevant character information, such as name, race, class, and level; passive Wisdom (Perception), and anything specified as notable by the adventure (such as backgrounds, traits, flaws, etc.)

Players can play an adventure they previously played as a Player or Dungeon Master, but may only play it once with a given character. Ensure each player has their character’s adventure logsheet (if not, get one from the organizer). The players fill out the adventure name, session number, date, and your name and DCI number. In addition, the player also fills in the starting values for advancement and treasure checkpoints, downtime days, and renown. These values are updated at the conclusion of the session.

Each player is responsible for maintaining an accurate logsheet. If you have time, you can do a quick scan of a player’s character sheet to ensure that nothing looks out of order. If you see magic items of very high rarities or strange arrays of ability scores, you can ask players to provide documentation for the irregularities. If they cannot, feel free to restrict item use or ask them to use a standard ability score array.

Point players to the D&D Adventurers League Players Guide for reference. If players wish to spend downtime days and it’s the beginning of an adventure or episode, they can declare their activity and spend the days now, or they can do so at the end of the adventure or episode. Players should select their characters’ spells and other daily options prior to the start of the adventure, unless the adventure specifies otherwise. Feel free to reread the adventure description to help give players hints about what they might face.

Adjusting This Adventure

When combat is a possibility, this adventure provides sidebars for each possible encounter that helps you to determine how to create an appropriate challenge. While you’re not bound to these adjustments; they’re here for your convenience and consideration.

To determine whether you should consider adjusting the adventure, add up the total levels of all the characters and divide the result by the number of characters (rounding .5 or greater up; .4 or less down). This is the group’s average party level (APL). To approximate the **party strength** for the adventure, consult the table below.

Determining Party Strength

Party Composition	Party Strength
3-4 characters, APL less than	Very weak
3-4 characters, APL equivalent	Weak
3-4 characters, APL greater than	Average
5 characters, APL less than	Weak
5 characters, APL equivalent	Average
5 characters, APL greater than	Strong
6-7 characters, APL less than	Average
6-7 characters, APL equivalent	Strong
6-7 characters, APL greater than	Very strong

Author's DM tips for this Module

Fellow DM's below are some tips I think will help you get the most out of running this adventure your way.

- ***This is YOUR Adventure.*** I wrote this adventure to have many open choices, specifically so each DM can tailor this adventure to their players play style. Do you have evil characters? Great! Push hard on the Cult of Zariel hooks. Good characters? Excellent, showcase the Knights of Holy Judgment! You know your players best; use the adventure to build around their playstyles.
- ***Prepare your players ahead of time.*** Due to the intentional tension I built into this adventure, I recommend you remind your players ahead of time that this is be a fun roleplaying experience. Ask if any of the players are against Player versus Player (PvP) combat, there is a high likelihood good and evil characters might want to fight each other in this adventure. So long as everyone has fun, use this adventure as a chance to highlight PvP. I strongly recommend the DM does not allow PvP to result in death, only unconsciousness.
- ***Sandbox feel might overwhelm DMs.*** Due to the many choices this adventure can take, I recommend DMs go with the flow and do not concern themselves with all the gritty details if they feel overwhelmed. Ultimately, the DM just needs to get the characters to search for the Temple of Orcus and enter it at the conclusion of the Adventure. It is that easy!
- ***Have fun.*** I wanted to give DMs full reign over this story so that you and your players can walk away with crazy stories of Dragonchess, sacrifices, slaying Dragons, helping out heroic Knights of Tyr, and whatever else might manifest itself from the imaginations of DMs and players playing this adventure. If you find yourself asking "What would happen if...?" That means you as the DM have complete control over what happens next. I hope you all enjoy running this adventure as I had creating it!

THE HEIR OF

ORCUS

VERSE II



**YOU DON'T PLAY THIS MODULE!
THIS MODULE PLAYS YOU!**

A Four-hour Adventure for Tier 1 Characters. Optimized for APL 3. By: Anthony Joyce

CCC-AETHER-01-02



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CCC-AETHER-01-02 The *Heir of Orcus: Verse II*

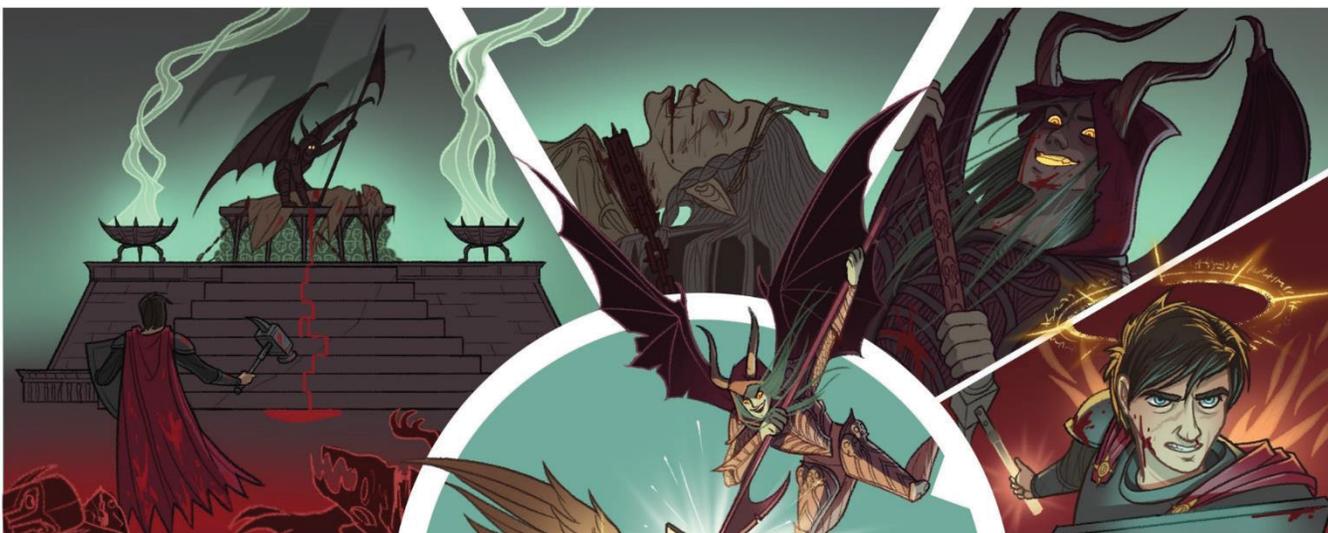
FOOLS! LED TO THEIR DOOM BY THE PROMISE OF JUSTICE.



DID THEY TRULY BELIEVE...



...THEY COULD STOP THE PROPHECY?



MAY THE GODS PITY US,

FOR TODAY THE HEIR OF ORCUS IS BORN!

Adventure Primer

This adventure builds off the choices made in *The Heir of Orcus: Verse I*. It is highly recommended that characters play *The Heir of Orcus: Verse II* after *Verse I*. Otherwise the DM narrates how the characters came to find the Temple of Orcus.

Background

“Deep in the Temple of Orcus, lies a creature of unspeakable evil. It is said that his Heir dwells in that lair so beware for all who enter may never return!”

–Verse II

The characters begin the adventure in the **TEMPLE OF ORCUS** deep beneath the **BLOODMUCK SWAMP** in the region of **THAR**, aligned either with the **KNIGHTS OF HOLY JUDGMENT** the **CULT OF ZARIEL**, or **CHAOS**. All factions want to rescue **SER VINDICTUS** or, if she is dead, recover her body.

No one knows what happened to Ser Vindictus and her failed raid over 100 years ago. It is up to the characters to brave the hordes of Orcus, enter the Temple of Orcus, and uncover the fate of Ser Vindictus.

Episodes

The adventure has two episodes and takes approximately four hours to play. The episodes are introduced by a **Call to Action** Episode.

If you are planning to play the entire adventure at once, you only need to introduce the Call to Action once. However, if you plan to play them over several sessions, you are advised to revisit the Call to Action each time you play.

- **Episode 1: Doomed (Call to Action)**. The party begins its journey into the Temple of Orcus. They need to make their way past several large groups of enemies to enter the **UNHOLY PLACE** and **UNHOLY OF UNHOLIES**. Characters complete Main Objective A upon completing this Episode.
- **Episode 2: The Heir of Orcus**. The party goes deep into the Temple, confronts the Heir of Orcus, and uncovers the unfortunate fate of Ser Vindictus, after which they make a daring escape with the body of Ser Vindictus. Characters complete Main Objective B upon completing this Episode.

Adventure Hooks

Players can come up with the best story hooks that intimately build upon their characters' backstories. Ask the players why their characters are going to rescue Ser Vindictus, a lost angel of Tyr. Is it for nefarious or noble purposes?

Choosing a Side

The characters' choices and actions will cause them to “choose a side” during this adventure. If they played *The Heir of Orcus: Verse I*, they have already chosen a side. If the characters did not play *Verse I*, or cannot decide whom they want to align with, then the DM decides. Below is a description of the three sides:

Knights of Holy Judgment. The Knights of Holy Judgment want to rescue or recover Ser Vindictus. A mythical hero for them, she would be a great asset to their order. If the characters aligned with the Knights of Holy Judgment, they begin the adventure with the following NPCs:

- **SER TITUS**. A handsome, muscular **Knight** of Holy Judgment who seeks to uncover the mystery behind Ser Vindictus' disappearance. If he died in *The Heir of Orcus: Verse I*, he appears as a **sword wraith warrior** in this adventure.
- **SER GERTZ**. A young, female, half-orc priest in the Knights of Holy Judgment. If she died in *The Heir of Orcus: Verse I*, she appears as a **sword wraith warrior** in this adventure.
- **Cult of Zariel**. The Cult of Zariel seeks to find Ser Vindictus and corrupt her into a fallen angel to serve the Archdevil **ZARIEL**. If Ser Vindictus is dead, the cult wants her body so they can conduct infernal rituals on her corpse to corrupt her soul.
- **NURFENPURF**. A gnome cultist who worships the Archdevil Zariel. If he died in *The Heir of Orcus: Verse I*, he appears as an **imp** in this adventure.
- **ORIANNA MAFISTO**. A spunky, playful, and seductive **succubus**. She enjoys corrupting mortals with pleasures of the flesh and their darkest desires, all in the name of fun! If she died in *The Heir of Orcus: Verse I*, she reforms in the Nine Hells and rejoins the party.
- **MORDAKAI MAFISTO**. A veteran of the **BLOOD WAR** who suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder. The only thing that cheers him up is Dragonchess, a game he grew to love during his time on the front lines of the Blood War. If he died

in *The Heir of Orcus: Verse I*, he reforms in the Nine Hells and rejoins the party.

Chaos. This side is the most difficult to side with while playing through the Verse II, and should only be considered for play by well-formed groups. The characters forsake helping the Knights of Holy Judgement and the Cult of Zariel. A voice echoes in their mind...“Recover the body of Ser Vindictus...you have been chosen...” If the characters communicate with the voice, it will repeat this phrase. All languages understand this voice; no one knows why this voice speaks, or what its purpose is.

Lore the DM should know

Orcus. Orcus is the Demon Prince of Undeath, also known as the Blood Lord. Orcus rules over Thanatos, the 113th layer of the Abyss. For more detailed lore, reference *Mordenkainen’s Tome of Foes* or *Out of the Abyss*.

Zariel. Zariel rules Avernus, the first layer of the Nine Hells and the main battlefield in the eternal Blood War. Many eons ago, she was a powerful angel tasked with observing the Blood War on Avernus. The influence of Avernus ultimately corrupted her and she became an Archdevil. For more detailed lore, reference *Mordenkainen’s Tome of Foes*.

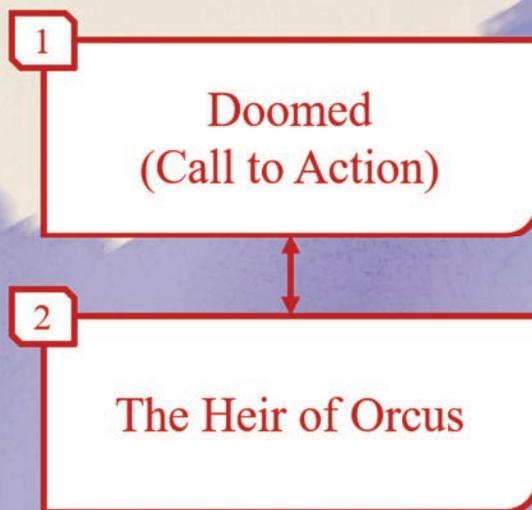
The Blood War. An eternal conflict between demons and devils that takes place in the lower planes, the war is mostly fought along the River Styx, in between the Abyss and Avernus. For more detailed lore, reference *Mordenkainen’s Tome of Foes*.

Tyr. Tyr is the Faerûnian god of justice. His symbol is balanced scales resting on a warhammer. Followers of Tyr see things in terms of black and white, as good or evil. The Knights of Holy Judgment is an order of knighthood devoted to Tyr and seeking out vengeance against all that is evil. These knights wear thin strips of diaphanous cloth over their eyes to remind others of the blindness of justice. For more detailed lore, reference the *Sword Coast Adventurer’s Guide*.

Ser. The title “Ser” is a gender-neutral, knightly title used by the Knights of Holy Judgment. This title exemplifies that Tyr’s adherence to justice is blind, and anyone, regardless of gender is equally capable of executing justice in Tyr’s name.

Episode Flowchart

This adventure plays takes place over 2 Episodes. Episodes 1 and 2 play out in linear order.



Episode 1. Doomed (Call to Action)

Estimated Duration. 150 minutes

In this Episode, the characters overcome a horde of demons and undead enemies as they make their way deeper into the Temple of Orcus.

Area 1. The Great Court

Area Information

The area has the following features:

Terrain & Dimensions. The **GREAT COURT** is a large open area that surrounds the Temple of Orcus, encased within an underground cavern. The cavern ceiling is 120 feet high. Bone cylinders filled with flesh are scattered throughout the Great Court, as are the mangled bodies of fallen knights from the lost Knights of Holy Judgment expedition. A river of lava flows around the temple; several bridges of bone expand over the lava and connect to the temples' **UPPER COURT**.

Lighting. Green flames spew forth from pyres made of human bone. These flames emit an eerie, dim, green light in a 20-foot radius. The lava emits bright light within a 20-foot radius. The bone cylinders radiate dim light in a 5-foot radius.

Smells and Sounds. The entire cavern smells of death, decay, and rotted flesh. Demons and undead creatures screech out in rage, ravenous to consume flesh and mortal souls.

Creatures/NPCs

A horde of 8 **manes**, 3 **dretches**, 2 **shadows**, and a **ghoul** wander aimlessly in the Great Court.

Ghoul. The ghoul is a deceased human from an unknown plane of existence. It wears a technologically advanced suit of green "Space" **Mariner's Armor (Breastplate)** and a strange metallic "HUD" **Dread Helm**. The ghoul does not gain any benefit from wearing this armor due to improper fitting.

Objectives/Goals. These creatures want to destroy all living creatures. The forces of Orcus loath the living and seek to extinguish all forms of life.

Other Features

Lava. A creature that falls in the lava immediately takes 55 (10d10) fire damage. A creature that begins its turn in the lava also takes 55 (10d10) fire damage.

Bone Cylinders. Place bone cylinders wherever you like in the Great Court! Bone cylinders weigh 100 lbs., occupy a 5-foot square, and have AC 15 and 4 (1d8) hit points. If a bone cylinder is destroyed, it erupts and each creature within 10 feet must succeed in a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or take 11 (2d10) piercing damage (taking half as much damage on a successful save).

Call to Action

The objective of this adventure is for characters to (1) enter the Temples' Unholy Place and (2) escape with the body of Ser Vindictus.

Treasure & Rewards

The characters can find the following treasure.

- **Mariner's Armor (Breastplate)**
- **Dread Helm**

Encounter Adjustments

- **Very Weak:** Remove five **manes**, one **dretch**, and all **shadows** from the encounter
- **Weak:** Remove two **dretches**, and one **shadow** from the encounter
- **Strong:** Remove three **manes**; add three **dretches** and two **shadows**
- **Very Strong:** Add two **shadows** and two **ghouls**

Playing the Pillars

COMBAT

Highlight the bone cylinders. Characters can destroy them to cause area-of-effect damage to the enemies.

EXPLORATION

Characters can attempt a DC 12 group Dexterity (Stealth) check to hide from the enemies. On a success, they remain hidden until moving within 20ft. of an enemy.

SOCIAL

Characters can make a DC 12 Charisma (Performance) check to mimic undead zombies. On a success, they pass by enemies in the Great Court unnoticed.

Area 2. The Upper Court

Area Information

The area has the following features:

Terrain & Dimensions. A 20-foot black marble wall surrounds the Upper Court. Ten fonts of blood and bones flank the Temple of Orcus. Near the entrance of the temple is a large altar stained with the blood of hundreds of innocents, used as sacrifices in honor of Orcus. In the southwest corner of the Upper Court is a 3-foot-tall vat of vile, black ooze.

Lighting. Green flames spew forth from pyres made of human bone. These flames emit a green eerie dim light in a 20-foot radius.

Smells and Sounds. The fonts of blood and bones smell of iron. The vat of black ooze fills the air of the Upper Court with an acidic singe.

Creatures/NPCs

The Upper court is crawling with 6 **manes** and 3 **rutterkins**. These creatures wander aimlessly, seeking to consume their next living meal.

Objectives/Goals. These demons protect the Upper Court from any intruders that dare approach.

Other Features

Doors leading into the Unholy Place. These massive, locked doors lead into Area 3, The Unholy Place. There are two golden rings on the doors, each with an inscription in Abyssal.

The inscription on the left golden ring reads, "Give life." In the middle of the ring is a small saucer with a sharp edge built into the rim. If a character cuts themselves with the rim and deposits blood into the saucer, the door unlocks.

The inscription on the right golden ring reads, "Take life". In the middle of the ring is a small saucer with a living, beating heart. The heart has AC 11 and 2 (1d4) hit points. The door opens if the heart stops beating.

Fonts of blood and bones. Any living, humanoid creature that drinks from these fonts is healed

2d4+2 hit points and ages 1d12 years. These fonts are for the Priests of Orcus. During rituals, they drink from the fonts to age so that they might sooner embrace undeath.

Vat of vile, black ooze. A creature that touches the black ooze or hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it takes 4 (1d8) acid damage. Any nonmagical weapon made of metal or wood that hits the black ooze corrodes. After dealing damage, the weapon takes a permanent and cumulative -1 penalty to damage rolls. The weapon disintegrates if its penalty drops to -5.

Characters can destroy the vat to distract or harm enemies. The vat is made of iron, and has an AC of 19 and 27 (5d10) hit points. Destroying the vat causes the black ooze to fill up a 20-foot-radius sphere from the center of the vat.

Altar of Orcus. Cultists of Orcus use this altar to sacrifice living creatures in honor of Orcus. A character can sacrifice a living creature on the altar. A sacrificed creature's blood turns into two servings of unholy anointment. Consuming an entire serving of unholy anointment grants the following benefit to the character:

- Wings of jagged bone sprout from your spinal cord when you drink the blood. You gain a flying speed equal to your walking speed for 5 hours and can hover. If you are in the air when this effect wears off, you fall unless you have some other means of staying aloft.

Objectives

- **Main Objective A:** The characters enter The Unholy Place (Area 3).

Encounter Adjustments

- **Very Weak:** Remove two **rutterkins**
- **Weak:** Remove one **rutterkin**
- **Strong:** Remove all **manes** and add 6 **dretches**
- **Very Strong:** Remove all **manes**; add seven **dretches** and three **ghouls**

Playing the Pillars

COMBAT

The Upper Court is a large area, enemies can attack the characters all at once or in waves. Be creative and balance this encounter, based off party composition.

EXPLORATION

The fonts of blood and bones and the vat of vile black ooze can cause distractions or facilitate creative use of the environment to overcome the enemies.

SOCIAL

At DM discretion, characters can make a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, they hallucinate and see dead loved ones beckoning them to jump into the vat of vile black ooze.

Episode 2. The Heir of Orcus

Estimated Duration. 90 minutes

In this Episode, the characters discover the unfortunate fate of Ser Vindictus, confront the Heir of Orcus, and try to escape with the body of Ser Vindictus!

Area 3. The Unholy Place

Area Information

The area has the following features:

Terrain & Dimensions. The ceiling of the Unholy Place is 60 feet high. Just inside the temple entrance stand two large statues of devourers. A large sarcophagus made of bones occupies the center of the room; around the sarcophagus are ten human skulls atop altars. At the far end of the room is a lectern with an open tome covered with cobwebs.

Lighting. The skulls on altars emit green necrotic energy that sheds bright light in a 5-foot radius and dim light for an additional 5 feet.

Smells and Sounds. Prayers whispered in Abyssal linger in this Unholy Place. Steady scratching and banging come from within the bone sarcophagus.

Creatures/NPCs

Entombed within the bone sarcophagus is Ser Vindictus. During her battle with the Heir of Orcus, a burrowing worm crawled under her armor and into her skin, turning her into a **spawn of Kyuss**. Before she turned, she restrained the Heir of Orcus and locked herself in the sarcophagus so she would do no harm to others. It is obvious to the characters that the spawn of Kyuss is Ser Vindictus: she is wearing her armor of Tyr and resembles her former self.

Objectives/Goals. Ser Vindictus bangs and scratches against the inside of the bone sarcophagus, trying to escape.

Other Features

Devourer Statues. The devourer statues are inanimate, magical objects that can choose a living humanoid with 0 hit points that it can see within 30

feet of it. That creature is teleported inside the devourer statue's ribcage and imprisoned there. A creature imprisoned in this manner has disadvantage on death saving throws. A devourer statue can imprison only one creature at a time. It requires one action to free a creature imprisoned in the statue.

Bone sarcophagus. This sarcophagus is a ceremonial fixture of the temple. Orcus selects deserving priests and commands them to lie in the sarcophagus with a burrowing worm, turning them into spawns of Kyuss. The bone sarcophagus has an AC of 15 and 18 (4d8) hit points. Characters can open the sarcophagus lid by succeeding in a DC 13 Strength (Athletics) check. If a character peeks inside, Ser Vindictus uses her *burrowing worm* action.

Skulls on Altars. Each skull is from a High Priest of Orcus who presided over this temple. When a skull is touched for the first time, roll on the "Skull Effects Table" found in Appendix 4. Each skull can communicate telepathically in common and Abyssal and has one "Skull Effect".

Tome of Orcus, Book I. A vile book of wretched evil and hate, verses glorifying Orcus and his destruction of life fill each page. The Tome is opened to a section on prophecies. The section discusses a ritual and the birth of Orcus' Heir by using a holy vessel as a means to birth this unholy cambion. The Tome is written in Abyssal.

Encounter Adjustments

- **Very Weak:** The **spawn of kyuss** starts with 45 hit points
- **Weak:** The **spawn of kyuss** starts with 60 hit points
- **Strong:** The **spawn of kyuss** starts with 92 hit points
- **Very Strong:** The **spawn of kyuss** starts with 108 hit points

Playing the Pillars

COMBAT

Ser Vindictus attacks the characters if anyone opens her sarcophagus. Otherwise, she tries breaking out once the Heir of Orcus is free from her chains.

EXPLORATION

If characters explore the Unholy Place, they see ancient abyssal engravings on the wall depicting the infinite ways Orcus wants to destroy all living creatures.

SOCIAL

The Skulls on Altars telepathically whisper hateful remarks at the characters. You determine the skulls' personalities.

Area 4. Unholy of Unholies

Area Information

The area has the following features:

Terrain & Dimensions. The ceiling is 60 feet high. A huge statue of Orcus occupies the Unholy of Holies.

Lighting. The statue of Orcus emits an eerie, dim light within a 15-foot radius.

Smells and Sounds. Wretched, Abyssal curses softly echo throughout the Unholy of Unholies.

Creatures/NPCs

The Heir of Orcus. This merciless, malevolent **cambion** is the daughter of Orcus and the embodiment of betrayal and deceit. She murdered her own mother, a priestess of Tyr, during childbirth. Her true name is unknown except for in the pages of a tome hidden deep within the Abyss.

Objectives/Goals. The Heir of Orcus is trapped within the Unholy of Unholies. Ser Vindictus tied her to the Statue of Orcus before turning into a spawn of Kyuss. The chains are imbued with the power of Tyr and prevent the Heir of Orcus from breaking the chains or from casting *plane shift*.

The Heir of Orcus immediately casts *alter self* on herself when the doors to the Unholy Place open. She alters herself to look like a tired, beaten, and exhausted Ser Vindictus, pretending to be unconscious when the characters approach.

Tactics. The Heir of Orcus uses deceit to gain the characters' trust so they free her from her imprisonment.

Deceiving the Characters.

The Heir of Orcus acts as if she is Ser Vindictus and shares the following to gain the characters' trust. She does all she can to avoid openly lying; instead, she misconstrues the truth.

- If Knights of Holy Judgment are present, she praises Tyr for saving her.
- If the Mafisto Twins are present, she curses the name of Tyr for abandoning her and listens to any offers of joining Zariel. She puts up a small fight to

play the role of "Ser Vindictus" but will ultimately "join Zariel" if the characters let her go.

- If neither the Knights of Holy Judgment nor the Mafisto Twins are present, she pleads for freedom.
- She says she led the Knights of Holy Judgment on a daring raid to rescue a Priestess of Tyr.
- The Knights arrived at the end of an unholy ceremony that caused the Priestess of Tyr to give birth to a cambion known as the Heir of Orcus.
- She was defeated and tied to the Statue of Orcus, left to die and wither away. (She is not lying here)

Other Features

Statue of Orcus. Magic of the darkest origins emanates from this statue. Orcus, himself, can recall anything the statue sees or hears. If he so chooses, he can speak through the statue to address his enemies and followers directly. Only a creature wielding the Wand of Orcus can destroy this statue. At your discretion, Orcus notices the characters and speaks to them through the statue. Orcus tells the characters to sacrifice "Ser Vindictus" in his honor, allowing them to leave the Temple alive if they do so. Orcus knows the Heir of Orcus has altered herself to appear as Ser Vindictus—the Prince of Undeath enjoys manipulating mortals and wants to throw them off.

Aura of Orcus. The statue activates this feature when the Heir of Orcus is free from her chains. While active, the aura deals 2 necrotic damage to any creature that ends its turn within Areas 3 and 4. Undead and fiends ignore this effect.

Encounter Adjustments

- **Very Weak:** The **cambion** starts with 44 hit points
- **Weak:** The **cambion** starts with 63 hit points
- **Strong:** The **cambion** starts with 101 hit points
- **Very Strong:** The **cambion** starts with 121 hit points

Objectives

Main Objective B: The characters escape the Temple of Orcus with the body of Ser Vindictus.

Playing the Pillars

COMBAT

The Heir of Orcus attacks the characters as soon as she is free of her chains. She uses *plane shift* if she is close to death and laughs if the characters kill her, for they have set her free!

EXPLORATION

Characters with a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 13 detect the unholy presence of Orcus staring at them from the statue.

SOCIAL

Characters succeeding in a DC 16 Wisdom (Insight) check realize that the Heir of Orcus is lying. The Heir of Orcus uses her *fiendish charm* on characters that accuse her of lying.

Wrap-Up: Concluding the Adventure

If the characters escape the Temple of Orcus with the body of Ser Vindictus, they are successful! The choices the characters make in *The Heir of Orcus: Verse I & II* determine the outcome of their adventure. Below are the outcomes of this story arc based on which side the characters aligned with and whether or not they killed the Heir of Orcus. More to come in future *Verses* if players enjoy *The Heir of Orcus*!

Development: “Choosing a Side”

Knights of Holy Judgment. These holy knights of Tyr recover their mythical Commander, Ser Vindictus, and set out to resurrect her. Ser Vindictus, is a powerful deva and once resurrected, the Knights of Holy Judgment to grow in power throughout the Moonsea Region.

Cult of Zariel. The Cult of Zariel takes the corpse of Ser Vindictus back to Mafisto Manor. They plan to carry out infernal rituals to resurrect Ser Vindictus as a fallen angel that will join the ranks of Zariel’s legions. If they succeed, Zariel’s influence grows in the Moonsea Region and her forces in the Blood War gain a powerful ally in Ser Vindictus.

Chaos. The characters escape with the body of Ser Vindictus. As they flee, an enormous blinding white light and deafening ring blares out around them. The characters must make a DC 30 Constitution saving throw, on a failure, characters go unconscious for 1 hour, and on a success, characters see the silhouette of a humanoid through the bright light before they go unconscious for 30 minutes.

When they wake, the body of Ser Vindictus is gone and a note is nearby. The note is in common and reads, “You have done well. We will contact you again shortly...chosen ones.”

Development: “Is The Heir of Orcus dead, alive, or still chained up?”

Use this to describe what happens as if it were the final scene in a movie.

Dead. A vile black ichor begins to form into the body of The Heir of Orcus deep in Thanatos, the 113th layer of the Abyss. You can hear the laughter of Orcus echoing over the grey dead wasteland, he says, “Rise my daughter...rise!”

Alive. The Heir of Orcus shape shifts into one of the characters and begins to laugh maniacally. Her reign of horror is now unleashed upon the world of Faerun.

Chained up. A Duergar mined too deep, digging into the cavern wall that leads into the Temple of

Orcus. He hears a voice calling out to him for help...he goes towards the voice to set the Heir of Orcus free!

Adventure Rewards

Upon completing the adventure, the characters each receive rewards based upon their accomplishments. These rewards include advancement and treasure, and may include special rewards, such as story awards or new downtime activities, as follows:

Advancement Checkpoints

The characters receive 2 **advancement checkpoints** for each main objective they complete.

- **Main Objective A:** Characters enter The Unholy Place (Area 3).
- **Main Objective B:** The characters escape the Temple of Orcus with the body of Ser Vindictus.

Treasure Checkpoints

The characters receive 2 **treasure checkpoints** for each main objective they complete. There is a maximum of four treasure checkpoints for this adventure.

Magic Item Unlock

Characters unlock these magic items if they complete **both main objectives**.

Dread Helm. This fearsome steel helm makes your eyes glow red while you wear it. When you wear it, the glass visor displays your body and any damage you take. This item can be found in **Appendix 7**.

Mariner's Armor (Breastplate). The number "12101993" is etched into the inside of this green metallic breastplate, along with a single word in Abyssal: "Doomed". This item can be found in **Appendix 7**.

Story Awards

During this adventure, the characters may earn the following story awards:

Rising through the ranks. Characters gain this story award if they sided with the Knights of Holy Judgement or the Cult of Zariel: Your service has not gone unnoticed; your "side" offers you a permanent room and free food at their headquarters featured in

throughout *The Heir of Orcus* storyline. More information about this story award can be found in **Appendix 5**.

Chosen One. Characters who sided with Chaos receive this story award when they complete this adventure. Something beckons you...you never feel alone even when you physically are...something or someone is watching, waiting, you have become a chosen one! More information can be found in **Appendix 6**.

DM Rewards

In exchange for running this adventure, you earn advancement and treasure checkpoints and downtime as though you played the adventure, but none of the other rewards listed above.

However, this adventure may qualify for rewards earned by completing DM Quests. See the ALDMG (Adventurers League Dungeon Master's Guide) for more information about DM Quests.



Appendix 1: Locations & NPCs

The following NPCs and locations feature prominently in this adventure. The NPCs are listed in order of appearance.

NPCs

- **Nurfenpurf (NURF-en-PURF)**. The steward for the Mafisto Twins and their manor. Gnome male.
Objective: Earn the favor of Zariel and the Mafisto Twins.
Personality: "I'm bitter and angry."
Ideal: "One day I'll earn Zariel's favor."
Bond: "I'll do anything for my Masters."
Flaw: "I spy on everyone."
- **Ser Titus (Ser TIE-tuss)**. Commander of the Knights of Holy Judgment. Always shouts when he talks. Human male.
Objective: Discover what happened to Ser Vindictus in the Temple of Orcus.
Personality: "JUSTICE, VENGEANCE, TYR!!"
Ideal: "RETRIBUTION FOR EVIL DOERS!!"
Bond: "SER GERTZ MUST BE SAVED!!"
Flaw: "JUSTICE IS NEVER WRONG!!"
- **Orianna Mafisto (ORR-ee-ANN-a ma-FIST-oh)**. A succubus disguised as a tiefling who contracts the adventurers to escort her and Mordakai to the Temple of Orcus. A servant of the Archdevil Zariel.
Objective: Recruit others into the Cult of Zariel and use them to enter the Temple of Orcus.
Personality: "I love to play and get my way."
Ideal: "I want others to love me."
Bond: "Mordakai has always been here for me."
Flaw: "I'll do whatever it takes to corrupt others."
- **Mordakai Mafisto (MORE-da-kigh ma-FIST-oh)**. An incubus disguised as a tiefling who contracts the adventurers to escort him and Orianna to the Temple of Orcus. A servant of the Archdevil Zariel.
Objective: Recruit others into the Cult of Zariel and use them to enter the Temple of Orcus.
Personality: "My soul is weary of war."
Ideal: "I want this eternal conflict to end."
Bond: "Dragonchess is my only solace."
Flaw: "I am willing to wager anything on a game of Dragonchess."
- **Ser Gertz (Ser GERTS)**. A member of the Knights of Holy Judgment. Half-orc Female.
Objective: Discover what happened to Ser Vindictus in the Temple of Orcus.
Personality: "It's best to be blunt and to the point."
Ideal: "I will prove myself as a great Knight."
Bond: "I am true to the ways of Tyr."
Flaw: "There is good in everyone. I don't care what others say."
- **The Heir of Orcus (ORR-cus)**. This merciless, malevolent cambion is the daughter of Orcus and the embodiment of betrayal and deceit
Objective: Gain enough power to kill everything, even her own father Orcus, and (lastly) herself.
Personality: "I hate life, undeath, existence... it all needs to end!"
Ideal: "If I can fool others into ending their own lives, I can become even more powerful than my father!"
Bond: "I must infect the world with my ideas to foster unending death."
Flaw: "There is nothing I love or care for, I side with no one!"
- **Ser Vindictus (Ser VIN-dic-TUS)**. An angel of Tyr and mythical hero of the Knights of Holy Judgment. Deva female.
Objective: Defeat Orcus and his forces!
Personality: "I will die for justice, honor, and the glory of Tyr!"
Ideal: "If I can vanquish all evil, the universe will be at peace!"
Bond: "I have dedicated my entire existence to Tyr."
Flaw: "It has been a century since Tyr left me here...has he abandoned me?"

Locations

- **Temple of Orcus (temple of ORR-cus)**. A defiled and unholy temple dedicated to the Demon Lord Orcus, the Prince of Undeath.



Appendix 2: Creature Statistics

Cambion

Medium fiend, lawful evil



Armor Class 19 (scale mail)

Hit Points 82 (11d8 + 33)

Speed 30 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Str +7, Con +6, Int +5, Cha +6

Skills Deception +6, Intimidation +6, Perception +4, Stealth +7

Damage Resistances cold, fire, lightning, poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages Abyssal, Common, Infernal

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Fiendish Blessing. The AC of the cambion includes its Charisma bonus.

Innate Spellcasting. The cambion's spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 14). The cambion can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

3/day each: *alter self*, *command*, *detect magic*

1/day: *plane shift* (self only)

Actions

Multiattack. The cambion makes two melee attacks or uses its *Fire Ray* twice.

Spear. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage, or 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack, plus 3 (1d6) fire damage.

Fire Ray. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +7 to hit, range 120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (3d6) fire damage.

Fiendish Charm. One humanoid the cambion can see within 30 feet of it must succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw or be magically charmed for 1 day. The charmed target obeys the cambion's spoken commands. If the target suffers any harm from the cambion or another creature or receives a suicidal command from the cambion, the target can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a target's saving throw is successful, or if the effect

ends for it, the creature is immune to the cambion's *Fiendish Charm* for the next 24 hours.

Cultist

Medium humanoid (any race), any non-good alignment



Armor Class 12 (leather armor)

Hit Points 9 (2d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

Skills Deception +2, Religion +2

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages any one language (usually Common)

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Dark Devotion. The cultist has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened.

Actions

Scimitar. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) slashing damage.

Dretch

Small fiend (demon), chaotic evil

Armor Class 11 (natural armor)

Hit Points 18 (4d6 + 4)

Speed 20ft.



STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	5 (-3)	8 (-1)	3 (-4)

Damage Resistances cold, fire, lightning

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages Abyssal, telepathy 60 ft. (works only with creatures that understand Abyssal)

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Actions

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

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d6) piercing damage.

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

Fetid Cloud (1/Day). A 10-foot radius of disgusting green gas extends out from the dretch. The gas spreads around corners, and its area is lightly obscured. It lasts for 1 minute or until a strong wind disperses it. Any creature that starts its turn in that area must succeed on a DC 11 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned until the start of its next turn. While poisoned in this way, the target can take either an action or a bonus action on its turn, not both, and can't take reactions.

Ghoul

Medium undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 22 (5d8)

Speed 30 ft.



STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	7 (-2)	10 (+0)	6 (-2)

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Common

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 9 (2d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (2d4 + 2) slashing damage. If the target is a creature other than an elf or undead, it must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Imp

Tiny fiend (devil, shapeshifter), lawful evil



Armor Class 13

Hit Points 10 (3d4 + 3)

Speed 20 ft., fly 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (-2)	17 (+3)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)

Skills Deception +4, Insight +3, Persuasion +4, Stealth +5

Damage Resistances cold; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons that aren't silvered

Damage Immunities fire, poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Infernal, Common

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Shapeshifter. The imp can use its action to polymorph into a beast form that resembles a rat (speed 20 ft.), a raven (20 ft., fly 60 ft.), or a spider (20 ft., climb 20 ft.), or back into its true form. Its statistics are the same in each form, except for the speed changes noted. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It reverts to its true form if it dies.

Devil's Sight. Magical darkness doesn't impede the imp's darkvision.

Magic Resistance. The imp has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Actions

Sting (Bite in Beast Form). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage, and the target must make on a DC 11 Constitution saving throw, taking 10 (3d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Invisibility. The imp magically turns invisible until it attacks or until its concentration ends (as if concentrating on a spell). Any equipment the imp wears or carries is invisible with it.

Knight

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment



Armor Class 18 (plate)

Hit Points 52 (8d8 + 16)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Saving Throws Con +4, Wis +2

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages any one language (usually Common)

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Brave. The knight has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.

Actions

Multiattack. The knight makes two melee attacks.

Greatsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) slashing damage.

Heavy Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, range 100/400 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d10) piercing damage.

Leadership (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). For 1 minute, the knight can utter a special command or warning whenever a nonhostile creature that it can see within 30 feet of it makes an attack roll or a saving throw. The creature can add a d4 to its roll provided it can hear and understand the knight. A creature can benefit from only one Leadership die at a time. This effect ends if the knight is incapacitated.

Reactions

Parry. The knight adds 2 to its AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so, the knight must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

Manes

Small fiend (demon), chaotic evil

Armor Class 9

Hit Points 9 (2d6 + 2)

Speed 20ft.



STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	9 (-1)	13 (+1)	3 (-4)	8 (-1)	4 (-3)

Damage Resistances cold, fire, lightning

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60ft., passive Perception 9

Languages understands Abyssal but can't speak

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Actions

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

Priest

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

Armor Class 13 (chain shirt)

Hit Points 27 (5d8 + 5)

Speed 25 ft.



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

Skills Medicine +7, Persuasion +3, Religion +4

Senses passive Perception 13

Languages any two languages

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Divine Eminence. As a bonus action, the priest can expend a spell slot to cause its melee weapon attacks to magically deal an extra 10 (3d6) radiant damage to a target on a hit. This benefit lasts until the end of the turn. If the priest expends a spell slot of 2nd level or higher, the extra damage increases by 1d6 for each level above 1st.

Spellcasting. The priest is a 5th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). The priest has the following cleric spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *light, sacred flame, thaumaturgy*

1st level (4 slots): *cure wounds, guiding bolt, sanctuary*

2nd level (3 slots): *lesser restoration, spiritual weapon*

3rd level (2 slots): *dispel magic, spirit guardians*

Actions

Mace. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage.

Rutterkin

Medium fiend (demon), chaotic evil



Armor Class 12

Hit Points 37 (5d8 + 15)

Speed 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	15 (+2)	17 (+3)	5 (-3)	12 (+1)	6 (-2)

Damage Resistances cold, fire, lightning

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, poisoned

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages understands Abyssal but can't speak

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Crippling Fear. When a creature that isn't a demon starts its turn within 30 feet of three or more rutterkins, it must make a DC 11 Wisdom saving throw. The creature has disadvantage on the save if it's within 30 feet of six or more rutterkins. On a successful save, the creature is immune to the Crippling Fear of all rutterkins for 24 hours. On a failed save, the creature becomes frightened of the rutterkins for 1 minute. While frightened in this way, the creature is restrained. At the end of each of the frightened creature's turns, it can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (3d6 + 2) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw against disease or become poisoned. At the end of each long rest, the poisoned target can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on itself on a success. If the target is reduced to 0 hit points while poisoned in this way, it dies and instantly transforms into a living abyssal wretch. The transformation of the body can be undone only by a wish spell.

Shadow

Medium undead, chaotic evil



Armor Class 12

Hit Points 16 (3d8 + 3)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (-2)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	6 (-2)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)

Skills Stealth +4 (+6 in dim light or darkness)

Damage Vulnerabilities radiant

Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages —

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Amorphous. The shadow can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.

Shadow Stealth. While in dim light or darkness, the shadow can take the Hide action as a bonus action.

Sunlight Weakness. While in sunlight, the shadow has disadvantage on attack rolls, ability checks, and saving throws.

Actions

Strength Drain. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 9 (2d6 + 2) necrotic damage, and the target's Strength score is reduced by 1d4. The target dies if this reduces its Strength to 0. Otherwise, the reduction lasts until the target finishes a short or long rest.

If a non-evil humanoid dies from this attack, a new shadow rises from the corpse 1d4 hours later.

Spawn of Kyuss

Medium undead, chaotic evil



Armor Class 10

Hit Points 76 (9d8 + 36)

Speed 30ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	11 (+0)	18 (+4)	5 (-3)	7 (-2)	3 (-4)

Saving Throws Wis + 1

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8

Languages understands the languages it knew in life but can't speak

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Regeneration. The spawn of Kyuss regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn if it has at least 1 hit point and isn't in sunlight or a body of running water. If the spawn takes acid, fire, or radiant damage, this trait doesn't function at the start of the spawn's next turn. The spawn is destroyed only if it starts its turn with 0 hit points and doesn't regenerate.

Worms. If the spawn of Kyuss is targeted by an effect that cures disease or removes a curse, all the worms infesting it wither away, and it loses its *Burrowing Worm* action.

Actions

Multiattack. The spawn of Kyuss makes two attacks with its claws and uses *Burrowing Worm*.

Burrowing Worm. A worm launches from the spawn of Kyuss at one humanoid that the spawn can see within 10 feet of it. The worm latches onto the target's skin unless the target succeeds on a DC 11 Dexterity saving throw. The worm is a Tiny undead with AC 6, 1 hit point, a 2 (-4) in every ability score, and a speed of 1 foot. While on the target's skin, the worm can be killed by normal means or scraped off using an action (the spawn can use this action to launch a scraped-off worm at a humanoid it can see within 10 feet of the worm). Otherwise, the worm burrows under the target's skin at the end of the target's next turn, dealing 1 piercing damage to it. At the end of each of its turns thereafter, the target takes 7 (2d6) necrotic damage per worm infesting it (maximum of 10d6). A worm-infested target dies if it drops to 0 hit points, then rises 10 minutes later as a spawn of Kyuss. If a worm-infested creature is targeted by an effect that cures disease or removes a curse, all the worms infesting it wither away.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) slashing damage plus 7 (2d6) necrotic damage.

Succubus/Incubus

Medium fiend (shapechanger), neutral evil



Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 66 (12d8 + 12)

Speed 30ft., fly 60ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	17 (+3)	13 (+1)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	20 (+5)

Skills Deception +9, Insight +5, Perception +5, Persuasion +9, Stealth +7

Damage Resistances cold, fire, lightning, poison, bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Senses darkvision 60ft., passive Perception 15

Languages Abyssal, Common, Infernal, telepathy 60ft.

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Telepathic Bond. The fiend ignores the range restriction on its telepathy when communicating with a creature it has charmed. The two don't even need to be on the same plane of existence.

Shapechanger. The fiend can use its action to polymorph into a Small or Medium humanoid, or back into its true form. Without wings, the fiend loses its flying speed. Other than its size and speed, its statistics are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It reverts to its true form if it dies.

Actions

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

Charm. One humanoid the fiend can see within 30 feet of it must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or be magically charmed for 1 day. The charmed target obeys the fiend's verbal or telepathic commands. If the target suffers any harm or receives a suicidal command, it can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on a success. If the target successfully saves against the effect, or if the effect on it ends, the target is immune to this fiend's Charm for the next 24 hours.

The fiend can have only one target charmed at a time. If it charms another, the effect on the previous target ends.

Draining Kiss. The fiend kisses a creature charmed by it or a willing creature. The target must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw against this magic, taking 32 (5d10 + 5) psychic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. The target's hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. This reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0.

Etherealness. The fiend magically enters the Ethereal Plane from the Material Plane, or vice versa.

Sword Wraith Warrior

Medium undead, lawful evil



Armor Class 16 (chain shirt, shield)

Hit Points 45 (6d8 + 18)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	12 (+1)	17 (+3)	6 (-2)	9 (-1)	10 (+0)

Damage Resistances necrotic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, frightened, poisoned, unconscious

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages the languages it knew in life

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Martial Fury. As a bonus action, the sword wraith can make one weapon attack. If it does so, attack rolls against it have advantage until the start of its next turn.

Actions

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) slashing damage, or 9 (1d10 + 4) slashing damage if used with two hands.

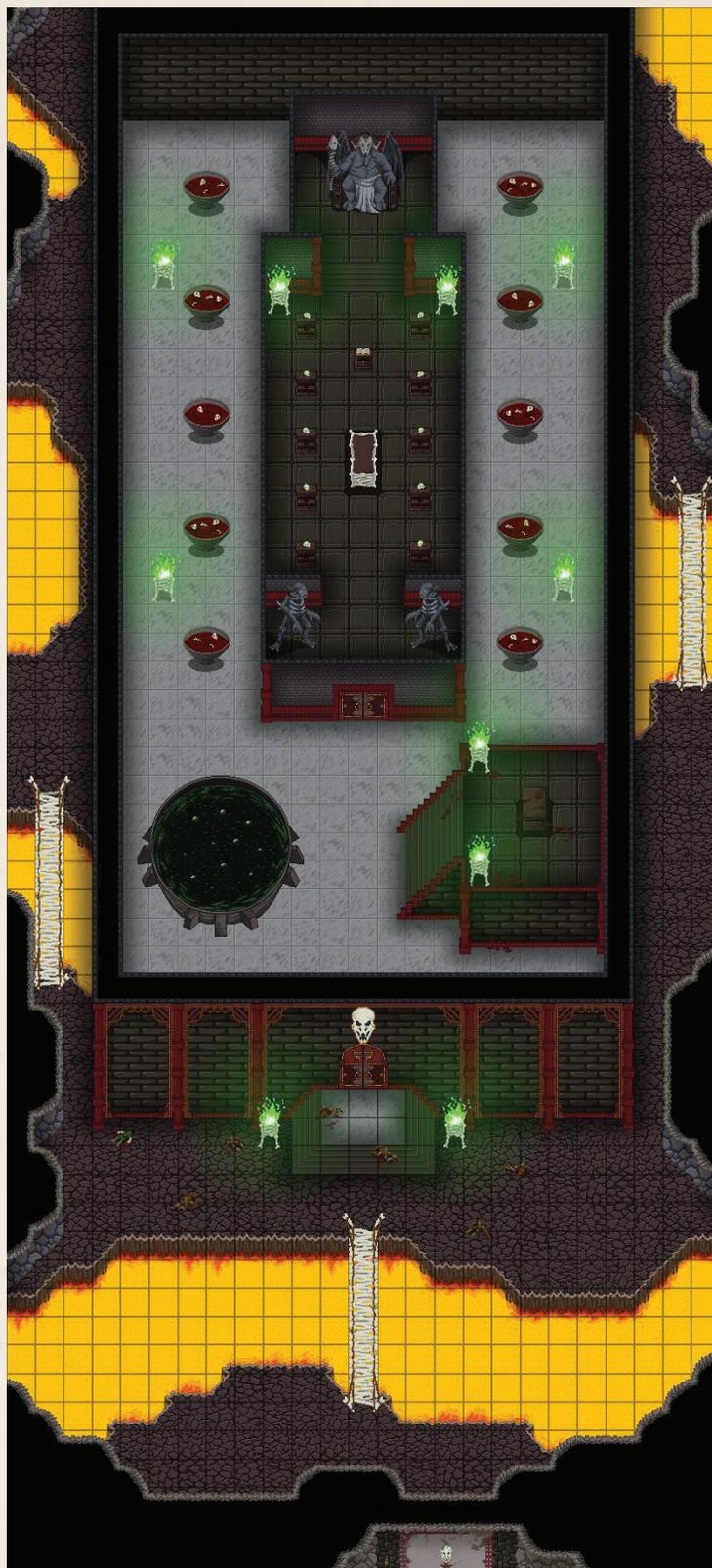
Longbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d8 + 1) piercing damage.

Appendix 3A: DM Map – The Temple of Orcus



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CCC-AETHER-01-02 The Heir of Orcus: Verse II*

Appendix 3B: Player Map – The Temple of Orcus



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Appendix 4. Skull Effects

Skull Effects Table

d100	Trick Effect	d100	Trick Effect
01–03	Ages the first person to touch the object by 4d12 years	51–53	Increases, reduces, negates, or reverses gravity (DM's choice)
04–06	Animates and vomits green pus on a character	54–56	Induces greed
07–10	Asks three skill-testing questions, but harasses the characters regardless of how they answer the questions	57–59	Contains an imprisoned creature of the DM's choosing
11–13	Bestows a resistance or vulnerability of the DM's choosing	60–62	Begins to belch causing the room to fill with the odor of rotten eggs and manure
14–16	Roll 1d6; based on the roll, change a character's (1) alignment, (2) personality, (3) size, (4) appearance, (5) gender, or (6) sex	63–65	Offers a game of chance with the promise of valuable information (the Skull rolls a d20 against the Characters, high number wins)
17–19	Asks for gold, changes any gold it receives into crackers, eats the crackers, then laughs manically	66–68	Helps or harms the characters (DM's discretion), bestowing 1d6 temporary hit points that last until a long rest or inflicting 1d6 necrotic damage
20–22	Creates a spooky light and music show, while telling the story of a cursed vampire in the plane of Barovia	69–71	Casts <i>polymorph</i> on characters standing within 15 feet of the skull (the spell is cast at 4 th level and has a spell save DC of 14), lasting 1 hour
23–26	Creates an illusion of the DM's choice	72–75	Asks the characters what year it is, where the skull is, and what the speed of a Waterdhavian raven is; when these questions are answered the skull says something witty then begins to melt
27–29	Suppresses magic items for 30 minutes	76–78	Prevents movement of the character for 10 minutes
30–32	Enlarges or reduces characters (DM's choice)	79–81	Releases false coins, then laughs manically
33–35	A <i>magic mouth</i> speaks a riddle of the DM's choosing; characters that fail to answer the riddle take 3 (1d6) necrotic damage	82–84	Summons or turns into a monster of the DM's choosing (max CR 4)
36–38	A <i>confusion</i> spell targets all creatures within 10 feet (the spell is cast at 4 th level and has a spell save DC of 14)	85–87	Casts <i>suggestion</i> on the characters within 10 feet (the spell is cast at 2 nd level and has a spell save DC of 14)
39–41	Gives directions to the nearest farm, talks about how good the cow's milk it (skull may be telling the truth or lying)	88–90	Wails loudly when touched
42–44	Offers to speak on behalf of a characters dead loved one, the loved one can speak through the skull to the characters	91–93	Talks (DM's choice of normal speech, nonsense, poetry and rhymes, singing, spellcasting, or screaming)
45–47	Flies about to avoid being touched	94–97	Teleports characters to another place of the DM's choosing
48–50	Casts <i>geas</i> on the characters (the spell is cast at 5 th level and has a spell save DC of 14)	98–00	Swaps two or more characters' minds standing within 100 feet

Appendix 5: Story Award - Rising Through the Ranks (Player Handout 1)

Rising Through the Ranks

Rising through the ranks. Characters gain this story award if they sided with the Knights of Holy Judgement or the Cult of Zariel: Your service has not gone unnoticed; your “side” offers you a permanent room and free food at their headquarters featured in throughout *The Heir of Orcus* storyline.

Knights of Holy Judgment

Your service to Tyr earns you praise among the Knights of Holy Judgement. The Knights notice your potential to serve in their Order, and hope that you continue to carry out the righteous justice of Tyr wherever you go. Spread his faith and his will until Faerun is free of evil doers!

Cult of Zariel

Zariel smiles upon you; you have shown your dedication to her cult. The Cult’s influence must spread beyond Mafisto Manor. The Cult is building a new headquarters in the Moonsea region; you will receive a permanent room and food there. Go forth and recruit souls in the name of Zariel, she needs more warriors to end the eternal Blood War.

Appendix 6: Story Award - Chosen One (Player Handout 2)

Chosen One

Characters who sided with Chaos receive this story award when they complete this adventure.

Something beckons you...you never feel alone even when you physically are...something or someone is watching, forever waiting. You have become a chosen one!

Note from the Author

I hope no one actually earns this story award...if a character becomes a Chosen One...may the gods show mercy on their soul.

Appendix 7: NPC Background Handouts (Player Handout 3)

NPC Handouts for Players

These handouts serve as a tool for the DM to enhance gameplay immersion at their table. DM's don't have to keep telling players who the NPC's are or what they look like. Enjoy!




TIEFLING
LAWFUL EVIL

Mordakai Mafisto

MORDAKAI IS A VETERAN OF THE BLOOD WAR AND SUFFERS FROM POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER.

THE ONLY THING THAT CHEERS HIM UP IS DRAGONCHESS, A GAME HE GREW TO LOVE DURING HIS TIME ON THE FRONT LINES OF THE BLOOD WAR.




GNOME
LAWFUL EVIL

Nurfenpurf

LARGE WARTS, BLISTERS, MOLES, AND GROWTHS COVER HIS HIDEOUS FACE.

HE MUTTERS TO HIMSELF CONSTANTLY.

NURFENPURF IS A GNOME CULTIST WHO WORSHIPS THE ARCHDEVIL ZARIEL AND SERVES AS A STEWARD FOR THE MAFISTO TWINS.




TIEFLING
LAWFUL EVIL

Orianna Mafisto

ORIANNA IS SPUNKY, PLAYFUL, AND SEDUCTIVE.

SHE ENJOYS CORRUPTING MORTALS WITH PLEASURES OF THE FLESH AND THEIR DARKEST DESIRES, ALL IN THE NAME OF FUN!

HER BLACK HAIR IS WORN UP IN PIGTAILS, AND SHE ADORNES HER FACE AND HORNS WITH ELABORATE SILVER JEWELRY ENCRUSTED WITH BLOOD RED SAPPHIRES.




HALF-ORC
LAWFUL GOOD

Ser Gertz

SER GERTZ IS A YOUNG FEMALE HALF-ORC PRIEST IN THE KNIGHTS OF HOLY JUDGMENT.

SHE HAS LONG, DREADLOCKED HAIR, AND IS KNOWN TO SPEAK BLUNTLY AND ACT ASSERTIVELY AROUND OTHERS.

SHE IS CALM AND THOUGHTFUL IN EVERYTHING SHE DOES.




HUMAN
LAWFUL GOOD

Ser Titus

SER TITUS IS A HANDSOME, MUSCULAR KNIGHT OF HOLY JUDGMENT WHO SEEKS TO UNCOVER THE MYSTERY BEHIND SER VINDICTUS' DISAPPEARANCE OVER A CENTURY AGO.

SER TITUS IS RUTHLESS WITH ENACTING JUSTICE AND WILL NOT HESITATE TO BRING THE FULL FORCE OF TYR DOWN UPON EVILDOERS!

HE EMBODIES CONFIDENCE, LEADERSHIP, AND BRAVERY, SO IT IS ONLY NATURAL THAT WHEN HE TALKS, HE SHOUTS!




HUMAN
LAWFUL GOOD

Ser Vindictus

COURAGEOUS, FEARLESS, AND CHARISMATIC, SER VINDICTUS IS A LEGENDARY COMMANDER OF THE KNIGHTS OF HOLY JUDGEMENT.

SHE IS AN ANGEL OF TYR, A DEVA, WHO EXECUTES TYR'S JUSTICE THROUGHOUT FRERUN.

WOE UNTO THE UNJUST WHO BEAR WITNESS TO HER RIGHTEOUS WRATH!




DEMON
CHAOTIC EVIL

The Heir of Orcus

THIS MERCILESS, MALEVOLENT CAMBION IS THE DAUGHTER OF ORCUS AND THE EMBODIMENT OF BETRAYAL AND DECEIT.

SHE MURDERED HER OWN MOTHER, A PRIESTESS OF TYR, DURING CHILDBIRTH.

HER TRUE NAME IS UNKNOWN EXCEPT FOR IN THE PAGES OF A TOME HIDDEN DEEP WITHIN THE ABYSS.

Appendix 8: Magic Items

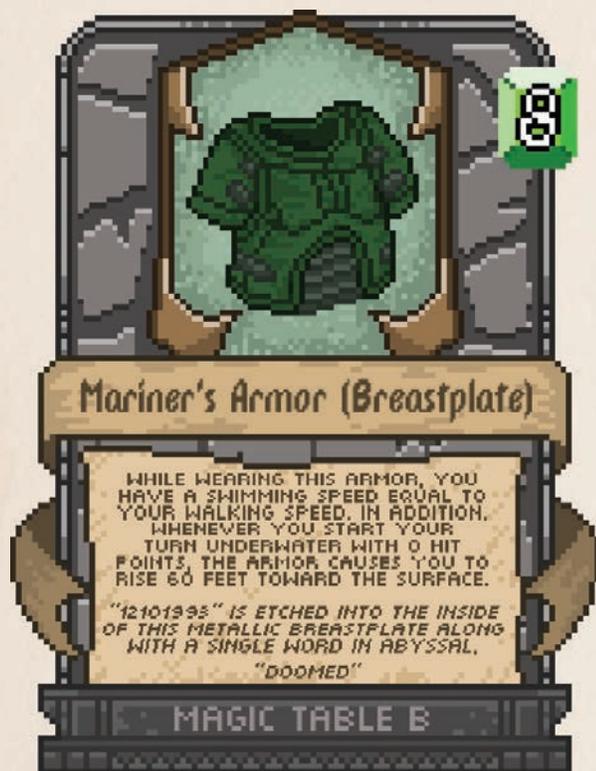
Characters completing this adventure's main objectives unlock these magic items.

Mariner's Armor (Breastplate)

Tier 1, 8 treasure checkpoints

While wearing this armor, you have a swimming speed equal to your walking speed. In addition, whenever you start your turn underwater with 0 hit points, the armor causes you to rise 60 feet toward the surface. The armor is decorated with fish and shell motifs. This item is found on **Magic Item Table B** in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

The number "12101993" is etched into the inside of this green metallic breastplate along with a single word in Abyssal: "Doomed".



Dread Helm

Tier 1, 2 treasure checkpoints

This fearsome steel helm makes your eyes glow red while you wear it. This item is found on **Minor Items, Common Table** in the *Xanathar's Guide to Everything*.

When you wear it, the glass visor displays your body and any damage you take. This helm is made of a strange material from another plane of existence. Whenever you strike a demon, the helm blares a heavy metal riff in your ears.



Appendix 9: Dungeon Master Tips

This adventure is designed for **three to seven 1st-4th level characters** and is optimized for **five characters with an average party level (APL) of 3**. Characters outside this level range cannot participate in this adventure.

New to D&D Adventurers League?

<http://dnd.wizards.com/playevents/organized-play>

New to Being the Dungeon Master?

<http://dndadventurersleague.org/start-here/dungeon-masters/>

To DM an adventure, you **must** have 3 to 7 players—each with their own character whose level is within the adventure’s level range. Characters playing in a **hardcover** adventure may continue to play to but if they play a different hardcover adventure, they **can’t return** to the first one if they’re outside its level range.

Preparing the Adventure

Before you start play, consider the following:

- Read through the adventure, taking notes of anything you’d like to highlight or remind yourself of while running the adventure, such as a way you’d like to portray an NPC or a tactic you’d like to use in a combat. Familiar yourself with the adventure’s appendices and handouts.
- Gather any resources you’d like to use to aid you in running this adventure—such as notecards, a DM screen, miniatures, and battlemaps.
- Ask the players to provide you with relevant character information, such as name, race, class, and level; passive Wisdom (Perception), and anything specified as notable by the adventure (such as backgrounds, traits, flaws, etc.)

Players can play an adventure they previously played as a Player or Dungeon Master, but may only play it once with a given character. Ensure each player has their character’s adventure logsheet (if not, get one from the organizer). The players fill out the adventure name, session number, date, and your name and DCI number. In addition, the player also fills in the starting values for advancement and treasure checkpoints, downtime days, and renown. These values are updated at the conclusion of the session.

Each player is responsible for maintaining an accurate logsheet. If you have time, you can do a quick scan of a player’s character sheet to ensure that nothing looks out of order. If you see magic items of very high rarities or strange arrays of ability scores, you can ask players to provide documentation for the irregularities. If they cannot, feel free to restrict item use or ask them to use a standard ability score array.

Point players to the D&D Adventurers League Players Guide for reference. If players wish to spend downtime days and it’s the beginning of an adventure or episode, they can declare their activity and spend the days now, or they can do so at the end of the adventure or episode. Players should select their characters’ spells and other daily options prior to the start of the adventure, unless the adventure specifies otherwise. Feel free to reread the adventure description to help give players hints about what they might face.

Adjusting This Adventure

When combat is a possibility, this adventure provides sidebars for each possible encounter that helps you to determine how to create an appropriate challenge. While you’re not bound to these adjustments; they’re here for your convenience and consideration.

To determine whether you should consider adjusting the adventure, add up the total levels of all the characters and divide the result by the number of characters (rounding .5 or greater up; .4 or less down). This is the group’s average party level (APL). To approximate the **party strength** for the adventure, consult the table below.

Determining Party Strength

Party Composition	Party Strength
3-4 characters, APL less than	Very weak
3-4 characters, APL equivalent	Weak
3-4 characters, APL greater than	Average
5 characters, APL less than	Weak
5 characters, APL equivalent	Average
5 characters, APL greater than	Strong
6-7 characters, APL less than	Average
6-7 characters, APL equivalent	Strong
6-7 characters, APL greater than	Very strong



**YOU DON'T PLAY THIS MODULE!
THIS MODULE PLAYS YOU!**

A Two to Four Hour Adventure for Characters Levels 5-10. By: Anthony Joyce

SNEAK PEEK EDITION!



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Episode 1. The Tumultuous Road to Duerradin (Call to Action)

Estimated Duration. 45 minutes

In this Episode, the characters decide to work with or against each side as they travel to Duerradin in search of the Cult of the Heir.

Scene A. The Trial of Nurfenpurf

The characters begin this adventure on a road in the **FOOTHILLS** of the Dragonspine Mountains heading to the duergar outpost of Duerradin. Poor Nurfenpurf was setting up camp for the Cult of Zariel when the Knights of Holy Judgment spotted and apprehended him. Nurfenpurf is now **restrained** with his head on a boulder as The Inquisitor raises his sword to execute him. The Cult of Zariel and all characters have walked up to the scene and are witnessing Nurfenpurf's imminent execution. The "I am the Law!" event (see below) immediately begins!

Area Information

The area has the following features:

Terrain & Dimensions. These rolling foothills stand before the majestic peaks of the Dragonspine Mountains.

Lighting. Clear blue skies and a sunny bright light fills the heavens.

Smells and Sounds. Crisp cold fresh air carries the sweet scent of morning dew. Gentle winds whisper carelessly down from the mountaintops.

Creatures/NPCs

Knights of Holy Judgment. The Inquisitor (LG male **planetary**), Ser Titus (LG male **knight**), and Ser Gertz (LG female **priest**).

Objectives/Goals. The Knights of Holy Judgment want to find and disrupt the Cult of the Heir's activities. The Inquisitor wants to pass judgment on Nurfenpurf for his crimes.

Cult of Zariel. Vindictus (LE female **erinyes**), Mordakai (LE male **incubus** in the form of a male tiefling), Orianna (LE female **succubus** in the form of a female tiefling), and Nurfenpurf (LE male **cultist**).

Objectives/Goals. The Cult of Zariel wants to find and disrupt the Cult of the Heir's activities. The Cult see's value in using the Knights of Holy Judgment and Chaos as a means to achieve their ends.

What does each side know?

Event: "I am the Law!"

In this event, the characters should attempt to convince The Inquisitor to free Nurfenpurf. Characters do so by making six skill check successes before making three skill check failures (a Skill Challenge). If characters do not intervene at all, The Inquisitor executes Nurfenpurf.

Running this event. Characters make skill checks in an attempt to convince The Inquisitor to free Nurfenpurf. This event can occur in or out of initiative order and DMs apply advantage/disadvantage as they see fits the situation.

Complexity. Medium (six successes before three failures).

Skills. Characters use any skills available to them so long as the use of these skills makes narrative sense. DMs are empowered to adjudicate skill usage as they see fits the situation.

Difficulty. The DC for each check starts at DC 15.

Successes. After three total successes, the DC for each skill check decreases by 5.

Failures. Each failure results in The Inquisitor acting according to the "I am the Law!" Failure Results below. After the first failure, the DC for each subsequent check increases to DC 20.

"I am the Law!" Failure Results

Number of Failures

1st	The Inquisitor finds Nurfenpurf guilty of devil worship. The Inquisitor will use his sword to carve Nurfenpurf's face, forever labeling him as a devil worshiper.
2nd	The Inquisitor finds Nurfenpurf guilty of deception and cuts out Nurfenpurf's deceitful tongue.
3rd	The Inquisitor finds Nurfenpurf guilty of murdering a Knight of Holy Judgment. The Inquisitor announces his final verdict for all to hear and immediately attempts to behead Nurfenpurf.

Development:

Success. If the characters succeed on six skill checks before three failures, The Inquisitor releases Nurfenpurf, but only after accounting for any failures listed in the "I am the Law!" Failure Results chart.

Failure. If the characters fail three skill checks before six successes, they fail. The Inquisitor immediately attacks Nurfenpurf in an attempt to behead him. If characters allow The Inquisitor to execute Nurfenpurf without intervening, he proclaims Tyr's justice has been served and then continues on his journey seeking out the Cult of the Heir.

All outcomes. After the trial and any conflict is resolved, the characters continue on their journey to Duerradin. If Nurfenpurf is alive he offers to accompany the characters. All other NPCs search the Dragonspine Mountain region for the Cult of the Heir.

Encounter Adjustments

- **Very Weak:** The Inquisitor starts with 128 hit points and Vindictus starts with 90 hit points
- **Weak:** The Inquisitor starts with 164 hit points and Vindictus starts with 121 hit points
- **Strong:** The Inquisitor starts with 236 hit points and Vindictus starts with 184 hit points
- **Very Strong:** The Inquisitor starts with 272 hit points and Vindictus starts with 216 hit points

Treasure:

The following item is present:

- Nurfenpurf carries an exquisite "double stuffed bacon, potato, and omelet stew" recipe in his pocket.

Call to Action

The objective of this adventure is for characters to:

Playing Nice

If the characters remain antagonistic towards each other after the trial, the DM is empowered to reference the below motivations for each side to work together. These motivations exist to facilitate play at tables with characters belonging to different sides. If characters all belong to one side exclusively, they are free to work with or against any side of their choice. It is important to remember, the will of deities, archdevils, and unknowable forces are beyond the comprehension of mere mortals!

Knights of Holy Judgment: If The Inquisitor kills characters, he will resurrect them and consider their death as payment for their crimes. Additionally, The Inquisitor may commune with Tyr himself. The DM is empowered to roleplay Tyr's commands to work with the characters; The Inquisitor has no choice but to obey.

Cult of Zariel: Zariel is concerned with the growing influence of the Heir of Orcus. Defending against the endless onslaught of demons in the Blood War is all Zariel cares about for the moment. The Archdevil views all those opposed to the Heir of Orcus as expendable means to an end. She has instructed Vindictus to work with whomever she can to put an end to the Heir of Orcus and her cult.

Chaos: The unknowable forces of Chaos emit impulses/urges to the characters. There is something about working with other sides that pleases these impulses/urges ... for now.

Playing the Pillars

COMBAT

If the characters initiate combat, NPCs aligned with their side will fight alongside them.

EXPLORATION

Characters make a DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) or Intelligence (Nature) check to escape into the mountainous region. On a success, they escape. NPCs do not chase fleeing characters.

SOCIAL

The Inquisitor sees through any illusion and instantly detects lies. Charisma (Deception) checks made against The Inquisitor result in automatic failures during the "I am the Law!" event.

Scene B. Onward to Duerradin

The characters continue to Duerradin unaccompanied by any NPCs except Nurfenpurf (if he is alive and the characters accepted his offer to join them). The travel to Duerradin utilizes the "Travel-Montage Approach" as described in Chapter 5 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. The characters choose from three different montage travel scenes as they make their way towards Duerradin. There is no requirement for combat due to the low-level threats of enemies that might be present along the way to Duerradin. DMs are encouraged to award inspiration for excellent montage descriptions. All roads are equal distance/time from Duerradin.

Option 1 - The High Road to Duerradin:

The High Road to Duerradin goes through the mountains and then down into the Underdark, ending at the north gate of Duerradin. The following events occur on their travel:

- High in the mountains characters spot the silhouette of a large dragon roaring in the distance. It vanishes into the thick clouds after only a moment.
- A pack of white wolves chases a mountain goat. The goat rams two white wolves off the mountainside which plummet to their death. The wolves eventually bring down the goat, but not before it impales one last wolf with its horns.
- Near the end of the High Road, there is an elderly man looking for his lost goat. He claims the spirit of his former spouse possessed the goat and ran away from his home in the mountains.

Option 2 - The Low Road to Duerradin:

The Low Road to Duerradin goes through the foothills of the Dragonspine Mountains and then down into the Underdark, ending at the west gate of Duerradin. The following events occur on their travel:

- A group of half-orc thugs demands the characters pay a toll of 5gp to pass unharmed. If a combat montage occurs and any thugs are killed, the characters find a journal on one of the thugs. The journal reveals that the thug has been saving up money for his sick child and he turned to crime in desperation.
- A troll covered in abnormal growths eats a horse in a bog off the side of the road. The troll appears happy as it hums a silly melody.
- A small half-orc boy in a strange wheelchair contraption approaches the characters. He says he is looking for his father and needs money for medical expenses.

Option 3 - The Dark Road to Duerradin:

The Dark Road to Duerradin goes through the Underdark ending at the south gate of Duerradin. The following events occur on their travel:

- A male deep gnome named Jimjar approaches the characters and asks if any of them have ever been to Velkynvelve. He tells them what a terrible place it is and that he is trying to avoid heading in that direction. He offers to make bets with the characters but he has no gold so he only bets with rocks instead.
- The Underdark opens up into an enormous cavern with luminescent crystals and fungi illuminating a group of drow chasing after a group of humanoids as they race through the Underdark. In an instant, they vanish into the darkness.
- A female drow in dark clothing appears out of darkness, she appears exhausted. She asks the party if they have seen a small male deep gnome along the road, she has a bounty for him and wants to take him to Velkynvelve.

Development: Arriving at Duerradin

The characters arrive at Duerradin after the travel-montage concludes. Upon arrival, the darkness of the Underdark is shattered by beams of neon lights as the characters cross the psionic barrier that has hidden Duerradin for centuries. From the distance, the characters spot bright glowing lights dancing in harmonious synchronization about a massive awe-inspiring duergar spire in the middle of the outpost. A careful glance reveals the lights are actual small mechanical devices (powered by psionic energy). Large walls protect the outpost from enemy incursions. The gates of Duerradin open as the characters approach. These gates also function as psionic powered scanners which scan anyone entering, thus recording their entry into Duerradin. Episode 2 begins once the characters enter the gates of Duerradin.

The Heir of Orcus Verse I & II

Warning: playing these modules are known to result in epic game nights and hospitalization due to excessive fun!



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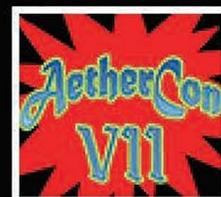
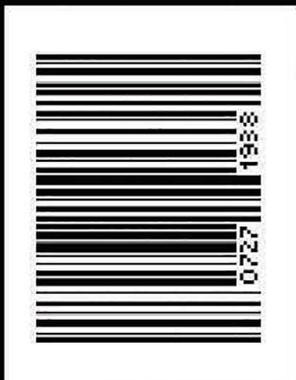
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– Eaten Humanoid Carcass #67



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