

FORGOTTEN REALMS[™]The
Jawning
Portal

Compatible with
the AD&D[®] and
the AD&D[®]
2nd Edition
Game Systems.

WATERDEEP

by Ed Greenwood

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MAGICAL CHAOS TABLE

Employ this table whenever magic or natural powers akin to magic are used at any point in this adventure. The spells of Midnight, avatars, and Elminster are affected least by Magical Chaos. They roll on this table normally. All other beings roll with a penalty of -20% (since the Fall, chaos has been increasing throughout the Realms, so magic is less reliable than it was in the earlier modules in this series).

Within the city of Waterdeep, decrease the penalty to 10%, and allow Midnight, avatars, Khelben, and Elminster a +10% bonus. This is due to the many powerful defensive magics cast on the city, which lessen magical chaos.

The DM should further modify percentile dice rolls as follows: +1 for every experience level of the spell-caster (magic items are considered 6th level, artifacts are 12th level); +12 if the spell or effect contributes to chaos or drastic change of a given locale (e.g. *fireball* or *polymorph* spells); and +4 if the spell is small and simple, such as a 1st or 2nd level spell or a cantrip (items and artifacts cannot receive this bonus). When the modified score is determined, consult the table below. The DM should not feel bound by the results of this table, and should indeed decide on a case-by-case basis whether spells function or not, to best suit play as it unfolds (but don't reveal this to the players).

Percentile Score	Result
01-19	Spell rebounds on caster, with full effects (if impossible due to nature of spell, reroll).
20-23	Pit opens instantly beneath the caster (depth varies at DM's option); there is no other spell effect.
24-27	Target of spell (or caster, if spell has no target) is instantly pelted with fiery red flower blossoms that materialize and vanish again 1 round later. Blossoms do no damage, but prohibit accurate aiming of wands or missile weapons, and prevent reading of books, scrolls, inscriptions, and the like.
28-31	Spell affects random creature or area (DM's option) rather than the intended target area.
32-35	Spell functions normally, but any material components are not consumed, and spell knowledge is retained by the caster or the charge is retained by the item.
36-39	Spell functions normally, but magical energy is released around the caster, <i>healing</i> any injuries of any beings within 10 yards of the caster (includes <i>fatigue</i> , <i>feeblemindedness</i> , etc.).
40-43	Total darkness and <i>silence</i> occur in a 30-yard radius about the caster, and last 2-8 rounds.
44-47	Reverse <i>gravity</i> (cf. spell) effect occurs in a 30-yard radius sphere about the caster, lasting 1 round; caster included in the effect.
48-51	<i>Shimmering colors</i> dance and play in a nimbus around the caster, blinding caster and all creatures within 20 yards for 1-4 rounds.
52-59	Nothing happens; no spell effect occurs.
60-71	Nothing occurs; no spell effect, but spell knowledge or charge is not lost.
72-98	Spell functions normally.
99-00+	Spell functions with maximum possible effects, full damage, maximum duration.

Special Effects SubTable

With any result on the above table, the DM can add to play excitement by adding one or more of the following "special effects" (roll 1d12):

- 01: Earth tremor underfoot (minor, with rolling echoes).
- 02: Sun dims and then brightens again or a star falls.
- 03: Violent roaring or screaming sound.
- 04: Intense wave of heat (no damage) felt in the vicinity.
- 05: Non-harmful, oily green slime forms on everything within 120 yards.
- 06: Maniacal, echoing laughter is heard. Flowers fall from the sky.
- 07: Old, brittle bones (3d20) rain down for 2 rounds, in a 60-yard radius.
- 08: Caster and everything within 60 yards lose all hair; plants grow hair.
- 09: Harmless yellow-green and purple smoke rises from the ground.
- 10: Boulders rise, swirling in midair like leaves (2d12 impact damage).
- 11: Nearby tree is uprooted (indoors, rock or furniture moves by itself).
- 12: Whispering voice is heard, murmuring a random character's name—and—a prediction about that character's future (the DM can make it as specific as he wants; given the PCs' circumstances, portents of danger and doom would probably not be too far off...).

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FORGOTTEN REALMS

Waterdeep

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PROLOGUE

Ye'll hear tales tonight, aye, and other nights besides, until ye know them well. And all of them tell of folk getting hurt, and enduring hardship and suffering, and spilling blood, too much of it their own. And ye'll laugh and enjoy it and think it grand—as ye can be sure they did not, during its unfolding. "High adventure," 'tis called; more's the joke.

—From an address given by
Elminster the Sage
at GENCON 20; Milwaukee,
1987

Notes for The Dungeon Master

Waterdeep is the last in a trilogy of modules that describe the Time of Troubles, called by some "the Godswar," in the Forgotten Realms.

These modules loosely parallel the action described in the Avatar trilogy of novels by Richard Awlinton, published by TSR, Inc. Neither you nor your players need to read the novels before playing this adventure, nor is the action herein identical to that of the novels. Players should use their own characters, though several non-player characters (NPCs) will prove valuable if not necessary.

This module is *not* a guidebook to the city of Waterdeep itself. For this information, consult sourcebook FR1, *Waterdeep and the North*, and the boxed *City System* accessory set.

The Time of Troubles

The gods of the Forgotten Realms have fallen. Now vastly reduced in power, they walk the earth as "avatars," mortal incarnations of their godly forms. Avatars are markedly weaker than the deities they represent, but still far outstrip PC adventurers in power. However, an avatar can be killed, and this can mean true death for the god.

Because the gods no longer maintain order in this dimension, chaos has overwhelmed the land. During the Time of Troubles, magic spells and magical items work abnormally or not at all. Because deities are disregarding their usual responsibilities, priest characters cannot gain or regain any spells of 3rd level or higher. And as if this magical upheaval wasn't bad

enough, the land itself is in chaos; unnatural effects may occur at any time.

Unless the gods soon regain their places, the Forgotten Realms must perish.

Lord Ao

The gods are victims of an enigmatic being who calls himself Ao, the overlord of the gods who is also known as "The One Who Is Hidden." Ao's power exceeds that of the gods by as much as theirs exceeds humanity's.

Ao grew angry at the gods' petty behavior, and finally had all he could stand when two of the deities, Bane and Myrkul, made off with the Tablets of Fate—two artifacts that Ao had specially crafted. By casting the gods down into the Realms as avatars, Ao is teaching them humility . . . and also testing them. Ao has commanded the gods to seek the Tablets of Fate. Only when one entity possesses both tablets and returns them to Ao can the gods ascend again. Until then, the way back to the celestial realm is blocked by the guardian god Helm, the only one of their number who was not cast down.

Midnight

Among the gods cast down was Mystra, Goddess of Magic. Always a wise and kind deity, Mystra has of late grown tired of her fellow gods' endless scheming. She wishes for dissolution, and so she has located a suitable successor.

This candidate is a young woman named Ariel Manx, otherwise known as "Midnight." Midnight has some inkling of the fate awaiting her, as do her friends and allies. She has shown amazing magical powers, and she is less prone to the effects of magical chaos than other wizards. Everyone realizes now that she is important.

That, unfortunately, includes the evil avatars Bane, Myrkul, and Bhaal. These gods have hunted her ceaselessly as the trail to the tablets grows warmer. Midnight has faced danger bravely, and so far she has survived. In fact, she grows great in magical power, and by the time this adventure opens, she has played a major part in bringing about the death of Bane's avatar.

But Midnight needs a lot of protection against the dangers ahead. That mission falls to the player characters.

Allies

In the Avatar Trilogy of novels, Midnight travels with three companions named Adon, Kelemvor, and Cyric. Adon is a good-hearted but rather prim 5th level priest of Sune Firehair. Kelemvor, a 5th level fighter, is a warrior who is prone to impulsive actions. In these adventures the PCs fulfill their roles as guardians. Nevertheless, Adon and Kelemvor can accompany the party as NPCs.

Cyric, a fighter and former thief, began as Midnight's ally and guard. However, in the course of the story he has grown corrupt and turned to evil. Midnight has so far refused to believe that he has changed. However, in the adventure that follows, Cyric becomes the PCs' chief antagonist and rival for the tablets. At last even Midnight recognizes his evil. Cyric's fate is detailed at the climax of the adventure.

Descriptions of all three companions, along with Midnight, appear in an appendix at the end of this booklet.

Several other allies help the PCs on their quest. Most significant of these is the sage Elminster, a legendary figure in the Forgotten Realms. Though immensely powerful, Elminster can render only spotty aid to the party, for he is preoccupied with fighting chaos elsewhere in the Realms. Many cities owe their survival to Elminster's courage. However, from the PCs' point of view, the sage serves primarily as a source of clues and information.

For more about Elminster, consult FR7, *Hall of Heroes*.

Running The Adventure

In this adventure, Midnight *must* accompany the party of player characters (PCs); the NPC Cyric must also appear as a sometime ally, sometime foe of the party; and both of these characters must survive to the end of the adventure.

Other NPCs are optional as party members, but in any case the PCs should have some allies. The challenges they face in this adventure are deadly. With both healing and attack magic unreliable, they need all the help they can find.

Do not hesitate to provide NPC party reinforcements from among the "background" characters included herein, or from another source. The good DM will aim to entertain his players while pushing

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them to the utmost limits of their playing skill—not to slaughter their characters out of hand. Allowing the party to occasionally escape from encounters may help their survival, too!

How The Adventure is Laid Out

This module is divided into chapters. Each chapter contains events keyed to a given time or part of the adventure; these occur regardless of what the PCs do. Some chapters also suggest encounters, which are keyed to a particular location; if the PCs enter that location, the encounter takes place.

A few sections are labeled “Offstage Events” – information, meant for the DM’s eyes only, that explains more of the “big picture” about what is happening in the Realms.

Any text that appears in a box is intended to be read aloud to the players, or given directly to them in summary form. The remaining information is for the DM, and most of the time should only be revealed in response to PC actions.

Read the module through carefully before play begins, and note what encounters need preparation beforehand. Tailor the adventure to your players and your campaign.

The Setting

This adventure is set in the continent of Faerun, in the Forgotten Realms. Its action spans Cormyr, Tunland, the Sunset Mountains, the High Moor country, and the city of Waterdeep itself. These areas are described in detail in the boxed FORGOTTEN REALMS™ Campaign Set; supplement FR1, *Waterdeep and the North*; and the boxed *City System* set. Consult these sources to add depth to this adventure, and to include other adventures along the way.

DMs who place this adventure in other settings can modify the gods, settings, and perhaps the rulers and other powerful beings to suit their own world. Much of the action described in these pages should be easily adaptable to another campaign.

Priests and Turning

The increasing chaos of the Time of Troubles, coupled with the lessened power of the gods and their preoccupation with personal troubles, has rapidly weakened the power of priestly turning attempts.

Unless a priest is within two miles of the current physical location of his deity’s avatar, no undead-turning attempt will be successful. (If the priest is within two miles of his god, normal chances apply.) This state of affairs lasts until the morning after the last day described in this adventure.

A Note About AD&D™ 2nd Edition

This adventure is written for the AD&D™ 2nd Edition game rules. Terms and references new to AD&D 2nd Edition should be self-explanatory to DMs who are not familiar with this new edition. Some noticeable differences are changes in name only. The term “magic-user” has been replaced by “wizard” and “mage.” The “cleric” character class is now the “priest” class, although members of that class are still often referred to as “clerics.”

The new edition of the game specifically describes benefits of extraordinary ability scores. Much of that information is summarized here in the appendix on avatars of the gods.

Another noticeable change involves the presentation of monsters. The new monsters in this adventure are presented in a format used in the new *Monstrous Compendium* series. Again, the changes are not significant enough to cause any problems for DMs and players who are continuing to use the original rules.

Ability Checks: From time to time the adventure calls for a character to make an ability check. Roll 1d20 and compare the result with the character’s appropriate ability score (Intelligence, for example). Players may roll their own ability checks, although it is usually better for the DM to ask for the roll without identifying the particular ability being checked.

If the roll is equal to or less than the character’s ability score, the action succeeds. If the roll is greater than the ability score, the action fails.

Grabbing: In this story the PCs carry a valuable item, one of the Tablets of Fate. Many evil beings will stop at nothing to get this tablet. At points, in fact, the story requires them to get it. But since that would usually result in the death of PCs guarding it, the DM should use an alternative rule that gives villains the tablet but still keeps PCs alive.

Use the “overbearing” rules offered in the AD&D 2nd Edition *Player’s Handbook* (page 98). The enemy tries to pull down and pin a character holding a tablet. If successful, the enemy has gotten the tablet without injuring the character.

For New Players

If *Waterdeep* is being played alone, independent of the rest of the modules in this series, use this section to bring the PCs into the story. If they have already played the previous adventures, skip to the next section.

Terrible times have befallen the Realms. During their past adventures, the PCs have seen bizarre weather, felt frequent earthquakes, and noticed omens in the trees and sky. (Improvise suitably weird phenomena here.) Wizards can no longer control their spells. At times their magic does not work; at other times it works too well, with disastrous effects.

Describe to the players the situation outlined in the above section entitled “The Time of Troubles,” presenting it in the form of rumors or news from distant lands. Stress the turbulence and danger of the times, and make it clear that the Forgotten Realms themselves are in jeopardy.

For the PCs, the breaking point came when they stopped at a tavern outside Marsember, in the land of Cormyr. During a heavy storm, the entire tavern floated into the air! It hovered 40 feet off the ground for perhaps half a minute, then settled back to its foundations. No one was hurt, but the PCs decided to take refuge in the nearby forest of Hermit’s Wood.

While searching for a campsite, they stumbled on the unconscious body of Midnight, along with other (also unconscious) NPCs that the DM wishes to include in the adventure.

Rousing the victims, the PCs learned of Midnight’s quest for the Tablets of Fate. She has already gained one (at the end of the previous module in this series, *Tan-*

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tras). She believes the other is in Waterdeep, far to the north. But en route, she and her party were attacked while she slept. Many died, and she (along with the other surviving NPCs) barely escaped. Now she needs the PCs' help to guard her and the tablet on the way to Waterdeep.

The party camps in Hermit's Wood. After they learn more about Midnight, her adventures, her quest, and its goal, turn to Chapter 1 to begin the adventure.

Myrkul's Plan

In *Waterdeep* the PCs seek the second Tablet of Fate, and fight Cyric's attempts to steal the one they already have. In addition, they fight the forces of Bhaal (God of Murder) and Myrkul (Lord of the Dead). These two avatars seek the party's tablet as well . . . or so the adventurers think.

Actually, the two evil gods are using Midnight and the PCs in a subtle scheme. True, they want the tablets. But even more, they plot to gain the power to overthrow Lord Ao himself!

Myrkul already possesses one of the tablets. He stole it himself and now holds it in his home dimension of Hades. However, since he has been thrown down to the Realms as an avatar, he cannot go back to Hades. And as an avatar, he cannot draw on the power of all the souls trapped there. So Myrkul wants to bring those souls here, where they can increase his power. How?

Humans can still travel the Planes, though the gods cannot. Myrkul, aided by Bhaal, plans to lure Midnight to Hades,

have her steal the tablet there, and bring it back to the Realms. Through many subtle spells that Myrkul wove into that tablet, its theft lets all the denizens of Hades follow it across the dimensions. Unwittingly, Midnight will fetch not only the tablet, but the souls that will strengthen Myrkul's avatar enormously.

Then, aided by Bhaal, Myrkul will take both tablets from Midnight, ascend the Celestial Stairway atop Mount Waterdeep, and overthrow Lord Ao.

To fool Midnight into visiting Hades, Myrkul pretends he doesn't want her to go there—reverse psychology! He sends undead minions to (fail to) seize Midnight's tablet. And he sends Bhaal to kidnap Midnight.

The PCs think Bhaal wants Midnight so he can gain the tablet. Actually, this is a ruse. Bhaal "accidentally" tells Midnight the location of a gate to Hades, and "lets slip" that Myrkul's tablet is there. Then he allows Midnight to escape, knowing she will head straight for the gate. And the rest of Myrkul's plan proceeds from there—if all goes well for him.

From Tantras To Here

This section briefly describes the events linking this module with its predecessor, *FRE2, Tantras*. Use this section if this adventure is played as part of its trilogy.

At the end of *Tantras*, the party hired a ship to take them down the Dragon Reach and across the Sea of Fallen Stars to Ilipur,

on the Lake of Dragons. There they intended to join a caravan for the overland journey to Waterdeep.

The ship set sail through capricious seas, passing lots of floating wreckage on the Reach. Running west through the Neck, the ship's lookouts several times saw a galley with the black-and-red sails of Zhentil Keep far behind, following them. Midnight believed it to be Cyric's ship.

In the Lake of Dragons a fierce squall, with howling winds and dangerous waterspouts, arose from a calm sea to drive the adventurers' ship north toward the port of Marsember.

The harried captain, fearing for his life and openly suspecting hostile magic of causing the storm, wanted to be rid of the band of heroes. He battled the wild waves to turn back east, whereupon the storm slackened immediately. This increased his certainty that magic was involved.

The party was put ashore in Cormyr, on the wrong side of the lake from Ilipur. They came in by open boat amid the dangerous rocks and sand shoals near the mouth of the Wyvernflow (the lower Immerflow), south of Wheloon, within patrol distance of Marsember. Horses and heavy gear could not be landed; as it was, it took everyone's strength poling the boat to hold it off the rocks amid the surging waves.

The PCs and Midnight gathered wearily on the beach. The first order of business was to get supplies, which were readily available in well-to-do Cormyr. They wouldn't face attack from the locals if they kept quiet and moved quickly, but they dared not visit the nearby city of Suzail or make more of a public appearance than they had to. Cormyreans are suspicious of travelers right now, given Zhentilar activities, the general unrest of nature and magic, and the schemes of avatars and worshipers alike.

The party, facing evening and exhaustion, and wishing to avoid undue attention, camped in a wooded hollow near the edge of Hermit's Wood. Chapter 1 of this adventure begins in the middle of the night, in that encampment.

Chapter 1: Cold Welcome in Cormyr

This chapter begins on the evening of the day the adventurers land in Cormyr. If this adventure continues from FRE2, *Tantras*, the heroes are footsore and thoroughly weary after facing the storm's full fury.

Without supplies, the party cannot reach Waterdeep. Nearby supply towns include Marsember, to the west, and Wheloon, to the north. Beyond Marsember lies Cormyr's royal capital, Suzail, where Midnight hopes to charter a ship to Ilipur. First, though, it's time to camp for the night.

The party finds a wooded hollow at the edge of Hermit's Wood, well east of Marsember, where they can hide from brigands, Zhentilar agents, and Cormyrean patrols alike. (If Adon is along as an NPC, he remembers the name of the forest from his temple teachings. The long-dead hermit for whom the wood is named was a devotee of Sune Firehair, Adon's deity.)

The party settles down to sleep.

OFFSTAGE EVENT

Two rival factions seek the party.

Unknown to Midnight or the PCs, the NPC Cyric is trying to prevent the party from reaching Marsember or Suzail. To this end he has enlisted the evil Zhentilar; he also plays informant to the standing army of Cormyr, the Purple Dragons, telling them that one or more of the PCs are fugitive criminals.

Cyric has learned that servants of the deceased god Bane are swarming across the south, seeking revenge on the woman who "caused" Bane's death: Midnight. Cyric does not want the party (and the Tablet of Fate in the group's possession) to fall into anyone else's hands but his own. Therefore he intends to drive the adventurers northward to Wheloon, then to the small village of Eveningstar.

Unfortunately for both Cyric and the PCs, Myrkul has also located the adventurers. In Event 1, agents of the God of the Dead try to kidnap Midnight.

Event 1: Happening in Hermit's Wood

In the third watch of the night, a few hours before morning, have the character(s) on watch (if any) make an Intelligence check.

If the check succeeds, the watchman sees much vigorous movement in the darkness beyond the firelight, but does not hear anything; the character can raise the alarm. If the check fails, the character sees nothing, and the attack that follows comes completely by surprise.

Myrkul has animated 13 night riders (a special, intelligent sort of zombie) to attack the encamped PCs by night. They and their undead mounts, called gaunts, are fully described in the New Monsters appendix at the end of this adventure.

Their orders are to kidnap Midnight and any other human females in the party (to avoid cases of mistaken identity) and locate a stone tablet to be found somewhere in the party's saddlebags. The night riders must then kill all the others and take the hostages and tablet to the Lord of the Dead.

(If the kidnapping attempt succeeds, Myrkul intends to connive so as to get Midnight to do his "dirty work" for him. He will "let slip" the whereabouts of the tablet he possesses and the location of the gate to his realm in Hades. Then the deity will allow Midnight to escape. At this early point in this adventure, Myrkul regards the PCs as expendable. Later he sees their importance in protecting Midnight, so he treats them less ruthlessly.)

Night Rider Tactics

In life, these riders were a Purple Dragon patrol, and accordingly wear chain mail with the Cormyrean insignia emblazoned on their surcoats. Their shields bounce unused at their saddles. Each is armed with a light horse lance (1d6 damage), long sword, mace, and dagger.

The undead are all mounted on gaunts: skeletal, bloated horses covered with blackened, twisted strips of rotting skin and flesh. These mounts have 12 hp each.

The mounted undead charge down into the wooded hollow where the PCs are sleeping. Two are in the lead, and six more ride fast behind them, spread out. A single rider follows slowly to tackle any escaping or especially powerful adventurer, and four of the undead remain farther back, in reserve.

The two lead night riders and the outermost two of the six that follow have 15 hp each and attack as 2nd level fighters. The others have 7 hp each and attack as 1st level fighters, except for the very last night rider.

In life, this last rider was Ogden the Hardrider, sergeant of the patrol. He has 24 hp and attacks as a 4th level fighter. He hangs back, committing his four-man reserve force to spoil any spellcasting. Then, if he can, he tries to snatch up Midnight across his saddle and ride back north toward Myrkul.

The night riders raid and harry, repeatedly turning their mounts to ride past PCs and strike, rather than staying to face the party in melee. The darkness and thickly clustered trees should make this a confused, disorganized fray.

Cyric Intervenes

Cyric, observing the battle from a distance, is too far from his Zhentilar to offer a great deal of help to the party against Myrkul's riders. But he does aid the adventurers with sniper fire.

Whenever a member of the party seems hard pressed by a night rider, an arrow comes out of the night to strike the monster. Note that night riders feel no pain, but can in a fight be distracted by unexpected attacks and sights, even as living beings are.

PCs do not see the mysterious archer; he slips away into the night at the end of the battle. PCs who pursue can identify the archer as Cyric, but they should not catch him.

Aftermath

The battle should end with the defeat of the undead. Magical chaos permitting, Midnight hurls a *fireball* to dispose of several of them. The spell sets the hollow aflame. Characters are in no immediate danger from the fire, but unless they put it out or flee, the light will attract Cormyrean patrols or further attacks.

If the PCs have had an easy time of the fight, provide additional challenges while the party is putting out the fire or stumbling through the darkened wood.

Event 2: Well Met in Wheloon

The rest of the night passes uneventfully. In the morning the party heads toward Wheloon. There they hope to rest, buy horses and supplies, and, if necessary, seek healing at the local shrines.

Should the party head toward Marsember, try to discourage them with numer-

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ous Zhentilar or Purple Dragon patrols. Dragon patrols are described in Event 3 of this chapter, the Zhentilar in Event 4. If you allow the party to bypass the patrols and reach Marsember, the following description of Wheloon can be adapted for use with the other city. No map of Marsember is provided; in a pinch, the map of Suzail in the FORGOTTEN REALMS™ Campaign Set can be used.

Travelers whom PCs meet on the road to Wheloon warn the characters to conceal their weapons as much as possible; citizens must have a charter, or license, to bear arms in Cormyr.

A hot day of walking follows, through rising, rolling farm country. Walls made of stone rubble and stumps separate many small fields. Deep, muddy lanes zig-zag everywhere, sometimes sheltered by hedges. When the travelers reach a fork or an intersection of two paths, they must proceed north or northwest to remain on the route toward Wheloon. Small, faded white symbols of wyverns painted on rocks at crossroads indicate the direction to Wheloon. Symbols in the shape of a crown show the way to Suzail; anchor symbols represent Marsember. The adventurers see more birds and cows than they do people.

Near sunset, the road rises, broadens, and enters the prosperous town of Wheloon. The buildings are stone; some have

stucco and timbered upper stories. The visitors see an occasional thatched roof, but most roofs are dark green slate shingles. Road-lamps glimmer here and there in the gathering dusk. Despite the late hour, characters hear clanging, chatter and the hubbub of work from many shops. Carts rumble through the muddy, patch-cobbled streets. This is a way-town of busy trade and skilled craftsmen.

The best-looking inn the party sees is the Wyvern Watch Inn, operated by Buldegas Mhaerkoon (F4, hp 42, Str 17, Dex 13, Con 17). He is ruddy-faced and overweight, with a cynical way of speaking but a kindly demeanor overall.

The inn is cozy and not overly busy. Buldegas charges a silver piece a head per day (all meals, drinks, and a bath included; a stable stall and horse care, two coppers extra). He readily agrees to hide the party away for a few days.

If he sees their weapons, the stout innkeeper adds, "You need not trouble about those." Amid the chaos that has gripped Cormyr, King Azoun has relaxed the prohibition against citizens carrying arms. Plain folk must defend themselves against increasingly numerous monsters and desperate brigands; the Purple Dragons cannot be everywhere at once.

In the taproom of the Wyvern Watch, or elsewhere in Wheloon, PCs may engage in, and overhear, conversation. Reveal ru-

mors from the the following table (roll d12 or simply select), or devise others that may lead to offshoot adventures.

Wheloon Rumor Table

1. All ships on the waves of the open Dragon Reach a tenday or so ago were sunk by the shock waves of a terrific explosion. Wreckage enough to make men rich has been washing up on Sembian beaches this last ride. The blast was heard as far west as Ordulin. Some say that it came from Tantras. (DM Note: The blast marked the death of the god Bane's avatar.)

2. A fleet set sail from Scardale over a tenday ago—a Zhentilar fleet led by a mysterious warrior named Cyric. It headed east to land troops north of Tantras, and the soldiers attacked that city. Cormyr is mustered to arms, expecting war, and Sembia is offering a gold piece a week to anyone who can hold a sword to bolster its border levies.

3. Strange tales have come out of the south of gods walking the lands, spells going wild, and the like. A high priestess of Loviatar died when her own *blade barrier* spell went awry.

4. All mages of power seem to have vanished from Cormyr. Even Vangerdahast, the Court Wizard, has not been seen for a tenday now.

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5. Daggerdale is one vast, smoking pit. The goddesses Tymora and Beshaba are said to have fought each other there. (False rumor.)

6. A great black statue as tall as the lowest clouds is said to have marched east into the sea at Scardale, walking steadily until the deepening waves swallowed it up.

7. Dragons have been seen dancing in the air over the Thunder Peaks. Some sages have held that these are the “nine black doves” referred to in the prophecies of the ancient seer Alaundo. Others say that the “war among wizards” that he foretold long ago has begun.

8. Elminster the Sage, the Old Mage of Shadowdale, has been killed in a battle there, in the temple of Lathander. Wandering brigands were captured and found guilty, but some say the god Bane appeared and killed the sage himself. Others say that Elminster still lives, and that the Harpers are seeking his whereabouts. (DM note: This refers to events in FRE1, *Shadowdale*. As Midnight and her companions found in FRE2, Elminster is not dead.)

9. Sylune “the Witch,” the Lady of Shadowdale, was slain a few seasons ago while defending Shadowdale against the great attacking flight of dragons that swept down over the Dragon Reach. Now her glowing white phantom has been seen walking the corridors of the Royal Court in Suzail. She smiled at several noble ladies, who fainted dead away. Sylune walked through guards and doors alike, into Azoun’s throne room, and moved her hands in a series of silent signs. Vangerdahast, the Court Wizard, turned pale and whispered something urgent to Azoun, then left the chamber and has not been seen since. Sylune’s form then faded away.

10. Alusair Nacacia, younger princess of Cormyr, has been seen several times in the Dalelands, riding hard with a sword on her back. Merchants have seen her striding through the ruins of Myth Drannor with a bloody blade. Some say that she rode down a man in the streets of Selgaunt.

11. The forces of the Citadel of the Raven have grown larger and more active than ever before. They patrol the area ceaselessly, putting all trespassers to death.

12. A patch of darkness that never moves has apparently settled in beyond the Sunset Mountains. No one who has gone into it has emerged alive.

Outfitting and Training

The trip from Cormyr to Waterdeep is lengthy and dangerous under the best conditions, let alone in the Time of Troubles. While they are in Wheloon, PCs can keep busy outfitting themselves for their upcoming long overland trip.

They must buy provisions, particularly safe drinking water, and pack them for rugged travel. They must replenish, repair, or replace cooking gear, tents, and the like. Above all, they must buy horses, including spare mounts, and buy and modify tack to fit them. You can either detail in full the mounts used by the party throughout this adventure, or simply give them average values of AC 7, MV 22, and 16 hp.

If the optional training rules are being used, those characters who aren’t busy outfitting themselves can take the opportunity to train. Midnight agrees to provide training, free of charge, for any PC mage who agrees to accompany her to Waterdeep. PCs of other classes can scout around Wheloon for tutors.

To determine how long training takes, decide which tutors hired by PCs have 17+ Wisdom. Midnight accepts a maximum delay of twenty days—two weeks, in the Realms. After that, she will threaten to take off for Waterdeep by herself. The threat should be sufficient to persuade any procrastinating PCs to break off what they’re doing and make ready to accompany her. If it isn’t, then the tutors themselves will break off any ongoing training sessions, saying something like, “I hear that it’s time for you to be on your way—not much point in training anymore, when the fate of the world is at stake!”

Priests may have difficulty gaining levels at this time. Most deities are too weak or too busy to answer the prayers of their faithful. And besides, most priests are too shocked and frantically busy seeking news of their deities to do any training.

The nature-oriented deities, such as Silvanus, Eldath, and Mielikki, have taken to avatar form well and remain diligent in their responsibilities. Their priests can complete training normally. But of the other deities, only clerics of Lathander, Tymora, Tempus, Gond, and Chauntea can complete training—and such training takes twice as long as usual.

Tutors available in Wheloon include these individuals:

Chalannos “the Masked” Firehawk, 8th level fighter, retired adventurer. His cottage lies on a lane at the northeastern fringe of town. As a training fee he demands a permanent (not one-shot) magical item he can use, or 2,000 gp/level (counting the level to be attained), or some combination of these. He is very good; if the PC desires to acquire proficiency in a particular weapon, allow Chalannos to provide it.

Haerldoun “Hawkmaster,” 6th level fighter (Wis 17), a mercenary warrior by trade. Haerldoun, a veteran man of battle, knows the Dragon Reach lands well. He is especially skilled at the art of command, organization, tactics, and scouting techniques.

Wounded in Daggerdale while fighting orcs, bugbears, and trolls allied to the Zhentilar, Haerldoun has rented a house here in Wheloon while recovering. Here he keeps an eye on his sideline, a helm and shield importing business run by his niece, Albhaera (F2, Dex 18, Cha 16). Haerldoun will train a PC for a flat fee of 4,000 gp, or a magical item and 2,000 gp.

If the party is weak or a PC has perished, the DM could allow Albhaera to join the party as a replacement PC or NPC. She is young, soft-spoken, and demure but restless. Albhaera knows the value, repair, and proper fashioning of helms, bracers, shields, belts, and baldrics. She is fit, lithe, and well trained as a warrior.

Haerldoun dotes on her. If word reaches him that a PC has mistreated her, that PC has acquired a tireless and wary foe who will track him across the entire Realms to take revenge.

Mhezenter Mirilar, 5th level thief (Wis 16), a thin, beak-nosed man who pretends to be deaf. By day he loads crates of goods for a hardware merchant, Zendaros Rallogar, whose old, rambling shop is located near the center of town.

Mhezenter sleeps in an attic of the shop, and plies his other trade by night. He robs mainly warehouse goods or wagonloads passing through town.

He does not advertise his profession; PCs wishing to train must find and catch up with him by night, then survive the encounter—Mhezenter is very quick with throwing darts and a slim, rapierlike short sword. The best way to persuade Mhezenter to train a PC is with payment of a magical item, but Mhezenter settles for 3,000 gp/level (counting the level to be attained), preferably in the form of gems.

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He cannot be blackmailed. Threats to expose him just make him shrug; then he targets the threatening character with a 3d6 *fireball*—the last missile of a *necklace of missiles*—before making his escape.

Mhezenter has a *ring of the ram* hidden away somewhere in Wheloon. If he is attacked by PCs, he takes to wearing it, and to tipping his weapons with a sleep-inducing drug. Give his victims +2 on saves against this venom; it has been stored for a long time, and has lost some of its efficacy.

Orlenstar Thirlthorn, 4th level druid (Wis 18), who keeps a shrine to Silvanus east of Wheloon, north of the road in a grove of duskwood trees.

Everyone in town knows where the grove is. Citizens take injured animals to Orlenstar; town children are always welcome in the grove; and Orlenstar keeps *goodberries* and home-brewed spruce beer on hand at all times. He is a gentle, saturnine young man, willing to train anyone who makes an offering to Silvanus of at least 1,000 gp/level, counting the level to be attained.

Devise other NPC tutors as desired. Allow PCs time to “spread their wings” in solo operations if they are not being trained. They can seek out Zhentilar spies, for example. Or, if they figured in the events of FRE1 and FRE2, they might have to explain their actions to agents of the Harpers who identify them and accuse them again of slaying Elminster.

The party should be at maximum strength before journeying onward.

OFFSTAGE EVENT

Not far from Starwater Bridge near the village of Hilp, Cyric and his band of Zhentilar attack the small halfling village of Black Oaks. While his men destroy the village, Cyric assaults a young halfling called Sneakabout, whom the PCs will meet in Event 5 of this chapter. Cyric steals Sneakabout’s magic sword, a cursed blade that gradually enslaves its owner’s will (see the New Magic appendix). Sneakabout, still affected by the sword’s curse after it is stolen, will not rest until he retrieves the weapon. The curse does not affect Cyric, whose will is so strong that he masters the sword, bending the weapon’s will to the strength of his own.

In his adventuring, Cyric has gained a level, so that he is now a 4th level fighter. Being dual-classed and unable to advance

in his former profession, he remains a 5th level thief and retains the combat abilities (HD 5, hp 24) he gained while a member of that class.

EVENT 3: ARRESTS, ALARMS, AND AMBUSHES

This optional event takes place at the time when the PCs gather as they prepare to leave Wheloon. This event can be skipped to speed up play.

When the party has outfitted, healed, trained, and is ready to travel onward, the Wheloon Watch arrives to arrest a PC on a charge of murder.

A local merchant (the one the PC bought horses from) has been found murdered, his goods missing. Someone testified to the local lord, Sarp Redbeard, that they saw the PC leaving the merchant’s house with bloody sword in hand. This false witness was one of Cyric’s men, seeking to drive the PCs from the safety of Wheloon.

The dour captain of the watch warns all the PCs to “bide peace” until Lord Sarp arrives. Expected within the hour, he will quickly pronounce a sentence of execution. “There’s not much doubt, ye see,” the captain adds fiercely through his bristling moustache.

The PCs have three options: cooperate, fight, or flee.

Cooperate: They can wait for Lord Sarp, then tell him their story. Judge the evidence as Wheloon’s lord would—with a strong bias toward declaring guilt and getting the whole matter over with. If he pronounces the PC guilty, the party’s only chance is to break and run; see below.

If the evidence for innocence is compelling, Lord Sarp apologizes to the PCs. But he doesn’t want them staying in Wheloon and drawing further trouble, so he politely offers them an armed escort—the Watch and its captain—to the village of Hilp (or to the next village or city on the PCs’ journey). The PCs shouldn’t refuse this offer, or the watch will make their lives hard during their remaining time in Wheloon.

Fight: The watch consists of 16 constables—volunteer militia, all merchants by daily trade—in leather armor, bearing maces, short swords, daggers, and crossbows. Each constable is F1, THAC0 20, 6 hp, AC 8.

Four rounds after combat begins, 46 Purple Dragon soldiers rush up the street on the double. Since their presence virtually ensures that the PCs must flee, the soldiers are described in the next subsection.

Attacking the constabulary guarantees that the PCs and their companions will be hunted fugitives for the remainder of their stay in Cormyr. If they are caught, the lord of the city imprisons them and sentences them to public execution. Then the PCs must stage a jailbreak, or Cyric and his Zhentilar can do so. Improvise details of the jail, or consult the jail (and jailbreak) description on pp. 6-7 of FRE2, *Tantras*.

Flee: If the PCs want to make a break for it, Midnight and other NPCs leap to their aid, attacking the nearest constables in an attempt to screen the player characters’ escape and then joining the flight themselves. (If Kelemvor is along as an NPC, he may try this tactic, taking the choice away from the PCs.) Battle ensues.

The party can grab their horses and flee just before the 46 hurrying Purple Dragon soldiers arrive. Make this departure urgent, with armed townsfolk gathering to watch. Lord Sarp Redbeard (F9, 77 hp, Str 17, neutral good with CN tendencies), his jeweled blade drawn, can be seen shouting angrily and pointing his sword, as he orders the Purple Dragons to pursue the adventurers.

Fourteen of the Purple Dragons, a local road patrol, are mounted. These men chase the PCs, brandishing lances and maces. All are F2, 16 hp each, wearing chain mail, armed with light lances, long swords, maces, and daggers. The leader of this patrol, Roadcaptain Thondar (F4, 37 hp), wields a battle axe and a *wand of magic missiles* with 14 charges.

All of this should cause the PCs to flee along the nearest road out of town, heading west and north toward the village of Hilp. (If they don’t run away, conduct combat normally; if the PCs haven’t attacked the constabulary, the Purple Dragons will fight to subdue and capture them.)

Assuming that they do flee, the chase continues for quite some time; the Purple Dragons are hot on the heels of the party, so no map of Wheloon’s surroundings is provided.

Guardsmen and terrified citizens alike scramble to get out of the way. The PCs gain opportunities to jump their horses over abandoned crates and stumbling people, watch their pursuers crash into a cart, spilling potatoes all over the street, and so on.

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If the PCs outdistance the guards too easily, have a heavily loaded stonecutter's cart block the road. The PCs must turn (slowing down) or ride right into it. Anyone who tries to jump the cart or cut around it must make a Proficiency check for land-based riding (if the proficiency rules are used). Unless the check is successful, the rider cannot pass the cart, and must make a Dexterity check or crash into it, suffering 3d4 impact damage and killing the horse. Such unfortunates must abandon horse and gear and flee quickly, or be captured.

The PCs should think of employing magic or clever strategies to elude their pursuers. If they try and their efforts fail, Midnight turns to confront their pursuers. She asks the PCs to shield her while she tries to cast *sleep* spells. (Let PC wizards try to cast magic as well, if they wish.)

Assuming magical chaos does not alter the spells, the onrushing Purple Dragon riders slump in their saddles. They tumble off to be trampled underfoot, or they ride into each other, and everyone hits the ground with a crash and a cloud of dust.

Aftermath

Regardless of the outcome of this event, the party must by now have left Wheloon behind. After traveling through Hilp—which doesn't take long—the PCs should be encouraged to take the road leading southwest toward Suzail. (Midnight has her own reasons for wanting to go this way, as explained in the beginning of

Event 4 below.) In any case, whether or not they were pursued, they are tired from their journey.

Night begins to fall as the party members wind their way south, walking their exhausted horses. (If the PCs are captured and must escape jail, assume the escape takes place as evening falls, whether on the day of Event 3 or the next.)

As the shadows lengthen, the party heads southwest along the fringe of the King's Forest, which cloaks the heart of Cormyr. As they proceed cautiously in the dusk, the lane the party is following ends in a secluded woodcutter's glade. This looks as good a place as any to camp.

Well, perhaps. Refer to the High Forest Encounter Table on the inside of the fold-out cover of this adventure. Four times during the night, roll for encounters. Most monsters turn away if they encounter alert, determined opposition; let the vigilance of the PCs determine what happens. The exhausted NPCs cannot stand watch all night, but do not point this out to the PCs unless the PCs raise the subject of posting a watch.

Event 4: Starwater Bridge

In the morning the party hastens on south toward Suzail, hoping to outdistance any word from Wheloon (the NPCs know that in the absence of mages from the kingdom, messages must travel by riders on the roads). In Suzail, Midnight

plans to buy passage for the party on a local merchant ship that will take them across Dragonmere to Ilipur, where the party can join an overland caravan to Waterdeep.

When the party reaches Starwater Bridge, read the following:

The River Starwater glimmers before you, sparkling in the morning sun. It lies in an old, broad valley, mirroring the blue sky overhead, and your road crosses over it by means of a broad stone span: Starwater Bridge.

There are men on the bridge with spears in their hands. As you draw nearer, you see that they are hard-faced fighting men, clad in a variety of armor. Some even wear black field plate. All wear scarves or surcoats bearing badges of a red circle on a black field.

They're Zhentilar! Here in the heart of Cormyr!

These Zhentilar are loyal to Cyric. There are 24 warriors on the bridge, and 16 more mounted troops hiding in the nearby trees to the west. Cyric is watching from within the trees, along with 10 other men who guard the tethered horses of the entire troop.

Stress to the players that the presence of Zhentilar troops here is highly unusual. Midnight believes, correctly, that Cyric is using them to warn the party away from the south. But she doesn't yet believe he has evil motives.

If the PCs show themselves, the fighters waiting on the bridge lower their spears to menace their horses, bracing themselves to face any charge the PCs might mount. If the PCs attack the 24 fighting men on the bridge, the 16 warriors in the trees ride to the attack.

The party can fight, though the odds are overwhelming. If the PCs win, they can travel unmolested for a time. But Cyric escapes and eventually forms another band. Skip to the next event.

More likely, however, the party flees northward again, while those PCs who feel inclined can fight a rear-guard action. However, Cyric has ordered the Zhentilar not to kill the party, and in fact the fighters pursue the PCs only a short distance northward.

The Zhentilar's purpose is to force the adventurers to go north. They dare not remain assembled in strength for long, or

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chase the adventurers along the roads. They know that if they try, they'll soon find Purple Dragons moving against them, several hundred strong.

Cyric's Zhentilar

All these men have chain mail and shield (AC 4) or better. All have access to a light crossbow and two cases of 21 quarrels each, and to a spear or a pike. All carry a long sword or a mace, a hand axe, and two daggers. Optionally, some may also wield war hammers, battle axes, or bastard swords.

They are all experienced fighters. Dalzhel, Cyric's second in command, is a 4th level fighter with 36 hp. The others in the troop include 10 3rd level fighters (25 hp), 20 2nd level (18 hp), and 19 1st level (10 hp). If desired, you can give Cyric's men individual names and hit point totals ... but some of them may not live long enough to be worth the work.

However, you should prepare a simple roster list of Cyric's band. They reappear throughout this module as foes of the PCs, and it may prove easier to keep track of their declining strength and numbers in this manner.

Another approach is to assign Cyric's command a variable strength. Simply follow the encounter descriptions given throughout the adventure, suitably adjusting the band's numbers according to the effects of physical chaos, desertions, reinforcements, sickness, offstage fighting or scouting, and so on. Though not as realistic as the first approach, this method guarantees that the band always presents a threat to the PCs.

Events 5: Ashes at Black Oaks

The Zhentilar do not pursue the party out of sight of the bridge. But if the PCs try going east or west and then turning south again, they meet the whole band of Zhentilar, moving to intercept them and force them back. If they evade or somehow defeat this band, let them proceed to their destination. Most of the following encounters can easily be adapted to their new surroundings, but you must improvise many details of a southern adventure.

The rest of this chapter presumes that the adventurers are warily heading north

again. Midnight and other NPCs argue about the Zhentilar: whether they are actually Cyric's men, and whether he is helping or hindering them. The PCs can take part or try to guide this argument as they wish, but Midnight refuses to believe Cyric is really an enemy.

Suddenly PCs smell smoke in the woods to the west of the road. If they investigate, they find a narrow trail. Tree branches meet above it at about chest height (for a human), forming a very low roof. These branches can be cut away to clear the trail.

The trail winds down and then up through thick stands of sumac, until it reaches a stand of black oaks. From the center of the stand, in a small glade, wisps of smoke are drifting. The smells of burnt wood and flesh are strong in the air.

Midnight points at a ring of stones. "A well," she says quietly.

This was a halfling village known as Black Oaks. The Zhentilar, impatient to loot something, chose this village by chance. Cyric, their leader, merely shrugged and allowed them to sack it. For himself he took only one item, but what a treasure: a magical sword of incredible power, formerly owned by a halfling named Sneakabout.

Amid The Ruins

PCs may want to scout around, to make sure there are no lurking brigands or other menaces. Most of the adventurers will probably want to search the tumbled piles of stone rubble and smoking burrow-holes, all that remains of the village.

Amid the wreckage they discover the ashes of much wickerware and cloth, the trampled remnants of many plants, and forty-five halfling bodies. Ten are males, the others women and children. Many were crushed under their collapsed huts. The searchers find no valuables, not even stray arrows or broken weapons. Lawful good PCs should consider gathering the slain halflings for burial.

While the PCs are busy searching the ruined village, halfling thieves from the surrounding woods go silently to work. They try to steal most or all of the party's food and bedrolls, Midnight's spell book, and a flint-and-steel pouch.

You can decree that the halfling thieves simply will not be caught in the act, regardless of PC precautions. This moves the story along smoothly. But if the PCs posted an alert guard or took clever precautions, they can catch the thieves red-handed.

In this case, alert PCs notice the halflings just as one thief is heading into the forest with Midnight's spell book. The others are looting the party's saddlebags. Try to focus attention on the ones still in the camp, and not on the thief who lifted the spell book.

The halflings, once discovered, run like bunnies. PCs can attack, trap, or pursue them. But in the forest the halflings probably outdistance their pursuit. By the time the PCs follow the trail to the halfling lair, the thieves have already destroyed Midnight's spell book.

Assuming the party fails to discover the thefts at once, they find out about their missing gear by dusk. PCs can track the thieves, aided by crumbs from some corn biscuits that were in the saddlebags. Aghast at the loss of her spell book, Midnight insists they search, or she deserts the party to search by herself.

The Thieves' Lair

The trail leads some distance northwest through deep forest to a tiny campfire.

There PCs discover two dozen halflings, obviously survivors from the village. The PCs see that the halflings are using their own stolen possessions. An old, matronly halfling woman is slicing up the missing corn biscuits with a PC's dagger. An old halfling man drinks wine from the fingers of a glove that another PC recognizes. If the PCs carried spears, the broken spears are propped over the campfire, and three rabbits are roasting on them.

Because Midnight has lost her spell book (this must occur, regardless of how the rest of the thievery turns out), stealth and surprise are impossible. With a shriek of horror, Midnight recognizes amid the flames the blackening, crumbling ashes of her spell book.

Alarmed, the halflings scramble to grab weapons. They have slings, spears and atlatls (also called woomeras), and a few daggers.

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The old halfling mother faces you fiercely, raising a stolen dagger with a hiss. "So! What you want?" she says in broken Common. "Come back to finish job? Tall ones all the same. Come to tool rich halfling cities." She steps forward, waving the dagger. "Not take Berengaria without fight!"

Midnight, ignoring Berengaria's dagger, rushes to the fire and scrabbles in it for her spell book. She is too late. Nothing is left. "Gone," she says softly, staring into the flames. A single tear runs down her cheek.

PCs can fight the halflings or call a truce. NPCs, even Midnight, recommend a truce. They do not take part in attacks on the halflings.

Fight: The able-bodied halflings of the village were away hunting when the Zhentilar raided. Now they are back, so the PCs don't have an easy time of it.

There are 16 able-bodied halflings, all LN, all equipped with short swords (1d6 damage) but no armor (AC 7). Four 2nd level fighters have 14 hp each. Four 2nd level thieves have 10 hp. Four fighter/thieves are 1st level in each class, with only 6 hp each. Finally, four 1st level thieves have 6 hp.

Eight 0-level halflings, old people or children, have no weapons and do not attack. However, they bravely rush in the path of the PCs' attacks to protect their loved ones. Throwing themselves at the PCs' feet, they scream for mercy. PCs who murder these halflings are showing evil alignment tendencies.

Try to show bloodthirsty PCs that these halflings represent no threat. Their village and families have been destroyed; they have nothing left and nowhere to go. They stole the supplies just to survive.

Truce: These pathetic halflings evoke the NPCs' sympathy. To avoid a fight and prove their friendship, the NPCs suggest letting the halflings keep what they have taken. This is for the PCs to decide ultimately, of course. The halflings sadly surrender their stolen goods if asked.

Though Midnight laments her lost spell book, she does not blame the thieves. "It's all right," she tells them. "You didn't understand."

"She might not have understood the spell book," says a new voice. "But that'd be all she didn't understand." A gaunt halfling male steps out of the darkness. A bandage is bound around his forehead. His eyes are red, and his skin an unhealthy gray.

The other halflings back away, whispering among themselves. The newcomer steps to the fire and picks up the rabbits. "Have these," he says to you. "There are plenty more where they came from, and it's less than a fair trade for what you've lost.

"The name's Atherton Cooper," says the newcomer. "But most call me Sneakabout."

Meet Sneakabout

Sneakabout is a 4th level halfling thief: AC 4 (leather plus Dex bonus); hp 22; THAC0 19 (17 with missiles); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon (short sword, 2 daggers, sling with 16 stones); Str 14, Dex 18, Con 15, Int 16, Wis 12, Cha 16; AL CG (CN tendencies, due to his recent ownership of the magical sword now in Cyric's possession). An empty sword scabbard swings at his belt. If asked about it, he simply shrugs and says, "I lost it. I'll get it back."

Sneakabout asks the party if they've run into any Zhentilar in Cormyr.

"I have unfinished business with those butchers," he says grimly. "As do all the menfolk of Black Oaks! It might have been different if all the fathers had not been out hunting!

"To think men'd come with swords and all, here in Cormyr! King Azoun'll hear of this, see if he doesn't! And those Zhentilar—they'll hear of it too, before long!" A dagger flashes up into the air from his boot, twinkles in the firelight, and falls back into his waiting hand.

He looks at you all in the gathering twilight. "It seems to me," he says softly, "that you might be in need of a guide—and protection, too, just in case you run into any more Zhentilar whereabouts. Well?"

The PCs can accept or reject Sneakabout as a guide. Establish him as a sympathetic character with goals much like those of the PCs. The adventure proceeds more smoothly if Sneakabout is along, but his presence is not vital.

In any case, the party can camp for the night with the halflings. Berengaria's faulty Common proves to be a deception. She can and will answer any PCs' questions about conditions in Cormyr, the whereabouts of possible supplies and tutors, and the like. She can furnish the PCs with water and many fresh berries and carrots for their journey.

Allow the heroes, especially lawful good PCs, to help the halflings. They could donate money or supplies; a priest PC could send a message to his temples seeking aid for the demihumans; they could even take the halflings with them on a search for a new home. However, the rest of the adventure makes no provision for the continued presence of any of the halflings except for Sneakabout.

Setting Out

Sneakabout tells the party he knows the deep forest trails, and he asks their route of travel. If the PCs don't have a route in mind, he suggests that they go to Eveningstar, and from there find their way westward out of Cormyr.

The next morning the party sets off. If they have accepted Sneakabout as their guide, he promises to take them through the very heart of the King's Forest, where men seldom go, in hopes of avoiding Zhentilar and zealous Purple Dragon officers alike.

Event 6: Walking Trees and Wildwood

The party travels on through old, deep woods of shady gloom and ancient, towering trees. Consult the King's Forest Encounter Table, checking for encounters once every 1d10 turns (or 1d6 turns whenever the party makes a lot of noise). Brigands encountered have meager treasure; prepare such booty before play begins.

Whenever an encounter is called for, roll 1d6. If the result is a 6, do not check the table; instead, the encounter is an attempted ambush by one of Cyric's Zhentilar patrols.

The patrol consists of seven men: six 1st level fighters, all AC 4 and having 10 hp, led by a 2nd level fighter. The leader wears plate mail (AC 3), has 18 hp, and wields a battle axe or bastard sword as his primary weapon.

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The men of the patrol wear chain mail and bear shields. All except the leader have a spear and a light crossbow with 21 quarrels. Everyone carries a long sword or a mace, a hand axe, and two daggers.

If the party runs into three Zhentilar patrols, the third should be larger than the others—11 men, including two 2nd level fighters.

If the PCs question captive Zhentilar, the prisoners say they sailed from Scardale to Tantras and then to Cormyr—with Cyric, who promised them much loot. So far Cyric hasn't led them to this loot; some discontented Zhentilar sacked Sneakabout's village, though Cyric gave no order to do this.

(Midnight uses this statement as proof that Cyric is not truly evil. In fact, Cyric didn't care that the village was destroyed; he simply saw no purpose in doing so.)

The prisoners say Cyric has ordered the Zhentilar to drive the PCs north to Eveningstar, arranging ambushes and tipping off the Purple Dragons if the PCs go south. "Suzail is already closed to you . . . and Marsember, too."

ENCOUNTERS

During this event, introduce the encounters that follow when the party reaches appropriate locations in the woods.

1. Watching the Watchmen

If Sneakabout is guiding the party, he offers to lead them along the banks of the Starwater, under the bridge that carries the Dhedluk/Immersea road across it, to avoid patrols.

Unknown to Sneakabout, seven Zhentilar watchmen hold the bridge. These are identical in strength to the seven-man Zhentilar patrol described above, except that two horses are tethered nearby. If the watchmen spot the PCs, two men mount the horses and ride off to report to Cyric. The other watchmen engage the party and try to hold them at the spot until Cyric and the other warriors arrive four rounds later.

The party should easily win though, especially if they dispose of the messengers before they can get away. But add excitement by pursuing them for a while with crossbow quarrels through the trees.

2. Starwater Ford

Eventually the party should reach Starwater Ford, along the river about

midway between Eveningstar and the Dhedluk/Immersea bridge, where gravel bars allow the party to cross over the Starwater River to the western side. If an encounter occurs here, it should be with an aquatic monster such as a giant gar.

The western bank of the Starwater at this spot is thickly grown, an old and dark woods (some say haunted). Here only elves, rangers, halflings, and the bravest of hunters go. The Zhentilar do not know their way around this area.

3. Trees on the March

The lead character scouts ahead along an unfamiliar trail—and comes running back to the party screaming in terror.

"Off the trail!" the scout cries. "Now!" Behind the onrushing scout you hear a deep rumbling, crashing noise.

Leaves stir and dance, and a huge sycamore tree suddenly lurches forward into view, swinging its branches like a dozen flailing arms. Its roots creak as they crawl along the ground like the rushing feet of a centipede. The ground trembles as the trunk of the tree twists along the ground. Then the trunk rises again as the tree strides on.

Another tree follows right behind the first. Mud rises in showers as many sycamores march in its wake. The noise is awesome, the ground shakes, and trees topple or are smashed aside by the marching sycamores.

The sycamores are part of the chaos of the Realms, perhaps directed by an avatar or a spell gone wrong. They march to a village or city of the DM's choice and attack its walls, not ceasing until the end of this adventure. They do not attack PCs or appear to notice PC activities, but any character who gets in the way is simply trampled, hurled aside, or torn limb from limb.

Allow Dexterity checks to avoid any or all of these misfortunes. Suggested damage is 1d6 per misfortune if a check is successful, and 2d8 if a check fails. Horses suffer the same damage.

A resourceful party could "ride" the trees, or tag along in their wake to avoid enemy encounters. This can be challenging, for the trees move quickly, without stopping. But if the PCs have too easy a time of their journey, physical chaos eventually subsides, and the trees collapse into so many logs.

EVENT 7: The Glowing Glade

When at last the exhausted party decides to camp for the night, they come upon a glade in the deep forest. It is in a hollow atop a wooded hill, amid rolling ground deep in the forest, not far from the Starwater. It is of natural origin, and is safe and uninhabited.

The party eats as dusk falls. Read the following:

An orange glow steals silently into existence above the fire. As you notice it curling gently in midair, it splits into nine little spheres of radiance. These darken and start to spin, turning blue and then silver. They drift outward in a widening ring.

The ring silently expands until it encloses the entire glade. The spheres change shape in the air. Each forms the image of a mouth—a human mouth, surrounded by a moustache and beard! No faces appear; all of these bearded mouths hang disembodied in the air in a huge ring around the glade.

One mouth moves. You hear a familiar dry, fussy, accented voice. "Well met, friends! We are still friends, are we not? We both, I trust, wish the Realms to survive." It is the voice of Elminster the Sage.

Though currently far away across Faerun, Elminster has clairvoyantly located the heroes. He wants to remind them of their mission and answer their questions, and he has chosen a typically flashy method of doing so.

The mouths are unaffected by physical attacks or any magic—including, for the moment at least, *dispel magic*.

The initial glow above the fire is equivalent to an amber *faerie fire*, and the bearded magic mouths speak even if characters flee out of the ring as it forms.

Talking With Nine Mouths

Allow the characters to talk with Elminster as long as they like. He can answer most of their questions, particularly those that let them go forward with the adventure.

Here are some typical questions and

Chapter 1: Cold Welcome in Cormyr

samples of Elminster's answers. If the players don't ask all these questions, don't go out of the way to work in the extra answers; just let them pass. Don't tell the players more than they want to know.

What is happening to the Realms?

One mouth along the ring speaks: "What's going on? Well you might ask. It's all rather confusing, really." The mouth clears its throat and says, "This bit's rather important. So bend thy ears."

A second mouth takes up the tale. "Each god of Faerun has a portfolio, a profession or natural force which that being dominates—and know ye, that good and evil, law and chaos and neutrality all are balanced evenly, greater gods and lesser, demigods and all. All hangs in the Balance—an ever-shifting Balance, to be true, but a Balance nonetheless."

Another mouth speaks. "Or, as ye might guess, is supposed to. The Balance is no more, for the gods have fallen down into Faerun. Now every great power and demigod strives among mortals, hardly more than mortals themselves. They neglect the Balance, and chaos has stricken the lands."

How did the gods fall?

"Know ye that there is one god above all the gods of Faerun, a being known as Ao, the One Who Is Hidden.

"Ao it was, so we are told, who created the gods, to bring order out of chaos, so that our world could exist, each beast in its place and each plant in its niche, all in harmony."

The mouth falls silent, and another mouth takes up the tale. "Standard talk, I know, but evidently true. Two of the gods, Bane and Myrkul, dared to go against the Balance created by Ao. They stole the two Tablets of Fate. Their theft so angered Ao that he cast the gods down, supposedly to teach them weakness and humility. But the gods are willful, and usurp each other's powers and influence, and strive one with the other."

What happened to Mystra?

"Ah, Mystra! Her power was within everything, and gathered stronger within a few in these lands, including one among ye. Yet even Mystra fought and argued and connived, as if she were . . . human." The mouth chuckles.

Another mouth speaks. "Mystra is no more, although her power will pass on. She will never entirely perish, so long as there is magic in the world."



What happened to Bane and Torm?

"The God of Strife battled the God of Duty in mortal combat—or perhaps I mean immortal combat. They destroyed one another. As ye have seen, when a god dies, his energies scatter in an instant, with the power of ten thousand bolts of lightning.

"Those forces have wrought strange new forms in the lands around Tantras, though not, fortunately, in the city itself.

"When Midnight rang the Bell of Aylen Attricus in that tower in Tantras, she activated an age-old power. The bell protected the city from destruction when the gods exploded. Only a wizard of great power and caring heart could ring the bell. It is only because her friends got her there to ring the bell that Tantras survives today.

"Ye need not fear Bane, nor his well-meaning brother Torm—one so blind with pride that he knew not that Bane's tablet lay hidden in his own temple cellar!"

How can the problem be solved?

"The gods' planes are shut against them, the ways there guarded by Helm. To get back, the gods must find the Tablets of Fate and present them to Helm. We must hope that, once they resume their stations, the gods can restore order."

Why should we look for the tablets?

"This test Ao has set for the gods. And for men, too, ye, and all the mortal races.

For anyone may win the tablets and redeem the Balance. Ao has hinted at godhood for any being who gives him the tablets.

"Ao would see that which sets us all apart from the beasts: the magnificence of deed and achievement, love and friendship and aiding one another—that which soars above mere survival. And so, of course, ye come into the picture." The mouth chuckles.

What should we do?

"All ye need do is find the second tablet, and take both to the highest point in the city of Waterdeep."

The next mouth over gives a warning. "Ye need not worry about Bane. But the second thief, Myrkul, is still your foe—and it is his tablet that ye now seek. I'm afraid I know not where it is, but the old seer Alaundo mentions that 'in the Time of Troubles, all roads will end in Waterdeep.' So perhaps you'd best head up that way.

"As you search, take care. Other gods are just as dangerous as Myrkul—Bhaal, his servant, for one. The God of Murder. . . ."

Concluding The Talk

PCs can ask other questions of Elminster; improvise the answers at will, but note the following: Elminster knows nothing, yet, of Myrkul and Bhaal's plan to herd Midnight toward the gate to Hades. Elminster knows nothing about Cyric. Elminster cannot warn the PCs regarding any surprises still to come in this adventure.

After the PCs have finished asking questions of Elminster, conclude the scene with this passage:

"Forget not this: Whatever befalls ye, all roads end in Waterdeep. Go on with my good wishes, all of you, and save the Realms. The gods know it's high time someone else should do so!"

The mouths fade into silver motes of radiance, and then drift to join each other in a shimmering, silvery ring of radiance. It encircles the entire glade in midair.

The ring remains until morning, unless it is dispelled. It poses no barrier or harm to any party member, but turns aside all wandering woodland creatures.

Chapter 2: Danger, Danger Everywhere

This chapter opens as the characters awaken in the deep woods of Cormyr. The ring of light caused by Elminster's spell has faded. Midnight can think of nothing but her lost spell book. She needs a spell book to cast spells, and the party certainly needs her magic! Everyone should agree at this point that one of the first things they must do is find a way to replace the lost book.

EVENT 1: The King's Forest

As the party travels, consult the King's Forest Encounter Table, checking for encounters every 1d10 turns (or 1d6 turns whenever the party makes a lot of noise).

Twice during the day the adventurers meet Zhentilar patrols, who harry them with crossbow quarrels from behind, hurrying them northward. Introduce these patrols whenever the PCs turn the party toward any destination other than Eveningstar.

Zhentilar patrols are identical with those described in the previous chapter: six 1st level fighters, all with 10 hp and AC 4 (chain mail and shield), led by a 2nd level fighter with 18 hp and AC 3 (plate mail, no shield). The leader is armed with a battle axe or a bastard sword. The warriors carry spears and light crossbows with 21 quarrels. Everyone also has a long sword, a mace, a hand axe, and two daggers.

The adventurers spend a wary, weary day of tramping through seemingly endless damp, dark forest, approaching Eveningstar only at dusk.

EVENT 2: AN EVENING IN EVENINGSTAR

As purple twilight settles over the forest, you see twinkling lights far ahead, glimmering through the trees: the lights of Eveningstar, the prettiest village in Cormyr.

If Sneakabout is guiding the party, he says there is a lone guard standing watch, under one of those road-lanterns, at each bridge. The halfling recommends they cross over the road and come in to the vil-

lage from the west to avoid the guarded bridges.

If Sneakabout is not guiding the party, PCs may run into a guard at a bridge. Each guard has the same abilities and equipment as the constables in Event 3 of the last chapter.

The guard may or may not be expecting trouble, depending on details of the PCs' departure from Wheloon. If the Purple Dragons are hunting the party, Eveningstar's guards will recognize the adventurers and try to sound the alarm. Otherwise the guard greets them peaceably, asks their destination and business, and allows them to pass unmolested. He recommends lodging at the Lonesome Tankard Inn (see below).

EVENINGSTAR

This is a pretty market town set among prosperous farms. Windowboxes are crowded with many flowers. Trees grow in plenty among the small, pretty wooden houses and stone-and-timber shops.

Unfortunately, like those of many other farm villages, the folk of Eveningstar are up before dawn but go to bed early. As the PCs travel the streets in the gathering night, the shops are shuttered and dark. The streets are empty.

Midnight knocks hopefully at several shop doors in hopes of finding someone willing to trade gold for a bottle of ink, a quill or two, and a ledger or chapbook. No one answers her rappings.

At a crossroads stands a large, three-story stone building, lamps lit and a faint murmur of speech audible from within. Above the broad, rolling roof of the front porch hangs a signboard proclaiming this to be "The Lonesome Tankard: Inn and Stables. Fine Ale and Finer Meals." This looks like the most suitable place for lodgings.

The Lonesome Tankard

A map of The Lonesome Tankard Inn is provided. Two smiling stableboys come forward to take the party's horses; they wave away any coins offered them. Entering by the sets of double doors opening in from the porch, the adventurers find themselves in a happily noisy dining room. Here they can locate the innkeeper and arrange rooms for the party. The cost is 2 sp per room per night, stabling and an evening and morning meal included, with

unlimited food and drink.

The innkeeper is Dunman Kiriag, known for his kindness and soft-spoken honesty. Dunman is a burly, black-haired, affable man (F5, hp 42, Str 17, AL NG). He understands at least the basics of most languages spoken by humans and demihumans in these parts, and is never without a *dagger* +4 that is strapped to one forearm under his sleeve.

Dunman ushers you all through a curtain into a dim, quiet room in the back. A small fire in a fireplace throws reflections off polished shields on the walls. "If you'd spend the night here, we'll have wine and roast boar before you in but a breath or two. Khair will serve you. Would you like to see the rooms?"

A young serving girl, her long hair tied back with a scarf, hurries in with a smile and a decanter of chilled wine.

Any PC who wants to see the rooms accompanies Dunman up a broad wooden stair that rises out of the dining room. Opening off a hallway, the rooms all overlook the stables. Behind them, a curve of the Starwater glimmers in the growing moonlight. A light rain has begun to fall.

The party should be quite tired. NPCs will retire; PCs can stay up late if they wish. In the dining room they can pick up rumors; draw them from the Wheloon Rumor Table in the previous chapter, or make up new ones.

Everyone seems especially sure that the Darkhold fortress is making passage through the Far Hills impossible. This is true, and the PCs should reconsider if they had planned that route to Waterdeep. A safer way to travel is through Stormhorn Pass, which takes the party past the fortress of High Horn, and then through the Sunset Mountains north of Darkhold, emerging due east of Corm Orp.

If PCs engage Dunman in conversation, he proves to be a garrulous veteran of many campaigns. Assuming they say nothing to offend the honor of the Purple Dragons, Dunman takes a liking to them.

"A little traveler's tip," he says. "When you need a Dragon's help, just say, 'Aid, in Azoun's name!' Then they'll know it's an emergency . . . because if you invoke the king's name in vain, you're in trouble!"

Chapter 2: Danger, Danger Everywhere

PCs can also slip away to explore Eveningstar. However, nothing of interest is happening in this quiet village so late at night. Eventually the characters should go to bed.

A Meeting With Cyric

Much later that night, one or more of the PCs (make Intelligence checks to determine who) is disturbed by the scrape of a boot in the hall outside, followed almost immediately by the faint sound of one of the room doors opening.

Then they hear Midnight whisper, "I'm so happy to see you!"

Inquisitive PCs find that their room doors can be opened in silence. If they watch, they see Midnight standing in the hall. At the head of the stairs is a hawk-nosed man—Cyric. Observers note a reddish glow briefly from within his cloak, as he sheathes a half-drawn blade. "You . . . er, I'm happy to see you as well," he replies.

PCs may or may not be happy to see Cyric. They can attack, eavesdrop on the conversation, or join it.

Attack: If they attack immediately, Midnight tries to cast a *wall of force* or other magic to prevent their impulsive actions. (Although her spell book is gone, she still has some spells in memory . . . or so it would appear; see Event 5 in this chapter for a full explanation of what is happening to Midnight.) After using her magic, or trying to, she steps aside in smooth haste. "Do not force me to choose between friends," she says to Cyric warningly.

If her magic fails, Cyric fights defensively with his new magical sword. "You will have to make that decision sooner than you think," he spits out. Then he flees, if possible; the sword can *teleport* him outside the inn, if necessary. From there he signals his troops to attack (see below).

Eavesdrop: Read players as much of the following conversation as they care to hear. Let them interrupt at any time, and when they do, go to the "Join" section (below).

Midnight takes Cyric's arm and draws him away from the stairs. She asks in a low voice, "Were those your arrows aiding us against those warriors in Hermit's Wood?"

Cyric nods. "I trust the tablet is safe?" "Of course," Midnight replies. "And the Zhentilar who've been forcing us

north? They're yours as well?"

"Right again," says Cyric. "I wanted you in Eveningstar."

"Why? What hazards lie to the south?"

"Why, the forces of Bane's allies, of course. The Black Lord may have perished, but he has many friends—and dead men are the least of them. That is why I came."

"To rejoin us?" she asks quietly.

"That is not what I mean. I've come for you—and the tablet. Your friends cannot protect you. I can. Leave with me."

Midnight shakes her head. "I can't," she says. "I won't."

Cyric says, "Think! Do you not realize the power we can possess? With the Tablets of Fate, we can be *gods!*" His voice trembles with excitement. He looks wild-eyed and dangerous.

Midnight says sharply, "That's blasphemy!"

"Blasphemy?" Cyric laughs. "Against whom? The gods are here, tearing the Realms apart trying to recover the tablets. Our destiny is now ours to make!"

"Let me warn you," he continues. "The gods are trailing you. Not two nights past, Bhaal butchered three of my best men. The Lord of Murder! Had Bhaal wished to stay for a few moments, he could have killed us all. But he did not. Do you know why?"

Midnight remains silent.

Cyric hisses, "Because Bhaal wants *you*. You and the tablet!" He lets go of Midnight and steps back, their gazes still locked. "You will never live to deliver the tablet," he adds calmly. "No matter where you go, Bhaal will find you and he will kill your friends—kill them in ways more painful than you can imagine."

Midnight shudders. "No," she says. "I won't permit it."

At this point, the conversation ends. If the PCs don't interfere, Cyric leaves to signal his Zhentilar to attack the inn (see below).

Join: Any watching PCs can join in at any time. Cyric treats them contemptuously. In talking with them, Cyric tries to get across the following points:

1. The southern route is too dangerous to travel. The only safe route lies past the

great mountain fortress of High Horn, several hours' journey to the west.

2. The avatar of Bhaal is seeking Midnight and the tablet.

3. Cyric can defend Midnight better than the PCs can. With the Tablets of Fate, the two of them can command immense power.

Midnight never agrees to desert her friends and join Cyric—and Cyric will not join the PCs.

If the PCs try to capture or kill Cyric, his magical sword protects him; go to the "Attack" section (above). If they permit him to leave freely, Cyric goes outside and signals his Zhentilar warriors to attack.

The Zhentilar Attack

Cyric sends 50 Zhentilar soldiers to drive the party westward toward High Horn. They approach the inn with maximum noise and no great speed, since Cyric wants the adventurers to flee, not fight. Anyone looking outside can see huge numbers of soldiers, clearly too many to battle.

The party should be caught up in a wild frenzy of scurrying, snatching up things and packing, and getting half-dressed. If Sneakabout is along, he has dangled a rope out the open window of his room, scurried down it, and saddled the party's horses for a quick getaway. Otherwise, PCs can choose their own escape route and either saddle their own horses or steal others.

If the PCs disagree on whether to fight or flee, read the following section aloud:

The rain has stopped. You hear the front door of the inn crash open, and the thunder of booted feet. A chair overturns with a crash. Thumps from heavy boots sound on the stairs, and then you hear the quiet, steely voice of Dunman, the innkeeper.

"Just a moment, gentlemen. Rooms are two silver falcons a night" —you hear the clash of steel upon steel— "and I let them only to those folk I choose to have under my roof." Steel rings and clashes again, and you hear a curse. "And I must admit," the innkeeper's voice resumes, "that I'm beginning to entertain negative thoughts as to admitting yourselves!"

There is a short scream, a grunt, the clatter of a dropped blade, and Dunman chuckles. You can hear no more.

Chapter 2: Danger, Danger Everywhere

If any PCs try to stay and fight, they are shoved aside by Khair (the girl who served them dinner earlier), who hisses at them, "Get you gone! You'll be in the way! Go!" She has a heavy double crossbow in her hand. She fires over Dunman's shoulder into the faces of oncoming Zhentilar, as the innkeeper holds the stairs with a great two-handed sword.

The snorting of horses and the creak of leather as everyone mounts and ties on packs drowns out further sounds of combat. A moment later, the PCs are riding hard across the crossroads.

There is one surprised Zhentilar soldier here. The PCs should have no trouble dispatching him. Then the adventurers ride into the night. They soon find that Cyric's men block all avenues out of Eveningstar except the road to the west, toward Stormhorn Pass.

Event 3: Meeting in The Peaks

Fleeing with Cyric's men hot on their heels, the adventurers ride desperately west toward the far-off safety of High Horn. Streaming clouds cloak the moon periodically, plunging the road into darkness.

Dodging the occasional crossbow bolt, they charge through Tyrluk. No map of the village is provided, as the night is dark and the chase very close, offering PCs no time to turn aside, take cover, call for aid, or snatch up anything.

The four rearmost adventurers are each attacked twice during their wild ride. The hard-riding Zhentilar are slowly overtaking the party, but the pace is frantic and the night dark: only rolls of 20 succeed in striking PCs. The Zhentilar light crossbow bolts do 1d4 damage.

The pursuing soldiers are too numerous for the adventurers to safely turn and fight them. The NPCs will certainly not stop—and if the PCs know what's good for them, they will keep on riding as well. Eventually, while riding up the rising road into the mountains, the adventurers come upon a troop of 36 Cormyrean soldiers riding hardy mountain ponies. These Purple Dragons are returning to High Horn from extended patrol in the Stonelands. The Purple Dragons turn at the party's approach, spear points swinging around.

PCs can flee in another direction or try to enlist the soldiers' aid.

Flee: The PCs must ride off the road, going either north or south into the foothills west of Tyrluk. Suspicious at the adventurers' behavior, the Cormyreans pursue. The soldiers break off the chase, however, when a rear guard shouts "Zhentilar!" The Purple Dragons chase Cyric's band back toward Eveningstar, leaving the PCs to continue their journey. (However, the Zhentilar escape.)

The only safe route lies toward High Horn in the west, but let the PCs take whatever path they like. Run encounters with monsters or Zhentilar patrols, and translate later events into the PCs' new surroundings.

Enlist Aid: The PCs can tell a convincing story; offer the code phrase "Aid, in Azoun's name!" if they learned it from the innkeeper Dunman; or just stall until the Zhentilar appear. When the Purple Dragons see the Zhentilar, the Cormyreans part to pass by the adventurers without a word, and promptly charge at the oncoming Zhentilar.

The Cormyrean soldiers are 2nd level fighters with 17 hp each. All wear chain mail and carry shields (AC 4), and are armed with light horse lances (1d6 damage), crossbows, long swords, darts, and daggers.

The PCs hear barked orders. Cyric's men wheel about and flee back east on the road, soon outdistancing the ponies of the Purple Dragons with their larger, stronger chargers.

The trailcaptain of the Cormyrean patrol is Tharsar Immerlund (F5, AC 1, Int 17, Dex 17). He is armed with a *long sword* + 1. Tharsar sends 12 soldiers to follow and scout the Zhentilar, then continues toward High Horn. If the PCs haven't fled out of easy earshot, he offers the adventurers an escort.

If the PCs accept the offer, they and their new escort reach High Horn in the dark of night without further incident. Go to the next event.

If any PCs want to go elsewhere, chase the Zhentilar, or split up, let them. Cyric's band continues to harry them until they evade or defeat it. If they don't go to High Horn, skip the next event. When the PCs settle down for the night, translate Event 5 to their new surroundings.

Event 4: Dinner at High Horn

High Horn is a mighty, many-towered castle perched atop a crag overlooking the narrowest point in Stormhorn Pass. Frowning gatehouses guard the three windswept paths that bend and twist up to it.

Alert guardsmen sound long horns as the party comes within sight of High Horn castle. Over 60 mounted, plate-mailed Purple Dragons emerge from the nearest gatehouse to block the road.

Tharsar rides forward alone to report. He confers with the Swordcaptain of the Pass for quite some time. Then he returns, smiling.

"You are to be guests of the Lord Commander of High Horn, Kae Deverell," he says. "Follow us on up. But draw no weapons, I warn you. Some of the lads tend to loose shafts in haste, and think on it later."

As the PCs pass through the thick curtain wall into the castle proper, the cloud-strewn night skies open up, and a gentle but chilly autumn rain begins to fall.

Tharsar points across a vast courtyard to an inner tower, a keep surrounded by a moat, which in turn is surrounded by a low ring-wall. "Leave your mounts with the gate guard," he says, "and walk across the drawbridge to the portal within. The Lord Commander awaits your attendance at table." He grins. "I hope you like ale."

Tharsar's patrol turns aside to a barracks. The party rides straight across the courtyard to the drawbridge, where sentinels armed with pikes await them.

Guards escort the adventurers into the keep, guiding them to a high-ceilinged, shield-hung feast hall. There the Lord Kae Deverell, a stout, bearded man, rises from his seat, tankard in hand.

"Well met, travelers! I'm told you were set upon by Zhentilar this night! In atonement, I offer the safety of the keep, and a ready, hot meal! What say you?"

Chapter 2: Danger, Danger Everywhere

As Lord Deverell speaks, servants carry fresh platters in from the kitchen on their shoulders: steaming roast goat on rice, in mushroom sauce. The smell is delightful. Fifteen officers and six “war wizards” of the Purple Dragons sit around the long table, drinking wine and sipping cabbage soup. Tubs of ice on the table hold ale jugs. Servants have set fresh places for the adventurers.

PCs can accept or reject the invitation. If they reject it, Lord Deverell appears amused and bears no ill will. The party can eat in their quarters in the castle. Skip to the next section (“Looking Around”).

However, the NPCs recommend accepting Deverell’s invitation. If the party accepts the invitation, they follow servants to their seats, and dig into the feast with gusto.

Twice during the meal, a page boy running messages from the watchcaptain interrupts Lord Deverell to whisper in his ear. Each time, allow the nearest PCs Intelligence checks to notice the brief interruption. A successful check means that the PCs overhear that, according to the watchcaptain, guards are missing—first two from the outer curtain wall, then three from the inner curtain. Lord Deverell nods each time, but does not discuss the matter with PCs.

Lord Deverell drinks heartily. From the expressions of the officers around, it is apparent that the lord often gets roaring drunk at evenfeast. Establish his jovial, essentially shallow personality for the PCs. Later in the adventure, they encounter Lord Deverell—or at least his form—in a far different context.

When Deverell finally succumbs to drink, two grumbling officers put him to bed. Another four carry drunken PCs and NPCs up to their rooms. The guest apartments are on the fourth floor of the keep: plain chambers that open off staircase landings. PCs may go up to bed at any time, by asking a servant to take them.

Looking Around The Castle

Important: Make it clear to the players that the staircase to their quarters spirals up the open center of the keep. This may become important later in the event.

PCs can try to wander the castle. If Sneakabout is along, he encourages this. However, without Lord Deverell as a guide (and he’s either busy drinking or

passed out by now), this is impolite at best.

Prying characters must avoid discovery by the castle’s numerous guards. A character caught snooping gets one diplomatic warning from the watchcaptain; if the PC is caught a second time, the guards politely lock the character in his or her room.

No map of High Horn is provided in this adventure. If a PC successfully sneaks around the castle, improvise descriptions of a routine castle operation, or adapt a castle map from another TSR product. The only notable feature of High Horn involves the central keep; see “The Staircase,” below.

Talking to Guards: PCs can stay where they’re supposed to and talk to the guards. Regarding the disappearances that the page mentioned to Lord Deverell, the guards know nothing definite. But they gladly pass along plenty of stories about ghosts that supposedly haunted the keep. These stories are completely false—at least so far as this adventure is concerned.

The Staircase: Investigating the castle, PCs may find one interesting architectural feature. If the proficiency rules are being used, give characters with engineering, carpentry, or other construction skills a proficiency check. If the proficiency rules are not used, give any character an Intelligence check.

If the check succeeds, the character observes that the staircase landings on each floor of the keep are built to collapse! The landings are made of loose stones, fitted into wooden frames. The frames are supported by single-beam supports, wedged in massive wooden brackets.

Iron cranks located in rooms on each landing can retract these brackets into the walls by means of rack-and-pinion gears. This is evidently a defensive measure; defenders retreating into upper rooms of the keep can cut off access to their refuges.

The staircase itself is solid, although the collapsing of landings would cause it to have long gaps at each collapsed level.

The collapsible landings are not especially easy to detect because they were incorporated into the original construction of the keep. The architecture of the fortress looks centuries old.

Event 5: To Battle Murder

In the early hours of the morning, shouts awaken the PCs:

“Halt in the name of Azoun, the Purple Dragon!”

“Stay back! Back, or I’ll—aiiee!”

“No! No!”

“Watch him! He’ll—aaghh!”

PCs must take at least two rounds to grab a weapon and shield, prepare a magical item, and/or put on armor before they rush outside to investigate. (Sneakabout, if he is with the party, is already prowling around the keep on his own. Midnight also awakens, but stays in her room, unsure of her usefulness without her spells.)

In the flickering torchlight, PCs who leave their rooms see the reason for the shouting. Read this aloud:

On the stone stair below the landing, four chain mail-clad guards armed with halberds and short swords face a single unarmed man. The man is climbing upward, empty-handed. His simple tunic is torn wide open, showing a gaunt, bony body covered with many cuts and gouges. He stands little more than a head taller than a halfling. His head is shaved bald and tattooed with green and red swirls.

The man’s face is ugly, with nervous, bulging eyes, buck teeth, a small nose, and flaplike ears. His eyes burn with a strange intensity as he calmly walks up the stairs.

This is the avatar of Bhaal, the God of Murder. He has possessed the body of a disciple and punished it mercilessly during his long journey to High Horn. (The abilities of Bhaal’s avatar appear in the appendix section at the end of this adventure.)

If the PCs continue to watch, Bhaal kills the four guards within four rounds. From one halberdier he grabs the weapon in his bare hands, ignoring the gash it creates; with the weapon he casually sweeps two guards off the staircase.

A third halberdier impales the avatar. Bhaal grabs the halberd’s shaft protruding from his chest, holds it firmly in place and charges up the stairs. He drives the weapon’s shaft through the guard’s mailed chest.

Chapter 2: Danger, Danger Everywhere

The avatar then punches the fourth and last guard, shattering his blade as though it is made of glass, and hurls him down stairs. Bhaal then steps onto the landing to battle PCs who stand against him. He appears especially interested in the character who carries the Tablet of Fate. First, he speaks.

The short man stares up at you. In a deep voice he says, "I am Bhaal. Your tablet belongs to me."

This is a feint. Bhaal offers this obvious motive to conceal his real strategy: to kidnap Midnight, tell her the location of Myrkul's tablet, then let her free so she can fetch it. However, the PCs should have no reason to suspect that Bhaal wants anything other than the tablet that the party is carrying.

Make it clear to the PCs that they cannot, under any circumstances, allow the god to get their Tablet of Fate. According to Midnight and the other NPCs, to do so would mean Bhaal could rule the Realms!

Before the god can engage the PCs, he passes the door to Midnight's room. The door suddenly flies open, and Midnight sinks her dagger hilt-deep in the avatar's back.

Bhaal's eyes open wide in surprise. He starts to turn, and PCs can seize the opportunity to attack. Treat Bhaal's AC as 10 for this surprise attack. NPCs attack as well (including Adon, if he is along). Bhaal's knees buckle, and the avatar collapses, tumbling down the stairs with a roar of anger.

From below, you hear the clatter of boots on the stairs, and shouted orders. More guards are arriving.

Midnight asks, "Is he . . . dead?"

Bhaal rolls to his feet and leaps up the stairs, dripping blood. A guard charges to meet him.

Bhaal smashes the attacking sword aside, then grabs the man's throat with his other hand. There is a sickening crack, and the guard goes limp.

Suddenly, the guard stands upright, and Bhaal's body falls. The short man you fought now lies limp on the stairs. But the guard turns to look up at you . . . and in his eyes burns the madness you just saw in Bhaal's previous body.

Stress the word "previous." Bhaal has taken over the guard's dead body; it is now his avatar. As such, he again has his full hit point total. Bhaal turns smoothly and hurls his old body down the stairs into the oncoming soldiers.

Fighting Bhaal

PCs have several options: attack, run, try to trick Bhaal, or, if they have discovered the feature of the staircase described above, arrange to collapse the staircase on Bhaal.

These options are described below. At the end of this event, a section called "If the PCs Lose" discusses the PCs' possible failure and Bhaal's victory.

Attack: A powerful party can challenge Bhaal—possibly. After all, he is AC 0 and has only 84 hp and 45% magic resistance. Since he regenerates only 2 hp per round, they might overwhelm him.

However, when he is in danger of dying during combat, he can simply possess a new body, regaining full strength as he does so. Bhaal does not possess PCs or important NPCs; instead, he chooses another guard. There is no shortage of these men, who throw themselves bravely against the god. Other than this, Bhaal prefers not to use magic in combat.

The PCs are probably aware by now that when an avatar of a god dies, the explosion is tremendous. So they may be reluctant to inflict fatal damage on Bhaal. If they kill Bhaal and he explodes, they have one round to prepare defenses or use magic to escape before the god blows up. Consult Event 2 of Chapter 4 for ways to handle the explosion.

The DM may prefer to keep Bhaal alive for the later meeting in Chapter 3, but the PCs and Midnight may be in no condition to entrap him (as described below). If so, Bhaal can *teleport* away when the battle goes against him.

Run: This is a prudent idea. Bhaal keeps hard on the party's heels as they flee High Horn. If they try to move east over the pass, he attacks, perhaps killing their mounts. If the PCs move west, Bhaal allows the party to "lose" him. He makes another attempt on Midnight in the next chapter.

Trick: In general, this tactic does not work. Bhaal can automatically see through 1st level illusions. And he is deeply suspicious. For instance, if the PCs

present him with an illusory Tablet of Fate or pretend to "summon" a rival avatar, Bhaal casts *dispel magic* or *true seeing* to detect the fraud.

At any rate, Bhaal enjoys killing. Even if he is fooled into accepting a false tablet, he should still try to kidnap Midnight. The PCs probably must beat him some other way.

Collapsing the Landing: There is a crank just inside one PC's room, behind the door. Turning the crank causes an ear-splitting metallic screeching, as rusty gears pull the support for the landing back into the room.

And then the entire landing collapses with a roar.

Bhaal and any PCs on the landing fall to the floor below, amid the loose stones. The fall does 4d6 damage to everyone. A successful PC Dexterity check halves damage. All items carried or worn must save vs. crushing blow.

However, Bhaal probably does not die this easily:

As the dust clears, the avatar of Bhaal lies amid the loose stone rubble. His head twists sharply to one side, and his sprawled body looks crushed and lifeless. But his eyes are still open. He stares up at Midnight in anger, and slowly curls his hands into fists, one after the other.

Bhaal ignores PCs crawling away, or others pulling PCs out of the rubble near him. Laboriously he hauls his shattered body into a sitting position.

At this point the players may think to collapse the landings on other floors. (If they don't, give them Intelligence checks to think of this, if desired.) It takes one round to move upstairs; floors below are not accessible except through careful climbing or magic. Once on other floors, PCs have no difficulty finding the cranks that retract the landing supports.

One stone falls, then another. Then the whole landing gives way, plummeting onto the rubble of the first landing's fall. Bhaal and anyone still in the rubble take a full 4d8 damage from the fall of the second landing (no saving throws allowed).

For those on a level beneath a collapsing landing: Anyone whose body partly projects from any room doorway is swept away by the fall of the second landing. They suffer 4d6 damage, but allow Dexterity checks for half damage.

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Everyone stares down at the dust-shrouded rubble.

As the dust clears, all you can see of Bhaal is a bloodied hand and foot projecting from the stones. The hand twitches, and then slowly pushes a stone away.

Midnight frowns, and murmurs something. Making a pass with one hand, she takes something from a pocket of her robe, and sprinkles it on the rubble below.

The rubble glows briefly, turns orange, seems to melt and shift, and turns transparent. Soon the mangled form of Bhaal is encased in something that looks like pine sap.

Bhaal continues to struggle slowly. Midnight, eyes shut, is quietly chanting and making intricate patterns in the air with her hands. The sap hardens until Bhaal—all except for one feebly moving hand—is encased in a huge drop of rock-hard amber.

Midnight shrugs wearily. "It just came to me," she says. "I don't understand it myself." She turns and walks across the ruined door, disappearing into the depths of her room.

Far below, a Purple Dragon officer taps Bhaal's prison timidly with his sword. "Will this hold?" he asks, warily.

Bhaal stares balefully up at him through the solid amber.

Midnight's Change

Midnight spoke the truth when she said she didn't understand how she cast the spell that imprisoned Bhaal. Do not reveal this directly to the players, but this is due to Midnight's growing magical powers. The power of Mystra now causes spells to appear fully formed in Midnight's mind.

Thus, while wondering how to dispose of Bhaal, Midnight thought about encasing him in amber, and an appropriate type of magic came into her mind. The instant it happened, she knew what had occurred—but she still (at this point) isn't sure why.

This ability remains with Midnight for the rest of this adventure. Its details follow.

Midnight is not restricted to spells known previously, to spells of one school of magic, or even to spells described in the AD&D™ game books. She can use any



conceivable form of wizard magic (but not magic specifically in the domain of priests, such as cure spells). When she thinks about using magic to achieve a certain effect, she forms in her mind the knowledge of how to cast a spell that duplicates or closely approximates the effect she desires. If the spell ordinarily requires a material component, she still must possess that component in order to cast the magic. The particular components needed are made known to her with the spell knowledge.

She can hold only one spell in her mind at a time. The spell appears only after $1d4 + 1$ rounds of continuous concentration. (When Chapter 5 begins, shorten this time to $1d4$ rounds.) Her concentration is automatically broken by any attack that hits her, regardless of damage done.

Midnight's spells remain subject to magical chaos throughout this adventure, and casting times are unchanged. The duration and damage of one of her spells may extend beyond normal maximums, beginning in Chapter 5.

Midnight need not cast a spell to get rid of it; she can intentionally "forget" it, and the spell fades from her mind within a single round. But any spell desired in its place requires the additional $1d4 + 1$ (or later $1d4$) rounds of concentration to appear.

If The PCs Lose

Bhaal is a god, after all. If he can get past the PCs to Midnight, he knocks her unconscious, grabs her, and leaps out a high window of the keep. This breaks his current body's legs—so outside, he kills and

possesses a very surprised guard, then steals a fast horse and flees out of the keep.

However, he waits long enough for PCs to pursue. If the PCs are in no shape to chase Bhaal, he allows Purple Dragon patrols to trail him and report back to the heroes about his route.

Bhaal wants the PCs to find him. He leaves a clear trail, and he travels slowly without being obvious about it. (Don't point out his slow rate of travel unless the PCs wonder why they can track him this easily.)

Try to extend the pursuit over several days. Bhaal's avatar needs no sleep, so he can simply ride his horse to death, steal another from passing travelers, and continue. Also, PCs can be delayed by random encounters, or by bands of night riders sent by Myrkul.

During the chase, as an offstage event, Bhaal "lets slip" the information he intended to convey to Midnight.

Along the trail the PCs encounter Cyric's band of Zhentilar. They may or may not make an alliance to rescue Midnight. See Event 8 in the next chapter.

In this way the chase eventually leads to Boareskyr Bridge. At that time, run Event 9 from the next chapter.

The next chapter assumes that the PCs successfully fight off Bhaal's attack without disabling or killing him.

Chapter 3: Magic—and Murder

EVENT 1: Perilous Paths

The next morning, over morningfeast, a grateful Lord Deverell offers the most resourceful PCs the post of Watchcaptain at High Horn as a reward for their quick thinking.

PCs who accept the offer need not remain at High Horn; Lord Deverell can appoint them as “escorts” to Midnight and the others. They wear the Purple Dragon, carry High Horn’s reputation for honor and duty with them, and will gain respect throughout Cormyr. After the adventure ends, they have a new position waiting for them.

If PCs reject the offer, Lord Deverell says that he understands why they cannot accept. He adds that 40 halflings passed High Horn before dawn, heading west in search of the Zhentilar band that destroyed the halfling village of Black Oaks. High Horn’s patrols sighted the Zhentilar once, and believes them to have passed west out of Cormyr, through the Stormhorns.

Lord Deverell offers to send a large patrol west into Tun Plain, to escort the adventurers as far as the Sunset Mountains. The presence of many Purple Dragons should discourage attacks from the roving Zhentilar band, which by now could be on its way back to the Zhentilar base at Darkhold, in the Far Hills.

If asked why he’s aiding them, Deverell says coyly, “A certain mage asked me to look out for you.” This, obviously, is Elminster the Sage.

Martial Aid

If the PCs accept the escort, 50 fully armed Purple Dragons ride out with the PC party. They are AC 4 (chain mail and shield) and are armed with light crossbows, with 2 quivers of 21 quarrels each, horse lances, long swords, maces, and 2 daggers each. All are 2nd level fighters (16 hp), except the leader, Swordcaptain Lunt, who is 4th level and has 33 hp. Lunt has a bastard sword but no shield, crossbow, or lance; he is still AC 4 because of high Dexterity.

All the Cormyrean soldiers ride hardy ponies and wear surcoats emblazoned with the Purple Dragon. Every third rider leads a “pack horse” (actually a spare riding mount, used for carrying food and

water until needed) on a long rein.

Deverell outfits the PCs with all the normal, nonmagical gear they request, such as mounts, rope, food and drink, armor, and weaponry. All equipment is of top quality. Note that there is no time to custom-make armor; thus, PCs cannot gain field plate or full plate armor.

For the trip westward, a PC can strap the wrapped Tablet of Fate securely to his or her back.

DM Note: Keep careful track from this point on of the adventurers’ provisions. Shortages of food and drink may well force the PCs to hunt in the Sunset Mountains. For example, they may have to fight a given monster, rather than flee. The adventurers are undertaking an overland journey that is dangerous and exhausting at the best of times—and this is definitely not the best of times.

A Night in The Stormhorns

The adventurers (and the patrol, if it is along) get underway in the late morning, and are still in the Stormhorns when night falls. Check twice per hour for overnight monster encounters, using an appropriate table from the *Monstrous Compendium* or some other AD&D™ game monster collection. Assign a chance for having encounters based on how much of a challenge you want the party to experience.

If the Purple Dragons escort the party, they mount a strong watch. Non-flying monsters of lesser power do not attack the encamped warriors, or else the soldiers defeat them without even awakening the PCs. The arrival of more powerful creatures, however, may result in a midnight battle.

Across Tun Plain

The next day the travelers emerge onto Tun Plain. In the northern reaches where the force is crossing, the plain is rolling grassland, broken by gravel ridges. The size of the force discourages most monster attacks. But if the party travels without the escort from High Horn, consult the High Moor Encounter Table inside the foldout back cover of this adventure.

Late in the afternoon of the first day, the travelers are startled to see clouds in the shape of a great armored warrior on a galloping horse passing silently and ma-

jestically overhead. Perhaps it is some spell or manifestation of Tempus. Who knows? Use similar mysterious effects to remind the players of the chaos that blights the land.

The next two encounters are optional. Run them if the players are in the mood for combat, or if it suits the story’s needs.

Attack of The Lizard Men

The lizard men who dwell in the Marsh of Tun have developed a sophisticated raiding and trading society. They use stolen weapons themselves, and trade all the seized goods they cannot use for healing potions. They deal with certain unscrupulous traders based in Eagle Peak and Proskur.

Drawn by the adventurers’ campfires, the lizard men come to raid. After dark of the first nightfall on Tun Plain, in the cool of the night, the party is set upon by hissing, gray-skinned scaly horrors.

If the party is accompanied by the Purple Dragon patrol, there are 36 lizard men. If the party refused the Cormyrean escort, the lizard-man force is a scouting party numbering one monster per PC and NPC in the party.

These lizards are after plunder, not a fight to the death. Trying to draw the adventurers (and Purple Dragons) away from the camp, they attack repeatedly from various directions. The lizard men hurl javelins from the darkness to fell those on watch, or anyone who appears to be casting spells. If the characters leave their goods unattended, the lizards steal them and try to escape.

Lizard Men: AC 5 (4 with shield); MV 6; HD 2 + 1; hp 15 each; THAC0 19; #AT 2 or 3; damage by weapon type plus 1d6 (bite), or 1d2/1d2 (claws) and 1d6 (bite); AL N. Each carries six darts (range 30’, 1d4 damage), two javelins (1d6), a short sword (1d6), and a dagger (1d4).

All lizard men also have shields and large canvas sacks with shoulder straps, for the carrying of booty. Six lizard men carry *potions of healing* in vials attached to their belts.

The Dead Are Always With Us

On the second night of their journey across the plain, the travelers camp atop some grassy hills. They see lizard men

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just after dusk, but the scaled ones do not attack or approach again.

Later there is a sudden, silent charge of night riders on gaunts, activated offstage by Myrkul. (Both monsters are described in the appendix of this adventure.) The undead attack in eerie silence.

There are 16 night riders, all mounted and armed with light horse lances (1d6), morning stars (2d4), and scimitars (1d8). They attack as 4th level fighters and have 30 hp each. Their mounts have 18 hp apiece.

Two of the night riders also have *scythes of wounding* +1. These do a base damage of 2d4 + 1, and have magical effects identical to those of a *sword of wounding* (detailed in the *DMG*).

These hills are ancient barrow-tombs. If desired, these can contain treasure and even extensive dungeon complexes for further adventuring.

Event 2: Through The Bonerun

The trip across Tun Plain takes at least three days. During that time the weather gets steadily colder and more wintry. Midnight is thoughtful and withdrawn, meditating on her new power.

If the Purple Dragons accompanied the party, the adventurers part ways with the Cormyrean patrol in the foothills of the Sunset Mountains. While the characters make their farewells, a Purple Dragon scout gallops up to report that a Zhentilar force is hurrying north from Darkhold to intercept them.

Swordcaptain Lunt smiles slowly. "Are they, now? Well, we'll have to greet them in the appropriate manner, won't we?"

He turns back to you. "We'll keep them busy for you—but hurry now, lest you be caught up in the fray before you can get clear!"

Lunt points up into the rising mountains ahead of you. "Your best route is the Bonerun. It's a valley, just there—see? It heads west, but never reaches the other side. On its northern wall, near the end, you'll have to climb up out of it. Look for a trail marked by human skulls. . . it's the Zhents' back way up over the lowest peaks.

"It splits, up there somewhere. One route goes up into Yellow Snake Pass—avoid that, or you'll all find death for sure. The other winds west, coming out between the pass and Corm Orp. Go warily; plenty of flying beasts prey on the mountain ways."

He grins. "Good luck! And when you run short on that, make your own!"

The PCs can use a narrow, twisting trail along one wall of the Bonerun. It is lined with thick stands of pine, already gloomy in the late afternoon light.

Roll 1d6 for encounters every hour:

1-3: Nothing occurs.

4: 3d4 stirges or 1d3 wyverns (DM's choice) attack.

5: 1d4 hungry griffons attack.

6: Rockfall on the party.

Rockfalls

A rockfall in the Bonerun lasts two rounds. Each round, four rocks "attack" each character (roll four to-hit rolls, THAC0 13). Each rock does 1d6 damage. Characters get a Dexterity check against each strike; if it is successful, reduce damage by half, rounding fractions down.

Consider a damage result of 6 (before a Dexterity check is applied) to hit the character's head. Two head hits knock out a character for 1-2 turns. No means short of magical healing can rouse the character. Shouting, slapping, and even further attacks have no effect.

For the effects of rockfalls on characters who try to climb the walls of the Bonerun, refer to p. 82 of the *Wilderness Survival Guide* rulebook.

Event 3: Darkness Attacks

PCs find no Zhentilar guards alive in the Bonerun. Dead ones, yes, and lots of dropped weapons, fireball scorch marks on the rocks, and the like—but living guards, no. Though they cannot know it, this is the aftermath of an encounter between Cyric's forces and the avatar of Bhaal, God of Murder.

As dusk approaches, the adventurers are unable to continue along the mountain trail. They should not try to use torches or magical light and thereby at-

tract attention. Should they do so, let them travel normally, but stage monster encounters every 1d6 turns. The best plan is to look for a place to camp.

The likeliest spot is a stand of pines atop a cliff, overlooking the lower Bonerun they have been climbing all day. (If the PCs choose another spot, translate details of the following encounter to fit the new surroundings.) All characters should recognize that they dare not lay a fire.

It is a clear, moonlit night. With no attempt at stealth, a cloaked and hooded man—Cyric!—steps into the camp clearing. "I'm here to see Midnight," he announces. This wakes up everyone in the camp.

Cyric's Motives

Cyric is making one more try to convince Midnight to join him, bring the Tablet of Fate, and desert the PCs. This time he hopes a show of force, and perhaps a threat against her friends, will convince her.

The PCs very likely try to attack Cyric. If Kelemvor is along, he certainly tries. Midnight protests that Cyric only came to talk, and demands that everyone put aside their weapons.

However, Cyric did not come without backup. Whether or not the PCs attack, Cyric draws his own glowing red short sword and calls, "Dalzhel!"

Cyric's Zhentilar number over 30, unless their casualties so far in this adventure have been very heavy. They emerge from the night in a long line, cocked crossbows in hand. (Event 4 of Chapter 1 lists their statistics and weaponry.) They close in, trapping the party against the cliff edge.

Midnight casts a *wall of fire*. It rises up as a raging 20-foot-high wall of green flame. It sets the pine copse alight, and separates Cyric, the adventurers, and their mounts from the Zhentilar. Cyric, for once, appears impressed.

Engaging Cyric

The encounter proceeds according to whether the PCs avoid fighting or attack Cyric; and, if they attack, whether they defeat him. They cannot "lose," since for the moment Cyric does not attack.

Avoid Fighting: Cyric proposes that the two parties join. Go to "Conversation," below.

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Attack: Regardless of how many PCs join in, Cyric can hold off the attacking weapons. Whenever he parries, the touch of his magical sword (detailed in the New Magic appendix) stops other weapons cold, as though they had been swung against a stone wall.

If Sneakabout is present, he charges in, crying “My sword!” Brainwashed by the curse he suffers, Sneakabout wants to kill Cyric himself, but gladly allows anyone else to try.

Take into account the chance that an adventurer might fall over the edge of the cliff. The chance varies according to what tactics PCs use and where they position themselves during the fight.

If the PCs Defeat Cyric: NPCs such as Kelemvor and Sneakabout argue that they should kill Cyric at once. If PCs agree, read the following aloud:

“Stop!” Midnight screams. “If you kill him, what’s to stop his men from killing us?”

Cyric smiles. “I was wondering when you’d take note of that.” He frees his sword arm. “Can we reason together? Many men serve me. Let us join forces; we all want the same thing—to bring both tablets to Helm, and save the Realms!”

If PCs decide not to kill Cyric, the belligerent NPCs acquiesce, grumbling. Cyric makes the offer above, and discussion continues from there. Go to “Conversation,” below.

If PCs still try to kill Cyric, read the following:

“Wait!” Midnight screams. “We will not become butchers!” And she wills the *wall of fire* into nothingness. As your companions stand amazed, the Zhentilar raise their crossbows and take aim.

If this happens, go to “Battle,” below.

CONVERSATION

Cyric makes his pitch to Midnight, much like the one he made at the Lonesome Tankard Inn in Chapter 2. He argues that since his Zhentilar got the drop on the PCs, the heroes are unfit to protect her. And so on.

When Midnight refuses his offer, Cyric then counters with an offer of alliance.



The two bands can join to increase their strength against the gods who seek the tablet.

Choosing Alliance: PCs can decide whether to ally with Cyric; Midnight argues strongly for it.

Any alliance, needless to say, is extremely cool. The Zhentilar travel and camp at a distance from the PCs; they shout sneering insults in battle; and they always try to make the PCs lead or take risks in combat.

At the first opportunity, Cyric betrays the party, tries to steal their tablet, and deserts them, preferably in the midst of battle with Bhaal or at some other perilous time.

Refusing Alliance: Cyric, infuriated, commits an atrocity that alienates Midnight from him. See “The Deed of Blood,” below.

BATTLE

PCs can try to fight Cyric’s Zhentilar (a foolhardy choice). The Zhentilar get one free attack before any PC can attack; then combat continues normally.

If they do fight, this should be a very difficult battle for the PCs. All of them, even Midnight, should become convinced that Cyric means them no good. The party should eventually have to retreat into the darkness, with Cyric’s troops in pursuit. Cyric himself, of course, survives.

PCs can also try to avoid battle by taking Cyric hostage. If they do this, read the following:

“Stand up,” you order Cyric. “Order them back.”

“Hold, Dalzhel!” Cyric yells. At a wave from Cyric’s second in command, the Zhentilar halt. Dalzhel asks calmly, “Your command, milord?”

Let the PCs tell Dalzhel what his troops should do. Probably they order the Zhentilar to go away.

Cyric looks at Dalzhel. “Do as they say,” he says briefly.

There is a tense silence. Dalzhel surveys the scene coldly, and then says, “If you do not release him unharmed, we will be back.” Then in silence he leads the Zhentilar away. Some of them keep bows leveled on you all until they have retreated out of sight.

The Deed of Blood

Assuming the party does not ally with Cyric, the purpose of this scene is to alienate the entire party from him. (If they do ally with him, the alienation comes later.) Even Midnight must now recognize his evil. To this end, Cyric must commit an atrocity, a genuinely evil deed.

The specific deed varies according to the players’ actions. Be ready to take many kinds of opportunities. Some sample atrocities:

* Cyric slays an important NPC. In the novel, Cyric kills Sneakabout; this event is described in more detail below, as a sample for the DM’s own improvisation.

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* A Zhentilar soldier makes some elementary blunder, such as accidentally firing at Cyric. Though the sword deflects the blow, Cyric grows furious. Before the party's eyes, he brutally slays his own man in grotesque fashion.

* Cyric spitefully mutilates or inflicts an ugly wound on any PC. The wound does little damage, but it leaves an unsightly, unconcealable scar. Reduce the victim's Charisma score by 2 or 3. Treat this as a magical power of Cyric's sword, so that the damage cannot easily be healed. This kind of deed gets on players' nerves in a truly personal way. As much as a killing, a mutilation can turn the PCs into Cyric's most determined foes.

Here is a sample atrocity, drawn from the corresponding event in the novel. Cyric has confronted the party on the cliffside. The heroes take him hostage, send away the Zhentilar, and (bound by a promise not to kill Cyric) let him go. He uses Sneakabout's rope to climb down the cliff and rejoin his troops. If events fall this way in the game, read the following:

Without sheathing his sword, Cyric wraps the rope around himself to rappel down the cliff, and disappears from view.

"Please don't make me regret saving your life, Cyric," Midnight calls. A grunt from below is his only answer.

Suddenly Sneakabout shoves her aside. "I can't take it any longer! My sword! I must have my sword!" he cries, and scrambles down the rope after Cyric.

Midnight gasps and casts a *light* spell down into the valley below as the party peers over the cliff. Assuming the spell is not affected by chaos, her magic is in time to show the PCs the scene of Sneakabout struggling atop Cyric's shoulders, clawing for the glowing short sword. An instant later, that blade pulses, and the halfling's body falls away from the rope, plummeting silently down to the valley below.

PCs can cut the rope, but Cyric has already swung in toward the cliff face, out of view. They do not see him fall; he must be safely clinging to the cliff.

Aftermath

In the wake of his atrocity, Cyric escapes. Assuming the party did not destroy all the Zhentilar, the sickened NPCs urge

the party to move on, quickly, before Cyric can lead his men back up to trap them again. This is excellent advice; encourage the PCs to take it.

Using the light of the last of the blazing pines, and illumination conjured by Midnight (assuming magical chaos allows it), the party should flee along the trail in the darkness.

OFFSTAGE EVENT

Bhaal is back. . . .

If the avatar escaped from High Horn, he returns to the fortress under cover of darkness. If he was encased in amber by Midnight's magic, he manages to get free when Lord Deverell orders his men to tie ropes onto the mass and hang it up near the front gates for display. The ropes break, the amber casing hits the ground and shatters, and Bhaal is unleashed once again.

The avatar wreaks havoc throughout the fortress, killing any guard who tries to block his way. His trail of slaughter leads from the gates to Deverell's rooms. There he kills and possesses Deverell. Investigators find no sign of the Lord Commander, only the shriveled skin and bones of a stranger, lying in Deverell's apartments.

Event 4: A Wall of Darkness

This event begins as the chilly morning finds the adventurers still in the Bonerun. PCs who investigate discover that Cyric's troops are following them.

The trail winds on, climbing out of the Bonerun north through a rocky cleft between two mist-shrouded peaks. From that vantage point, the adventurers look out over Yellow Snake Pass. It stretches below them for as far as the eye can see, a great channel through the mountains, running west to east.

But the pass is entirely filled with darkness: black, impenetrable darkness.

The Chaos Field

The darkness is the result of a Zhentilar experiment. In the service of Bane, many Zhentilar worked together to create a gate to allow the Black Lord to escape from the Realms. They failed, due in part to Helm. The backlash created a temporary planar rift, or *chaos field*. The presence of this vast field of darkness has rendered the pass useless for the time being.

If the PCs test the darkness, they find that its touch instantly disintegrates all inorganic matter, including magical items. Artifacts leave their wielders and are *plane shifted* at random.

The *chaos field* also causes all living beings to suffer 2d4 internal damage per round of contact. Intelligent creatures in contact with the *field* must also save vs. poison once per round. Whenever the save fails, one of the following effects is instantly visited upon the affected being (roll 1d6):

1: Victim is *slowed* for 1d4 rounds (as the 3rd level wizard spell).

2: Permanent blindness.

3: Some form of insanity. Choose a mental illness (paranoia, pyromania, delusions, etc.) and tell the player of the affected character to role-play it.

4: Victim suffers a *feblemind* effect (as the 5th level wizard spell). This applies even to non-spellcasters.

5: Victim receives permanent infravision (60-foot range). If the victim already possesses infravision, it is increased in range by 60 feet.

6: Victim permanently loses 1d4 hp. The life energy is expended in a discharge from the victim's eyes, a straight beam that strikes anything in its path (i.e., wherever the victim is looking) up to 90' distant, for 2d8 hp of damage. The beam can injure up to three beings before it fades.

Diverted

The party must turn aside on a narrow, ever-climbing trail and take the route westward over the peaks, whether or not they want to. A day of difficult climbing passes. Midnight is short-tempered and morose.

Roll 1d6 every hour to check for encounters.

1-3: Nothing occurs.

4-5: A random encounter, selected purposefully or taken from a table in the *Monstrous Compendium* or some other source.

6: Rockfall; see Event 6 in Chapter 2 for details.

Chapter 3: Magic—and Murder

EVENT 5: Black Rain

The next day dawns cold and gray, a warning that winter is not far off. As the adventurers struggle upward, check for encounters and rockfalls as described above.

Around highsun (noon), wyverns attack the PCs on the mountain trail. These four hungry wyverns have 49, 47, 40, and 32 hp. They carry no treasure. If the battle grows too close for comfort, Midnight slays or drives them off with a *meteor swarm*—and then collapses, exhausted.

After the adventurers defeat the wyverns, they crest the high saddle between the peaks. They see the mountains falling away to the west, with the green expanse of the Far Lands beyond. The scene would usually be beautiful, but at that moment an ice-cold driving rain begins to fall. Its drops are jet black (a manifestation of physical chaos), and where it touches flesh, it leaves itching red circles behind.

Check for encounters as the adventurers follow the trail down the western side of the mountains. Midnight continues to ride in grim silence, responding angrily when spoken to.

When the sun is sinking low, the party finds a sheltered overhang at the base of a cliff in a steep-sided valley, and makes camp. A small, clear pool nearby contains a human skeleton—and nothing else. The water is cursed; horses can drink it safely, but it makes humans sick and weak (-1 to hit, -3 on all damage dealt, +1 on AC) for 24 hours after drinking from its water.

Any monster encounters here are with stirges or mountain lions. Because of the heavily overcast sky, night comes early.

EVENT 6: Midnight Goes Missing

Blaming herself for Cyric's atrocity (due to her misjudgment of Cyric), and reasoning that as long as she is with the party, she will bring death to her friends, Midnight resolves to seek the second tablet on her own.

In the early hours of the morning, Midnight leaves. If any PCs are standing watch and see her, she casts *sleep* on them. Using magical *silence* and, if neces-

sary, *invisibility* to conceal her actions, Midnight takes the tablet from the sleeping character who carries it.

If a PC has cleverly hidden the tablet, Midnight may resort to mind-reading or other magic to obtain it. If absolutely necessary, she leaves without the tablet. She assumes that those who menace the party will assume she carries the tablet and follow her instead of her friends.

Midnight wants to discourage pursuit until she builds a long lead. Therefore, she patiently bridles all the horses, ties together their reins, and attaches the combined lead rein to her own saddle. Then she mounts her own pony and leads them away. She leaves saddles and saddlebags behind.

When the PCs awaken in the morning, their only choice (besides cursing) is to follow the trail left by the horses. It will be slow going. Allow the PCs to abandon whatever gear they want . . . but they may wish they hadn't, later.

Check for encounters in the mountains periodically, as the adventurers walk for two days. The nights are clear and frosty. On one of these nights, with the PCs camped well off the trail, Cyric's band catches up to them and unwittingly passes them by.

Night Riders Redux

Use this optional encounter as desired.

On the morning of the third day after Midnight's disappearance, the party is attacked by seven of Myrkul's night riders. All are armed with clubs (1d6) and *scythes of wounding*. These are +1 magic weapons that do 2d4 + 1 damage, plus magical wounding effects identical with those of a *sword of wounding*, as detailed in the DMG. All night riders attack as 3rd level fighters, and have 20 hp.

Back in The Saddle

By midafternoon the party reaches a small stand of pines on the trail. In its center is a glade—and waiting in its shade are the missing horses, hobbled with their reins.

However, there is no sign of Midnight. Where has she gone? Characters who are familiar with this area (including Kelemvor, if he is along) expect that Midnight is heading for Hill's Edge, the only easy river crossing for many days' ride. It's also the only strong fortified city for miles around, and inhabited by men who hate the Zhentilar.

The NPCs recommend pressing on toward Hill's Edge. There seems little else to do. If the PCs decide on another course, let them take it. The events that follow still take place.

OFFSTAGE EVENT

Midnight travels alone for several days, through the time of the next event. Then she encounters Bhaal's avatar, and he quickly captures her.

EVENT 7: Battle in The Trees

Riding on the trail soon after Event 6, the adventurers hear a faint crashing in the underbrush ahead. A man rises out of brush beside the trail and runs away through the pines, clawing and scratching at small dark furry things swarming all over him.

PCs who succeed in an Intelligence check recognize the man as one of Cyric's Zhentilar. This sentry turns and runs into the woods. He seeks his fellows, so they can brush all these things off of him.

Try to arouse the players' curiosity, if this hasn't already done so. If PCs decide not to investigate, skip the remainder of this event and proceed to the next one.

PCs can investigate among the pines and creep along after the faint crashing noises. Bent double amid the prickly boughs, they are suddenly beset by a swarm of biting, clawing black squirrels.

Squirrel Warfare

Physical chaos has driven every squirrel in this wooded area fighting mad. PC spellcasters can *dispel* this effect, but on only one squirrel at a time. Any character can attack and kill a squirrel, but again, only one at a time. And there are hundreds of them!

Each character must make a successful Dexterity check every round or suffer 1 hp of bite damage. All attacks by characters during this event are at -1 to hit, since the attacker must constantly tear squirrels away from face, throat, and hands.

Cyric and his band are now about 22 strong, unless previous losses dictate otherwise. The men are sleeping in the woods. If the party tries to take them by surprise, the noises of the attacking squirrels and the returning road-sentry alert the Zhentilar.

Chapter 3: Magic—and Murder

Zhentilar Warfare

At this time, unless your up-to-date roster indicates otherwise, the band of Zhentilar includes Cyric, his second in command Dalzhel (F4, 36 hp), and the following troops: eight 3rd level fighters, each with 25 hp; ten 2nd level fighters of 18 hp; and three 1st level fighters with 10 hp each.

All Zhentilar wear chain mail and carry a shield (AC 4). All have a light crossbow and a quiver of 21 quarrels, a long sword or a mace, a hand axe, and 2 daggers. Optionally, some may also wield war hammers, battle axes, or bastard swords.

Depending on PC actions, there may or may not be a big battle amid the trees. If the PCs feel like talking, so does Cyric; see below. If PCs run, the Zhentilar follow and try to surround them; once they are surrounded, Cyric offers a truce. Again, see below.

If headstrong characters attack, conduct battle. Try to arrange a pause in the battle. At that point Cyric tensely calls for a halt to the fighting. To support his request, Cyric's men pull out menacing wands and brandish them as weapons. This is a ruse; the wands are nonmagical, tapered sticks of wood, painted black.

PCs can keep fighting or stop and talk. The consequences of these choices follow.

Keep Fighting: The battle continues. Cyric warns the adventurers not to attack him. He says that if he is injured or restrained, the magical blade he carries can animate to attack by itself; only his expert control prevents it from draining the life blood of anything it strikes.

This is all a lie. Anyone can wield the sword, and the user must do so for at least a round before releasing it to fight for itself. It cannot enter battle spontaneously. (See the description of Cyric's sword in the New Magic appendix.)

Stop to Talk: Cyric once more tries to persuade the PCs to join forces with him. To support his point, he tells them the latest news from Cormyr, gleaned from Zhentish spies: Bhaal is on the loose. (See the Offstage Event earlier in this chapter.) Cyric suspects that Bhaal now inhabits Deverell's body.

Cyric openly admits that he wants the Tablets of Fate himself. But that also means he doesn't want Bhaal to get them. So to that extent, his aims coincide with those of the PCs.



If the PCs ask where Midnight is, Cyric says, "I've nothing to do with her. Bhaal has her—and now that we're all about to kill each other, it looks like he'll keep her."

Cyric knows this because he witnessed Bhaal capturing Midnight. Cyric was trailing Midnight, looking for a chance to steal her tablet; he dared not attack the god alone.

PCs can accept or reject a truce to battle Bhaal and recover Midnight. If they refuse, Cyric and his lieutenant, Dalzhel, covertly follow the party. In the battle with Bhaal (Event 9), they try to find Midnight and steal her tablet. But they get caught up in the battle themselves.

EVENT 8: Heroes' Roads Go Ever On

The combined bands travel on uneasily together for three days, toward Boareskyr Bridge. Select encounters from the High Moor Encounter Table to test the PCs and whittle the numbers of Cyric's men down still further (to around a dozen).

Cyric suspects that Bhaal is heading for the ruins of Dragonspear Castle, although he remains mysterious about why he thinks this. (Riding alone, he caught up to Bhaal. He crept up as the avatar was telling Midnight about the gate beneath the castle. However, Cyric did not want to attack the god alone.)

Cyric suggests that the party head in that direction, avoiding the delays of en-

tering Soubar and other cities. If the PCs disagree, Cyric assents to their wishes. The next event takes place regardless of the adventurers' route.

The party meets several large and heavily armed caravans. They can trade treasure, if any, for food and fresh mounts. Cyric produces many gold coins to buy food for his men.

The caravans have heard nothing about Bhaal, which indicates that he is not in a city. The news would spread quickly if he were, for Bhaal just can't seem to stop killing people. He enjoys it too much.

EVENT 9: Boareskyr Bridge—and Bhaal

Just after nightfall on the brightly moonlit third night of their traveling together, the combined party reaches an abandoned tent city at the southern end of Boareskyr Bridge.

The massive 30-foot-wide stone span of Boareskyr Bridge crosses the broad Winding Water in five long stone arches. Eyeing the bridge in the moonlight, Cyric suggests that they should explore the tents. They should make sure the cause of the abandonment is not lurking nearby, and they also need to find a defensible camp.

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BATTLE IS JOINED

This is an area of rolling wilderland, covered with brush and stunted trees. Very soon, the searching party rides into a gully—right into Bhaal!

Unless past events have somehow prevented it, his current avatar is indeed the bloated, wound-covered body of Kae Deverell.

Dalzhel nearly rides over the avatar, not seeing him in the dappled moonlight of the gully. Bhaal snatches one foreleg of Dalzhel's horse and simply tears it off, spilling Dalzhel and the horse down into the bottom of the gully. Battle ensues (of course).

Bhaal uses the leg as a club to fell one of Cyric's men. He grabs any PC who confronts him in both hands, ignores attacks, and hurls the PC 30 feet through the air, to land on a grassy hill (3d6 damage; Dexterity check for half damage).

The PCs become embroiled in a nasty knock-down fight. Refer to the appendix for Bhaal's avatar powers.

At some point, preferably after a PC or Cyric has just inflicted a severe wound on Bhaal, the avatar roars in pain or rage and races into the forest. However, he moves slowly enough that the party can chase him. If they don't want to, tell them they hear Midnight calling to them from the forest beyond.

The PCs and Cyric pursue, their snorting horses scrambling through the night.

ENTER MIDNIGHT

Bhaal is heading back toward Midnight; he left her tied up with the tablet bound to her. He plans to "accidentally" show the PCs where she is, then escape with his mission accomplished.

Midnight, however, has already won free of her bonds. She is walking warily through the moonlit wilderness with a *lightning bolt* spell in her mind, the tablet safely secured on her back, and murder in her heart.

She happens upon Dalzhel in the forest. Recognizing the Zhentilar, Midnight blasts him, rightly assuming that he will attack her if she doesn't.

To her astonishment, the bolt she releases achieves titanic strength. It blasts Dalzhel into nothingness and does 12d6 damage to all within 20' of him; allow PCs to save vs. spell for half damage. Its electrical storm blinds all characters for 1d4 + 1 rounds unless they save vs. spell. (Note that Midnight's bolt has dealt more than the 10d6 maximum of the wizard spell!)

Bhaal is caught in the spell, too, but of course he survives. Cyric and all nearby PCs are thrown to the ground.

Bhaal's battered, smoking avatar advances on Midnight. The PCs see Cyric slowly and painfully crawling toward Bhaal, the sword in his hand glowing with a faint red radiance.

The PCs get a round of free attacks on Bhaal, as the avatar kills and possesses the last of Cyric's underlings. On later rounds he hurls the PCs away as before, for 3d6 damage per time (Dexterity check for half damage).

A GOD'S DEMISE

By all rights Bhaal could escape now, since he has told Midnight about Myrku's tablet and the gate to Hades beneath Dragonspear Castle.

But the Lord of Murder enjoys the battle too much. He remains, and the PCs can attack at will. In describing the battle, emphasize Bhaal's brutality, his imperviousness to pain, and the disfigured, broken body he has possessed.

The PCs should eventually kill Bhaal's avatar. If they cannot do so, Cyric attacks from behind, plunging his sword through the god's chest. Now describe the dying god's screams—the energy that pulsates around his withering form—the bass hum that rises in volume. Clearly, the god is about to explode.

The party has one round to set up defenses or escape. Their salvation lies with Midnight. She has prepared one of two spells, depending on whether the PCs are all near her.

Prismatic wall: Midnight casts this if some PCs cannot reach her in time for a *teleport* (see below). The wall protects those who stand behind it against the explosion's effects. This spell leaves the party near Boareskyr Bridge, which is destroyed in the explosion. Cyric makes a wild leap to reach the wall's protection.

Teleport: This is the spell used in the novel, and the best choice to speed the adventure. If the heroes can all reach her, Midnight calls, "Join hands, and touch me!" Cyric stumbles back, still holding the blade, to slap at her as the spell goes off—and the screaming Bhaal explodes.

Everything whirls away into oblivion.

Chapter 4: Darkness and Death

If Midnight teleported the party away from Bhaal's explosive demise, begin this chapter with Event 1.

If the party did not escape Bhaal's demise, the explosion may have transformed or moved them. Begin with Event 2.

EVENT 1: On The Road Again

This event begins as Midnight's teleport dumps the party elsewhere. They have no horses and none of the supplies that the horses carried. However, the tablet is safely tied to Midnight's back, or carried by a PC.

"Elsewhere" in this case is the snow-covered road to Waterdeep, a few days' ride south of Dragonspear Castle.

Midnight knows this spot through practice with a crystal ball at Mystra's temple in Deepingdale, long ago. Her tutor, Sunlar, was familiar with a spot where an old shadowtop tree had fallen just off the road. He often called up this place in the crystal, then asked Midnight to observe and try to maintain the image.

Cyric—burned, twisted, and apparently lifeless—lies in the snow beside the PCs. Above his body hovers his sword. (He is actually feigning death, and has released the sword to defend his body.)

Assuming Cyric played a part in killing Bhaal, the sword is aglow with the life energy of an avatar. It fights on by itself indefinitely, deflecting attacks (including missiles) away from Cyric's body, and reflecting any magic cast at him or it back at the caster.

This should discourage anyone from harming or robbing Cyric. Since the sword also keeps him warm in the snow, he lies still and listens.

Midnight reveals her destination: Dragonspear Castle. Beneath it, Bhaal told her, there is a *gate*— unusable by the gods, but open to mortals. It opens into the Realm of the Dead, Hades. There stands the Bone Castle of Myrkul, Lord of the Dead, the resting place of the second Tablet of Fate.

Once the party leaves him behind and is out of sight, Cyric retrieves the sword and uses it to heal his wounds. (Clever PCs can hide and try to observe this, but Cyric detects obvious spying attempts and remains still.) He follows the party toward Dragonspear Castle.

Go to Event 3.

EVENT 2: Transfigured

Use this event only if the party was caught in the explosion of Bhaal's avatar.

Don't just kill them outright; that is not much of a conclusion to an adventure story, when the party's major goal remains unfulfilled. As described in the appendix, an avatar explosion is not physical but magical. Therefore, it can have unpredictable effects on player characters.

The effects should not be pleasant, but they need not be fatal, either. Some effects to consider:

1. *Transformation.* The characters get turned into random creatures from the *Monstrous Compendium*. In general, they should still be mobile and able to fight or do interesting things. This can be a fresh role-playing experience for jaded players.

If they become monsters, choose monsters roughly as powerful as the original characters. (If a PC becomes something as powerful as a beholder, he or she may outclass the rest of the characters—and may not want to become human again!)

A variant idea is to switch the characters' bodies. Each PC's mind ends up in the body of another. This lends a comedic touch to adventures, but should not be carried on too long.

2. *Teleportation.* If Midnight could not teleport them, the explosion might—but not to any place so convenient as Dragonspear Castle. The party may end up somewhere else in the Realms, in Kara-Tur, on another plane, or even stranded in history. Midnight's magic has temporarily "burned out," so the party must undertake a new adventure to return.

This is an excellent chance to work in shorter mini-adventures as part of the larger story. Also, teleported PCs can lose troublesome magical items that have proven too powerful.

3. *Crippling.* If the PCs have proven too strong for the opposition so far, the explosion can drain them of levels, ability scores, or special powers. Or it can destroy possessions. This type of unfortunate circumstance can arouse players' bitterest anger if it is applied in heavy-handed fashion, so choose calamities wisely.

How Long Does It Last?

Since Midnight survives the explosion, she can use her magic to remedy problems right away. Or can she? If desired, she can fall into a comalike slumber or temporarily lose her magic. This forces the PCs to find their way around the Happy Hunting Grounds, adjust to life as narwhals or shambling mounds, or otherwise deal with their new problems.

The transfigurations of the explosion should not prove permanent, unless both DM and players prefer them that way. Let the changes last only so long as they entertain, then restore the PCs to their previous circumstances. Proceed with Event 3.

EVENT 3: Travel and Chaos

The party walks north, seeing ice on the streams and frost glittering on shadowed hollows. An early winter is coming. Because of the ice and cold, use the "tundra" terrain cost for overland movement in this area (*DMG*, p. 125).

After daylight the party encounters another effect of chaos, even stranger than the squirrels in the mountains: a troop of wolves marching in precise unison like soldiers. The wolves ignore the adventurers unless attacked. The wolves are on a search-and-destroy mission against a rival wolfpack, as PCs can find out if they follow the lupine troop.

Later still, the adventurers meet with a tough-looking band of over 30 warriors traveling from Waterdeep to Baldur's Gate. They guard valuable cargo (gems and fine wine). They keep their weapons ready and refuse to sell the party any horses.

Veterans in the band can tell the PCs common knowledge about Dragonspear Castle: a ruin east of the Trade Way, less than a century old, but taken over by evil forces that made the whole land unsafe. After two years of steady siege, armies from Waterdeep and elsewhere finally cleaned it out. For more information, consult the "Dragonspear Castle" entry in the *Cyclopedia of the Realms*, part of the FORGOTTEN REALMS™ Campaign Set.

Should the PCs inquire about specific details of Dragonspear, one veteran mentions that, though the entire complex is in ruins, he has heard that the inner ward

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still stands intact. (This is true.) He knows nothing else of interest.

The PCs cannot persuade the soldiers to join them.

Event 4: Death Walks at Dragonspear

The party reaches Dragonspear Castle. A map of the ruins is included in this adventure.

Exploring, they discover that its outer ward is utterly ruined, and its main tower is a gutted shell open to the sky above. But its inner ward is defensible. Give the PCs time enough to find the cellar beneath the castle (see below), then start this event.

Caravan Trap

While you explore the inner ward, you hear noises outside the ruins: galloping horses. You run to the battlements to look, and you see a small group of people fleeing toward the castle. They are dressed in rich clothing; they look like merchants. In close pursuit behind them, in total silence, ride scores of undead night riders.

PCs may let the caravan into the safety of the inner ward, close the gate, and then hold off the undead.

If PCs Let in the Caravan: It's a trap.

The inner ward's wooden gate creaks as you start to push it closed. The merchants ride hard to make it through the opening. The last of them pushes through just as you slam the gate shut.

Before you can drop the bolt, the riders turn to face you. And you stop in your tracks. Their skin is withered, the eyes dry in their sockets. They smell like spoiled meat. These riders, too, are night riders!

Go to "Dragonspear Battle," below.

If PCs Don't Fall For It: Give suspicious characters an Intelligence check. If they succeed, they realize that the merchants, too, make no noise—a sign that something is wrong. They look very closely then, and see that the merchants are undead too.

They can bar the gate, leaving all the night riders outside. The attack of these undead is futile.

But from his observing station high overhead, the god Myrkul raises more night riders within the inner ward! The undead rise from the burial chamber beneath the ward (see below), grab rusted weapons from the armory, and totter outside to attack. This might catch the PCs completely by surprise.

Another way to stage this is to have the undead wait until the PCs happen to discover the cellar beneath the castle, described below.

In either case, go to the next section. (Note that the PCs cannot observe or interact with Myrkul; he is too far away.)

Dragonspear Battle

The undead attack. All of these night riders are 1st level fighters, with 10 hp each. The 12 "merchants" are mounted on living horses with 18 hp each; the 60 "chasing" night riders are astride gaunts. All are armed with long swords (1d6 damage), and half of them carry bows and 10 arrows each.

Freshly raised night riders have no mounts. They quickly move to open the ward's gate and let in the rest of the night riders. All night riders have orders to seize the Tablet of Fate, if possible, but above all to force Midnight down beneath the castle. They do not need to kill the other party members.

There are over 70 night riders, and Myrkul can raise more as required. If the PCs are not already in the castle's cellar, the sheer numbers of night riders should finally force them to flee there.

Worn stone stairs lead down into a low-ceilinged room smelling of mildew. You hear rushing water somewhere below. Faint light comes into the room from narrow slit windows in one wall. The light falls upon moldering sacking and casks, some rusty weapons, and a pile of stone slabs.

"Awlinson Lieth Beneath, In Peace," reads one. They're tombstones!

None of the piles of rotting goods contain anything of interest.

As the undead spill down into the room, or rise from shallow graves in the cellar, let PCs (or, if they don't search, Midnight) find a circular wooden hatch under the

tombstones: the cover of a well opening. Shifting the stones takes at least three rounds; heaving the hatch cover aside takes a fourth. All this time, the party must fight off the undead.

As soon as they uncover the hatch, the sound of rushing water from the darkness below grows louder.

An instant later, the light in the cellar dims slightly as an undead archer, outside with bow ready, steps forward to one of the slit windows.

The archer's shaft hums across the chamber and strikes an NPC (in the novel, Adon is the character felled by the arrow; here, it can be any NPC except Midnight). Silently he topples forward. Give the two nearest PCs Dexterity checks at -5 to catch his falling body. If they fail their checks, the NPC falls through the open hatch and splashes into the river below.

Only powerful magic or extreme cleverness can rescue the NPC, who has taken 10 hp damage and is stunned.

Midnight points one finger at the window and mutters rapid, angry words. She finishes her incantation, then spits toward the window.

In the air, her spittle becomes a black ball of ice-drops. You feel waves of cold radiating from it. It spins toward the window, growing larger and faster. Midnight watches it rush outside. Then she staggers and falls to the cellar floor.

Many more undead come silently down the stairs. Death has come for you all.

What happened? Midnight cast a *cone of cold* spell out the window at the archer, but magical chaos made the spell misfire. This created a rolling black iceball of destruction.

If any PCs watch out the window, they see the ball crumble stone to dust with its intense chill. It rolls away out of sight across the High Moor. (It does not retain such destructive force for long.)

The twisted spell also released a backlash of energy, reducing Midnight to weak, shivering helplessness.

If anyone approaches any window, the undead archers' arrows strike with deadly accuracy. Add a +6 bonus to all of the monsters' attack rolls, for this event only.

Hurl endless waves of night riders at the party until the PCs make a fighting re-

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treat. During this assault, unless the character bearing the Tablet of Fate takes special pains to avoid coming into contact with the undead, the night riders succeed in grabbing the tablet, whereupon some of them break off and head for Water-deep to deliver the tablet to Myrkul. As it becomes obvious that vanquishing all the night riders is impossible, one by one each of the party members should leap down the hole into the blackness below.

Event 5: Downriver

The stream is ice-cold, fast-flowing, and dark. If Midnight is still with the party, she vanishes now. Despite anything the PCs do, she is sucked down into a whirlpool and away.

The adventurers float along helplessly. Apply damage as detailed below, as the adventurers crash into rocky walls and submerged rocks, then go over a 20-foot waterfall. Here the underground river emerges from the edge of the High Moor plateau to drop down a cliff and into a lake.

The adventurers are in the water for six rounds before emerging into the waterfall. During this time they are swept along at 70 feet per round. They cannot slow their passage by grabbing onto things; there's nothing to grab onto! They cannot swim against the current; it's too strong, and too dark to tell directions accurately.

If the proficiency rules are being used, have every PC make a Swimming proficiency check each round. If proficiencies rules are not used, or if some characters do not have Swimming proficiency, each character must make a Strength check *and* a Dexterity check, each round. Failing any check means 1d4 battering damage.

Characters who are unconscious or bound make no checks, but automatically suffer 1d4 damage per round.

The waterfall does a further 1d6 damage. A successful Dexterity check allows a character to escape the waterfall without damage. For more detailed hazards of water journeys, consult the *Dungeonier's Survival Guide* and *Wilderness Survival Guide* rulebooks.

PCs who lose consciousness and vanish beneath the roiling river, or who succumb while fighting in Dragonspear Castle, do not die. They are found later and nursed back to health by gnomes in

nearby underground caverns. (In the novel, this is Adon's fate.) But these characters are delayed in reaching Water-deep, and so are out of the adventure for a while.

Last characters can reappear at a dramatic moment at the adventure's climax, to rescue the party as they battle Myrkul's avatar.

OFFSTAGE EVENT

Midnight, swept downward by the whirlpool in the underground river, winds up in an abandoned underground city, the legendary Kanaglym. The city was built by dwarves long ago, then abandoned when the dwarves accidentally tunneled down to a portal that leads to Myrkul's realm in Hades.

Here Midnight encounters the souls of the recently dead, who are trapped here and cannot reach Hades. (Lord Kae Deverell is among them.) This is because Myrkul no longer dwells in Hades; he cannot force the dead spirits to go to his realm.

The portal lies beneath a still pool of water, enchanted to remove the memories of dead souls that pass through it. Midnight, through her magic, enters the portal without memory loss and arrives in Hades, where she sets out to locate the second Tablet of Fate.

Event 6: All This, and Ice Too

All the adventurers who are still alive and conscious eventually come down the waterfall to land in a small, round lake. Each character floats d100 feet from shore.

Use the rest of this event only if, during the battle in Dragonspear Castle, Midnight cast the spell that turned into an iceball. If she did not, assume the PCs get out of the lake without incident. (Stage an aquatic monster encounter if desired, such as a giant gar.) Proceed to Event 8. But if Midnight cast the iceball spell, continue with the rest of this event.

PCs must make a Constitution check or be stunned for 2-5 rounds after coming over the fall. They float to the surface and can breathe, regardless of whether or not they succeed—but stunned characters cannot swim.

This rapidly becomes important.

Something large and black is bounding toward you, across the High Moor. It's a sphere, moving quickly. As you watch, it glances off the edge of the cliff and strikes the waterfall.

The waterfall turns dark, and its waters slow with a slushy sound. In a moment the fall becomes a black, curving pillar. Water falls over it in a torrent.

The sphere is driven up and out into the air by the rushing waters of the fall. Slowly it falls toward the lake.

The iceball created by Midnight's spell drops into the lake, menacing PCs swimming in it. Adventurers can only swim 20 feet before the widening circle of black ice catches up with them. Thereafter, they must make a successful Strength check every round (moving at only one foot per point of current Strength).

A failed check means the character is trapped and held motionless by the hardening ice. Adventurers who reach the shore before the ice reaches them are unharmed.

Every round spent battling the ice does a character 1 hp of damage. A PC held by the ice suffers no further damage. But begin a time countdown for hypothermia damage; see "Hypothermia," below.

The iceball dissipates upon contact with the lake. It causes the entire lake to freeze to a depth of two feet through the next day. Water flowing over the frozen falls rests atop the ice, its level rising to flood the surrounding shore. Perhaps this destroys party supplies.

Hypothermia

The *Wilderness Survival Guide* rulebook provides detailed rules for this situation. A simplified method follows.

Ability Losses: At the end of one turn of being trapped in the ice, each trapped character loses one point of Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution. At the end of the next turn, the character loses one more point from each, and one point of Wisdom. Losses continue at this rate until the character is free of the ice.

When any of a character's ability scores reach 3, the reduction of that score ends.

However, when two of a character's abilities reach 3, the character can no longer move. The character falls unconscious 1d3 turns thereafter and, unless rescued, dies 2d4 turns after that (regardless of hit points remaining).

Chapter 4: Darkness and Death

The hypothermia time-count does not end until the character is out of the water, clothed in dry garments or wrappings, and sheltered from the wind.

Getting Free of the Ice: During every round from initial entrapment until hypothermia causes two ability scores to reach 3, beings trapped by the ice may attempt to free themselves.

Any character may strike the ice with fists and feet, suffering 1 hp of damage. Allow a Strength check (against current Strength total) and a saving throw vs. petrification. If both are successful, the character has wrenched free of the ice's grip, and now lies atop the ice.

Rescues: Freed characters can help others. They can easily walk on the ice to reach companions. For simplicity's (and mercy's) sake, characters trapped in ice can be broken free in 1-2 rounds by chopping and striking the ice around them.

If the freed character has no weapons to strike the ice, allow him or her to make a Strength check and a saving throw vs. petrification each round. If the check succeeds (and the trapped character's check fails), the rescuing character can substitute the successful check. In like manner, a successful save can be substituted for the trapped character's failed save.

Checks and saving throws *cannot* be substituted one for the other. And if the rescuer fails both the check and the saving throw, the rescuer has fallen back into the ice and become trapped again!

Magic: Spellcasting is impossible for ice-bound characters. The ice prevents freedom of movement for gestures and the reaching of material components; the cold causes teeth-chattering and stuttering, making verbal incantations error-prone.

Event 7: The Road, Once More

The surviving adventurers consider their options.

If they still have their Tablet of Fate, they should definitely head for Waterdeep, on or near the overland caravan road. Elminster suggested this in the strongest terms.

If the PCs have lost their Tablet of Fate, going to the City of Splendors is still the best thing they can do. They might be able to find Elminster in Waterdeep, and therefore receive aid to find Midnight and the tablet. If Kelemvor is along, he advances this line of reasoning and strongly recommends the party head for Waterdeep.

If the PCs decide to go somewhere else, conduct random encounters or mini-adventures in other settings. Kelemvor and other NPCs desert them, saying that Midnight's rescue lies in Waterdeep. The crisis of the Time of Troubles is eventually resolved without the PCs, though not without tremendous damage to Waterdeep. The remainder of this adventure, however, assumes that the PCs continue toward Waterdeep.

Merchants

On their journey the PCs soon encounter a hard-riding company of ten merchants traveling from Scornubel to Waterdeep.

These are all 2nd level fighters, with 16 hp, and armed with a variety of weapons. They have no armor and are low on cross-bow bolts from fighting off orc raiders and brigands. They would be glad for a few friendly sword arms. PCs can join them or continue to travel alone, as they wish.

The merchants carry medicinal herbs, gems, and rare ingredients for spellcasting, potions, and gourmet cooking—all valuable but lightweight, nonbulky goods. They fight ferociously to protect them.

The merchant leader is a grim, sardonic-humored man named Sarlgon the Tall (he is tall, and thin, too). Others among them include the steadfast Uith Though of far-off Rashemen; the long-suffering Elbaerl of Tethyr; and the sarcastic, sneering Zzun Tzhar of Calimport.

Play these fellows for comic relief, recounting all the bad jokes that the DM feels like inflicting on the players. Zzun Tzhar makes a good straight man for jokes the PCs tell in return.

The merchants know that many magicians of renown live in and around Waterdeep. That is why they're trading in material components right now—"a ready market up there, though they sometimes pay in odd coin," says Sarlgon.

So the journey continues.

Chapter 5: Interesting Times

If the PCs managed to hang onto their Tablet of Fate through the battle at Dragonspear Castle, they should lose it before they reach Waterdeep. Harry them with more night riders, or have Myrkul himself steal into camp invisibly and steal the tablet from its sleeping guard.

Once they lose the tablet, the PCs still should head for Waterdeep. They can guess that is where Myrkul will be, with one or both tablets. Besides, they still want to meet Elminster, so that the sage can help them find Midnight.

Event 1: Roasted Griffon

As the PCs, NPCs, and merchants travel north together on the road to Waterdeep, consult the two High Moor Encounter Tables (see the foldout back cover).

If the merchants are traveling with the party, most intelligent foes avoid battle with such a large, dangerous-looking force. Many beasts of the wild, however, are starving and half-crazed by the chaos affecting nature, and they may attack anyway.

Use physical chaos more frequently, to give players a sense of mounting urgency. Use monsters that “don’t fit” the surroundings. Inappropriate scenes that you have always wanted to use in play can appear as illusions, cloud-scenes in the sky, or as shared dreams. If anyone casts spells, use magical chaos whenever possible. The Realms are in a perilous state.

After the party has traveled for at least a day and a half, read the following:

Ahead of you in the distance stands a stone building. It is shaded by a stand of maples beside the road, and looks empty and lifeless, its upper level blackened and somehow . . . wrong.

The building is a roofless, burnt-out ruin. A signboard trampled into the dirt proclaims it “The Roosting Griffon Inn.”

Its front doors are gone. Within, the adventurers can see a tangle of charred and fallen timbers, with a blackened wooden stair leading up to empty air. The chest-high stone walls of the ground floor remain, but the upper story has entirely burned away.

Charred ground behind the inn, with stray wisps of smoke still rising from it, is

all that remains of the stables. Dead draft animals litter the stream nearby.

If the party searches the inn, they almost immediately see an intact wooden table near the stairs, with two chairs drawn up to it. In one is slumped the unburned body of a short, portly man wearing an apron. The innkeeper’s name is (was) Farl.

If the PCs use magic to question him, they learn he was slain by Cyric after surviving the earlier burning of the inn by night riders. Cyric’s sword has entirely drained Farl’s body of blood. If Kelemvor is with the party, his eyes narrow when he sees this. He snarls, “Cyric! What will it take to kill him?”

There is no treasure in the inn. The heat of the fire has melted a few copper and silver coins into little circular puddles (now hardened) on the charred floor.

If the PCs investigate the rear of the inn carefully, they find stone stairs covered by the fallen roof-timbers of the kitchen, leading down to a stone-lined underground storage pantry. They can salvage food and casks of wine from this room. It shows evidence that it has been raided already – Cyric at work again?

What the PCs don’t (and shouldn’t) know at this point is that Cyric has been trailing the night riders back to Waterdeep. He knows that Myrkul is the key to gaining both Tablets of Fate, and he has correctly deduced that the Lord of the Dead is in the City of Splendors.

Event 2: Clutching Claws of Death

Run this event when the party makes camp at night. There comes a sudden shout of alarm from whoever is on watch. Night riders are attacking the camp!

All of the 20 attackers in this case have 8 hp each, and strike as 1st level fighters. They seek to extinguish all sources of light and then slaughter the adventurers in the dark. If the merchants accompany the party, use this attack to slay most of the merchants. The surviving merchants flee into the night with cries of terror.

From this point on, the adventurers face repeated undead attacks as they struggle toward Waterdeep. Whenever a monster encounter is indicated (check every 1d10 turns), roll any die. If the result is odd, consult one of the High Moor

Encounter Tables to see what appears. If the result is even, the encounter will be with tirelessly attacking night riders.

DMs who have access to the description of the environs of Waterdeep (published in issue #128 of DRAGON™ Magazine) may have the night rider attacks force the adventurers into the Rat Hills southeast of the city. Or, these encounters can tie this adventure more closely to the DM’s own campaign.

Scenes of physical chaos as the adventurers hurry toward Waterdeep include these:

- * Thousands of fish wriggling and flopping inland, traveling away from the sea;
- * Leaves of entire stands of trees breaking free of their branches to fly about, swooping and soaring like swifts or other fly-catching birds, changing color all the while;
- * Grass growing with astonishing speed into tree-high stooks and tangles;
- * And so on. Chaos rules the land.

Event 3: Welcome To Waterdeep

The adventurers eventually see the great walls of the city of Waterdeep in the distance. Mount Waterdeep rises from within them like a great shoulder sheltering the city from the sea.

Overhead fly many griffons, each bearing a mailed rider armed with long jousting lances and javelins. One griffon-rider sees the party and circles overhead, observing. He ignores attacks or attempts to communicate with him, and hurries back to the city to report.

As the adventurers approach the gate of their choice, they see that it is open and guarded by over 20 warriors in full plate of gleaming silver-blue.

The guards hold leveled pikes, and regard the PCs in steady silence until one man steps forward from between the pikes, speaking to the armored men on either side. The pikes rise in smooth unison, and the soldiers stand aside, leaving only two doorwardens in black scale mail. On the breast of each gleams a golden crescent moon surrounded by nine silver stars.

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The lone man who ordered the pikes aside steps forward. He wears green leather armor and a black chain mail shirt emblazoned with a crescent moon.

"Well met, travelers. We yet hope for peace amid these troubled times. Accordingly, tell me your names and business in Waterdeep, if you would pass within."

The man looks pleased at hearing their names. Introducing himself as Ylarell "of the Watch," he says, "Please come with me. There's someone in the city who very much wants to see you."

Ylarell is a lawful good 4th level fighter of 36 hp, armed with a *short sword of quickness*, a +2 weapon that always strikes first (DMG, p. 185). Ylarell takes the adventurers through the streets of Waterdeep to Blackstaff Tower. He promises that any needs they have can be met there.

If any PC attacks Ylarell, griffons and watch patrols arrive from all directions. The adventurers are magically *held* or *charmed*, and the party is marched to Blackstaff Tower under guard.

Blackstaff Tower

Consult the map of Blackstaff Tower provided in this adventure. Ylarell takes the adventurers up to the parlor. Read the following:

Worn, comfortable chairs and sofas crowd a room that is littered with maps and scrolls. A crystal ball sits in an ornately carved waist-high holder in one corner. A huge globe with its own elbow-rail of smooth, gleaming wood stands in another. In two overstuffed chairs sit bearded men.

One is clad in robes of black, adorned with many tiny silver stars. He is handsome, his black hair shot through with silver and white combed back from a high forehead. A neatly trimmed beard adorns his chin.

He smiles at you with bright, almost hawkish interest. His voice is pleasant, yet commanding. "Well met, heroes! I am Khelben Arunsun, called by some 'Blackstaff,' and this is—"

"They already know me, I think," says Elminster the Sage.



Elminster prompts the PCs to tell the entire tale of their adventures since he last saw the adventurers in Tantras. He and Khelben stroke their beards in silence as the tale unfolds.

If anyone (PCs or otherwise) tries to threaten or attack Elminster, the two archmages are both 26th level (Khelben is AC 3 and has 70 hp; Elminster, AC 7 and 96 hp).

Elminster has only his spells, a *ring of protection* +3, and a *ring of regeneration*.

Khelben, however, has at hand his *staff of power* (the "Black Staff") and a seemingly endless store of magic items (i.e., whatever you wish to throw against anyone so foolish as to attack him). Also, the protective magics of his tower make him less subject to magical chaos while spellcasting within it. (Assess no negative modifiers on the Magical Chaos Table.)

Even if someone in the party mounts an attack against them, the two archmages are not interested in destroying any PCs—merely in preventing them from hurting themselves, or from getting in the way while truly important things are discussed.

Both archmages are more fully described in FR7, *Hall of Heroes*. But no more detail is really necessary to run them in this adventure. The PCs have too much else to worry about!

Talking With Archmages

Upon hearing of Midnight's plans to recover the second tablet alone, Elminster shakes his head. "She's not ready for such doings, yet. Mystra aid her, for the Realms must depend upon her!"

The archmages dispense potions of *extra-healing* and *vitality* to the adventurers as needed, from stone chests that rise silently out of the floor (appearing the rest of the time as flagstones visible between the various old and opulent rugs scattered about the floor). They tell the adventurers something of the present situation in Waterdeep.

One of the most important facts is that a Celestial Stair now rises from Mount Waterdeep, and one of the sayings of Azuth is that "in time to come, battle will come to the great City of Splendors, and in that hour gods will meet amid strife at the Stair, and all must stand to defend what they hold dear, lest all be lost."

Accordingly, the watch has been armed. Piergeiron, Commander of the Watch, has been steadily gathering food, drink, and weaponry these last few months to hold the city against a prolonged attack.

Mirt the Moneylender has organized ships friendly to Waterdhavians to supply the city, and to provide escape from it, should things go awry. He is now on the island of Mintarn, organizing additional

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ships to scour the seas for pirates, and patrolling to give warning of approaching naval invaders.

Khelben reveals that “my lady” Laeral, his right hand (and former leader of the adventuring group known as the Nine), has taken all of Khelben’s apprentices and much of the Tower’s magic to a secret place on another plane. “For if all else is lost,” Khelben says softly, “the great and beautiful Art must survive, to lighten the lives and loads of others, somewhere else, in days to come.”

Whatever occurs in the Realms, Khelben hopes, something of the Art of magic will survive down the ages, should Waterdeep—or indeed, civilization in general—fall.

“You have done well,” Khelben concludes. “Even if you lost one tablet and never reached another, we know how far you came and what you did manage. Few would have survived the Zhen-tarim and Myrkul this long—to say nothing of destroying Bhaal and rescuing the tablet from the temple in Tantras, ere it fell. Now your task is done. “Ylarell, fetch Gower and meet us at the Yawning Portal. Farewell, my friends.”

Allow—in fact, encourage—the PCs to argue against this abrupt dismissal. Though Khelben has only their own welfare at heart, the adventurers should want to see their mission through to their conclusion. If players think they’re supposed to do whatever Khelben tells them, Elminster can cue them by arguing in favor of taking the PCs along. Give the characters a chance to make heroic speeches. At last, they convince Khelben to take them along to the Yawning Portal Inn.

To The Yawning Portal

Gravely wounded adventurers are tended in a wing of Piergeiron’s Palace, which has been equipped as a crude hospital. Anyone merely tired of the quest is escorted by the Watch to the green and beautiful calm of The City of the Dead. In this huge cemetery they sit idly out of the way in the coming conflict. They get caught up in Event 2 of Chapter 6, rejoining the action then.

Ylarell salutes and runs out. Khelben and Elminster calmly follow him down to the

streets. The PCs see many hurrying soldiers, and feel the vigilant eyes of numerous watch patrols. The wizards walk purposefully through the bustling crowds, around the spur of mountain crowned by Castle Waterdeep, to the narrower, dirtier streets leading to the harbor.

Consult the simplified map of Waterdeep included in this adventure, or use FR1, *Waterdeep and the North*, or the City System accessory set. Both products contain detailed maps of Waterdeep. (Map 7 of *City System* also contains a floor plan of the Yawning Portal Inn.)

The wizards lead the adventurers to a large, rambling building with a signboard over its rounded front door that says, “The Yawning Portal.” On the door itself someone has chalked, “Come Ye Inn.”

It is dimly lit inside. Chatter ceases as the two wizards enter. Elminster and Khelben thread their ways steadily between tables, nodding to old men seated there.

Unless the PCs have other ideas, the wizards troop into a private side room, sit down at a bare wooden table, and wave at the adventurers to pull up chairs for themselves. They pull out long clay pipes.

A 14-year-old girl sweeps into the room to take orders for ale or food. A sword swings at her hip. Khelben says, “Would you bring Gower, please?” The girl sweeps out again.

A stocky, grim-looking man with broad shoulders and a weathered face comes into the room a breath or two later, with Ylarell and a ruby-nosed dwarf.

The grim man is Durnan, the innkeeper. This iron-strong warrior, now retired, had a career very much like that of a certain famous barbarian; in cases of trouble, play him accordingly.

Bargaining With Gower

The dwarf, beery and fat for his kind, is named Gower. Now retired from an illustrious career, Gower rents out his services as a guide to the cavern complex beneath the Yawning Portal. Gower has heard from Khelben that the PCs want to go down below; this may be the first that the PCs themselves have heard about the matter!

“Gower,” Khelben says, not bothering with any introductions, “you’re going to guide us to the Pool of Loss.”

The dwarf sighs. “It’ll cost you. fifteen—no, make it twenty—mugs of ale.” He eyes your tankards.

PCs can bargain Gower back down to fifteen mugs, but at Durnan’s reasonable prices this would be stingy indeed.

If they choose not to employ Gower as a guide, PCs can still find their way around beneath the inn. Durnan gives them directions to the Pool of Loss. But this is awkward work, and the wizards advise using Gower. The rest of this event and the next one assume that Gower is the PCs’ guide beneath the inn.

Should he overhear that the party is going “downstairs,” Durnan the innkeeper volunteers to accompany them. Elminster and Khelben both suggest this is a good idea, but they allow the PCs to decide.

Venturing Downward

Durnan leads the party to the back of the inn. He takes down a burning torch from a wall bracket with one hand and a glittering sword from over the next door with the other.

The innkeeper lifts a huge bar from the door with one hand, as though it weighs nothing, and leans it against the wall. Then he opens the door and leads you into a dark room. The torch’s flickering light shows a covered well and a table. On the table lie coils of rope, a tinder box, and half a dozen unlit torches.

Durnan uncovers the well, lights a wall lamp and a torch for himself from Ylarell’s torch, and then steps into the well, planting one foot in the well bucket.

He tests the rope’s strength. “I haven’t been down this back way in some time,” he says. “We usually go down the dry one; it keeps the water cleaner.”

Ylarell cranks Durnan, Gower, the two wizards, and each adventurer down the well in turn. The adventurers are pulled into a side-passage well above the dark surface of the well water, and into a labyrinth of dark, dripping passages and caverns. Gower strolls ahead unconcernedly, having produced a rather large axe from somewhere beneath his clothing.

The speed of the trip, coupled with the

Chapter 5: Interesting Times

numerous twists and slopes of the passages and intersecting caverns, make mapping impossible. Gower leads them ahead for only a short time before he says, "Here we be!" He steps into nothingness, vanishing into the floor.

The adventurers face a dirt-walled chute plunging down six feet and curving sideways. Assuming they go down, they are tossed out into a huge cavern, its soaring ceiling and farther reaches lost in darkness. This is merely a part of the complex beneath the Yawning Portal.

"Here's the Pool of Loss," Gower says calmly. "I don't recall seeing all this excitement here before, though."

Event 4: The Pool of Loss

The cavern is full of glowing white shapes drifting aimlessly through the air. In the center of the room is a shimmering dome. "Look away from the sphere!" Khelben commands sharply.

Each adventurer must make an Intelligence check to avoid looking at the sphere. It blinds anyone of less than 8th level for 2d4 turns.

About The Pool

In answer to PCs' questions (if any), Elminster explains that the Pool of Loss is a portal to Hades. The drifting shapes are "soul spectres" from that plane.

These harmless phantoms are waiting to enter the Realm of the Dead. They can see, move freely and speak, but have no tangible existence (appearing only as translucent images), and can neither attack nor be attacked on the Prime Material Plane. They can only have come here through the pool, which is customarily an open gate between the Realms and the Land of Always Night.

In ancient days, barbaric northern peoples hurled the bodies of great leaders into the pool, so that their greatness would not be lost to the service of the clan. The pool today exists as a well in this hidden cavern beneath Mount Waterdeep.

If the PCs have told Elminster what they know about the second tablet, he says it lies beyond this portal, in Hades.

The well is currently filled with the upper half of a *prismatic sphere*. Elminster says that he and Khelben believe that Midnight has created the *sphere*, and is probably still inside it. The problem is how to get her out.

Rescuing Midnight

Should PCs inquire about the nature of a *prismatic sphere*, Elminster launches into a long-winded explanation of the seven globes and the effects that negate them (*Player's Handbook*, p. 196).

Even without his explanation, PC wizards know that touching a *sphere* is extremely hazardous, and dispelling it is intricate work. Elminster and Khelben both believe the simplest course is to wait; no human wizard can maintain the enchantment indefinitely.

PCs can wait for the sphere to disperse, or—if the players are clever—devise a way to contact Midnight. (Trying to destroy the barrier is an extremely unwise—and difficult—thing to do; if the PCs attempt this, they will simply fail.)

If PCs do not want to rescue Midnight, let them return to the surface and have adventures in Waterdeep. After a few hours, Elminster and Khelben eventually rescue Midnight without destroying the barrier. She rejoins the PCs . . . but she may be less well disposed toward them at the story's conclusion, because they did not stand by her.

The outcomes of likely choices:

Wait: This does not work. The wizards bide their time patiently. Inquisitive PCs can explore the passages, though Khelben advises against it: "If we fall, here, who's to stop the creatures of Hades from overwhelming the city? Then Myrkul would win the tablets after all—and I'd not want to live in the Realms if they were ruled by the Lord of The Dead!"

If PCs still insist on exploring the passages, improvise dungeon adventures using published cavern complexes or others from the campaign. No cavern maps are provided.

PCs can also return to the surface and undertake encounters there. When the PCs return below, the *sphere* is still intact, and the wizards still wait.

While the adventurers watch, several soul spectres drift too close to the *sphere*. They vanish in silent flashes of white light, destroyed by its magic.

At last Khelben stirs. "If this is Midnight's work, she must command power at least equal to Azuth's! No mere mage can hold a sphere this long!"

Contacting Midnight: If Elminster describes the effects of a *prismatic sphere*, be sure he mentions that (a) only the first of its seven globes bars physical objects; and (b) the caster can pass through the globes without harm.

This may give alert players a clue to rescuing Midnight. Following Kelemvor's example in the novel, a PC can get Elminster to dispel the first globe, then throw a message or recognizable token through the *sphere*.

This recognition signal lets Midnight know she is among friends. She passes through the sphere, leaving it intact, and rejoins her friends outside the Pool of Loss. Weary but jubilant, she holds out the recognition token: "Is this yours, by any chance?"

News From Hades

The NPCs with the party are overjoyed to see Midnight alive and well. Amid their whooping and embracing, Elminster fills and lights his pipe, and asks, "Perhaps you'd care to explain your need for a sphere?"

"Not here," Gower says firmly. "I'm thirsty—and those mugs of ale are calling me, from Durnan's taproom!" Durnan and Gower, with Midnight and the archmages, head back to the inn.

En route, Midnight gives her most urgent news: The Denizens of Hades wait beyond the Pool of Loss to invade Waterdeep. If she hadn't erected the *sphere*, they would be flooding out even now. She believes Myrkul's tablet has been enchanted to allow these monsters to enter this dimension.

(Hearing this news, players may think of posting a guard over the Pool of Loss. The magicians say this is not necessary, for Midnight's barrier bars the denizens' way. In this case, the magicians are wrong. If the PCs insist on posting a guard, the guard(s) will witness the collapse of the barrier at the start of the next chapter. Award the players extra experience at the end of the adventure.)

Chapter 5: Interesting Times

Now What?

The party may now want to head for Mount Waterdeep. If so, start the events in the next chapter immediately. However, the heroes should consider Midnight's extreme weariness. She's too tired to go right now, and wants to be at full strength for the coming confrontation.

What's more, it is probably night by now. And Elminster recommends that the heroes get some rest . . . or at least let him get some, before they bring Myrkul down on his neck.

PCs who so desire can explore the underground ways beneath the Yawning Portal Inn. However, these labyrinths are not described in this adventure. Employ any cavern complex for adventures beneath Waterdeep. PCs should be aware, though, that it isn't very heroic to spend extensive time underground while the city above is in chaos.

Event 5: Rest and Revelations

The wizards return to the side room. Durnan promptly serves everyone a hot meal of beans and bread (or whatever the PCs wish, if they're not rude and it's not fancy). Noticing Midnight's weariness, Durnan steps out of the room and returns, hefting a full-size wooden bed un-

der one massive arm.

While Midnight sleeps, the party can discuss what must come next. Midnight's *sphere* prevents the foul Denizens of Hades from invading Waterdeep, but the adventurers must still fight Myrkul himself. For this they may have to depend on Midnight, who apparently commands more power than any other mage in the city.

Uncovering The Plot

Smoking his pipe, Elminster raises some points that have been troubling him. Use this opportunity to drop clues and promote the players' speculation. Allow them to unravel as much as they can of Myrkul's subtle plot to overthrow Lord Ao.

The players can't figure out the whole scheme yet, for they don't have enough information. But Elminster can start them thinking with the following observations:

1. Bhaal's avatar let slip the location of Myrkul's tablet, and of a gate to Hades. Bhaal is an absolutely loyal servant of Myrkul. This was stupid behavior for a god.

2. The gate is in Dragonspear Castle. Bhaal and Myrkul presumably wouldn't want mortals using it to enter Hades—especially not Midnight, who had the power to steal the tablet. Yet Myrkul's forces kept driving the party north and west, toward Dragonspear. When Bhaal

kidnapped Midnight, he carried her in that direction.

3. However powerful Midnight is, it seems impossible that she could have overcome the legions of Hades single-handedly. Since the realm belongs to Myrkul, the feat should be beyond a single being's power, even a god's.

4. How is it that Midnight escaped the denizens by fleeing into exactly the gate that would bring her to Waterdeep?

Let the players speculate as little or as much as they wish. In any case, establish the mystery. Over the rest of the adventure, the PCs may or may not ever deduce that Myrkul has manipulated them. Understanding the plan is not vital to the adventure.

AN ENDING

While the adventurers talk, news comes that Yarell is dead. While tracking the undead in the sewers under the city, the watchman was slain by Myrkul himself. The news leaves Khelben and Elminster solemn. They retire to meditate, leaving the PCs to their own devices.

PCs can venture into Waterdeep. For typical adventures in the City of Splendors, consult the published products mentioned earlier. Eventually, the adventurers grow tired and should get some sleep at Blackstaff Tower. Then begin the next chapter.

Chapter 6: To Save the Realms!

Midnight has seen the Realm of the Dead, and she would rather be destroyed utterly than live in the Realms if Myrkul rules them. What actually happened there? "Don't ask," Midnight replies, shaking her head. "Never ask me that again."

The only fact she will reveal about her time in Hades is that she succeeded in gaining possession of the second Tablet of Fate—the one that had been held by Myrkul. As the PCs can deduce, her success occurred at just about the same time that Myrkul's minions stole the first tablet. Thus, an ironic and uneasy balance is maintained—and the fate of Realms, as before, still hinges on which faction will ultimately possess both tablets at the same time.

If the players think to post a guard over Midnight's *sphere* in the Pool of Loss, go to Event 1. However, don't remind them of this if they don't think of it! No NPC thinks of it, either.

If the PCs post no guard, skip the next event. PCs can undertake more adventures in Waterdeep (left as exercises to the DM). If and when they return to Blackstaff Tower to rest, go to Event 2.

Event 1: The Gate Opens

Use this event only if the players post PC guards at the Pool of Loss, the gate to Hades beneath the Yawning Portal Inn. If they fail to post PC guards, or post NPCs as guards, simply skip this event and go to the next one.

The watches pass uneventfully through the afternoon and into the night. Then, take aside the players whose characters guard the pool in the last watch before dawn.

Describe the quiet cavern, Midnight's amazingly persistent *prismatic sphere*, and the wispy soul spectres who now and then collide with the *sphere* and annihilate themselves. Let the PC take whatever precautions he or she likes. Then have the PC make an Intelligence check.

If the check fails, the PC does not notice the arrival of Myrkul's avatar—not until it's too late.

But if the check succeeds, read this aloud:

A black fog rises from the ground. It smells of sulphur. Inside it you can make out a human figure dressed in loose black robes. As the fog clears, you see that the figure is not human—exactly. Its head is a bare white human skull.

This is Myrkul. Finally ready to come out in the open and make his move against Ao, Myrkul starts by destroying the barrier blocking his denizens from entering the Realms.

Myrkul has set a special version of a *hold portal* spell on the Tablet of Fate he holds, so that it will keep the passageway open once it has passed through it. When the *sphere* is gone, the denizens will be able to enter the Realms!

Give the PC(s) present one round to do something—either attack, flee, or hide.

Attack: Myrkul pauses before destroying the *sphere* to kill the foolhardy PC who attempts this. If an NPC guard is also present, Myrkul destroys the NPC first, so the player can reconsider this fatal course of action.

Flee: If the PC flees, Myrkul allows him or her to escape; the avatar fears no opposition now. (Myrkul's abilities appear in the appendix to this adventure.) The character easily escapes. In the tunnel behind, the fleeing character hears the sounds of many attacks striking the *sphere*, and then devilish laughter as the Denizens of Hades swarm through the opened portal.

Hide: The character can hide behind an outcropping of rock or just inside a tunnel. If hidden, the PC can watch everything that follows without being detected.

Myrkul's avatar makes wide gestures in the air. He attacks the globes of Midnight's *prismatic sphere* with all the spells needed to destroy it.

Then the fiendish denizens from Hades swarm into the cave through the portal. (For descriptions of the two kinds of denizens appearing in this adventure, see the appendix.)

Myrkul commands them to head straight for the surface and overwhelm the mortals who oppose him. "Find the tablet, kill its bearer, and bring it to me!" he cries.

Then Myrkul vanishes, and most of the denizens fly upward. If the PC attacks, the denizens tear the foolish character to pieces. If the PC waits for a chance, the

denizens leave the cavern, giving him or her an opportunity to run for it. Since a few denizens continue to pass through the portal at random intervals, the PC may have to fight one or more on the way to the surface.

Sounding The Alarm

The PC can warn the rest of the party and Elminster. With this early warning, Midnight, one of the archmages, or a powerful PC can quickly return to the Pool of Loss, fight the escaping denizens (three for every member of the party present), and cast another barrier spell to block the portal.

If they reseal the portal, fewer denizens can escape to plague Waterdeep. This reduces the turmoil seen in this chapter. Leave the actual effects vague, depending on how soon the PCs blocked the portal. If they acted very quickly, there are few denizens in Waterdeep; if the PCs acted slowly, the numbers of denizens are unchanged.

However, note that the wizards cannot close the portal permanently. Myrkul's tablet keeps the gateway open between Hades and the Realms. Only when Myrkul and the tablet are both destroyed, later in this chapter, can the party return and close the Pool of Loss for good.

Event 2: Marching Orders

This event begins on the following morning, when a sudden noise outside the tower awakens the PCs.

A company of over 200 soldiers arrives at Blackstaff Tower, their nailed boots clattering on the cobbles. The PCs can open their windows and look down on the tower courtyard below.

The company's captain presents Khelben with orders from Piergeiron. Blackstaff must assume immediate command of this newly mustered Wyvern Company of the Waterdeep Guard, and lead them into battle.

"Battle?" Khelben asks, blinking. "Against whom?"

"Hundreds of fiends are ruining Dock Ward, sir," said the captain. "They're coming up from below, from

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the sewers, sir, and tearing apart everything they can't kill. They've got everything from Harborwatch Tower to Snail Street. We've got every man under arms to the city fighting 'em, and we've just slowed them down. Even the griffons are taking a beating—some of those devils can fly. Before long they'll have all of Waterdeep—unless you can stop 'em, sir."

"Oh," Khelben replies mildly. "I see."

From this news PCs can deduce, or Elminster can tell them, that Myrkul must have destroyed Midnight's *sphere*. "And he'll be on his way here for the tablet," says Elminster, "while his denizens pour through that pool and tear apart the city!"

Obviously, therefore, Khelben wants to stay in his place of power, the better to battle Myrkul. But the captain's orders are firm; Piergeiron, ruler of Waterdeep, insists Khelben lead the troops into battle. Since Khelben is a good soldier, he reluctantly leaves.

Khelben says, "So be it. Come, captain!" Blackstaff turns and steps through the solid stone courtyard wall. The captain stares at it, sighs, and then turns toward the open gate. "Wizards," he mutters, just loud enough to be heard, as he leaves.

Event 3: War in Waterdeep

The adventurers dress in haste. Make it clear to the players that Myrkul's avatar will probably attack soon. Let them plot strategy. Their options include waiting in the tower, or going out and actively seeking Myrkul.

A Waiting Game

If the PCs decide to wait in the tower, let them set traps, plan ambushes, and prepare for battle. Stress the danger of confronting an avatar, though by now the players probably need no reminders of this. As battle rages through the city, build suspense while the adventurers look out from the deceptive calm of the tower.

At last Myrkul appears . . . in force. The god shatters the door to the tower, and his

legions of undead night riders storm inside to battle the PCs. Go to the next event.

Taking The Initiative

Kelemvor, if he is along, argues that everyone should attack Myrkul, rather than sitting in the tower waiting to be killed by him. Taking the battle to the god is the last thing he'll be expecting.

Elminster wonders how the party can sneak up on Myrkul, since the avatar remains attuned to the tablet he once possessed and thus will always know, via the tablet, where they are.

Elminster suggests hiding the tablet in one of Khelben's hidey-holes: an extradimensional vault in the tower. If the PCs agree, they discover that Myrkul's web of magic on the tablet includes a *hold portal* spell that prevents the vault from closing, and keeps the tablet from leaving the Prime Material Plane. Ah, well, no one ever promised that battling a god would be easy. . . .

The next problem: How to find Myrkul? He could be anywhere in, above, or under Waterdeep. The PCs' magic or a clever plan can both work. Also, if the PCs suggest it, Midnight can work a spell to track Myrkul just as well as Myrkul can track his tablet.

A City at War

The adventurers set out. Elminster can go along or not as they prefer, but Midnight absolutely insists on coming with them.

In the city, columns of smoke are rising in the distance above Dock Ward. Overhead, griffons hurry south from the northern outposts of the City Guard, to join a confused battle in the skies.

Almost three thousand city guardsmen, watchmen, and hastily mustered militia are gathering in the streets northeast of Dock Ward. These forces include mercenaries, the bodyguards of the nobility, and volunteers such as the Wvyern Company.

The denizens lurk everywhere. The battle for the city will be a long and bloody fight.

Every time the PCs move through city streets for the rest of this adventure, roll a die. An even result means the way is clear for that trip; an odd number means that 2d6 denizens leap, fly, or charge to attack the PCs, and the adventurers must fight.

Let the PCs fight enough denizens, save enough lives, and stop enough fires to earn the title of "hero" several times over.

Meeting With Myrkul

A detailed map of the city is not necessary to run this part of the adventure. As they search for Myrkul, the route the PCs follow—at Midnight's direction—is a circuit of streets going south from the tower, then east, north, and west, ending back at the tower again.

The PCs hurry down Swords Street. Then Midnight directs them east, onto Keltarn Street. A short block later, this joins the Street of Silks, and Midnight frowns. "That's odd indeed," she murmurs. "He's to our north now."

The PCs race up the Street of Silks, turn west onto Tharleon Street at Midnight's direction, and wind up at Swords Street—and Blackstaff Tower—again!

Walking up to the tower gates is a figure in a ragged robe, carrying saddlebags over his shoulder. As he walks, he hurls people in his path violently out of the way. "Myrkul!" Elminster says, pointing.

Midnight hurls a *lightning bolt*, but it misfires, spraying the entire street with small arcs of blue flame. People scream, horses bolt, and Myrkul stands unharmed. He turns at the gates, sees his attackers, and waves an arm at them.

Up from the underground sewers rise a horde of night riders! There are at least three for every character in the party; all attack as 2nd level fighters and have 14 hp each. As Myrkul disappears within the tower gates, the undead advance to attack the PCs. However, no more than two at a time attack a given PC.

The night riders have gone berserk due to the Hades-derived magic in the air. Those not directly involved in combat turn on one another with ferocity. Given this, the PCs should be able to break through them to chase Myrkul. But the night riders pursue the adventurers throughout the next event, attacking until destroyed.

Event 4: To Battle a God

The tower's door is open, and the reek of decay is strong within. The night riders pursue the adventurers into the tower.

The specifics of this battle depend very much on what the PCs try to do. Midnight

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and Elminster are plagued by magical chaos during this fight. Until pressed, Myrkul has little interest in fighting the adventurers; his night riders do that for him.

On the second floor, the library door is closed. Elminster warns everyone that Myrkul is probably inside, because off the library is the vault where the tablet is hidden. If the PCs haven't stopped the night riders yet, Elminster turns and (successfully) casts a *wall of stone* to close the stair behind him. This keeps the night riders at bay.

PCs who succeed in Strength checks or use magic can break down the library door. Inside, the room is deserted. The vault stands open and empty. "Mystra's dark folly!" Elminster curses. "He's got the tablet already!"

The parlor opens off the other side of the landing from the library. It is empty. The bedrooms beyond are also empty.

Khelben has magically sealed off most of his keep, but both Elminster and Midnight can tell that the seals have not been disturbed: Myrkul has not exited the staircase by any of the doors on the third or fourth floors. That leaves the roof. Sooner or later, the PCs head up there.

OFFSTAGE EVENT

As soon as the adventurers reach the roof, the study's stone floor rises, twists, and flows back into Myrkul's humanlike form. Picking up the two tablets from the real floor of the landing, Myrkul puts one in each of the saddlebags he carries and walks down the stair to Elminster's *wall of stone*.

"Remarkable," he says aloud. "They're hunting *me!* We can't have that!" He touches the wall and mutters a spell. A door-sized section separates neatly from the rest of the wall and hops down the stairs as though alive.

Dispassionately watching the bounding stone crush one of his night riders, Myrkul waves a hand commandingly at the surviving zombies. "Up—up, and slay everyone! They've caused me too much trouble already." The door disappears around a bend of the staircase below.

Myrkul steps through the hole and floats down the stairs. He plans to return to the Pool of Loss and call the dead to him. After absorbing their energy, he can confront Ao at the Celestial Stairway—and, augmented by the energy of the dead, destroy Ao himself! Bane was foolish, choosing to attack the



ready Torm. Myrkul will not make that sort of mistake.

RoofTop Struggles

On the roof of Blackstaff Tower, the PCs realize that Myrkul has eluded them. Midnight, though tired, says, "Let me try something." Her power has grown to the point that (she thinks) she can fetch the tablets out of Myrkul's hands!

Midnight concentrates, and then sways and falls. Across her prone body lies one, but only one, of the Tablets of Fate.

Midnight is unconscious, and PCs cannot rouse her for several rounds. At this inconvenient time, the night riders advance from below. Every round six night riders come through the roof's trap door, two at a time. PCs can probably pick them off as they emerge, but their numbers appear endless. Adjust the numbers of attackers to wear down the PCs.

When the battle grows exhausting or tedious, Myrkul himself makes a dramatic entrance. Furious at the theft of one of the tablets, Myrkul casts a magical silence that blankets the roof and extends in a sphere 120' around the tower roof. Spellcasters on the roof cannot cast magic that includes verbal components. That probably makes this a purely physical fight.

The night riders form a wall between Myrkul and the adventurers, then advance, attacking. The PCs battle evil toe-to-toe, in dead silence, while Myrkul first seizes the stolen tablet, then attacks Midnight. If any PCs try to block his way, refer to the appendix for Myrkul's powers (but remember, he too may be affected by

the magical silence). After three rounds, Midnight awakens and tries to help the party, though she is still weak.

The party may well slay Myrkul now. If they do, Waterdeep survives; Myrkul's silence spell lapses, and in that moment Midnight desperately casts a *dimension door* spell to shunt the avatar's explosion far out over the Sea of Swords. Run the following conclusion to the battle only if the PCs cannot make much headway against Myrkul.

The End of a God

While they are engaged in their futile battle with Myrkul, give PCs an Intelligence check. Successful PCs note a griffon and rider diving out of the sky toward Blackstaff Tower. It appears to be heading straight at Myrkul. They can't make out the griffon's rider.

If necessary, cue the players that someone should distract Myrkul from noticing this attack. Any especially heroic attack now distracts Myrkul, so that he does not see the griffon.

It strikes, its rider leaping clear. As the great talons of the griffon pierce Myrkul through the chest, Myrkul opens his mouth in a silent scream.

The rider leaps clear and lands on the roof. PCs recognize the rider now. Use any important character who appeared to die at an earlier point in this adventure. (In the novel, it is Adon; when he was swept away by the underground river beneath Dragonspear Castle, he was rescued by subterranean gnomes who nursed him back to health.)

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The griffon flaps wildly as it lifts the avatar off the roof. As Myrkul shrieks silently, Midnight grabs any nearby PC and points at the saddlebags Myrkul is holding. They hold the Tablets of Fate! If no PC makes a grab for the saddlebags, Elminster does so.

As the saddlebags are torn away, Midnight prepares two spells (another sign of her growing power). Myrkul turns in the air and withers the griffon; to do so, he lifts his cloak of silence from the rooftop.

At that moment, Midnight casts *disintegrate*.

The spell works automatically; do not check for magical chaos. There is a flash of golden light, the ground trembles, and then a deepening purple glow settles over the scene. When it dies away, Myrkul and the griffon have vanished. A brown murk hangs in the air where The Lord of the Dead had been.

In the same moment, Midnight has also successfully cast a special *dimension door*. She shunts the force of the avatar's exploding energies far away from Waterdeep, out over the sea. PCs can see the explosion from the tower roof: a brilliant white sphere exploding over the Sea of Swords, on the western horizon.

Myrkul's Ruins

The murk settles slowly to the ground. Where it touches, trees and plants turn brown and wither. People collapse, gasping and choking, their skin darkening. Buildings lean, topple, and collapse slowly into dust.

DM Note: Two square blocks of Waterdeep, at the lower end of the marketplace, become a devastated area where no building can stand and nothing can grow. This area, called "Myrkul's Ruins," remains for a time as a legacy of the Time of Troubles.

Event 5: To Battle a Man

Elminster manages a *meteor swarm* to polish off any remaining night riders. The Old Sage makes sure the tablets are safely in the party's possession. Then he takes his leave, explaining that he must try to close the gate to Hades to stop the incoming flood of denizens. If Khelben has remained with the party through all this, he leaves with Elminster. However, if PC wiz-

ards volunteer to help, Elminster gently tells them they'd only get in the way.

(If the characters blocked the portal to Hades earlier, Elminster still goes down to the Pool of Loss. Now that Myrkul is dead, Elminster believes the gate can be permanently closed.)

Before he goes, Elminster points down to the carnage in the streets below. "Look ye! When Myrkul's denizens begin to retreat, take the tablets to the top of Mount Waterdeep, to Peaktop Eyrie—look, there!" He points out the small battlement high up on Mount Waterdeep. With a cheery wave he teleports away.

In the streets below, the denizens are winning the fight for Waterdeep, forcing the defenders back across Trades Ward.

Cyric Attacks!

While all of this has taken place, Cyric has stolen up the staircase inside Blackstaff Tower and waited for Elminster to leave. Now he makes his move. He slays an NPC from behind with his magical sword (in the novel, the victim is Kelemvor). Then Cyric tosses the weapon into the air to "dance." He draws another blade and hurls a glass vial of sleep gas to the roof.

The gas is called "greensleep." It expands rapidly into a spherical cloud of mint-green smoke 20' across. All PCs must save vs. poison at -2 to avoid falling asleep for 1-2 turns. Midnight saves, but other NPCs fail automatically.

It is not necessary to breathe greensleep; it works by skin contact. Its antidote can awaken affected victims immediately. If the antidote is taken just prior to the release of the gas, it prevents protected beings from any effects. Cyric has just taken the antidote, but there is no other store of antidote nearby, nor are any of the adventurers familiar with it.

Thanks to the effects of the gas and the confusion it causes among even those who make their saving throws, Cyric seizes the tablets and fights his way clear. Cyric also tries to kick conscious opponents off the roof. A fall from the roof of Blackstaff Tower onto the hard cobbles below does 4d6 damage.

Some ten minutes later, a griffon lands atop the tower. On its back is a city guardsman and Khelben Arunsun. Khelben fetches healing potions for injured PCs and finds a store of greensleep antidote somewhere in the tower. He sends the guardsman on his griffon to bring more griffons to the tower—

enough to fly all of the surviving adventurers to Mount Waterdeep.

If Cyric slew Kelemvor, Khelben looks at the body sorrowfully and says that there is nothing he can do. Cyric's sword has utterly drained the warrior.

Event 6: At The Foot of The Stair

DM Note—Celestial Stairways: A Celestial Stairway is a rare link between Prime Material Planes (in this case, the Realms) and a multiplicity of Outer Planes.

Created by godly magic, Celestial Stairways are usually only visible to those of 22nd level (or 22 Hit Dice) or more. Any living being can use them. However, without constant magical maintenance, Celestial Stairways soon fade into ether and vanish.

While touching the stairway, a traveler is protected by its magic from hostile atmosphere and temperatures on foreign planes. If a traveler becomes separated from a stairway partway up, the traveler often loses access to it and is stranded in an intervening plane. If a PC leaves a stairway partway up, have the character "fall" through ethereal mists into another campaign world.

Most stairways are guarded at the Prime Material Plane end by Einheriar or Lantern Archons (detailed in the *Manual of the Planes* rulebook), or by other servants of the power controlling the stairway. In this adventure, Helm guards the stairway for Ao.

The Celestial Stairway atop Mount Waterdeep changes appearance constantly. To those who can see it, the stairway first appears as a shimmering, translucent spiral path of amber and pearl; then a set of plain white railless steps; then a ramp of pure silver; and so on, changing every few seconds.

On Mount Waterdeep

The adventurers, on griffon-back, wing their way across the city (through aerial battles with denizens, if the DM desires) to land at Peaktop Eyrie. Khelben remains behind to fight alongside the Waterdhavian defenders in the streets.

The adventurers can persuade Khelben to come along if they really want to, but his presence has no effect on the climax.

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Midnight can see the stairway clearly. PCs who search around it find no sign of Cyric; evidently he has not reached Mount Waterdeep yet. PCs can go ahead to the Celestial Stairway, or they can remain behind and ambush Cyric.

Go to the Stairway: The party reaches the stairs. As anyone tries to climb them, read the following:

The instant you set foot on the bottom step, a giant in burnished armor appears to block your way. "I guard this path!" he cries.

This is Helm, Guardian of the Way. Since the PCs do not have the tablets, and Helm knows this, he continues by saying, "Do not approach. This way is forbidden, save to the one who bears the tablets."

Just as Helm finishes speaking, Cyric rushes up the mountainside shouting, "Wait!" Breathlessly he joins the party; Helm prevents them from fighting.

Go to "Talking With Helm," below.

Wait for Cyric: If PCs decide to lay an ambush, they can hide in a nearby lookout tower of the Eyrie.

Suddenly Cyric appears, sword in hand, walking calmly up the slopes of Mount Waterdeep toward the stairway. The Tablets of Fate are contained in saddlebags slung over his shoulder.

If the PCs confront him, Cyric sneers, defends himself with his sword, and runs for the stairway. If he reaches the steps, Cyric cannot attack or be attacked. A new figure appears beside him; go to the next event.

PCs can only stop Cyric from reaching the stairway by attacking him. Midnight definitely wants to kill Cyric, and fires a *lightning bolt* unless restrained. If they attack, read the following aloud:

As you attack, Cyric runs for the stairway. A huge figure in gleaming armor materializes at the bottom of the steps. "No!" it shouts, striding forward. It is Helm.

Helm throws up his hand, and missile attacks veer toward it. No mortal attacks can bypass the god's magic. Midnight's lightning strikes the armored colossus, covering him in a harmless shower of sparks. Helm's armored head turns toward the PCs. "This life is not yours to take."



Talking With Helm

Cyric thrusts the saddlebags into Helm's hands. "I have recovered the Tablets of Fate," he says proudly. He glances back over his shoulder at you, and smiles.

Helm takes the tablets and stares down at Cyric. "I know who recovered them," he says coldly.

If PCs protest that Cyric is lying, Helm agrees. He seems to know everything that has happened, and he knows Cyric is evil. Nevertheless, Helm allows him near the stairway, along with Midnight and the PCs. Read the following:

Midnight angrily asks Helm, "If you are aware of Cyric's evil, why do you not punish him?"

"Because it is not his duty to pass judgment," says another voice, deep and resonant. A new voice. Behind Helm on the stair, another figure appears.

Helm bows. "Lord Ao!" he says reverently.

EVENT 7: The Lord of ALL

The Overlord of the Gods appears as a cryptic yet awesomely imposing figure. He has hair and beard of purest white, but his face and posture do not suggest a particular age; he could be young, or old, or anywhere in between. His face is neither handsome nor ugly—the sort of visage that looks absolutely average. In short, he is the embodiment of the Balance, showing no aspects of any ex-

treme. What does set him apart, however, is his robe: as dark as oblivion, yet at the same time dotted with millions of twinkling stars, such that the motes of light and the inky blackness balance each other perfectly.

"Bring me the tablets," Ao commands. Helm does so, removing them from the saddlebags and kneeling. Ao touches them. "On these tablets," he says in a voice like thunder, "I have recorded the Balance created to keep the Order. They have now been restored!"

"And I returned them to you," Cyric says quickly.

Ao looks down at him. "I know what you have done," he says in calm, even tones. "And here is what all of it amounts to!" Ao crushes the tablets in his hands; they explode into dust.

The tablets meant nothing, of themselves. Ao kept them to remind the gods that he created all of them to serve the Balance, not to twist it to their own ends. Unfortunately, the gods saw the tablets only as a set of rules. When the rules became inconvenient, two gods stole the tablets.

For that, Bane and Myrkul have paid the ultimate price, and are no more. But, Ao says, all the gods are guilty. All caused worshipers to raise wasteful temples, to devote themselves slavishly to the gods' aggrandizement so that they could not feed themselves, even to spill their blood upon altars—all for no reason.

Silence hangs heavy over Mount Waterdeep. Then Ao speaks again—this time addressing all of the gods across the Realms as well as the PCs. "I created the gods for a purpose. Now

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you, the gods, will fulfill that purpose. From this day forward, your true power depends upon the number and devotion of your followers."

There is a rumbling in the sky, a gasp of astonishment from avatars all across the Realms. Ao smiles slowly. "Aye, and after what has befallen in the Realms, it will not be easy to win the faith of mortals. You will have to earn it by serving them. Now, let the gods return!"

"No!" Cyric yells. "After all I went through—"

Ao says, very quietly, "I do not care to be challenged. It makes me fear I have made a poor choice for my new God of Strife and Death."

Cyric smiles. "So you do keep to the bargain! I am to be a god!" He steps forward to stand by Ao on the Celestial Stairway. "My thanks!"

Ao replies, "Do not thank me, evil Cyric. Being given the role of God of Strife and Death is no gift. It is eternal punishment. At first, you will enjoy it, for it is the only thing you are suited to. But you will find it wearisome in the end. The freedom you seek lies not with godly power. You serve me now . . . and your worshippers."

For a moment you see in Cyric's eyes the beginnings of fear. Then he scowls, but he says nothing.

Lord Ao turns. "Midnight!" he says commandingly. "I have lost Mystra, Lady of Mysteries, Mistress of Magic. She is within you, and yet she was weary and weak, and could not now be restored as she should be. I have selected one mortal for malevolence and cruelty. I hope to select another for wisdom and spirit. Will you take her place?"

A ring of nine small, blue-white stars appears in the air around Midnight, dancing softly.

Midnight looks both surprised and exhausted. She almost shakes her head. Then she looks at you for guidance.

The PCs can argue pro or con. Only Midnight responds to them; Ao ignores queries put to him. Let the players really ham it up; after all, the circumstances merit great oratory. Lord Ao himself smiles upon PCs who orate exceptionally well; award them bonus experience points.

Regardless of what the PCs say, Midnight finally agrees to godhood. She climbs the stairway to stand beside Cyric, with the words, "I accept. And you, Cyric, will soon wish you had not."

Ao lifts his hands, and the Celestial Stairway and those upon it vanish in a pillar of light.

The Time of Troubles is over.

Rewards

Midnight, now transfigured, soon appears in a vision to each PC. She grants each character one *wish*, as per the 9th level wizard spell. Exception: Characters who did not try to protect Midnight, or disregarded her importance (for instance, by arguing against rescuing her from her *prismatic sphere* in the Pool of Loss), receive no *wish* and also are not rewarded as described below.

Midnight grants all PCs enough experience to go up to the next level of experience. She heals wounded characters of all damage, and resurrects dead PCs.

After The Adventure

Now the purpose of the Avatar storyline becomes clear: It provides a golden opportunity for DMs to change from the original AD&D® game to the AD&D 2nd Edition rules.

What's more, the DM can correct campaign problems of all sorts. The world's godly pantheon can be rearranged, lands renamed and shifted, and so on; the DM has *carte blanche*, as though creating a new campaign world from scratch.

The New Pantheon: In the official Forgotten Realms campaign setting, Midnight becomes the new Goddess of Magic. Cyric, "the Swordbearer," is now God of Strife, Murder, and Death.

Bane, Bhaal, and Myrkul are gone, along with the entire assassin character class. However, Lord Ao reforms the dispersed spirit of Torm so he can return as God of Duty.

The Harrowing of Hades: Many souls were unjustly trapped in Myrkul's realm. The gods had abandoned their responsibility for retrieving these spirits of their faithful.

Following the Time of Troubles, Midnight leads the gods to Hades to recover most of the spirits trapped there—

including Lord Kae Deverell, Sneakabout, Kelemvor, and Cyric's other victims—and bring them to a happier afterlife.

Restoration of Order: With the gods in their places, all is once again right with the world. Magical and physical chaos cease. Aftereffects of the chaos can still prompt adventures, but most effects soon vanish.

The denizens in Waterdeep, their god destroyed and their portal to Hades closed, become much less powerful. The forces of Waterdeep slaughter them within a few days.

The Source of Godly Power: Gods now draw their strength directly from the numbers and devotion of their followers. For game mechanics of this new arrangement, consult the forthcoming Forgotten Realms hardcover rulebook.

Effects on the Land: As shown in *Shadowdale*, the area around Castle Kilgrave has been destroyed; it is now a land of bubbling tar pits.

As shown at the end of *Tantras*, the area north of the city of Tantras becomes a magic-dead wasteland for (at least) several years. No magic works here. The area becomes a refuge for those fleeing from vengeful wizards.

As shown in this adventure, two square blocks of Waterdeep become uninhabitable. As an offstage event, the explosion of Bhaal's avatar poisons the Winding Water river for 100 miles, from Boareskyr Bridge down to Trollclaw Ford.

Also, Boareskyr Bridge is destroyed. However, the DM can easily decree that it has been rebuilt "offstage," or make the construction the hook for a new adventure. Speaking of which . . .

Further Adventures: First, the PCs may help the Waterdhavians mop up the remaining denizens who haunt Waterdeep. They can sail out onto the Sea of Swords, to ensure that Myrkul's explosion did not create any weird new creatures (or to find that it did).

Naturally, a lot of priesthoods will be very busy in the near future—sorting out details, proselytizing furiously to strengthen their gods (and themselves), and grabbing power. They employ adventurers on all sorts of missions to recover this, vanquish that. . . .

Life, as they say in the Sword Coast lands, unfolds as the gods will, whether or not one feels like being a part of it.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

This section describes four non-player characters, the four major characters of the novels of the Avatar Trilogy. These are described more fully in accessory FR7, *Hall of Heroes*.

Only Midnight and Cyric *must* appear in this adventure. Use Kelemvor and Adon as desired, to augment the party's strength or provide useful information.



"MIDNIGHT" (ARIEL MANX)

Human Mage, Level 9 (at beginning of adventure; later, level becomes irrelevant)

Str 6
Int 16
Wis 10
Dex 11
Con 10
Cha 17
HP 27

Alignment: Lawful Neutral

Worships: Mystra, Goddess of Magic

Armor Class: 10

Equipment: Spell book containing *armor*, *charm person*, *comprehend languages*, *feather fall*, *magic missile*, *run*, *Tenser's floating disc*, *identify*, *read magic*, *shocking grasp*, *sleep*; *continual light*, *darkness 15' radius*, *deppockets*, *detect evil*, *ESP*, *invisibility*, *levitate*, *locate object*, *scare*, *shatter*, *wizard lock*; *clairaudience*, *clairvoyance*, *feign death*, *fireball*, *fly*, *haste*, *hold person*, *infravision*, *material*, *suggestion*, *water breathing*; *dimension door*, *enchanted weapon*, *fire charm*, *fire shield*, *ice storm*, *Leomund's secure shelter*, *massmorph*, *polymorph other*, *polymorph self*; two daggers—one at belt, one hidden in boot; staff, two flasks of oil, one *potion of healing* in a

steel vial, and a *pearl of power* (allowing Midnight to "recall" two 1st level spells), sewn into a garter worn beneath her robes.

Midnight is a thin woman in her late 20s, with a slim, catlike body. She has jet black hair that reaches to her waist (but is usually braided) and darkly tanned skin.

In her youth Midnight was unruly, restless, argumentative, and bored. Her merchant parents evidently lacked imagination and dreams. Having both in plenty, Midnight developed an active night life (thus earning her nickname). After a tryst with a conjurer, she set her sights on magic.

She began to feel watched. Sunlar, a high priest in the Deepingdale temple of Mystra, singled her out for special attention. This fueled her suspicions that she had been selected for some great destiny.

Midnight is scrappy, tough, and taciturn. She enjoys being mysterious, and occasionally flirtatious. And she knows that some important destiny lies just ahead of her.



CYRIC

Human Fighter/Thief: Character with Two Classes; 4th level Fighter, formerly 5th level Thief

Str 17 (+1 on attacks and damage)

Int 11
Wis 10
Dex 15
Con 15
Cha 15
HP 24

Alignment: Lawful Evil

Armor Class: 1

Equipment: Plate mail, magical sword (see "New Magical Items"), longbow and 10 arrows, dagger, hand axe, coil of 100' of black waxed rope, grapnel, set of lock-picks and thief tools hidden in a hollowed-out wooden crutch, 16 empty canvas sacks with drawstrings, three flasks of oil, six iron spikes, mallet, darklantern, 12,000 gp in gems.

Born in the back alleys of Zhentil Keep, Cyric never knew his parents. He suspects his father was influential in the Zhentilar. After his mother was murdered and his father vanished, the infant Cyric was sold to slavers. He ended up as a foster son to a wealthy family in Sembia.

Cyric always showed curiosity about foreign lands and customs. After causing his foster parents much grief, he ran away. Forced to steal to survive, Cyric spent four years in Sembia's Thieves' Guild. Later his love of travel took him across the Dragon Reach and to many ports on the Inner Sea.

Cyric returned to Zhentil Keep to learn about his family. After the death of a man who might have been his father, Cyric decided he must abandon the thief's life. He became a fighter and worked as a guard in Arabel. There he befriended Adon and Kelemvor. Since the Time of Troubles began, Cyric has grown cynical about "causes" and now works only to increase his own power.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS



KELEMVOR LYONSBANE

Human Fighter, Level 5

Str 17

Int 15

Wis 13

Dex 16

Con 18

Cha 14

HP 44

Alignment: Lawful Neutral (good)

Armor Class: 4

Equipment: Chain mail and shield, short sword, bastard sword, lance, bow, dagger, three *potions of healing* in steel flasks.

Kelemvor is a mercenary, a muscular and ruggedly attractive man in his early

30s. He was once a werepanther, a lycanthrope with the ability to become a panther. Much to his delight, he discovered that after the death of the avatar of Bane (in FRE2, *Tantras*) he had been mysteriously cured of his curse; whether it was an after-effect of the explosion or the by-product of some other magical effect gone awry matters not to him.

Now restored to his original (fully human) form, Kelemvor seeks to do good wherever he can—for little or no reward. He lives now to become the hero his curse prevented him from being earlier in his life. He loves Midnight and will sacrifice anything for her safety. His fighting skills make him a match for most foes.

ADON

Human Cleric, Level 5

Str 11

Int 9

Wis 15

Dex 12

Con 12

Cha 13

HP 25

Alignment: Neutral Good

Worships: Sune Firehair, later Midnight

Armor Class: 2

Equipment: Plate mail, large shield, mace, war hammer, two vials of holy water, three flasks of oil, a pack with a rack of six *potions of healing* in glass vials; a scroll with the spells *command*, *detect*



evil, *detect magic*, *protection from evil*, and *purify food and drink*; and a notebook of mediocre love poems.

Adon was born wealthy but grew up shiftless, extravagant, vain, and weak-willed. On the night of his 15th birthday, Adon had a dream that the love goddess, Sune Firehair, would raise him to become her divine consort. On the spot, he primly resolved to become a cleric for Sune.

The scar that Adon receives during the events of this adventure changes his outlook. He spends a great deal of time questioning the worth of the gods—especially Sune. Now he accepts the state of the world as it is. He might eventually regain his faith as a priest, but not until after the gods have departed from the Realms.

AVATARS OF THE GODS

This appendix details two avatars that play major parts in this adventure. These are but two of many avatars cast down to Faerun during the Time of Troubles. Far less powerful than “usual” avatars assumed by divine beings, they are the result of possessing human or humanlike bodies.

These *are* the gods: No god has multiple avatars or a simultaneous existence on other planes during the time covered in this adventure. These weakened avatars are subject to magical chaos, although less so than mortal spellcasters. All types of weapons affect these weakened avatars.

All avatars can hear their names spoken anywhere in Faerun, along with the next nine words of the same speaker. Avatars also detect the speaker’s voice-likeness, distance, and direction. The gods usually ignore the ceaseless babble this creates in their minds, but Bhaal and Myrkul do listen to the PCs during this adventure. No *glyph* or *symbol* magics have any effect on avatars, except to attract their attention.

Modify the minor powers avatars use in play to explain spectacular magical effects, physical feats, and so on. Though magic is temporarily unreliable, most dei-

ties are still the equivalent of a 12th level mage, able to unleash full magic.

Avatar Death

Avatars can be slain. However, most deities prepare magical safeguards that enable them to survive the “death” of their physical forms. Only *energy drain*, *wish* spells, or similar magics that drain their divine energy can prevent this. But the scattering of its energies may prevent a god from taking another avatar for 1d6 weeks or longer.

AVATARS OF THE GODS

Destroying an avatar may or may not destroy the being. Some deities survive apparent death as ghostlike "anima" forms. These anima cannot be turned, can become *invisible* at will, and can perform magic. They have a ghost's attacks and half the avatar's hit points.

When a god truly dies, everyone around knows it. Their titanic magical energy disperses in a huge explosion with a radius of 5-10 miles. The landscape is usually devastated. When Bane and Torm killed each other outside Tantras (in FRE2), the land was blasted down to bare molten rock.

However, since this is not a physical explosion, it does not necessarily kill its victims. Instead, plants and animals twist into weird new shapes and species. Buildings usually collapse, though not always.

Important characters (especially PCs) caught in an avatar explosion need not die. They may be transformed into monsters, or shifted to other planes of existence. Choose a fate that allows the player to remain active in the game.

After an avatar explodes, the surrounding area is "dead" to magic for 1d4 + 1 years. No magic of any kind works in the area, with the exception of powerful artifacts (DM's discretion). Spellcasters feel dazed while in the area.

Lord Ao and Helm

Descriptions of Helm and the Overlord Ao are not included here. Ao is all-powerful, a god above gods. He simply ignores attacks, and they have no effect on him. He is not subject to magical chaos, but can cause it to plague any being he desires.

Helm only appears in this adventure in the presence of Ao, who extends his powers to protect Helm. Helm by nature does not act against attackers.

Abbreviations

AL: Alignment.

Symbol: The sign by which the deity is known. An avatar may display it at will, or project it into surrounding minds to cause instant recognition.

HD: Hit Dice.

THAC0: Acronym for "To Hit Armor Class 0": the score needed on a 20-sided die to hit an opponent having an Armor Class of 0. The score needed to hit other Armor Classes is easily calculated from this number. Note that THAC0 does not take into account adjustments due to strength, skills, or magic.

SpA: Spell Ability. The class and level at which the avatar casts spells (W = wizard; P = priest).

MV: Movement. How fast, in distance per round, that the avatar moves (Fl = flying speed, with maneuverability class following it in parentheses).

AC: Armor Class. This is the avatar's frontal Armor Class, including adjustments for Dexterity, magical protections, and innate durability. The AC may be worse if the avatar is attacked from behind or from the flank.

hp: The avatar's hit points (always less than those of the deity at full powers).

#AT: Number of attacks per round.

Dmg: Damage per attack.

MR: Magic Resistance; the chance that a spell may fail when used against the avatar. Apply this factor *in addition to* magical chaos. The deity's normal MR is usually twice that of its weakened avatar.

SZ: Size. An avatar can cause a possessed body to grow larger, or shrink smaller, by 50% of its normal size.

High Ability Scores: The 2nd Edition *Player's Handbook* details the increased powers and abilities conferred by ability scores higher than 18.

Note that high Wisdom confers the ability to throw off the effects of certain charmlike magical effects, as follows:

19 Wis: *cause fear, charm person, command, friends, hypnotism*

20 Wis: *forget, hold person, ray of enfeeblement, scare*

21 Wis: *fear*

22 Wis: *charm monster, confusion, emotion, fumble, suggestion*

23 Wis: *chaos, feblemind, hold monster, magic jar, quest*

Note that the above list assumes immunity to less powerful versions of similar spells.

Avatars should appear in play only sparingly. It is hard to excite or awe players whose characters are battling the thirteenth or fourteenth avatar of the day.

In this adventure PCs are likely to encounter these avatars:

BHAAL (Lesser Power)

AL: LE; **Symbol:** A circle of red blood-teardrops, falling counterclockwise, usually depicted circling a white skull.

HD 12; THAC0 as body (+ 5 to hit due to Strength); SpA W12, P14; MV 12; AC 0; hp 84; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 or by weapon type (+11 due to Strength); MR 45%; SZ as body (usually M); Str 23, Int 17, Wis 19, Dex as body (no AC change), Con 25, Cha as body; regenerates 2 hp/round.

Bhaal, The Lord of Murder, has been reduced to a killing force able to possess humans. He must personally slay the owner of a body to take possession. The victim gets no saving throw to avoid being possessed. Possession takes one round; it does not require Bhaal's physical contact, but he must be able to see his victim.

The spirits of humans slain by Bhaal become "soul spectres" (phantoms), and go to the Land of Always Night in Hades to serve him and Myrkul.

Bhaal retains his own strength and vitality, but employs the possessed body's fighting skills ("to hit" rolls). His possessed body can withstand attacks that would kill a living human. The avatar feels no pain except that caused by magic; he can grasp and pull on bare weapon blades, or slap weapons aside. He can force a smashed body to do things that a living human could not, such as hurling men through the air with single blows.

Bhaal does not care what happens to bodies he inhabits, but tries to keep a body mobile so he can readily slay replacement bodies. The eyes of possessed bodies burn with a strange, mad intensity.

Bhaal can also exercise additional powers by touch. He can *animate* undead indefinitely. Skeletons or zombies obey him absolutely; greater undead must perform one service for him—treat as a *command* spell—and are then free-willed. Bhaal cannot command existing undead that have greater power than skeletons and zombies. He can influence only those undead he himself animates. Bhaal is immune to all undead attacks of any sort.

AVATARS OF THE GODS



Symbol of Bhaal

Bhaal can also *disrupt* undead with his touch, turning them instantly into dust that not even he can reanimate.

Bhaal can *possess* undead to serve him as bodies, in the same way that he possesses living humans in the act of killing them. To do so, Bhaal must "slay" the undead (reduce it to 0 hp). Undead possessed by Bhaal lose all of their non-physical attacks. They last only 1d6 turns before disintegrating, destroyed by the divine energy within them. Therefore, Bhaal uses such bodies only as a means of escape.

MYRKUL (Greater Power)

AL: NE; Symbol: A skull or skeletal hand (sometimes combined, the hand issuing from the mouth of the skull).

HD 18; THAC0 14; SpA W23; MV 12, Fl 18 (D); AC -4; hp 136; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (+1 due to Strength) + special (see below); MR 45%; SZ M; Str 16, Int 18, Wis 23, Dex 15, Con 25, Cha 9; regenerates 2 hp/round.

Myrkul, Old Lord Skull, appears as a cloaked skeletal human. The corpses Myrkul uses disintegrate rapidly, and so they tend to be more skeletal than zombie-like. The head usually appears as a bare skull.

The Lord of Bones is somewhat haughty, even by the gods' standards. He thinks nothing of lesser gods and "no-account cattle" (mortal creatures). He prefers to frighten or awe them by taunting them with his image, rather than facing them in combat.

Myrkul's attacks are as follows: 1d6 (open-handed) or by weapon, plus 1d4 chilling damage. This additional damage is identical to a *chilling touch* spell: 1d4 damage (no save), plus save vs. spell to avoid a 1-point Strength loss; lost Strength returns at 1 point per hour. The chill can be conferred by Myrkul's touch or a weapon he wields.

Myrkul can also exercise Bhaal's powers to animate and control the undead. Like Bhaal, he can possess undead bodies (but not freshly killed victims). For a description of these powers, see Bhaal's entry above.



Symbol of Myrkul

With a touch Myrkul can confer *flesh rot*, the "mummy disease." It negates all *cure wounds* spells, causes infected creatures to heal at only 10% of the normal rate, causes a permanent Charisma loss of 1 point every two weeks, and is fatal in 1d6 months. Touched creatures can avoid this with a save vs. poison, but they must save again each time Myrkul touches them.

A side effect of Myrkul's touch is that living creatures see all those around them as moving, talking, clothed skeletons. Victims cannot see flesh, including expressions, moving lips, and so on. This does not mean victims automatically assume that comrades have become undead; simply describe the effect to the player and let the player determine the PC's reaction. Make an Intelligence check every turn to end this side effect.

The Tablets of Fate

Indestructible in the hands of anyone except Lord Ao, each Tablet of Fate is made of plain, weathered stone, two feet high and with rounded ends and edges. On the sides are engraved the names and symbols of the gods and their divine portfolios. However, no one but a god can interpret anything except the gods' symbols.

Tablets reflect all spells back 100% on the caster, but are otherwise inert. No one can use them offensively. The PCs' tablet radiates no dweomer. Myrkul's tablet radiates strong magic, signs of the enchantments he has placed on it. These spells let his denizens cross from Hades into the Realms; maintain an open gate to Hades, so that their power remains strong; and allow Myrkul to locate the tablet wherever it is.

Cyric's Sword

Though it resembles a *short sword of dancing* +2, this chaotic evil weapon is intelligent and has powers almost on the level of an artifact. Its origin and purpose remain a mystery, as does its arrival in Sneakabout's hands.

Abilities: If directed to parry, the sword hurls back any weapon it contacts, regardless of weapon velocity or wielder's strength.

The sword has vampiric abilities. On any killing blow, the sword can drain all the blood and life energy of its victim. This causes the sword to glow a bright rose red. If the sword has not drained a victim in more than a day, it gradually wanes in color.

If it desires, the blade can release drained life energy to heal or revive its wielder (but no one else). It cannot be forced to do this. The sword can also keep the wielder comfortable in extremes of heat or cold.

The sword can speak with its user telepathically. It has an Intelligence of 17 and an Ego of at least 10. Refer to the *DMG* for details of magic sword blood-draining, dancing, ego and intelligence.

The sword possesses other powers determined by the DM. Use these powers to preserve Cyric's life until the end of the adventure.

The Curse: This weapon's principal drawback is a curse that causes blood lust in the wielder. Also, as with many objects of powerful evil, the item gradually pre-occupies its owner's mind. The wielder eventually grows paranoid, obsessed with the sword, and knows no peace if the sword is taken away. This happened to Sneakabout.

However, shortly after acquiring the weapon, Cyric engaged it in a contest of wills. Cyric won, and now he is immune to the blood-lust curse. When Cyric meets his fate at the end of this adventure, the sword passes from the world with him.

Denizen

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Hades
FREQUENCY:	Common in Hades; unknown elsewhere
ORGANIZATION:	Group
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	None
INTELLIGENCE:	Average (10-11)
TREASURE:	V (magical weapons possible)
ALIGNMENT:	Lawful Evil

NO. APPEARING:	1-4
ARMOR CLASS:	1/0
MOVEMENT:	12/12, Fl 18
HIT DICE:	8/10
THACO:	13/11
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1/2
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1-6/1-8 or weapon
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Nil
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	See below
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	30%/35%
SIZE:	M/L
MORALE:	Steady (11-12)
LEVEL/X.P. VALUE:	650 (3000)/1400 (5000)

These creatures of Hades are servants of Myrkul, brought to the Realms by the magic he placed on his Tablet of Fate.

Each denizen was once a living being, usually a cleric of Myrkul. Evil and cunning in life, they were rewarded in death with these new forms and the role of tormentors of the dead.

There are many kinds of denizens, with many different powers and proficiencies. This entry describes the two seen in Waterdeep during the Time of Troubles: knights and dukes. In the ability listings above, some entries have two values, separated by slashes. The number before the slash indicates knights; the number after, dukes.

Knights have grotesque, casklike bodies with gangly, misshapen arms that drag along the ground. Their short legs bely their speed and grace. Knights have humanlike heads and features, except for bilious fangs and glowing red eyes. They speak in low, guttural voices.

Dukes have fat bodies covered with feathers. Their huge, leathery wings propel them through air at maneuverability class C. A duke's head looks like nothing human, but rather a combination

of vampiric fangs, insectile compound eyes, and a flat hoglike snout. Both hair and quills grow on its head, just behind a pair of diminutive horns.

Combat: Denizens have several special abilities that only function in their home plane of Hades, or near an open portal to Hades. They cannot be harmed by less than +1 magical weapons; they have magic resistance and innate *protection from good*; and they are immune to the same attacks as undead creatures.

All denizens regenerate 1 hp of damage each round. All have infravision (60' range) and extraordinarily acute senses of smell and taste. Some denizens also have other special abilities.

However, no denizen can turn invisible, and none can leave the plane of Hades without Myrkul's assistance.

When stranded in another dimension without an open gate to Hades within 100 miles, denizens lose their special abilities (except their superhuman senses). They regenerate only 1 hp per day. All attacks can harm them, except for fire- or heat-based attacks. They have no other special defenses. Dukes in flight drop from maneuverability class C to class D.

In combat denizens attack viciously, picking off the weakest opponents first. They take sadistic pleasure in inflicting pain.

Use the first XP value given above for denizens without their special abilities; the XP value in parentheses applies to denizens with all abilities intact.

Habitat/Society: Denizens are found only in Hades, specifically in the Realm of the Dead (Myrkul's domain). They often fly out over the Fugue Plain of Hades to harvest the waiting souls of the False and Faithless.

Denizens belong to an elaborate social structure modeled on human aristocracies. Low-ranking denizens are called "knights"; those of greater power have titles such as "duke" or "prince." All obey Lord Myrkul without question. It is not clear whether a denizen can voluntarily advance in social status.

Ecology: Denizens do not need to eat to survive, but they enjoy the taste of living flesh.

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Night Rider

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any (guardian)
FREQUENCY:	Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary or group
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	None
INTELLIGENCE:	Low (5-7)
TREASURE:	V (magical weapons possible)
ALIGNMENT:	Lawful Evil

NO. APPEARING:	3-24
ARMOR CLASS:	7
MOVEMENT:	10
HIT DICE:	As in life
THACO:	As in life
NO. OF ATTACKS:	As in life
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1-8 or by weapon type
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Chill touch
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	<i>Protection from good, darkness</i>
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Special
SIZE:	M
MORALE:	Very Steady (13)
LEVEL/X.P. VALUE:	650 (varies)

These undead are created by Myrkul and a few lichs and evil clerics. They are usually found as guardians or servants, and resemble zombies or (more rarely) skeletons or partially skeletal corpses. They are more powerful than both of these types of undead, and their intelligence makes them far more dangerous.

Although utterly silent in movement, night riders usually chuckle or cry out in triumph when they strike an opponent. They are so profoundly evil that they can create a *protection from good*, 10' radius at will. Night riders are turned as shadows.

Combat: Night riders may use all sorts of weapons, but because of their relative clumsiness, they are -1 to hit with missile weapons. Unlike zombies, night riders do not necessarily strike last in a round (being faster than zombies, night riders suffer only -1 on initiative rolls).

Most night riders in the service of Myrkul are armed with *scythes of wounding* +1 (treat as a *sword of wounding*), which deal a base damage of 2-8 +1.

Night riders can create *darkness* in a 15' radius at will. Their touch chills all non-undead for 1d4 hp damage, and causes a (cumulative) hour-long 1-point Strength loss.

Night riders cannot use spells, potions, or magic items requiring a living touch. They suffer only half damage from edged and piercing weapons, and are unaffected by *sleep*, *charm*, *hold* and *cold*-based magics.

Healing spells and potions actually do damage to night riders. Such magics diminish their unlife energy, causing the loss of hit points equal to the points of healing the magic would have done to a living being. (A partial or splash hit from a potion does 1-2 hp damage.) Holy water does a night rider 2d4 damage per vial.

Habitat/Society: Night riders are created for a purpose, and go where commanded. They have no societal organization, but are most often found with other undead—particularly gaunts (see below), normal zombies, and skeletons. They retain something of the intelligence they had in life, and seem drawn to areas they frequented when alive.

Ecology: Night Riders eat nothing, and serve no ecological niche. They may serve Myrkul or the greater undead.

Gaunt

AC 7; MV 24 (leap 20'); HD 2 + 2; #AT 2; Dmg 1d4; SZ L; AL LE; Morale 12; XP value 975.

Many night riders have as companions only their undead horses called gaunts. These skeletal steeds, also known as deadmounts, are rare. Some believe them to be created only by Bane and Myrkul.

Gaunts appear as skeletal horses, some with manes, tails, and even tatters of withered flesh still attached. They are of all sizes, and although their bones are as brittle as most dry bone, their unlife gives them strong and supple joints. They gallop and leap as swiftly and surely as living horses. Gaunts are turned as ghouls.

Gaunts fight anything that their rider attacks, or as commanded. In battle, gaunts lash out with their hooves for 1d4 damage per attack.

Their breath has a chilling effect. Living creatures within 10' must make a Constitution check every round. Failure means 1d4 hp damage and causes a (cumulative) one-point Strength loss lasting one hour.

Any living being foolish enough to mount a gaunt must save vs. paralyzation every round or be paralyzed. Such paralysis can only be broken by a successful saving throw on a subsequent attempt. On the first round, the save is made at -6; on the second round, at -5; and so on. On each round of paralysis, a rider suffers an automatic 2 hp of chill damage. Helpless living riders are usually taken on a ride over a cliff. Anyone who can reach a paralyzed rider can readily pull him or her off.

Gaunts suffer only half damage from edged or piercing weapons, and are unaffected by *sleep*, *charm*, *hold* and *cold*-based magic. Holy water does a deadmount 2d4 damage per vial.

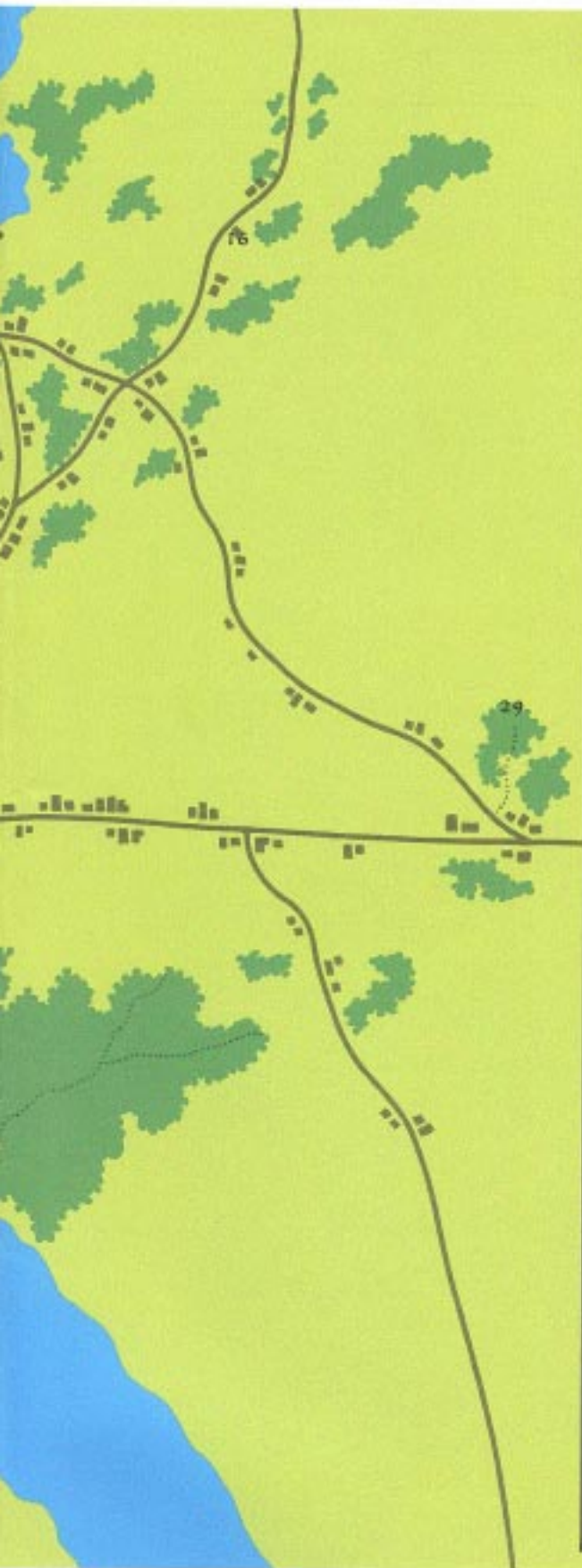
Some gaunts, who have lost riders far from anything that can command them, wander alone and in small bands in wilderness areas. They may even join and run with wild horses, who ignore or fear them.

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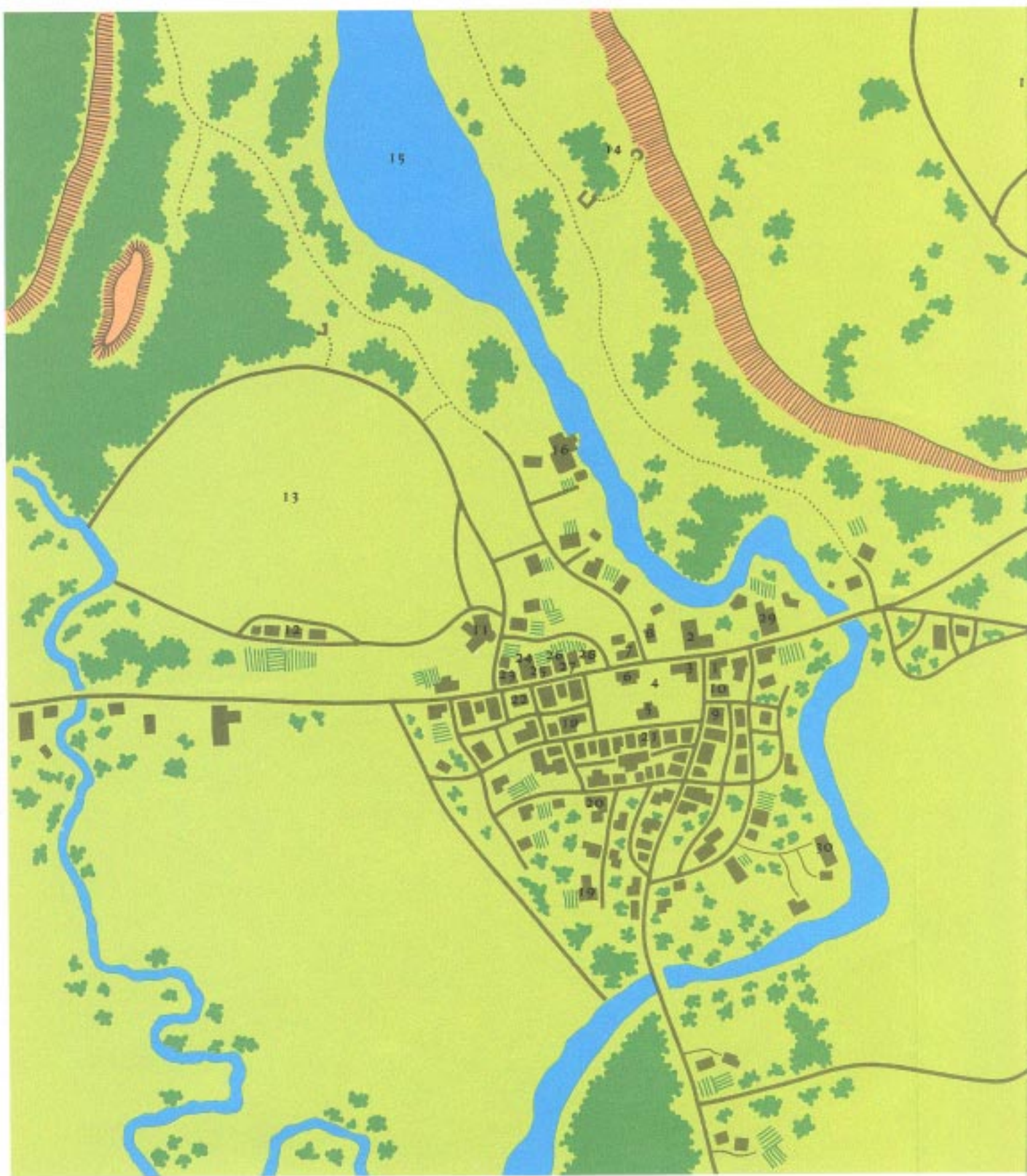


- 1. Great Harbor
- 2. Deepwater Isle
- 3. Naval Harbor



TOWN OF WHELOON

1. The Wyvern Watch INN; proprietor Bulbegas Mhaerkoon (F4, NG).
2. Route of Ferry. One-way trip costs 1 cp per head, plus 1 cp extra per crate or bag beyond what traveler can carry in hand, plus 1 cp per mount or pack animal, plus 1 cp per cart or wagon.
3. The Wyvernflow River; flows south from Wyvernwater (the lake) to the Dragonmere.
4. Olbetone Hall; home of Lord Sarp Redbeard.
5. Lord Sarp's paddock.
6. Sendever's Stables; horses bought, sold, doctored, and boarded.
7. Halbos the Butcher; slaughterhouse, shop, and stockyard.
8. Redbeard Rental Storage and Shipping; warehouse owned by Lord Sarp Redbeard.
9. Mill; proprietor Leahon Woumar (F1, CG).
10. The Cormyrean Coins Coster; warehouses and shipping business, operating throughout Cormyr and Sembia with routes to Westgate, Tezuir, and Ilipur.
11. Warehouse of Mhaernos Falconstar, wayshipper; rents space to caravan masters or ship captains for storage while transshipping between land and water.
12. The Lanthorn INN (and boat rental); proprietor Staephon Gylesman (F3, NG).
13. Hanno's Herbs and Medicines; proprietor Hanno Minstrelsong (halfling T6, NG).
14. The Silvery Sembian Snail (tavern); proprietor Roond Asmyrk (Pr16, retired cleric of Sune, CG).
15. The Blackbarb (boatbulber and rental storage space); proprietor Shanna "Blackbarb" Northgate (T7, NE, a fence and smuggler).
16. Cottage of Chalannos Firehawk (F8, CN).
17. The Fish House (icehouse and fishmonger).
18. Haertiboun's Helms & Shields; proprietress Albhaera (F2, CG).
19. House of Haertiboun "Hawkmaster" (F6, CN).
20. The Scarlet Sheaf (tavern); proprietor Anthara "Softjangles" Shalymarr (T3, retired, CN).
21. Smithy; proprietor Dunlath Darispur (F2, LG).
22. Temple to Chauntea, overseen by Harandave Donohar (Pr16, NG).
23. Hardware shop; proprietor Zenbaros Rallogar.
24. Immerhand INN; proprietor Chalthos Immer (F5, retired, LN).
25. Rathool's Pond; swimming hole & trout fishing.
26. The Sleeping Cat (tavern & restaurant); proprietor Whelgar Caerncole (F5, retired, NG).
27. Wheloon Tack & Leather Shop; proprietor Landon "Wonderwand" Bhentyi (M2, retired, LG).
28. Slowtooth's Weapon Shop; proprietor Nym "Slowtooth" Nindar (F8, retired, CN).
29. Shrine to Silvanus (in duskwood grove); overseen by Orlenstar Thirlthorn (D4, N).
30. The Watch House (barracks, armory, and jail).
31. Meeting Hall and Courthouse; contains apartments for court messengers and high-ranking Purple Dragons.



1. Entry chamber, empty now but usually occupied by one of

Village of EVENINGSTAR

1. The LONESOME TANKARD INN (see map below); proprietor DUNMAN KIRIAG (F5, NG).
2. EVENINGSTAR HALL (meeting house, guard barracks, jail).
3. Stables (horses bought, sold, rented); proprietor LADIAN RULBO (see also #30). DUNMAN KIRIAG OF THE LONESOME TANKARD RENTS SPACE IN THIS STABLES FOR THE USE OF HIS GUESTS.
4. Market Square.
5. ASHNAIRN'S FINE CLOTHING SHOP.
6. EBBARD HIGHSONG, BUTCHER.
7. The Old Boot (wagonmaker & harness shop); proprietor ARBOLD TETHYR.
8. Residence of Auldo MORIM (town clerk and purser) and barracks for local Purple Dragon detachment (9 men strong).
9. Residence of Lord TESSARIL WINTER (F10, CG, an ex-mage who possesses a necklace of missiles and a wand of magic missiles).
10. Shop and home (upstairs) of VILNAR ORSBORG, barber/perfumer/tattooer.
11. The House of the MORNING, temple to LATHANER; patriarch CHARISBONDE TRUESERVANT (PR11, NG).
12. Temple granaries.
13. Temple fields (wheat and vegetables grown by and for clergy).
14. Pillar Rock (entrance to old tomb cave in base).
15. Redhand Pool.
16. Deltar's Mill; proprietor Deltar CUMMARIN.
17. High Pasture (COMMON grazing land).
18. The Iron Hand (smithy); MASTER ARMORER DHURTHAL IRONHAND.
19. The Golden Unicorn INN; proprietress SELBA IMYARA.
20. Shop of BASKAR LENDO; sage, print shop, parchment and ink maker.
21. Mother Tethos; cordials, herbs, gentle cures (a doctor and midwife, but not a cleric).
22. The Low Lantern (tavern, dance hall, theater); proprietress MAEA "Iron Eyes" DULGUSLIR.
23. Tethyr Hardware (chains, oil, rope, candles, etc.); owned by Arbold Tethyr, run by his three fat daughters.
24. Tethyr's Court (rooming house); owned by Arbold Tethyr, run by his wife and eight live-in maids.
25. Shop and home of Uibar the Potter.
26. The Silver Branch (jewelry, fine silks, glasswork, art, etc.).
27. Carpenter's shop and rooming house owned and run by Roarel Olff.
28. EVENINGSTAR Bakery; proprietress URDA MALO and her daughters.
29. The Welcoming Hand INN (a burned-out ruin at present).
30. Stables; proprietor LADIAN RULBO (see also #3).
31. Apple orchard and farm belonging to TABURG SHEN.

1. Great Harbor
2. Deepwater Isle
3. Naval Harbor
4. The City of the Dead
5. The Market
6. The Field of Triumph (arena)
7. Heroes' Garden (park)
8. Waterdeep Castle
9. Piengeton's Palace
10. Blackstaff Tower
11. The Yawning Portal Inn
12. Mint's Mansion
13. Fishgut Court
14. Virgin's Square
15. Court of the White Bull
16. Caravan Court
17. Peaktop Eyrie

1. Front door
2. Stairs up; body of table
3. Dining hall

ONCE a bustling business remain, covered by the

Scale: 1 square = 1

1. Great Gate
2. Outer Ward
3. Inner Ward

Scale: 1 square = 1

Sea of Swords

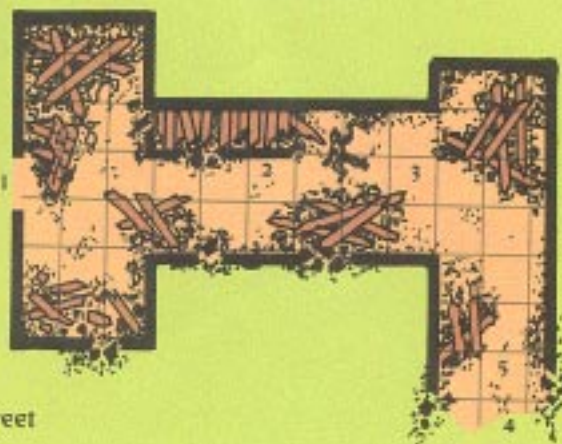
City of Waterdeep

The Roosting Griffon Inn

- 4. Kitchens (destroyed)
- 5. Stairs down to stone-lined pantry cellars

Innkeeper slumped at a

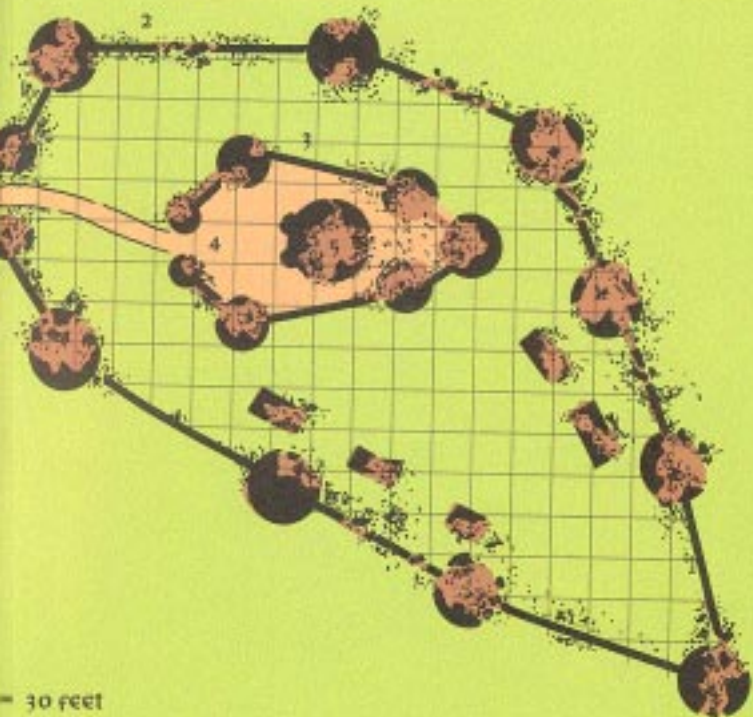
ness, this is now a roofless, burned-out inn. Stone, half-story-high walls
charred and fallen timbers. The upper story is entirely gone.



10 feet

Ruins of Dragonspear Castle

- 4. Inner Gate
- 5. Dragonspear Keep (cellars below)
- 6. Overland caravan road



30 feet

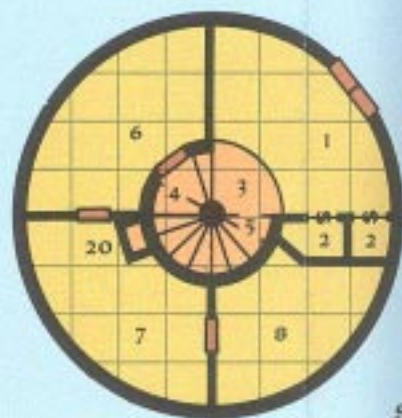
Blackstaff Tower

(Partial map)

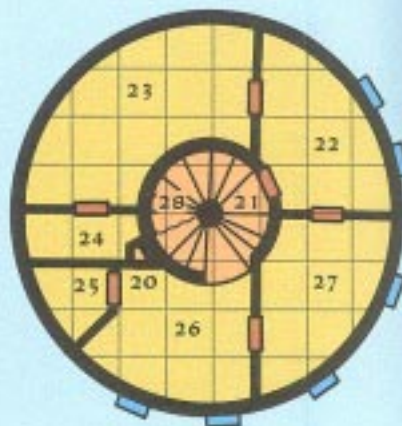
Much of Blackstaff Tower exists ON O has been magically sealed off by Khelben time of this adventure. Only the areas th can readily reach are detailed here. All floor (except #28, the trap door to the wizard locked by Khelben (26th level). Ne tower courtyard and walls, and the tow include an underground tunnel to Pie

Magical spying within the tower is imp teleportation or other forms of magica the tower are impossible except when a powerful of mages.

GROUND FLOOR



THIRD FLOOR



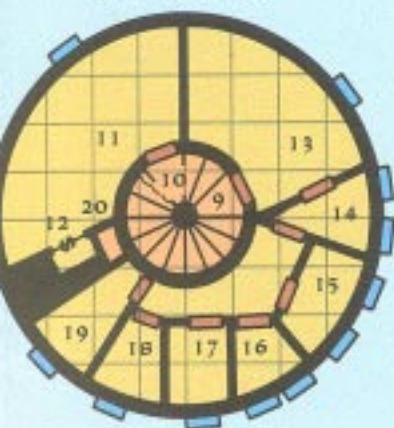
TOWER

It exists on other dimensions, or off by Kheiben Arunsun during the areas that avatars and PCs led here. All doors on the third floor to the roof have been (6th level). Not shown here are the and the tower cellars (which tunnel to Piergeiron's Palace). Tower is impossible, and of magical travel in or out of except when attempted by the most



Scale: 1 square = 10 feet

SECOND FLOOR



1. Entry chamber, empty now but usually occupied by one of Kheiben's apprentices equipped with a wand of paralyzation and a wand of enemy detection.

2. Closets containing a stone golem and an iron golem, which are activated when anyone except Kheiben or Laeral (his wife) opens one of the secret doors.

3. Landing at the bottom of the central circular stair, one step up from area #1. A defensive magic placed on this area by Kheiben causes all dweomers brought into this area to glow. The object or caster radiates white light (or blue if the magic is strongly good, or red if strongly evil). The radiance lasts for three turns unless dispelled, and when it begins an alarm chime is sounded in areas #13, #23, #26, and #27. Note that a Tablet of Fate radiates no dweomer.

4. Stairs up to second floor.

5. Stairs down to cellars (not shown).

6. Audience chamber and guest dining room.

7. Kitchen, containing a dumbwaiter (#20) large enough for a small dog or a pixie to fit into, connecting the cellars with the upper floors. Magical protections prevent the dumbwaiter from being used to transport flaming or magical cargoes.

8. Pantry, very well stocked.

9. Landing at the top of the stairway leading from the first floor.

10. Stairs up to third floor.

11. Library, crammed with overflowing bookcases and a massive table and chairs.

12. Entrance to extradimensional storage vault (where Elminster tries to hide one of the tablets).

13. Parlor.

14-19. Guest rooms (used by the adventurers).

20. Dumbwaiter; opens into areas #7, #11, #19, #24, and #26, and into the cellars, but it does not go to the roof. Hidden in a box fastened to its bottom are 24 stoppered and sealed vials containing potions of extra-healing. (See also #7.)

21. Landing. When any being enters here for the first time, an image appears of a single, disembodied human hand floating in midair. It makes a palm-outward "stop" gesture, and then slowly changes form to point a finger at the intruder. The image is harmless, serving only to scare intruders or cause them to waste spells. It functions each time a being who has not been here before enters the landing, and is seen only by the being(s) for which this is true.

22. Study and laboratory. An incredibly untidy room crammed full of odds and ends of magical apparatus, half-finished experiments, and the like, dominated by a large table piled so heavily with stuff that the tabletop cannot be seen. (Some of the contents of this room are detailed in FR4, The Magister.)

23. Spellcasting chamber. A bare, partially extradimensional room, which normally appears to be a dark void illuminated by many tiny, twinkling stars. A practice area for magical experiments.

24. Material components storage area, heavily guarded with magic.

25. Wardrobe containing a lavish supply of garments and accessories, some of them magical.

26. Kheiben's chamber, containing a large bed, a writing table and chair, and not much else (except a black staff of power stashed under the bed).

27. Laeral's chamber. Furnished the same as #26, but without an access to the dumbwaiter (and no staff under the bed).

28. Trap door to roof; a simple, solid slab of marble. The roof itself is a plain, flat circle of fused (seamless) stone, with spells on it to repel rain water, and no railing or battlements.

GROUND

1. Front porch (not shown).

2. Taproom, wall and south (south of #3).

3. Bar, behind

4. Wide stairs

5. Private dining

6. Robbing room

store outer wall

7. Servants' room

8. Dunman's double-locked

9. Scullery; #

10. Kitchen; N

#11.

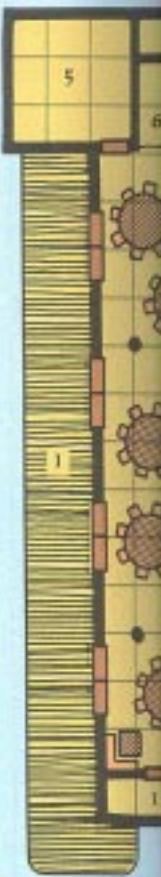
11. V.L.P. lounge (taken).

12. Back room

Stairs at south

13. Men's toilet

14. Women's toilet



The Lonesome Tankard Inn

GROUND FLOOR

1. Front porch (with overhanging roof; pillars not shown).
2. Taproom/dining room with tables, booths (on east wall and southern corners), pillars, and fireplace (south of #3).
3. Bar, behind which Dunman is usually found.
4. Wide stairway to upper floors.
5. Private dining/meeting room, available for rent.
6. Robing room, where visitors can clean up and store outerwear.
7. Servants' lounge and dining area.
8. Dunman's office and strongroom; heavy door double-locked.
9. Scullery; food & cutlery storage.
10. Kitchen; note double-sided fireplace, shared with #11.
11. V.I.P. lounge and dining area (where PCs are taken).
12. Back room; storage of liquor and specialty items. Stairs at south end lead to cellars (not shown).
13. Men's toilet.
14. Women's toilet.

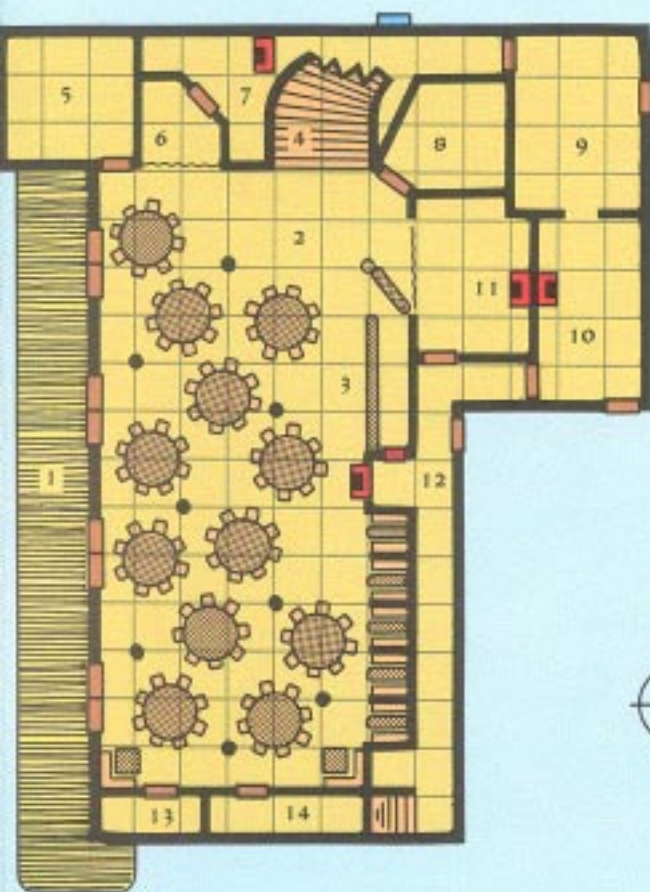
Second floor

15. Wide stairway leading from ground floor.
16. Stairway to third floor (not shown).
17. Walk-in storage areas for linens, chamberpots, water casks, candles, lamps, and so on.
18. Guest rooms. All have a bed, storage chest, sideboard with chair and ewer of water, washing bowl, clothes rack, lamp, and chamberpot.
19. Luxury room, shared by Midnight and one other character. Identical with #18 except for fireplace.
20. Rooms that PCs and other NPCs are lodged in. Furnishings identical with #18.

Third floor: Not shown. Layout same as second floor, except that the center storage closet has a hatch in its ceiling allowing access to the roof.

Stables: The inn has no attached stables, but rents stalls in the stables across the road to the west, for the convenience of quests.

Scale: 1 square = 10 feet



RANDOM ENCOUNTER TABLES

The tables below are provided for the convenience of the DM to determine the nature of random encounters in some of the areas where this adventure takes place. Other types of creatures may be encountered, at the DM's discretion; these tables are meant only as a guideline and a time-saver. Use the King's Forest table when the party is in the forested area of Cormyr, and use the High Moor tables whenever the party is in open terrain west of the Sunset Mountains. For encounters in other areas and other types of terrain, the DM can select appropriate creatures from the *Monstrous Compendium* or use the general encounter tables provided with any official AD&D® game book or supplement.

King's Forest

1d20	Encounter
1	Choke creeper (1)
2-3	Wild dogs (4d4)
4-6	Goblins (5d4)
7	Fire beetles (3d4)
8-9	Mongrelmen (3d4)
10-11	Stirges (5d6)
12	Giant hornet (1)
13-14	Korreds (1d4)
15-17	Orcs (2d6)
18-19	Brown bears (1d6)
20	Green hag (1)

High Moor (Day)

1d20	Encounter
1-2	Bugbears (3d4)
3-4	Huge spiders (2d4)
5-6	Wolves (4d4)
7	Land lampreys (2d6)
8-9	Manticores (1d4)
10	Bulettes (1d2)
11-12	Trolls (1d12)
13	Wild boars (1d6)
14-15	Giant wasps (4d4)
16-18	Hobgoblins (4d8)
19-20	Griffons (2d4)

High Moor (Night)

1d20	Encounter
1	Hill giants (1d10)
2-3	Bats (2d20)
4	Groaning spirit (1)
5-6	Wolves (2d10)
7-8	Trolls (1d12)
9-10	Hobgoblins (4d8)
11-12	Jackalweres (1d4)
13-14	Land lampreys (1d6)
15	Ascomid (1)
16-17	Bats (2d10)
18-19	Orcs (2d10)
20	Giant slug (1)

MONSTER SUMMARY TABLE

Some of the vital statistics of monsters featured in this adventure are presented in this table for handy reference during play. Refer to the original AD&D® game monster books or the 2nd Edition *Monstrous Compendium* volumes for more detailed information.

Name	AC	HD	#AT	Dmg	MV	Remarks
Ascomid	3	6+6	1	1 (poison kills)	12	cloud: 1-4 rnds helpless
Bat	8(4)	1-2 hp	1	1	Fl 24	ruin spells, torches out
Bear, brown	6	3+3	3	1-6/1-6/1-8	12	hugs: 2-12 dmg
Beetle, fire	4	1+2	1	2-8	12	glands glow 1-6 days
Boar, wild	7	3+3	1	3-12	15	fight 2-5 rds. at 0 hp
Bugbear	5(10)	3+1	1	2-8 or weapon	9	attack as team
Bulette	-2/4/6	9	3	4-48/3-18/3-18	14	jump 8': 3-18 X 4 dmg
Choke creeper	6(5)	25	8+	1-4	1	strangles
Giant, hill	4	8+1-2	1	2-16	12	hurl rocks to 200': 2-16 dmg
Goblin	6	1-1	1	1-6 or weapon	6	may have slaves
Green hag	-2	9	2	7-8/7-8	12, Sw 12	spell-like powers
Griffon	3	7	3	1-4/1-4/2-16	12, Fl 30	eat horses
Groaning spirit	1	7	1	1-8	15	wail kills (range 30')
Hobgoblin	5	1+1	1	1-8 or weapon	9	swords & morning stars
Hornet, giant	2(4)	5	1	1-4	6, Fl 24	poison, paralysis
Jackalwere	4	4	1	2-8	12	gaze sleeps, wpn immunities
Korred	5	6+1	1	1-2 +4 or weapon	9	animated ropes entangle
Lamprey, land	7	1+2	1	1/rnd (up to 3)	12	drains blood
Lion, mountain	6	3+1	3	1-3/1-3/1-6	15 (leap 20')	rear claws: 1-4/1-4
Manticore	4	6+3	3	1-3/1-3/1-8	12, Fl 18	tail spikes: 1-6, 18' r.
Mongrelman	5	4	1	1-10 or weapon	9	pickpocket, camouflage, mimic
Orc	6(10)	1	1	1-8 or weapon	9 (12)	-1 to hit in full daylight
Slug, giant	8	12	1	1-12	6	60' + range acid spit
Spider, huge	6	2+2	1	1-6	6, Wb 15	poison, leaps 30'
Squirrel	8	1 hp	1	1	9	lair 20' up in trees
Stirge	8	1+1	1	1-3	3, Fl 18	blood drain, hits as 4 HD
Troll	4	6+6	3	5-8/5-8/5-12	12	regenerates 3 hp per rnd
Wasp, giant	4	4	2	2-8/1-4	6, Fl 21	poison paralyzes
Wolf	7	2+2	1	2-5	18	hunt in packs
Wyvern	3	7+7	2	2-16 (bite), 1-6	6, Fl 24	tail sting: killing poison



PHYSICAL CHAOS TABLE

The effects described on this table are suggestions only; the DM should feel free to make up alternatives and substitute freely. Bear in mind, however, that play will have to go on in the “new” environment afterwards; consider the impact of widespread or long-lasting changes to the landscape beforehand. Roll percentile dice, and consult the table below; the frequency with which the DM consults the table is a matter of choice (generally, the presence of avatars or large-scale magical activity increases chaos, and the presence of large populations or mountains decreases chaos). The use of this table should make travel strange, exciting, and occasionally dangerous; not an exhausting, neverending obstacle course. DMs who also used the preceding adventure, *Shadowdale*, should roll on this table more often than they did in the previous adventure, since chaos in general is increasing throughout the realms.

Percentile

Score	Result
01-10	Natural <i>fireworks</i> effect (as in the <i>pyrotechnics</i> spell) occurs. The air is filled with a ringing, chiming sound that dies away (with the fireworks) after 1-4 rounds.
11-24	Undergrowth sprouts into sudden, frenzied life (if no foliage underfoot, it will grow, even from bare rock or atop water), equal to an <i>entangle</i> spell, which lasts 7 rounds in a 60-yard diameter area (save equals slowed, not held; held creatures can fight and cast spells, but not change location). Musklike plant scents and floral bouquets will waft (harmlessly) in the air.
25-30	Insects appear with a menacing buzzing sound, a swarm equal in effects to an <i>insect plague</i> (priest spell), lasting for 1-4 turns.
31-44	The air turns violet and luminous (lasting 1-12 rounds). During this time, all within the area (a 400-yard diameter sphere extending into any buildings, the ground beneath, etc.) are slowed, affected by <i>feather fall</i> and <i>neutralize poison</i> , and are <i>cured</i> of 1-4 points of damage if injured. All invisible creatures and objects, and all dweomers (but not alignment auras) can be clearly seen in the violet field.
45-52	There is a menacing crackle, and a strong smell of ozone. <i>Lightning bolts</i> (damage 1d6 through 4d6; determine randomly) form spontaneously from rocks or exposed wood of any sort, leaping in a straight line to the nearest bit of rock or exposed wood (rock to rock or wood to wood, never one to the other). Save vs. breath weapon to avoid if possible (contact with any part of a bolt's destination, such as climbing elsewhere on the same cliff, makes a saving throw impossible). Bolts and discharges will veer away from and avoid large concentrations of pure metal; fully armored characters will automatically make their saving throws, if allowed any.
53-62	Lashing rain begins, though the air grows warm. This precipitation lasts 1-10 rounds, affects a small (80-yard-diameter cylinder from ground to upper air) area, and within it, all creatures can understand the speech of all other creatures, as if a <i>tongues</i> spell were in operation.
63-70	All small, light (roughly 10 lbs.) objects within a 10-yard radius that are not held or secured will <i>animate</i> (as the priest spell <i>animate object</i>). They will fly about aimlessly; make Dexterity checks each round to avoid being hit. Any hit does 1-2 points of damage. Any being concentrating on a moving object for at least 1 round will discover that he can influence its course, perhaps employing it as a weapon. A maximum of 1 object at a time can be so controlled by a being; if two beings try to control the same object, the creature with the higher Intelligence will ultimately prevail. This effect will last for 1-2 turns.
71-88	The ground begins to rise and fall as if it were waves on the open sea. Charging or springing accurately becomes impossible, as does riding other creatures. Writing and spellcasting take twice as long (but are not ruined). There is a 1 in 6 chance each round that this condition exists that a rift will open in the earth and swallow a rock, tree, or being up, spitting them out unharmed (unreachable by magic or physical means during their entombment) 2-5 rounds later. There is also a 2 in 6 chance that a <i>shooting star</i> (as in the missile released by a <i>ring of shooting stars</i>) will appear overhead, and burst. All creatures must save vs. spell to avoid suffering damage. These conditions last for 1-3 turns, moving with any traveling creatures.
89-96	All creatures within a 90-yard radius, from earthworms to dragons, are enshrouded in a <i>faerie fire</i> radiance for 1-6 turns thereafter. The radiance will shift color slowly but constantly; it will also act as a <i>ring of spell turning</i> , and as a <i>regeneration</i> field: all damage, however caused, suffered by a creature within a radiant field, is not suffered but gained as <i>healing</i> . Creatures at full hp can increase their hp by this means, such increased hp being lost at the rate of 1 per day (24-hour period), or through injury. Creatures augmented substantially in this way save at their “new” Hit Dice total, but still attack and function at their original level or Hit Dice.
97-00	A <i>reverse gravity</i> effect occurs. All creatures take damage as per the spell, but upon landing find that they have permanently gained 1-4 hp, and 20-yard-range <i>infravision</i> (if they already possess <i>infravision</i> , its range is extended by 20 yards). A strange, flickering golden radiance flashes here and there; <i>arrows of direction</i> and similar devices will not function. Tracking is impossible. These latter effects fade away in 1-2 turns.

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons[®]
2nd Edition



Official Game Adventure

WATERDEEP

by Ed Greenwood

Who will be the new gods?

The God of Strife is dead, destroyed in his attack on Tantras, and Midnight and the player characters have recovered the first Tablet of Fate—one of a pair of mysterious artifacts that will return the gods to their former glory and save the Realms from the fallen deities' wrath.

But the quest isn't over! To find the other Tablet of Fate, your heroes must travel across Faerun to Waterdeep, the City of Splendors. But both Midnight's former ally, Cyric, and Myrkul, the Lord of the Dead, want the tablets for their own dark ends, and they will stop at nothing to capture Midnight—even if it means the destruction of the Realms!

Waterdeep is the third of a three-part series of adventures for the ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS[®] 2nd Edition role-playing game, but it can also stand alone. Set in the popular FORGOTTEN REALMS[™] game world, this adventure is loosely based on Richard Awlinton's *Waterdeep*, the third novel in the Avatar Trilogy. This adventure is designed for four to six player characters of levels 6 to 9.



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