



THEATERS OF DEATH

Battlefield Encounters for
4th-, 8th-, and 10th-Level Player
Characters Featuring Material
from *Heroes of Battle*

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Heroes of Battle brings the dungeon out onto the battlefield and enables Dungeon Masters (DMs) to set adventures against the backdrop of armed conflict. Whether player characters (PCs) lead army units into battle or perform elite missions on behalf of battle leaders, the foes they face on the battlefield are just as lethal as any they would find in a dungeon. In addition to new battle-oriented spells, feats, and items, *Heroes of Battle* presents plenty of sample battlefield encounters that can be dropped into any war-based scenario.

Theaters of Death is a collection of new battlefield encounters (for characters from 4th to 10th level) are designed to supplement those presented in Chapter 3 of *Heroes of Battle*. These scenarios are nonlinear and not designed to work with any one specific battle. Thus, each can be dropped into a mass combat of your choice, or modified to work with a variety of different battles. Like the battlefield encounters given in *Heroes of Battle*, these scenarios can easily be reused simply by changing the specific creatures or terrain. As always, feel free to adapt the material presented here as you see fit to make it work with your campaign.

Theaters of Death is not set in a specific campaign world. In fact, in most cases, no specific names or places are given, so that you can more easily drop the encounter into your campaign.

PREPARATION

You (the DM) need the D&D core rulebooks—the *Player's Handbook*, the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, and the *Monster Manual*—as well as *Monster Manual II*, *Monster Manual III*, and *Heroes of Battle*—to run this adventure. The information presented here utilizes the D&D v.3.5 rules.

To get started, print out the text and maps. Read through the encounters at least once to familiarize yourself with the situation, threats, and major NPCs (particularly their motivations). In addition, you might want to read over the new uses for skills and the new spells presented in *Heroes of Battle* so that you are familiar with them before starting play. Text that appears in shaded boxes is player information that you can read aloud or paraphrase for the players at the proper times. For monster and NPC statistics, refer to the appropriate pages in *Monster Manual*, *Monster Manual II*, *Monster Manual III*, or *Heroes of Battle*.

MINIATURES

The D&D miniatures line has been a smashing success, and you may find that some of the miniatures produced by Wizards of the Coast, Inc. greatly enhance your players' enjoyment of these scenarios. A battlefield

encounter provides the perfect opportunity to utilize some of the more impressive miniatures in your collection, as well as some of the more common ones that you have undoubtedly accumulated over time.

You can use human fighters, orcs, and goblins to represent the less powerful foes that oppose your PCs, and the rarer miniatures in your collection can make excellent generals or special opponents.

The miniatures indicated below are particularly useful during play. Some are not exact matches for the designated creatures, but they do an adequate job of capturing the nature of the monster, or at least its relative size.

Boneclaws: Deathknell—Boneclaw (47/60)

Bonedrinkers: Dragoneye—Wererat (40/60)

Drowned: Archfiends—Cursed Spirit (49/60)

Ettin Skeletons: Ettin Skirmisher (52/60)

General Charred: Deathknell—Death Knight (33/60) or Giants of Legend—Lord Soth (36/72)

Ogre Barbarians: Dragoneye—Ogre Ravager (56/60) or Deathknell—Skullcrusher Ogre

Orc Messenger: Deathknell—Orc Savage (57/60) or Giants of Legend—Orc Brute (56/72)

Vampire Fighters: Deathknell—Ravenous Vampire (58/60)

USING THESE ENCOUNTERS

Each encounter begins with a description of the setup in plain language. Additional information is presented in the format detailed below.

Character Level: This entry gives the optimal average character level for the encounter. Characters of the indicated level are expected to spend 20% to 25% of their resources in such an encounter, much as if they were engaged in an encounter of an EL that matched their character level. The actual EL of the opponents in the encounter tends to exceed this value, since it takes into account the allied forces aiding the PCs.

Objective: The objective is the PCs' goal. Many battlefield encounters have both primary and secondary objectives.

Allied Forces: This entry describes additional troops or reinforcements available to PCs undertaking the mission.

Enemy Forces: These forces are the foes that the PCs will face in the encounter. These creatures are described either in the *Monster Manual* or in the appendices of *Heroes of Battle* (or both). Depending upon the encounter and the situation, the PCs might be aware of some, all, or none of these foes before the encounter begins.

Terrain Features: This entry includes any significant features of the landscape—such as hills, undergrowth, or fortifications—that could affect the outcome of the encounter.

Tactics: This section describes the options available—whether to the PCs and their allies, their enemies, or both—and what effect such tactics have on the encounter.

Aftermath: The aftermath section describes the effects of a successful or unsuccessful operation by the PCs.

XP Adjustment: In addition to the normal reduction of XP awarded after a battlefield encounter that features allied NPCs fighting alongside the PCs, some encounters afford the PCs even greater support before, during, or after the battle. In such cases, reduce the XP reward granted to the PCs by the indicated percentage. This concept is detailed more fully in the XP on page 61 in *Heroes of Battle*. In cases where this circumstance does not apply, the entry is absent.

Scaling This Encounter: This entry offers advice on how to adjust the encounter's difficulty for a wider range of character levels.

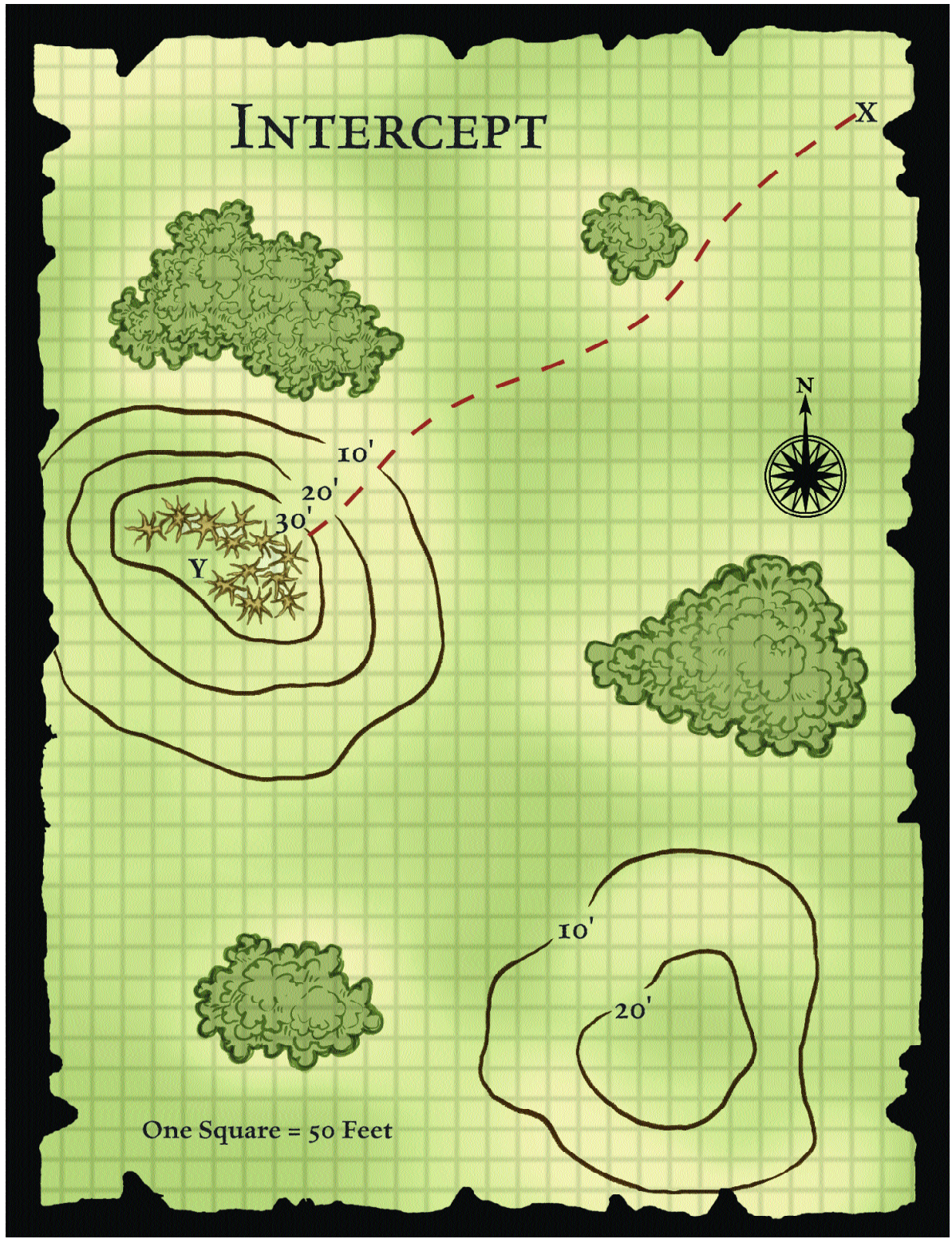
INTERCEPT ORDERS (4TH)

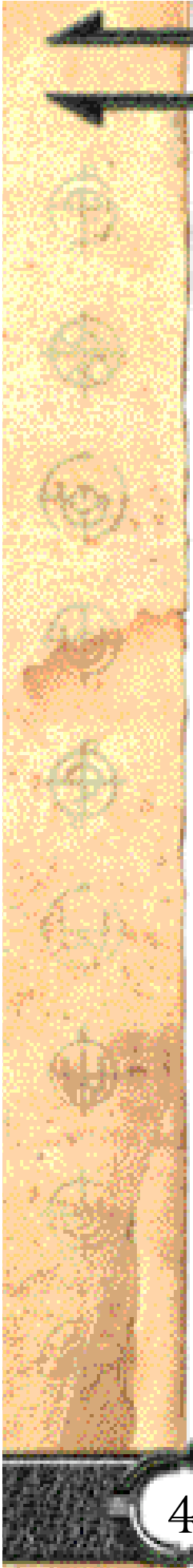
A mostly human army gathered by a local prince must combat an organized orc incursion. Though orcs are typically chaotic and disorganized, a powerful monstrous warlord has united the nearby tribes against the populace, and the resultant army is powerful enough to threaten the cities in this region of the campaign setting. Without decisive action on the prince's part, the orcs will overtake the local militias. To prevent such an outcome, the prince has united the militias of several cities that owe allegiance to him and sent the massed forces to intercept the approaching orc army.

Since the orcs have their own scouts in place, they are aware of the mostly human army that is closing in on their location. The orc general has concealed half of his force, including a company of archers, in a thicket of dead trees and brambles atop a nearby hill (area Y). He has given these hidden forces specific instructions to let the human army advance until his messenger arrives with orders to attack. The rest of the orc army waits motionless between the two wooded areas north of the hill where the hidden forces are concealed. In addition, several squads patrol the northern half of the battlefield map.

When the front of the human army arrives at the southernmost squares of the battle map, the front ranks spot the orc army. The humans advance at a rate of 50

INTERCEPT





feet per round until their army's front is just south of the smaller hill. The human general suspects that additional forces may lurk nearby, and that the orcs are waiting for his army to come closer before attacking. Rather than march his troops into a battlefield that may provide a nasty tactical surprise, he asks the PCs to sneak behind enemy lines, disrupt any communications in progress, and find any hidden enemies.

Character Level: This encounter is designed for 4th-level characters.

Objectives: This encounter has both a primary and a secondary objective.

Primary: Locate and eliminate the orc messenger running up the hill toward the hidden forces.

Secondary: Locate the enemy's hidden forces and report back to the human general with their number, type, and location.

Allied Forces: Since this mission relies on stealth, the general assigns the heroes no backup.

Enemy Forces: The vast majority of the orc army waits motionless between the two wooded areas north of the hill where the army units are hidden. Several squads patrol the northern half of the battlefield map.

The messenger with the order to attack is an orc lieutenant (see *Heroes of Battle* page 152) who begins at the location marked with an X on the map. Escorted by the orc squad detailed below, he makes his way at double speed to the spot marked Y on the map.

- Ten orcs (see *Monster Manual* page 203)
- Three orc sergeants (see *Heroes of Battle* page 152)
- One owlbear (see *Monster Manual* page 206)

Terrain Features: Two hills and several clusters of trees dominate the battlefield. The steeper northern hill is considered difficult terrain for climbing characters. The more southern hill is not as steep and does not slow movement. The terrain between these features consists of gently rolling hills no more than 5 feet high, but a +3 bonus applies to all Hide and Move Silently checks made in this area. PCs wishing to approach the enemy's location undetected have a better chance of doing so if they pass through the centrally located cluster of trees.

Tactics: If the PCs are discovered sneaking into orcish territory, 1d4 orc squadrons confront them, each arriving within 1d6 rounds. Until they have found the orc carrying the orders, the PCs need to use stealth.

The PCs would be wise to use the hillside opposite the orc army to their advantage if they wish to investigate the forces waiting atop the hill. Any magic such as

polymorph, *teleport*, or *invisibility* that the party might have allows the PCs a greater chance of approaching the hilltop undetected.

Aftermath: If the PCs successfully intercept the messenger bearing the order to attack, the portion of the army in the northernmost section of the battlefield attacks well ahead of the surprise force. The resulting confusion amid the orcs' ranks leads to fewer casualties for the human army. If the PCs spot the forces waiting atop the hill and give the human general an accurate report, he sends a force up the hill to neutralize that threat before advancing. If the PCs fail in their mission, the orcs hit the human army with a deadly strike that takes a heavy toll.

If all the PCs are captured, they must escape before the messenger reaches point Y on the battlefield map in order to complete the mission successfully.

Scaling the Encounter: For 2nd-level PCs, the enemy squad consists of five orcs, one orc lieutenant, and one owlbear. An orc sergeant carries the orders to the concealed portion of the army.

For an 8th-level party, the squad consists of ten orc corporals (see *Heroes of Battle* page 152), three orc captains (see *Heroes of Battle* page 152) and two 6-HD owlbears (see *Monster Manual* page 206). An orc colonel carries the orders to the concealed portion of the army.

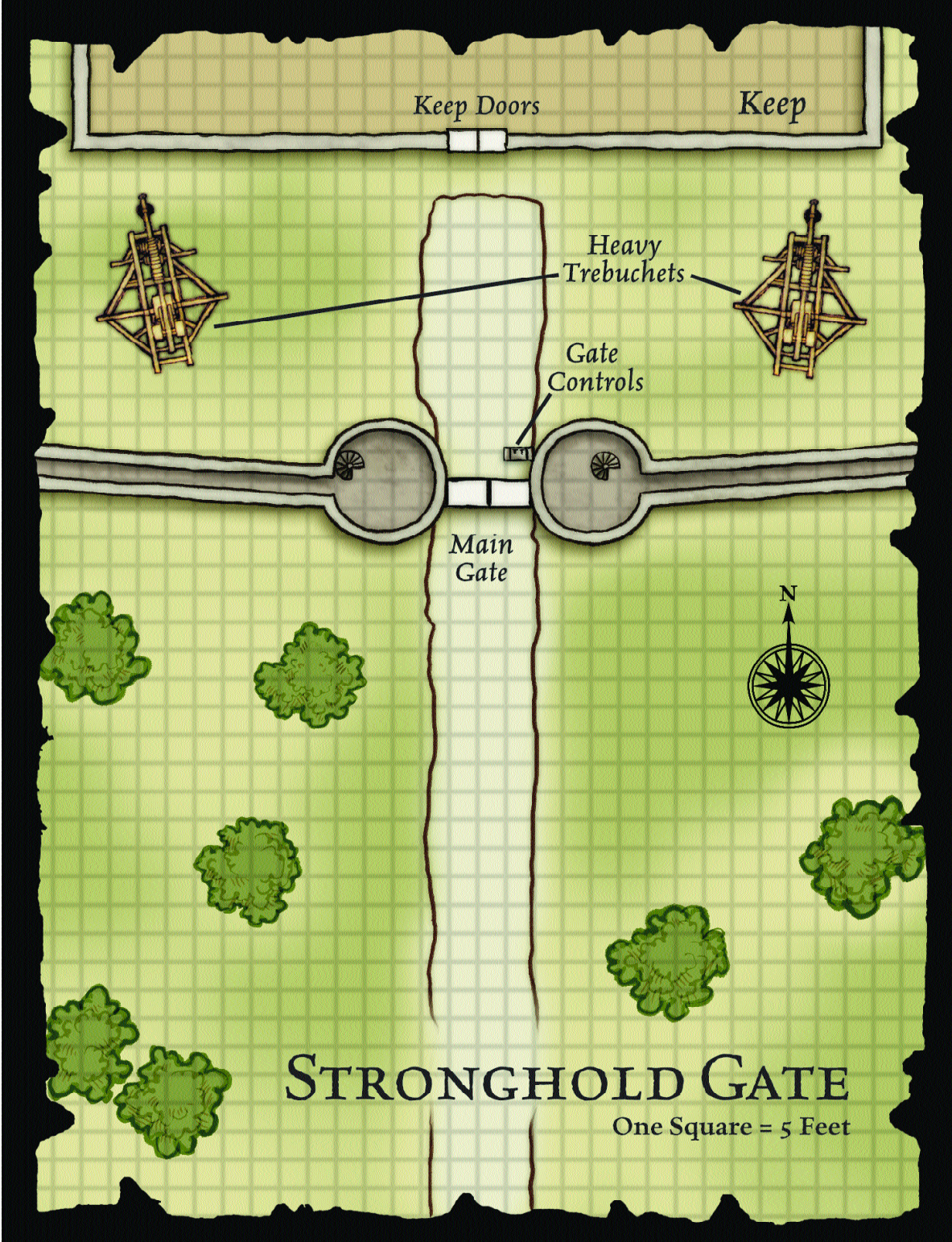
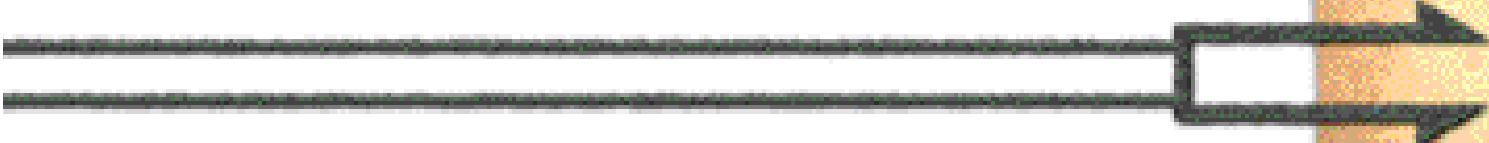
ATTACK THE GATE (8TH)

Opening the enemy's gates in real-world historical warfare was a costly endeavor at best. The murder holes, the boiling pitch, the arrow slits, and the defenders patrolling the walls ensured that opening a gate would cost the lives of countless attackers. Thus, commanders often considered a siege preferable to the sheer loss of troops.

In the D&D universe, characters have tools that were not available to real-world troops. Spells such as *disintegrate*, *teleport*, *fly*, and *dimension door* take much of the carnage out of the process and ensure a much faster resolution. Add character statistical boosts such as Deflect Arrows, high Armor Class, and uncanny dodge, and PCs have a very real chance of breaching gate defenses.

In this scenario, the PCs and a small group of elite soldiers must move ahead of their army and open the gates of an enemy keep. The rest of their forces wait just out of range of the defenders' archers and heavy trebuchets. This task should prove difficult, though it is far from impossible—provided that the PCs use stealth and whatever magic they have at their disposal.

Character Level: This encounter is designed for 8th-level characters.



Objectives: This encounter has both a primary and a secondary objective.

Primary: Open the stronghold gates.

Secondary: Open the doors to the keep and destroy or commandeer the heavy trebuchets just inside the walls.

Allied Forces: The general commanding the PCs sends six human elite soldiers (see *Heroes of Battle* page 143) to help overcome enemy resistance while the PCs try to bring down the gate.

Enemy Forces: The defenders consist of humans and ogres deployed as noted below.

- Two squads of ten human soldiers each (see *Heroes of Battle* page 142) manning the walls
- Twelve human soldiers staffing each heavy trebuchet
- Two 4th-level barbarian ogres (see *Monster Manual* page 199) guarding the gate controls

Terrain Features: The ground in front of the stronghold is flat and grassy. You may wish to increase the difficulty of the scenario by adding a moat around the stronghold.

Wall: The wall around the keep is 25 feet tall and 6 feet thick. The crenellated parapet provides the defenders with a +4 bonus to AC for soft cover.

◆ **Exterior Wall:** Hardness 8, 1,080 hp, Climb DC 22.

Gate: The gate is a 4-inch-thick iron drawbridge.

◆ **Gate:** Hardness 10, 120 hp.

The walls are protected by the aerial *alarm* spell (*Heroes of Battle* page 124, password Mordenkainen, audible alarm), which prevents the PCs from flying over or otherwise bypassing the walls without drawing attention to themselves.

Towers: Each of the towers has a ground level and a top level connected by a spiral staircase. On the defender's side of the wall, each of the towers has a 5-foot-wide open archway at ground level that allows access to the interior. Five arrow slits, spaced out every 5 feet, provide the defenders with additional options.

Doors: The stronghold doors are made of iron.

◆ **Standard Iron Door:** Hardness 10, 60 hp, break DC 28.

Tactics: As many enemy soldiers as possible fire arrows through the arrow slits from the inside of the towers, while the remainder of the soldiers shoot arrows from the top of the wall. If the PCs manage to block the arrow slits, the soldiers within join the forces atop the wall. Should the PCs use magical means to bypass the wall, the human defenders join the ogres in defense of the gate controls.

Any PCs who try to breach the wall and lower the gates by the direct approach face difficult resistance.

Every defending soldier not attached to the heavy trebuchets rains arrows down upon the invaders, while the trebuchet operators attempt to pick off any enemies on the opposite side of the wall. PCs using *teleport* or *dimension door* to bypass the wall do not set off the aerial alarm.

Aftermath: As soon as the gate is open (or a 15-foot or larger hole has been blasted in the wall), the invading force enters, following the PCs if they have taken the lead. The invaders attack the heavy trebuchet personnel immediately upon entering. Once they have secured control of the siege engines, they go to work on the stronghold doors.

If the PCs fail to open the gate, the invaders bring out a battering ram. Opening the doors with this tool requires several rounds of bashing and leaves the soldiers on the ground vulnerable to arrow fire from above. The heavy trebuchets fire at all enemy soldiers on the ground outside the wall, specifically targeting the battering ram if possible. This attack proves costly in terms of lives and equipment, and the results may even cause the attacking army to retreat (DM's option).

Scaling the Encounter: For a party of 6th-level characters, use the following defenders.

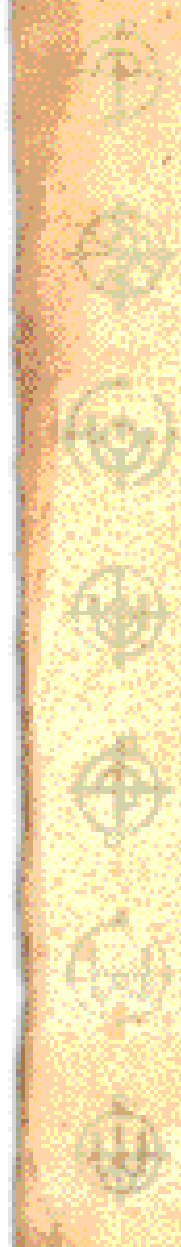
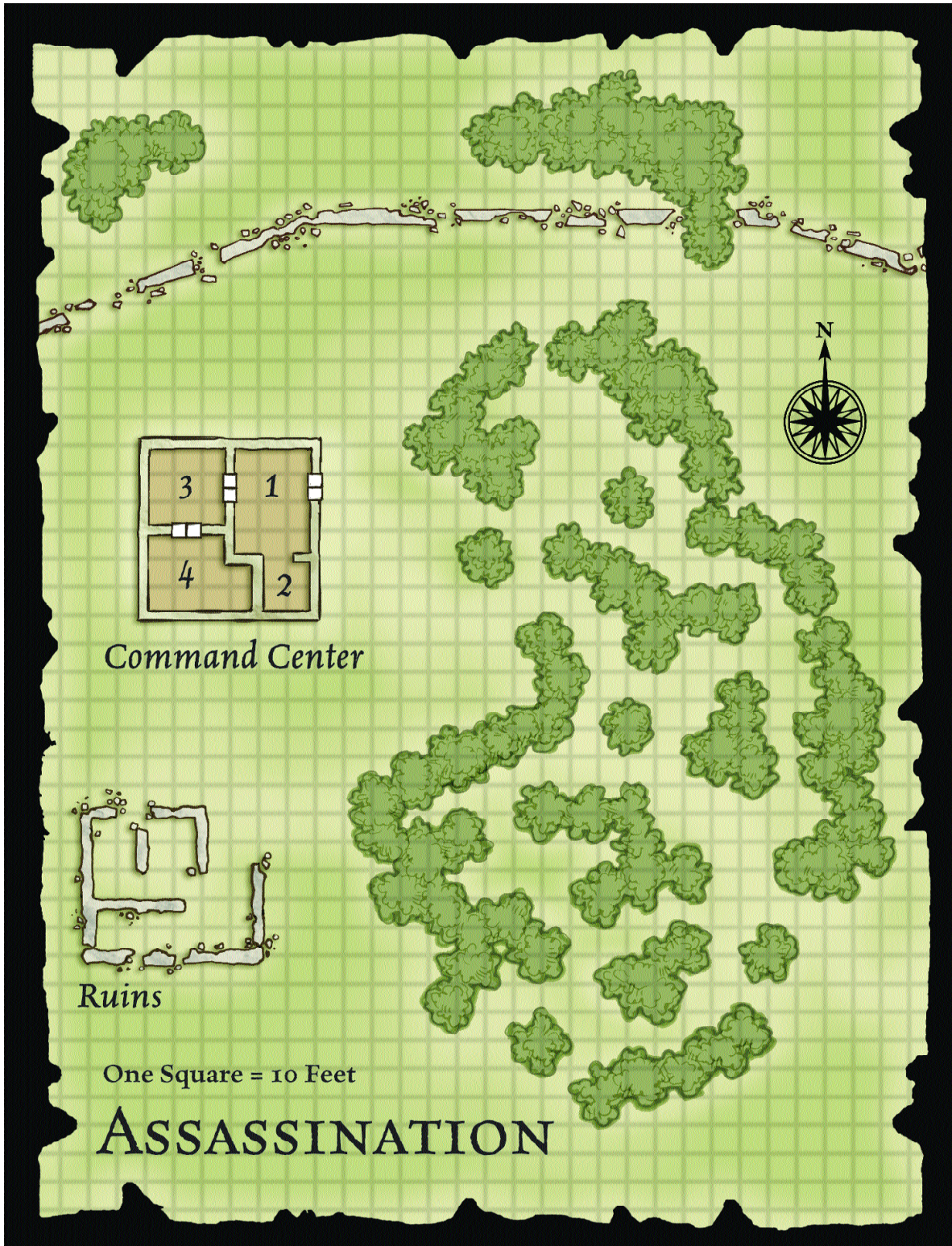
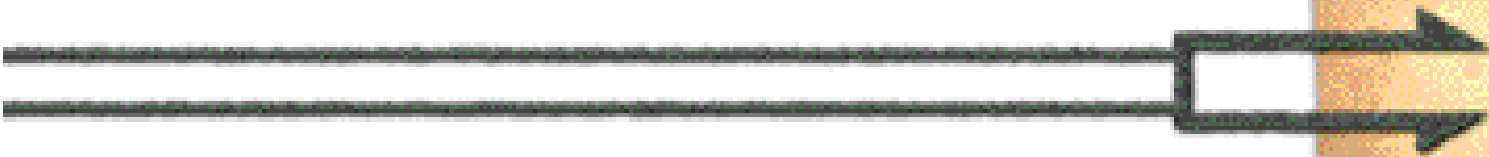
- Two squads of ten human soldiers each (see *Heroes of Battle* page 142) manning the walls
- Eight human soldiers staffing each heavy trebuchet
- One 4th-level barbarian ogre (see *Monster Manual* page 199) guarding the gate controls

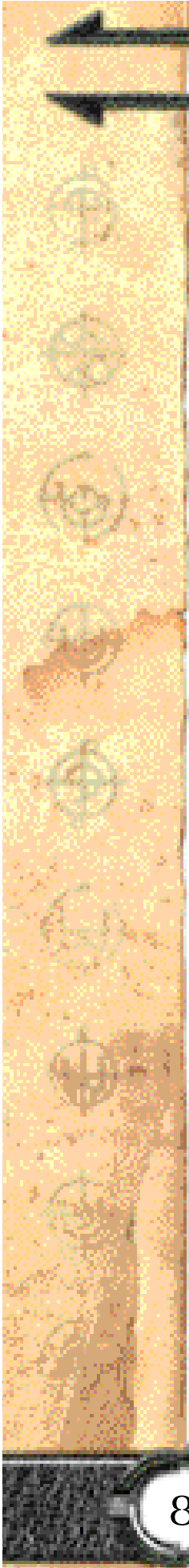
For a party of 10th-level characters, use the following defenders.

- Two squads of ten humans soldiers each (see *Heroes of Battle* page 142) manning the walls
- Twelve human soldiers staffing each heavy trebuchet
- Four 4th-level barbarian ogres (see *Monster Manual* page 199) guarding the gate controls
- Add a third heavy trebuchet manned by another twelve human soldiers to the defenses.

ASSASSINATE THE GENERAL (10TH)

After a millennium of biding her time and gathering her forces, the lich Kazgol has finally committed her troops to battle. Her undead legions are marching





across the landscape, destroying any living creatures they encounter while slowly making their way toward Kazgol's home city. Rather than commit herself to the battlefield, Kazgol has enlisted the help of the death knight known as General Charred to lead her forces to victory. The general is currently holed up in an abandoned cottage in the midst of a vast ruin.

The army with which the PCs march has already engaged Kazgol's army of undead, which consists primarily of zombies, skeletons, and ghouls. General Charred has also committed several of his more powerful undead to the battle, although he has held some back to patrol the ground between the battlefield and his own position. In addition, he has surrounded himself with several powerful servants for extra protection.

The PCs' commander orders them to fight their way through enemy lines, then attack the general himself. Advance scouts have provided the PCs with the likely position of the cottage in which the general has camped to draw up his battle plans.

Character Level: This encounter is designed for 10th-level characters.

Objective: Locate and slay General Charred.

Allied Forces: The PCs' army sends a group of ten human elite soldiers (see *Heroes of Battle* page 143) to help the characters fight their way through the battlefield. These soldiers follow the PCs to the cottage and offer combat support during the final battle against General Charred.

Enemy Forces: Once the PCs have fought their way behind enemy lines, they encounter undead patrols, each with the following composition.

- Twelve human skeletons (see *Monster Manual* page 226)
- Four boneclaws (see *Monster Manual III* page 17)
- Four bonedrinkers (see *Monster Manual III* page 18)
- Two drowned (see *Monster Manual III* page 46)

Eventually, the PCs locate General Charred's cottage. The keyed rooms within this structure contain the following creatures.

1. Six boneclaws (see *Monster Manual III* page 17) guard the entrance to the cottage.
2. Four bonedrinkers (see *Monster Manual III* page 18) occupy this chamber.
3. Three vampire fighters (use the 5th-level human fighter vampire, *Monster Manual* page 250) have made camp here.

4. The death knight General Charred (use the sample death knight, *Monster Manual II* page 207), one plague spewer (see *Monster Manual III* page 125), and three ettin skeletons (see *Monster Manual* page 227) occupy this room.

Patrols are positioned approximately every 100 feet. Should the PCs engage a patrol, the nearest other one immediately begins moving toward the combat to add support.

Terrain Features: This portion of the battlefield consists of a flat, grassy field and what was once a forest maze. Many of the original trees are now missing, and new trees are growing in the wrong places. However, the excess growth in the maze provides a chance for the PCs to approach the cottage without attracting the notice of the undead patrols.

Because the vegetation in this area is overgrown, it is considered difficult terrain for movement purposes. Two undead patrols move within the maze, but because of the dense vegetation, they cannot see each other and thus are not reinforced when they engage the PCs. Like the PCs, their movement is limited to their normal rate.

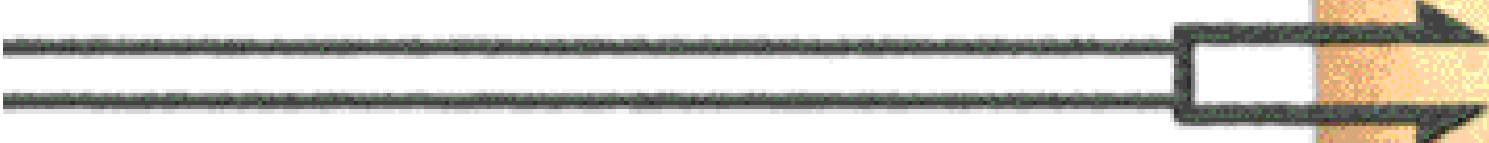
In addition to the maze of trees, this region contains the crumbling remains of a 5-foot-tall wall of hewn stone and a cottage. All that remains of the cottage now are parts of the jagged stone walls that once supported its wooden ceiling. Each wall section stands between 1 and 3 feet tall.

Tactics: The strategy of the undead army is fairly straightforward—its members move to engage the PCs in melee combat as soon as possible. The undead patrols use the human skeletons as fodder to flank opponents, while the more powerful undead move in and employ their lethal attacks. The boneclaws, bonedrinkers, and drowned each have their own special attacks, as noted in their respective descriptions in *Monster Manual III*. These creatures employ their abilities to great effect.

When the PCs confront General Charred, he begins by using his abyssal blast to weaken the PCs. Then he relies upon his melee skills while the plague spewer and ettin skeletons relentlessly attack the foes.

Aftermath: If PCs succeed in destroying General Charred, his death disrupts the cohesion and combat tactics of the entire army. Although the undead combatants on the battlefield continue to fight, their strategies start to fall apart within two hours. Eventually the intelligent undead flee, leaving their lesser compatriots to be destroyed.

If the PCs fail to kill Charred, the battle continues unabated. The PCs' commander makes additional attempts to destroy the general, but the PCs were the



most skilled elite unit in the army, so these attempts also fail. The cost in human lives is great, and the situation becomes even worse when the slain humans are raised as skeletons, ghouls, zombies, and other undead creatures.

XP Adjustment: –10% (minor support)

Scaling this Encounter: For 8th-level characters, remove the blackguard levels from the death knight, and remove the plague spewers from the encounter altogether. Each undead patrol should consist of the following creatures.

- Twelve human skeletons
- Two boneclaws
- Two bonedrinkers
- One drowned

For 12th-level characters, add two levels of blackguard to the death knight. Each undead patrol should consist of the following creatures.

- Twelve human skeletons (Monster Manual page 226)
- Six boneclaws
- Six bonedrinkers
- Three drowned

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Darrin Drader was born in Pullman, Washington in 1973 and stayed there long enough to attend WSU. He then moved to western Washington and eventually landed a job at Wizards of the Coast, Inc. After an eight-year stay in the Seattle area, he decided to move back to eastern Washington so that he could be closer to his family. He has been an RPG freelancer since 2000, and has done design work for *DRAGON* magazine, *Star Wars Gamer* magazine, Bastion Press, Mongoose Publishing, and Wizards of the Coast, Inc.

