

FIRST STRIKE

A DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® *LIVING FORGOTTEN REALMS* ADVENTURE

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The time is now! The Thayan forces of Undumor threaten to flood the Yuirwood with hordes of undead. The Simbarch Council seeks heroes of great renown as Aglarond prepares to deal with this threat. A *Living Forgotten Realms* adventure set in Aglarond for characters levels 14-17. This is the conclusion of the "Circle of Stones" major quest, which began in AGLA1-5 *Silver Lining* and continued in AGLA2-1 *The Undumor Connection*. Those who have completed the "Tome of Twilight Boughs" major quest may also be interested in this adventure.

Based on the original DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® rules created by E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson and the new DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game designed by Andy Collins, Rob Heinsoo, and James Wyatt.

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OFFICIAL D&D PLAY

Most likely you ordered this adventure as part of an event, or you received it from your organizer. To play this adventure and receive rewards for it, you must schedule it as an event. This event could be as elaborate as a big convention, or as simple as a group of friends meeting at the DM's house.

To schedule a game for public play, you must be enrolled in the Wizards Play Network. Information on enrolling in the program can be found at www.wizards.com/wpn. If you are scheduling the game for private play, you do not need to be enrolled in the Wizards Play Network. The person who schedules the event, called the organizer, is in charge of making sure the event is scheduled before play, runs smoothly on the date scheduled, and gets reported back to Wizards in a timely manner. The person who runs the game is called the table Dungeon Master (or usually just DM). Sometimes (and almost all the time in the cases of home events) the organizer is also the table DM. You don't have to be enrolled in the Wizards Play Network to DM this adventure if you are not the organizer.

By scheduling and reporting this adventure you accomplish a couple of things. First, it is an official game, tracked under your play history. Second, DMs gain rewards for scheduled play if they are members of the DM REWARDS program. DMing this adventure is worth one (1) point.

To learn more about event scheduling and DM REWARDS, visit the D&D Events website at www.wizards.com/dnd and click on "Events."

PREPARING FOR PLAY

In order to play this adventure, you'll need copies of the following D&D 4th Edition rulebooks: *Player's Handbook*, *Dungeon Master's Guide*, and the *Monster Manual*. Any other rules referenced in this adventure will be noted in the **New Rules Items** section at the end of the adventure.

Throughout this adventure, text in bold italics provides player information for you to paraphrase or read aloud when appropriate. Information on nonplayer characters (NPCs) and monsters appear in abbreviated form in the adventure text.

Along with this adventure, you'll find a session tracking sheet. If you're playing this adventure as part of an officially scheduled event, complete and turn in this sheet to your organizer directly after play.

READING MONSTER STAT BLOCKS

Most of the information should be easy to understand, as it mirrors the information presented in the *Monster Manual*. Attacks may have a letter next to them designating the type: M for melee, R for ranged, C for close, and A for area. A lower-case letter (used only in some melee and ranged attacks) denotes that the attack can be used as a basic attack.

IMPORTANT DM INFORMATION

As the DM of the session, you have the most important role in facilitating the enjoyment of the game for the players. You take the words on these pages and make them come alive. The outcome of a fun game session often creates stories that live well beyond the play at the table. Always follow this golden rule when you DM for a group:

Make decisions and adjudications that enhance the fun of the adventure when possible.

To reinforce this golden rule, keep in mind the following:

- **You are empowered to make adjustments to the adventure and make decisions about how the group interacts with the world of this adventure.** This is especially important and applicable outside of combat encounters, but feel free to use the "scaling the encounter" advice (usually for adjusting to different-sized groups) to adjust combat encounters for groups that are having too easy or too hard of a time in an adventure.
- **Don't make the adventure too easy or too difficult for a group.** Never being challenged makes for a boring game, and being overwhelmed makes for a frustrating game. Gauge the experience of the players (not the characters) with the game, try to feel out (or ask) what they like in a game, and attempt to give each of them the experience they're after when they play D&D. Give everyone a "chance to shine."
- **Be mindful of pacing, and keep the game session moving along appropriately.** Watch for stalling, as play loses momentum when this happens. At the same time, make sure that the players don't finish the adventure too early; provide them with a full play experience. *Living Forgotten Realms* adventures are designed to be played within 3.5 - 4 hours; try to be very aware

of running long or short. Adjust the pacing accordingly.

- **Give the players appropriate hints so they can make informed choices about how to interact with their environment.** Players should always know when enemies are affected by conditions and are bloodied. They should be given clues about how to interact with their surroundings so they can tackle skill challenges, combats, and puzzles without getting too frustrated over lack of information. This helps to encourage immersion in the adventure and gives players “little victories” for figuring out a good choice from a clue.

In short, being the DM for a *Living Forgotten Realms* adventure isn't about following the adventure's text word-for-word; it's about creating a fun, challenging game environment for the players. Chapters 1 and 2 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* are filled with good information about being a DM for a D&D game.

APPROPRIATE CHARACTER LEVELS

This adventure is designed for player characters (PCs) levels 14 - 17. Characters that fall outside of the level range may not participate in the adventure. Make certain to check the levels of the PCs before beginning play to ensure that they are the proper level.

Each adventure has a low-level version and a high-level version. The low level is meant for a group whose levels, on average, fall in the lower levels of the adventure's level spread. The high level is meant for a group whose levels, on average, fall in the higher levels of the adventure's level spread.

A group may decide to play the high level when their levels are more suited to the low level if everyone in the group agrees to do so; however, some of the rewards may not be available to them. Conversely, a group may decide to play the low level when their levels are more suited to the high level if everyone in the group agrees; however, some of the rewards may be less than what they'd ideally want from the adventure.

Reading the Numbers: Each encounter has a level and sometimes other values (such as XP or skill check DCs) listed with two numbers divided by a slash. The number before the slash is always the value for the low-level version of the adventure; the number after the slash is the value for the high-level version of the adventure.

FAILING TO DEFEAT AN ENCOUNTER

If a group fails to defeat an encounter - that is, if they have to flee from a combat because it's too tough or they reach the predetermined number of failures in a skill challenge before reaching success - they are only awarded half experience points (round down) for the encounter. If they manage to tackle the encounter later and defeat it, award them the other half of the experience points for the encounter.

CHARACTER DEATH

If a PC dies during the course of the adventure, the player of that character and the rest of the group have two options, provided that they have access to the Raise Dead ritual (either a PC has it and can use it or the characters return to civilization), they have access to the body, and it is possible to return the dead PC to life.

- **Pay the component cost for the ritual.** If the group chooses this option, the cost should be divided evenly among the group (500 gp for heroic tier, 5,000 gp for paragon tier, and 50,000 gp for epic tier). Using a source outside the group to cast the ritual costs 20% more than the component cost. Total cost when using an outside source is 600 gp for heroic tier, 6,000 gp for paragon tier, and 60,000 gp for epic tier. A PC that dies and chooses this method of return gains full (or half, if the party was defeated) experience points from the encounter in which the character died, but no experience points for any encounters that were missed while the character was dead. If there are encounters remaining, the PC continues to earn experience as normal, and receives a normal cut of the rewards at the end of the adventure.
- **Invoke the Death Charity clause.** If the group cannot afford to pay for the ritual (or doesn't desire to do so), the PC can choose to return to life at the end of the adventure. Doing so forfeits all rewards (including treasure and story rewards) earned for the adventure except experience points gained prior to the character's death (the character receives the experience point award for the encounter in which they died). The PC cannot participate in the same adventure a second time.

MILESTONES

No matter if the characters succeed or fail in an encounter, they reach a milestone if it is the second encounter they've had since the start of the adventure or their last extended rest. **Encounters that do not give**

out experience points do not count for purposes of reaching a milestone. Make certain to mention this information to the players when applicable, as it gives each PC another action point and affects how some magic item powers are used.

LASTING EFFECTS

Sometimes a PC suffers a lasting effect that isn't easily resolved before the end of the adventure. The two most common lasting effects are the death penalty and diseases.

Death Penalty: When a character dies and is brought back to life by the Raise Dead ritual, that character suffers a -1 penalty to all attack rolls, skill checks, saving throws, and ability checks until they have reached three milestones. The player should simply record the adventure where the character died on their adventure log, and then keep a running tally of milestones reached. Once the PC has reached the third milestone since coming back to life, they no longer suffer the penalty.

Diseases: Diseases take hold of a character and last until they are cured or they reach their final state. Normally, a PC makes an Endurance check after each extended rest to see if the disease improves, worsens, or maintains its current condition. At the end of the adventure, any character suffering from a disease must resolve the disease to either its cure or final state, using the necessary number of extended rests to do so. Other characters adventuring with the PC may decide to aid the afflicted character during this time. If a disease reaches its final state and the PC can get a Cure Disease ritual cast (and pay the appropriate costs), they may do so.

Other Lasting Effects: Other effects that last beyond the scope of the adventure should be resolved at the DM's discretion. Any effects that last for a specific period of time (that end after a certain number of days or a certain number of extended rests) should be resolved at the end of the adventure in which the effect was obtained (unless otherwise specified). Effects that use some sort of adventuring benchmark of unknown duration (such as milestones) should be recorded on the character's logsheet and tracked across adventures.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Vol Zaffras was an ambitious, up and coming eladrin Red Wizard in Thay. A master of enchantment, Vol was sent to Aglarond as a sleeper agent. Her mission was to ingratiate herself with the disaffected fey of Aglarond and sow the seeds of dissent in preparation for a future invasion of the forest kingdom. Vol spent decades

making subtle contacts and laying the groundwork for rebellion.

During this time, the eladrin wizard also indulged in a fascination in the magical menhir circles of the Yuirwood. As she learned better how the circles worked, she formed a plan to invade Aglarond by using the ancient circles to teleport an army into the midst of Aglarond, thus bypassing the country's natural defenses. She discovered that most of the menhirs in the circles used a special stone found in the Tannath Mountains that enhanced their teleportation properties. But before she could put her research to use, the Spellplague rendered the Yuirwood menhir circles unusable and Szass Tam overthrew the ruling Zulkirs of Thay.

But the longevity of eladrin often brings patience and Vol Zaffras was undaunted. She showed her loyalty to the new regime in Thay by embracing undeath and becoming a baelnorn lich. She secured a position in the hierarchy by overthrowing a powerful Tharchion in a deadly political battle. (The rank of Tharchion is one level below that of Zulkir; Tharchions are the equivalent of regional governors within the current power structure of Thay.)

Having secured her new position, Vol Zaffras returned to Aglarond and her old contacts. She took on the persona of Voldini, a quasi-religious leader dedicated to bringing back the glory of ancient Yuireshanyaar. As the cult she formed around her persona grew, she spent the next decades studying the plaguelands surrounding the ancient Yuir menhir circles. Ever the manipulator, Vol fabricated a copy of an ancient legendary Yuir ritual book known as the *Tome of Twilight Boughs*. She used the book and the cult to conduct experiments to further her goals (as detailed in AGLA1-1 & AGLA1-4).

But negating the plagueland's effects was only part of the plan. Vol Zaffras still needed the special stones to construct a menhir circle, and those stones could only be found in Aglarondan territory. She adopted a new persona, that of the mysterious Saffron Devil. Vol found the stone she needed in an abandoned silver mine in the Tannath Mountains. She recruited a band of orcs to mine the stones but the "abandoned" mine turned out to be the home of a tribe of surprisingly resourceful goblins. Against all odds, the goblins went to Aglarond for help, and thus the actions of a group of adventurers prevented her from getting all of the stones she needed (as detailed in AGLA1-5).

Vol's ruse as Voldini was eventually exposed and the Cult of Voldini dispersed (as detailed in AGLA1-7), but she had completed enough of her research to understand how to temporarily negate the deleterious effects of the plagueland on the menhir circles. She used

her position as a Tharchion to gather an army at Undumor for her invasion while she used her persona as the Saffron Devil to build the menhir circle.

During this time, agents of the Simbarch Council discovered part of the Saffron Devil's plans (as detailed in AGLA2-1). Realizing the grave threat this posed to Aglarond, the Simbarch council moved to make a preemptive strike in hopes of stopping the invasion before it began. They secretly gathered the best of Aglarond's military into a powerful, elite strike force and moved them into a position to attack the gathering Thayan army.

But that would only delay the invasion if the Undumor teleportation circle and Vol Zaffras's research remained intact. Fortunately, Simbarch Vummos Poe thinks they can kill two birds with one stone. Vummos Poe's study of the Saffron Devil's notes has lead him to surmise that the menhir circle would not work properly because the Saffron Devil was not able to quarry enough of the proper stone from the Tannath Mountains. The only way to make it work would be to tie the power of the circle directly into the Saffron Devil's own power. Thus, if the Saffron Devil were to be destroyed, so would the menhir circle she had created.

DM'S INTRODUCTION

The PCs are secretly recruited by an agent of the Simbarch council and summoned to the Palace of the Simbul in Veltalar. They were chosen either because of their service to Aglarond or their reputation. Here, they learn the purpose of the menhir circle and the plan to attack Undumor in a preemptive strike against the Thayan forces led by Vol Zaffras

The characters are given a mission to seek out and destroy the Saffron Devil while an elite portion of the army of Aglarond attacks the menhir circle and the gathered army directly. The PCs must find their way to the Saffron Devil by participating in a skill challenge.

Eventually, the PCs reach a vault hidden in the Shadowfell, which is guarded by a necrosphinx. The necrosphinx poses a riddle to the PCs. Regardless of whether the PCs answer the riddle correctly, a combat ensues with the necrosphinx.

After defeating the necrosphinx, the PCs gain entrance to the vault, which also serves as the tomb of Vol Zaffras, a baelnorn lich. The PCs now need to dispatch Vol Zaffras and her minions, recover her phylactery and destroy it.

PLAYERS' INTRODUCTION

The PCs were secretly recruited by agents of the Simbarch Council and summoned to the Simbarch Council in Veltalar. If the PCs played AGLA2-1 *The Undumor Connection* and Drall Keighton lived, he is the one who recruited them. If the PCs have the story award, **AGLA12 Thanks of a Spy (from AGLA1-6 *Twisted Roots Run Deep*)**, then the agent that recruited them is Satal. If both apply, the DM may choose whichever one he feels is most appropriate.

Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

The early morning sun illuminates the green stone of the Palace of the Simbul. You were called here in secret by the Simbarch Council, who rule Aglarond from the Palace, a mansion on a hill overlooking the slums of Old Velprintalar.

Other adventurers, ones you likely recognize by name or by reputation, have gathered here, as well. The exact reasons that the Council has called you here are unknown, but it is obvious that whatever threat requires your services must be dire. You have just enough time to swap introductions and speculations with some of the others before the Simbarch Council calls upon you.

ENCOUNTER 1: THE SIMBARCH COUNCIL

SETUP

Important NPCs: The Simbarch Council; Vummos Poe, an eladrin Simbarch; Captain Gaspar Inskipp, commander of Citadel Dantalien.

PCs who have played AGLA2-1 *The Undumor Connection* may recognize Captain Inskipp. If so, Captain Inskipp acknowledges the PCs but does not speak. Furthermore, while the PCs were not hired by Vummos Poe directly in AGLA2-1, the Simbarch knows any PC who has played in that adventure. If the PCs have played any previous Aglarond adventure, Poe thanks them for their previous service to Aglarond. If the PCs have not played any Aglarond adventure, he mentions their reputation for heroism.

SCENE 1

Read or paraphrase the following:

The council chambers of the Simbarch Council were once a lavish ballroom. It is a high-ceilinged room with many windows. The fifteen Simbarchs sit in ornate chairs arranged in a semicircular pattern. A man with neatly-trimmed red hair and beard, wearing an officer's uniform, stands at the side of the room.

The chamber is abuzz with activity. Each of the members of the Simbarch Council seems focused on individual tasks of great urgency. One studies a map, while another quickly jots a message and hands it to a runner. Still others issue hushed orders to members of Aglarond's legendary Griffon Riders. The very air around the Simbarchs seems to crackle with conjured arcane energies. It does not take you long to realize that you are among some of the most elite spellcasters, not only in Aglarond, but in all of Faerûn.

Out of this bustle comes a tall, thin eladrin man with silver hair and bright green eyes.

"Greetings," he says. "I am Simbarch Vummos Poe. The Council has agreed that I be the one to speak with you. Some of you may know Captain Inskipp of Citadel Dantalien." The red-haired officer nods in your direction, but does not speak. "I wish there was time to introduce each of my colleagues individually, but the matter at hand requires the utmost urgency."

Poe explains why the PCs were called to Veltalar. Please note that there is a lot of vital information in this

section that must be communicated to the players. However, do your best to work this information into the natural flow of conversation. Also, if the PCs have played some or all of the previous Aglarond regional adventures listed below, then Poe is aware of their deeds and references their specific actions, rather than describing the past adventures in general terms.

Use the following points during this discussion (Note that the Saffron Devil is referred to in the male gender here, because her true identity and appearance are unknown by the Council):

- Several months ago, a group of adventurers discovered that a being known as The Saffron Devil had been quarrying stone from an ancient silver mine in the Tannath Mountains. This stone is of an unusual sort that was commonly used in making the ancient stone menhirs that are found in ancient ruins in the Yuirwood. The Saffron Devil was quarrying this stone into menhirs of his own, but it is believed he did not get all of the stone he was looking for. (AGLA1-5 *Silver Lining*).
- A spy for the council was able to retrieve information about the Saffron Devil's operations and discovered he was fashioning a large menhir circle near Undumor. (AGLA2-1 *The Undumor Connection*).
- After examining further information brought back by the spy, the council has determined that the Saffron Devil intends to use the giant menhir circle to link to the other menhir circles in the Yuirwood and teleport Thayan undead armies into the midst of the Yuirwood and attack Aglarond from within.
- Normally such a link to these ancient circles would not work due to the disruptions of the plaguelands that surround them, but there seems to be a connection between the Saffron Devil and Voldini, the mysterious cult leader who used his followers to conduct experiments on the plaguelands. (AGLA1-7 *Twilight Ambitions*).
- With an unstoppable invasion threatening Aglarond, the Simbarch Council has embarked on a risky plan. They have gathered as much of the Aglarond Army as possible in secret. The plan is to launch a preemptive strike on the Thayan forces before they can attack from the Yuirwood, and hopefully destroy the menhir circle they intend to use.
- It is known that the Saffron Devil was not able to gather enough of the special stones to complete the menhir circle properly. Therefore, Vummos Poe believes that the final construction of the circle required the Saffron Devil to actually link

his own power to that of the portal. Because of this, destroying the Saffron Devil may render the menhir circle permanently inoperable.

- The council has agreed that Simbarch Poe may recruit a group of elite heroes to attempt to track down and kill the Saffron Devil during the attack.
- Spies report that the Saffron Devil's current whereabouts are at his command tent near the menhir circle outside of Undumor.
- The job of the PCs is to accompany the attacking forces into Thay, track down the Saffron Devil, and destroy him.
- If the PCs are from Aglarond and ask about payment, Poe is somewhat taken aback and emphasizes that the fate of Aglarond is at stake here. However, he grudgingly mentions that the PCs will be well rewarded should they succeed. He is less taken aback by recruits from other areas, should they ask for payment.
- The PCs were not recruited prior to this or given more time to prepare for reasons of secrecy. The forces of Aglarond cannot hope to defeat the gathered forces of the Saffron Devil without the element of surprise.
- A DC 23/25 Insight check reveals that not all the assembled Simbarchs seem enthusiastic about this plan. Poe does not comment on this unless asked, but says that, although there was some internal disagreement amongst the Simbarchs, they are all currently united behind this plan.
- If the PCs agree to this plan they will be given a few hours to prepare themselves. They are asked not to leave the palace at this time for security reasons. After a few more hours of deliberation and discussion, the Simbarch Council teleports themselves and the PCs to the secret army encampment near Undumor for final preparations to begin.

ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

The PCs are taken to a clearing outside of Veltalar to get ready to be transported to Undumor. Go to Encounter 2.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

The PCs do not earn any XP for this encounter, and it does not count towards a milestone.

ENCOUNTER 2: LEADING THE TROOPS

**SKILL CHALLENGE LEVEL 15 / 17,
COMPLEXITY 2 (2400 / 3200 XP)**

SETUP

In this encounter, the PCs accompany a group of soldiers during the assault on the military camp outside of Undumor. After crossing the Umber River with the army, the PCs must then find the command tent of the Saffron Devil and confront her.

Read or paraphrase the following:

The buzz of activity in the Simbarch council chamber has been replaced by the quiet anxiousness of a battle about to start. Only a few hours ago, the Simbarch Council teleported themselves and several others, including your party, to join the army secretly gathered near Citadel Dantalien.

The PCs have about an hour to prepare once they arrive at the camp. The attack is scheduled to occur just before dawn.

The skill challenge is broken into 3 main scenes. The first requires the PCs to cross the Umber River during the initial attack. The second requires them to find the Saffron Devil's command tent in the midst of the battle. And the third requires them to deal with the keeper of the Saffron Devil's portal to her crypt. The PCs cannot exclusively focus on one aspect of the challenge, and must accumulate two successes in each portion of the challenge.

The PCs may well have abilities, rituals, or magic items that might make different scenes easier. For example, there are any number of teleportation or flight abilities that might allow the PCs to bypass the battle on the bridge in Scene 1 (any PC who can bypass a scene is exempt from having to participate in the group skill checks, but those PCs who do not have corresponding abilities must still make the appropriate checks). As always, the DM is free to interpret how each of these abilities or items may affect each part of the skill challenge. This may include automatic successes, or even automatically succeeding in a scene if appropriate.

SKILL CHALLENGE

Goal: The PCs must find the tomb of the Saffron Devil while fighting their way through the gathered undead army.

Complexity: 2 (6 successes before 3 failures).

Primary Skills: Acrobatics, Arcana, Athletics, Bluff, Diplomacy, History, Insight, Intimidate, Perception, Religion, Stealth, Streetwise.

Other Skills: Endurance, Heal.

Success: The forces in Encounter 4 are not as prepared as they should be. Use Encounter 4 as written.

Failure: The Saffron Devil is ready for the PCs and has additional troops (see Encounter 4).

SCENE ONE - THE CROSSING

In the darkness just before dawn, the Simbarchs and several other prominent spellcasters step forward and begin conjuring. Several minutes later, bridges magically form over the Umber River, some made of ice while others consist of nothing more than a thin, black ribbon of force. At a signal from their commanders, hundreds of soldiers begin silently crossing the river.

But before even the first rank has reached the other side, an alarm goes off. Within moments, the calm of the night is broken by shouted commands, the battle cry of troops, chants of "Forever Aglarond!" and the arcane sounds of spells being cast.

The battle has begun and your task is now at hand! However, your purpose does not lie here. You have a greater task that does not permit you to get bogged down in the close-quarters fighting that now rages across the bridges.

The PCs must successfully cross the Umber River to get to the enemy camp. This requires 2 group skill checks. Each group skill check requires everyone in the party to make a check against one specific skill. If at least half the PCs succeed, then the entire group succeeds in that skill check. Each time the party fails a group check, each PC loses 1 healing surge.

Once the group has succeeded in 2 group checks, or failed 3, they succeed in getting across the river. Proceed to the next scene.

Acrobatics DC 18/20 (group, maximum 1 success)

The PCs dash their way across the bridges, nimbly dodging arrows, spells, enemies, and allies. Any individual PC that fails this check by 5 or more falls in the water or is trampled in the rush and must make an Endurance check (DC 18/20) or lose a healing surge.

Athletics DC 23/25 (group, maximum 1 success)

The PCs use brute force to cross the bridge and escape the clash of battle.

History DC 11/13 (group, maximum 1 success)

The PCs use their combined knowledge of battlefield tactics and the area to find weak points in the enemy ranks to exploit and break through.

Religion DC 18/20 (group, maximum 1 success)

The PCs use their combined knowledge of undead to bypass intelligent undead and dodge unintelligent groups, or simply channel divine energy to blast a path through the lesser undead.

SCENE TWO – FINDING THE DEVIL’S TENT

Having successfully broken away from the main battle, your challenge now is to find the Saffron Devil’s command tent and put an end to this vile creature. The task will not be easy, however. A sea of tents, crude lean-tos and bivouacs stretches before you and there are many enemy combatants still mustering and readying for battle.

The PCs must successfully search through the enemy camp to find the Saffron Devil’s command tent. This requires 2 group skill checks. Each group skill check requires everyone in the party to make a check against one specific skill. If at least half the PCs succeed, then the entire group succeeds in that skill check. Each time the party fails a group check, each PC loses 1 healing surge.

Once the group has succeeded in 2 group checks, or failed 3, they succeed in finding the command tent. Proceed to the next scene.

Bluff DC 18/20 (group, maximum 1 success)

The PCs are confronted by some guards and convince them they are simply troops looking for the commander and get directions.

Perception DC 18/20 (group, maximum 1 success)

Several of the PCs are able to spot small clues that guide them in the right direction towards the command tent.

Stealth DC 11/13 (group, maximum 1 success)

The PCs stealthily avoid any confrontations with Thayan troops while they search for the command tent.

Streetwise DC 18/20 (group, maximum 1 success)

The PCs use their street savvy and knowledge of civilized layout and interpose it on the camp layout, allowing them to make a good guess as to the direction of the command tent.

SCENE THREE – TALKING WITH UTHVEC PRATOR

You have arrived at the Saffron Devil’s command tent, but the Devil and his henchmen are nowhere to be found. Before you can even start to decide what to do next, a high pitched cackling draws your attention to a skull sitting on a table. Its bleached white bones are festooned with arcane runes.

The skull speaks, “Well, what have we here? Assassins sent to dispatch my wretch of a mistress? As much as I might personally wish your success, I am afraid the magic that she has bound me with makes it a bit difficult to lend a helping hand... or any kind of hand, for that matter.”

The PCs must successfully negotiate with Uthvec Prator to gain knowledge of Vol Zaffras, the Saffron Devil, and her location. This requires 2 successes (note that these are NOT group checks, any individual PC can attempt them). Use the role-playing notes below to help make this scene feel more like a role-playing encounter and less like a formal skill challenge.

Once the PCs succeed in making 2 checks, or fail 3, they have the information they need to pursue Vol Zaffras. (On failed checks, Uthvec might still reveal a tidbit of needed information, but he does so in the context of threatening and berating the PCs rather than trying to help them.) Proceed to Ending the Encounter.

Arcana DC 18/20 (individual, maximum 1 success)

The PC is able to manipulate some of the magical runes binding Uthvec Prator and make it easier for Uthvec to resist the bonds.

Diplomacy DC 23/25 (individual, maximum 1 success)

The PC is able to persuade Uthvec into resisting his bonds and helping them.

Insight DC 18/20 (individual, maximum 1 success)

The PC is able to understand and empathize with Uthvec’s torment, making him more willing to help the party.

Intimidate DC 11/13 (individual, maximum 1 success)

Despite already being dead, Uthvec is in no hurry to find out the final fate of his soul as he suspects it isn’t a pleasant one. The PCs can easily make Uthvec cooperate by threatening to destroy him.

Role-Playing Notes: Uthvec Prator was once a powerful Tharchion of Priador in Thay until he fell victim to the cunning machinations of Vol Zaffras. Vol

seduced him, betrayed him, stole his title and lands, and ultimately killed him. For reasons both cruel and practical, Vol Zaffras bound Uthvec's soul into his skull using arcane rituals. The magic forces Uthvec to cooperate with Vol, but he is sometimes able to resist this control if motivated enough. Vol uses him for information and as a guardian and focus for a portal to her crypt in the Shadowfell. Uthvec is capable of opening and closing this portal at will. He is compelled to do it only for Vol Zaffras, but can do it for others with great effort.

Uthvec Prator is cantankerous, sarcastic, and bitter about his current state of being, but still prefers it over true death. If the PCs can persuade him they can successfully destroy Vol Zaffras, he will open the portal for them. He may also provide some or all of the below information, depending on how the PCs treat him:

- The "Saffron Devil" is actually a female baelnorn lich and a Tharchion (regional governor) of Priador in Thay. Her name is Vol Zaffras.
- Vol Zaffras enjoys subterfuge and goes by many aliases, including the Saffron Devil and Voldini.
- Since she is a lich, destroying Vol's body does not destroy Vol; her soul is bound to a magical phylactery. Only destroying the phylactery will allow you to permanently destroy Vol Zaffras.
- Vol keeps her phylactery safe in her crypt, which is located within the Shadowfell. Uthvec has never been there so he doesn't know what sort of protections she might have.
- Uthvec can open a portal leading to the entrance to Vol's crypt, but if he is destroyed, the portal will be too. Vol is able to call upon him from the Shadowfell to open the portal so that she can return.
- Vol Zaffras used Uthvec to open the portal only a few minutes before the PCs arrived. She entered the portal to gather magic equipment and allies and to strengthen her power at its source. She has not called upon him to open it again. Uthvec is certainly, however, she may have another way back other than his portal, so the PCs cannot trap Vol on the Shadowfell simply by destroying the skull.
- Other than his ability to open and close the portal, Uthvec is nothing more than a helpless talking skull.

ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

Success: The PCs are able to open the portal to Vol Zaffras's crypt on the Shadowfell and follow her. The

forces in Encounter 4 know that the PCs are coming, but need to scramble and do not have all of their forces.

Failure: The PCs are able to open the portal to Vol Zaffras's crypt on the Shadowfell and follow her. The Saffron Devil is ready for the PCs. Add additional monsters as noted in Encounter 4 (which will make up for lost XP for failing the skill challenge). Also, communicate to the players that the lost time has resulted in heavy casualties among the Aglarond forces.

After the PCs have finished talking to Uthvec Prator and he agrees to open up the portal, read or paraphrase the following:

"Stand back," says the talking skull as it rises above the table, arcane energies forming about it. "Not that I really care if you get hurt and I am pretty sure it wouldn't hurt you even if you don't stand back. I just like saying that."

As Uthvec Prator cackles, a dark void of shadows forms in front of you.

"Well," says Uthvec, "are you just going to stand there like some slack jawed zombies or are you going to do what you came here for?"

EXPERIENCE POINTS

Each PC receives 480 / 640 XP each for successfully completing the skill challenge (or half that amount if they fail).

TREASURE

There is no treasure in this encounter (other than Uthvec, if the PCs decide to take the skull with them through the portal).

ENCOUNTER 3: RIDDLE OF THE NECROSPHINX

ENCOUNTER LEVEL 16 / 18 (7,000 / 10,000 XP)

SETUP

This encounter includes the following creatures at the low tier:

Necrosphinx (S)

This encounter includes the following creatures at the high tier:

Necrosphinx (Level 18) (S)

Passing through Uthvec Prator's portal to the Shadowfell, the PCs find themselves in the antechamber outside of the Vol Zaffras's crypt. The door to the antechamber is guarded by a necrosphinx. The door is magically sealed and can only be opened by Vol Zaffras while the necrosphinx is still alive.

As you enter the portal, the chill of absolute darkness surrounds you. You can see nothing and even sound seems curiously muffled here.

It is pitch black in the antechamber, but any magical or nonmagical source of light can pierce the darkness. Once the PCs find a light source, read or paraphrase the following:

A large reflecting pool of dark water sits in the middle of the room, beneath a beautiful fountain. The lush décor serves as a juxtaposition to the brackish water leaking from the ceiling, forming a small pool.

Fumes of some dark energy rise from the pool forming a curtain of distorted air that makes it difficult to see what is on the other side. But with some concentration you can see a huge door covered in glowing black symbols. In front of the door, a black-winged lion covered with strips of black linen cocks his head and looks at you.

The lion slowly begins to speak:

*It can take you to another land
Even if you have no gold in hand.
It can give the starving a loaf of bread,
or reunite you with loved ones dead.
It can make a dwarf fly through the air.*

*For an eladrin, there's nothing there.
Your darkest thoughts it can see,
but sometimes it can set you free.*

What is it?

The answer to the riddle is "a dream."

The players are not obligated to answer the riddle, but failure to answer counts as an incorrect answer. The PCs only get once chance to answer the riddle, and must answer it before combat begins. The DMs is free to replace this riddle with one of his own making if he/she feels this one would be too easy for the players or if some of the players have played this adventure before.

If the PCs answer the riddle correctly, the necrosphinx tells them they may leave the way they came and keep their lives. (Of course, doing so would require abandoning their mission.) If the PCs do not answer the riddle correctly, or do not leave, the necrosphinx attacks.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Illumination: The necrosphinx has darkvision and the room is pitch black when the PCs enter. Any light sources have to be provided by the PCs.

Pool of Brackish Water: The brackish water is difficult terrain.

Swimming Pool: The pool of dark water is 6 feet deep. Medium creatures can wade across it at half speed or swim (Athletics DC 11 / 13). Small creatures must swim across. The water is charged with powerful necrotic energy. Any creature in or on the pool gains Vulnerable 10 Necrotic and Resist 5 Radiant.

Shadow energy raises off the pool creating distortions in the air above it. Any creature on the far side of the pool has total concealment against ranged attacks. Any creature in or over the pool gains concealment against ranged attacks.

Fountain: The fountain is blocking terrain.

Ceiling: The ceiling in this room is 40 feet high.

TACTICS

If the PCs failed to answer the riddle correctly, the necrosphinx gets significant bonuses from the *sphinx's challenge* and taunts the PCs relentlessly for their stupidity if they answer incorrectly. The sphinx readies an action to use *death's pounce* against any creature that enters or attempts to cross the pool. Its goal is to intercept any PCs at the midpoint and force them to fight in the pool. After intercepting them, it

spends an action point and uses *necrotic roar*. It tries to keep the battle in the pool where the pool enhances its necrotic damage and helps it avoid ranged attackers. It uses *necrotic roar* whenever possible. If bloodied, the necrosphinx uses an action point to use *second wind* and still attack.

SCALING THE ENCOUNTER

Make the following adjustments to the combat based on the number of PCs present.

Four PCs: Subtract 152 hit points from the necrosphinx at low level (to 608 hit points, bloodied at 304) or 169 hit points at high level (675 hit points, bloodied at 337).

Six PCs: Add 152 hit points to the necrosphinx at low level (912 hit points, bloodied at 456) or 169 hit points at high level (1013 hit points, bloodied at 506).

ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

After defeating the necrosphinx, the PCs can enter the vault with a Thievery check (DC 18 / 20). Alternatively, they can simply break down the door.

Once the PCs enter the vault, proceed to Encounter 4.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

Each PC receives 1,400 / 2,000 experience points for defeating the necrosphinx.

TREASURE

Each PC finds 1,100 / 3,000 gp worth of coins and jewels, and the group finds a suit of *tombforged armor* +4.

ENCOUNTER 3: RIDDLE OF THE NECROSPHINX (LOW LEVEL)

Necrosphinx	Level 16 Solo Soldier
Large immortal magical beast (undead)	XP 7,000
Initiative +12 Senses Perception +17; darkvision	
Despair aura 5; any enemy within the aura takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls against the necrosphinx.	
HP 760; Bloodied 380	
Regeneration 10 (if a necrosphinx takes fire damage, its regeneration doesn't function until the end of its next turn)	
AC 31; Fortitude 29, Reflex 26, Will 31	
Saving Throws +5	
Speed 6, fly 8 (clumsy), overland flight 10	
Action Points 2	
m Claw (standard; at-will)	
+21 vs. AC; 2d10 + 5 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the sphinx's next turn.	
M Death's Pounce (standard; at-will) ♦ Necrotic	
The necrosphinx moves up to 6 squares and makes two claw attacks, each one against a different target. If an attack hits, that target is knocked prone. If both attacks hit, each target also takes ongoing 5 necrotic damage (save ends).	
M Fierce Retort (immediate interrupt, when a creature marked by the necrosphinx makes a melee attack against it; at-will) ♦ Necrotic	
Targets the triggering creature; +21 vs. AC; 2d10 + 5 damage and the target takes ongoing 5 necrotic damage and is marked (save ends both).	
C Necrotic Roar (minor; recharge 5 6) ♦ Fear, Necrotic	
Close burst 5; targets enemies; +19 vs. Will; the target takes ongoing 5 necrotic damage and a -2 penalty to attack rolls (save ends both).	
C Mummy's Curse (when reduced to 0 hit points) ♦ Disease	
Close burst 10; targets enemies; +18 vs. Will; the target contracts mummy rot.	
Second Wind (standard; encounter) ♦ Healing	
The necrosphinx spends a healing surge and regains 190 hit points. It gains a +2 bonus to all defenses until the start of its next turn.	
Sphinx's Challenge	
The necrosphinx poses a question or riddle out of combat. If the challenged creatures refuse to answer or answer incorrectly, the necrosphinx gains the following benefits until the end of the encounter: 1 extra action point, an extra use of second wind, a +2 bonus to attack rolls, and a +2 bonus to all defenses.	
Alignment Evil	Languages Common, Supernal
Skills Arcana +16, History +16, Insight +17, Intimidate +16, Religion +16	
Str 19 (+12)	Dex 15 (+10) Wis 19 (+12)
Con 16 (+11)	Int 16 (+11) Cha 16 (+11)

Mummy Rot (necrosphinx)	Level 16 Disease
Endurance maintain DC 20, improve DC 25	
Initial Effect: The target regains only half the normal number of hit points from healing effects.	
Disease Track	
♦ (improvement) The target is cured.	
♦ Initial Effect (start here)	
♦ (worsen) In addition to the initial effect, the target takes 10 necrotic damage, which cannot be healed by any means until the target is cured of the disease.	
♦ (worsen) The target dies.	

ENCOUNTER 3: RIDDLE OF THE NECROSPHINX (HIGH LEVEL)

Necrosphinx (level 18)	Level 18 Solo Soldier
Large immortal magical beast (undead)	XP 10,000
Initiative +14 Senses Perception +19; darkvision Despair aura 5; any enemy within the aura takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls against the necrosphinx. HP 844; Bloodied 422 Regeneration 10 (if a necrosphinx takes fire damage, its regeneration doesn't function until the end of its next turn) AC 33; Fortitude 31, Reflex 28, Will 33 Saving Throws +5 Speed 6, fly 8 (clumsy), overland flight 10 Action Points 2	
m Claw (standard; at-will) +23 vs. AC; 2d10 + 6 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the sphinx's next turn.	
M Death's Pounce (standard; at-will) ♦ Necrotic The necrosphinx moves up to 6 squares and makes two claw attacks, each one against a different target. If an attack hits, that target is knocked prone. If both attacks hit, each target also takes ongoing 5 necrotic damage (save ends).	
M Fierce Retort (immediate interrupt, when a creature marked by the necrosphinx makes a melee attack against it; at-will) ♦ Necrotic Targets the triggering creature; +23 vs. AC; 2d10 + 6 damage and the target takes ongoing 5 necrotic damage and is marked (save ends both).	
C Necrotic Roar (minor; recharge 5 6) ♦ Fear, Necrotic Close burst 5; targets enemies; +21 vs. Will; the target takes ongoing 5 necrotic damage and a -2 penalty to attack rolls (save ends both).	
C Mummy's Curse (when reduced to 0 hit points) ♦ Disease Close burst 10; targets enemies; +20 vs. Will; the target contracts mummy rot.	
Second Wind (standard; encounter) ♦ Healing The necrosphinx spends a healing surge and regains 211 hit points. It gains a +2 bonus to all defenses until the start of its next turn.	
Sphinx's Challenge The necrosphinx poses a question or riddle out of combat. If the challenged creatures refuse to answer or answer incorrectly, the necrosphinx gains the following benefits until the end of the encounter: 1 extra action point, an extra use of second wind, a +2 bonus to attack rolls, and a +2 bonus to all defenses.	
Alignment Evil Languages Common, Supernal Skills Arcana +17, History +17, Insight +19, Intimidate +17, Religion +17 Str 20 (+14) Dex 16 (+12) Wis 20 (+14) Con 17 (+12) Int 17 (+12) Cha 17 (+12)	

Mummy Rot (necrosphinx, level 18)	Level 18 Disease
Endurance maintain DC 22, improve DC 27	
Initial Effect: The target regains only half the normal number of hit points from healing effects.	
Disease Track	
♦ (improvement) The target is cured.	
♦ Initial Effect (start here)	
♦ (worsen) In addition to the initial effect, the target takes 10 necrotic damage, which cannot be healed by any means until the target is cured of the disease.	
♦ (worsen) The target dies.	

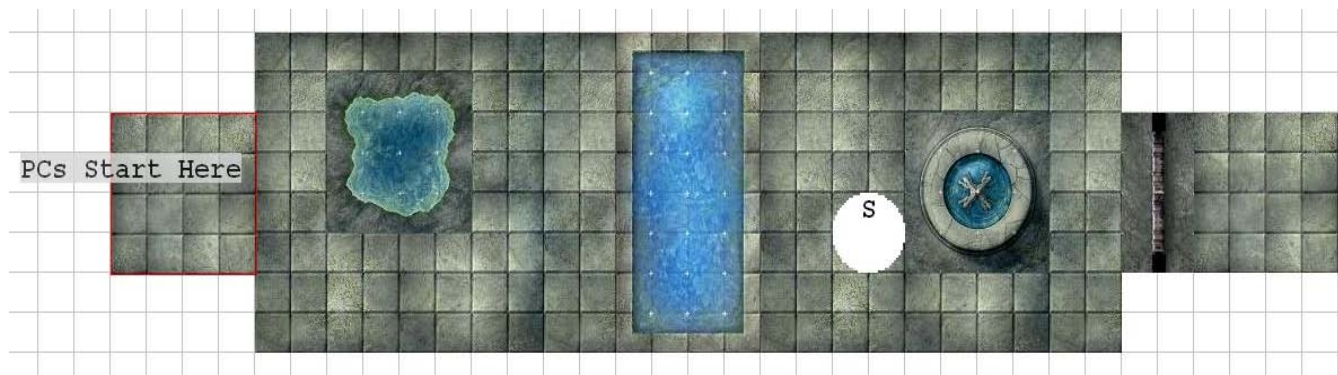
ENCOUNTER 3: RIDDLE OF THE NECROSPHINX

TILE SETS NEEDED

Dungeon Tiles x1

Arcane Corridors x1

S = Necrosphinx



ENCOUNTER 4: TOMB OF VOL ZAFFRAS

ENCOUNTER LEVEL 18 / 20 (10,400 / 14,800 XP)

SETUP

This encounter includes the following creatures at the low tier:

Vol Zaffras (Baelnorn lich, Level 16) (VZ)

2 slaughter wights (SW)

1 wrath spirit (WS)

2 blaspheme knights (BK)

This encounter includes the following creatures at the high tier:

Vol Zaffras (Baelnorn lich, Level 18) (VZ)

2 slaughter wights (Level 20) (SW)

1 wrath spirit (Level 19) (WS)

2 blaspheme knights (Level 16) (BK)

In this encounter, the PCs enter the vault that contains Vol Zaffras' phylactery only to be intercepted by Vol Zaffras and her forces.

Read or paraphrase the following:

Instead of walls, this room is surrounded by dark swirling energy. Ethereal motes zip through the room like small birds.

At the far end of the room stands the withered husk of an eladrin wizard. Beyond the wizard stands a pile of skulls. The pile of skulls projects an image of the Saffron Devil's stone circle. All about the stone circle rages a furious battle as the forces of Aglarond fight to reach the circle against hordes of undead and their allies. But valiant though their efforts may be, it is obvious the army of Aglarond is not making any further headway.

Watching the battle, the lich speaks, "It seems the impetus of your army has been spent. I have gathered my power now, and in a moment, when I join the battle, the tide will turn and Aglarond's finest will be pushed into a watery grave in the UMBER River. You have done much of my work for me. It only seems fitting, then, that I reward you by making you my personal guard after I kill you."

With that, the lich turns to you, a wicked grin crossing her face.

Unknown to the PCs, the real Vol Zaffras is not speaking, but is hiding behind the pile of skulls on the far end of the room. The speech is delivered by the illusion created by Vol Zaffras' *projection* ability, which stands near one of the sarcophagi.

The creatures that appear immediately depend on the outcome of the skill challenge in Encounter 2. The monsters appear in waves according to the following schedule:

Round 1: Vol Zaffras and slaughter wights

Round 2: Add blaspheme knights

Round 3: Add the wrath spirit

If the PCs successfully completed the skill challenge in Encounter 2, then they fight only the monsters listed above. If the PCs failed Encounter 2, then add two blaspheme knights to Round 1 of the encounter.

The slaughter wights look like typical wights, but are feral (though not mindless) and leap into battle. The wrath spirit is a headless ghost dressed in ornate armor. The blaspheme knights are intelligent zombies stitched together from corpses.

Vol Zaffras does not speak much once the battle begins, although the other undead periodically shout things such as, "Protect Vol Zaffras!" and "Protect the Tharchion!" and "For Thay!" while rushing into battle.

Vol Zaffras's phylactery is also hidden within the room. The default location is the sarcophagus located closest to the pile of bones, but feel free to move the phylactery to another location if any of the players have played the adventure before. The PCs notice the phylactery with a Perception check (DC 18 / 20). Any PC can take a standard action to attempt to damage the phylactery, using either Religion (ranged 5, DC 23 / 25) or Athletics (melee, DC 23 / 25). After three successful Religion or Athletics checks, the phylactery is destroyed. If the phylactery is destroyed before Vol Zaffras, then Vol Zaffras will look visibly pained and lose the ability to use *voice of solemnity*. The PCs can also wait until after the encounter to destroy the phylactery.

The ethereal motes attack each PC every round, regardless of their position in the room, unless the PC has made three successful Religion checks (see below).

Ethereal Motes
Hazard
Initiative: +8 (Low), +9 (High)
Attack
Target: All non-undead creatures.
Attack: +16 vs. Will (Low), +18 vs. Will (High)
Hit: The mote slides the target 1 square. The motes attempt to slide PCs into the walls, or away from the lich. If the mote would slide a creature off the map, the "walls" deal 2d8 + 6 necrotic damage (low) or 2d8 + 7 necrotic damage (high) and the target is not slid.
Countermeasure: As a minor action, a PC can make a Religion check (DC 18/20) to ward himself or another character from the motes until the end of his next turn. If any PC successfully makes this check (or has this check made on his behalf) three times during the encounter, that PC is immune to the motes for the remainder of the encounter.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Illumination: All the enemies have darkvision and the room is pitch black when the PCs enter. Any light sources have to be provided by the PCs.

The Walls: Instead of walls, the room is surrounded by swirling necrotic energy. Any creature that enters the energy takes 2d8 + 6 necrotic damage (low) or 2d8 + 7 necrotic damage (high). The creature does not actually enter the walls, but remains in an adjacent square. The undead in this combat are not immune to necrotic damage and can be forced into the walls.

Fallen Columns/Ruins: The entire 4x8 tile is difficult terrain.

Coffins: The coffins and sarcophagus are blocking terrain that do not block line of sight. The coffins grant cover.

Pile of Skulls: The pile of skulls is blocking terrain. An Arcana check (DC 18 / 20) reveals that the image of the battle is a scrying effect that does not allow communication.

TACTICS

Vol Zaffras begins the combat with *projection* already active. She uses this power again after being bloodied. Vol Zaffras uses *voice of solemnity* as often as possible, preferring to use the power on ranged attackers (note that Vol Zaffras can no longer use this ability if her phylactery is destroyed). Also, note that the *voice of solemnity* power has an unlimited range. Zaffras stays out of melee, preferring to use *fey ire* (she avoids hitting her allies) and *dream haunting*. Also, don't forget about Zaffras' *second wind* ability. If any of the PCs defeated her in *AGLA1-7 Twilight Ambitions*, she focuses her attacks on them. Vol Zaffras fights to the death, since abandoning her phylactery would eventually have the same effect anyway.

The slaughter wights rush into melee and inflict as much damage as possible. They do have some intelligence and take opportunities to flank or to move to a location where they catch more targets with their *death wail*.

The blaspheme knights generally use their greatswords. They use *sweeping cleave* if they can catch several enemies at once.

The wrath spirit tries to keep as many of the PCs marked with its *exploding head* and *keening sword*, hoping to use its *burning challenge* at least once a round.

SCALING THE ENCOUNTER

Make the following adjustments to the combat based on the number of PCs present.

Four PCs: Remove one slaughter wight.

Six PCs: Add one slaughter wight.

ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

After Vol Zaffras and the phylactery are both destroyed, the encounter is over. Read or paraphrase the following:

As Vol Zaffras and the phylactery are destroyed, an unearthly scream echoes throughout the room. The scream seems to pass from the Shadowfell, through the pile of skulls to the battlefield beyond. The fighting stops briefly as all are stunned by the powerful scream. The menhir stones, forming the great teleportation circle, suddenly shatter. At the same time, the pile of skulls crumbles into dust, revealing a large portal in the floor back to the battlefield.

In a moment, the battle begins again, but little fight seems left in the defenders and the forces of Aglarond, emboldened by the destruction of the circle, begin to scatter the enemy. Though it is obvious they will not be able to follow up this route and completely crush the opposing forces, they will be able to withdraw in good order and with minimal casualties.

The portal quickly starts to shrink.

The PCs have about 5 minutes to gather up any treasure they wish before the portal closes. Since they have no way of signaling Uthvec Prator to open his portal, this is likely their only means of escape from the Shadowfell (apart from their own rituals, if any). Should the PCs be trapped on the Shadowfell, the Simbarch Council eventually sends an expedition with the appropriate rituals to locate and rescue them.

If the PCs die in this battle, Vol Zaffras makes good on her promise to make them her personal guard. The PCs are turned into undead under her control. However, forces loyal to Vummos Poe are eventually

able to capture the undead PCs and restore them to their former selves (using the usual methods of returning dead PCs).

EXPERIENCE POINTS

Each PC receives 2,080 / 2,960 experience points for successfully defeating Vol Zaffras and her henchmen.

TREASURE

Each PC receives 1,100 / 3,000 gp from the coffins in the room. The PCs find a *phrenic crown* and *orb of translocation interference +4* on the remains of Vol Zaffras. In addition, Simbarch Poe rewards the PCs with a *ring of shadow guard* (low-level version only) or a *ring of dimensional escape* (high-level version only).

If the PCs completed the *Circle of Stones* major quest then Vummos Poe also offers them a selection of lesser magic items from the Council's vaults (this is the only way to unlock Treasure Bundle F).

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE: SUCCESS

If the PCs destroyed Vol Zaffras, read the following:

The Battle of the Menhirs has ended in glorious victory. It doesn't take long for news of this victory to spread across Aglarond. Vol Zaffras's invasion plans have been thwarted, and at least for now the buildup of undead at Undumor has been reduced. The threat from Thay will likely never end, but at least for now, Aglarond can rest.

A celebration is held in Veltalar with you as the guests of honor. You are given a special medal and the citizens of Aglarond, high and low born each, all seem willing to buy you a drink for some time to come.

All PCs earn the story award **AGLA17 Hero of the Battle of the Menhirs**.

If any PCs also have the story awards **AGLA09 Suspicious Stones** and **AGLA16 The Saffron Devil's Plans**, they have completed the *Circle of Stones* Major Quest. These characters receive the story award **AGLA18 No Stone Left Unturned** and bonus experience (as detailed in the Rewards section). In addition, Vummos Poe gives those PCs who completed the Major Quest access to additional magic items (treasure bundle F).

If the PCs decided to take the talking skull Uthvec Prator with them when they entered the Shadowfell (a decision that can only be made during Encounter 2; if they return to the command tent later, he is no longer there) and decide to keep him, one party member may take the story award **AGLA19 Alas Poor Uthvec**. Only one PC may take this award.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE: FAILURE

If the PCs failed to destroy Vol Zaffras, read the following:

With the Battle of the Menhirs lost, Vol Zaffras and the armies of Thay are now poised to launch a massive invasion of Aglarond. Many now keep a fearful watch on the Yuirwood, expecting teeming hordes of the living dead to surge forth at any moment. Aglarond is now a nation living under the pending sword of invasion. It will likely be quite some time before the land will be able to rest peacefully again, if ever.

The PCs earn no story awards from this adventure. If any of them were on the *Circle of Stones* Major Quest, they have failed that quest, do not earn the bonus XP for the quest, and cannot unlock treasure bundle F. Even if they brought him with them into the Shadowfell, Uthvec remains under the control of Vol Zaffras and therefore the PCs cannot claim the skull.

ENCOUNTER 4: TOMB OF VOL ZAFFRAS (LOW LEVEL)

Baelnorn Lich (level 16)	Level 16 Elite Controller
Medium fey humanoid (undead)	XP 2,800
Initiative +11 Senses Perception +13; darkvision	
Baelnorn's Will aura 5; any enemy within the aura takes a -2 penalty to Will and to saving throws against psychic effects.	
HP 310; Bloodied 155	
Regeneration 5	
AC 30; Fortitude 28, Reflex 31, Will 30	
Immune disease, poison; Resist 10 necrotic	
Saving Throws +2	
Speed 6	
Action Points 1	
m Grasp of Enfeeblement (standard; at-will) ♦ Necrotic	
+20 vs. Fortitude; 1d10 + 8 necrotic damage, and the target is weakened until the end of the baelnorn's next turn.	
r Dream Haunting (standard; at-will) ♦ Psychic	
Ranged 20; +20 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 7 psychic damage.	
R Voice of Solemnity (minor 1/round; at-will) ♦ Charm	
+20 vs. Will; the target falls into a sleepy trance. While in this trance state, the target is immobilized and dominated (save ends both). In addition, the target truthfully answers any question the baelnorn asks.	
A Fey Ire (standard; recharge 4 5 6) ♦ Psychic, Radiant	
Area burst 2 within 10; +18 vs. Will; 2d8 + 10 radiant damage, and the target takes ongoing 5 psychic damage and is dazed (save ends both). Miss: Half damage, and the target is instead slowed (save ends).	
Ethereal Shift (immediate reaction, when an enemy's melee attack misses the baelnorn; at-will)	
The baelnorn shifts up to 3 squares.	
Fey Step (move; encounter) ♦ Teleportation	
The baelnorn teleports up to 5 squares.	
Projection (standard; recharges when first bloodied) ♦ Conjuration, Teleportation	
Ranged 10; the baelnorn creates a conjuration of itself, turns invisible, and teleports up to 5 squares. The conjuration can be attacked and damaged, though it is unaffected by conditions and effects. The conjuration occupies one square and has 1 hit point (a missed attack never damages the conjuration). The baelnorn becomes visible if it attacks or when the conjuration is reduced to 0 hit points. As a move action, the baelnorn can move the conjured illusion up to 6 squares. It uses the baelnorn's defenses.	
Second Wind (standard; encounter) ♦ Healing	
The baelnorn spends a healing surge and regains 73 hit points. It gains a +2 bonus to all defenses until the start of its next turn.	
Indestructible	
When a baelnorn is reduced to 0 hit points, its body and possessions crumble into dust, but it is not truly destroyed. It reappears in 1d10 days within 1 square of its phylactery (if it has one), unless the phylactery is also found and destroyed.	
Alignment Evil	Languages Common, Elven
Skills Arcana +22, History +22, Insight +18	
Str 15 (+10)	Dex 17 (+11) Wis 20 (+13)
Con 19 (+12)	Int 24 (+15) Cha 22 (+14)

Note: Vol Zaffras (the Baelnorn Lich) possesses a *phrenic crown* and *orb of translocation interference* +4. These items grant her the following additional powers:

Critical: +4d6 damage.

Property: Whenever the Baelnorn Lich attacks a creature's Will defense, the target of that attack takes a -2 penalty to the first saving throw it makes against an effect imposed by that attack.

Power (Encounter): Free Action. Use this power when an enemy within 10 squares of you uses a power that has the teleportation keyword. Choose the space where the enemy appears. The location must be within the power's normal range.

Slaughter Wight	Level 18 Brute
Medium natural humanoid (undead)	XP 2,000
Initiative +14 Senses Perception +13; darkvision	
HP 182; Bloodied 91	
AC 30; Fortitude 30, Reflex 27, Will 26	
Immune disease, poison; Resist 20 necrotic	
Vulnerable 10 radiant	
Speed 7	
m Claw (standard; at-will) ♦ Healing, Necrotic	
+21 vs. AC; 3d8 + 6 necrotic damage, the target loses 1 healing surge and is weakened (save ends), and the slaughter wight regains 15 hit points.	
C Death Wail (when reduced to 0 hit points) ♦ Necrotic	
Close burst 5; targets enemies; +21 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 4 necrotic damage. Undead allies in the burst can make a basic attack as a free action.	
Alignment Chaotic Evil	Languages Common
Str 26 (+17)	Dex 20 (+14) Wis 9 (+8)
Con 22 (+15)	Int 12 (+10) Cha 18 (+13)

Blaspheme Knight		Level 14 Soldier
Medium natural animate (construct, undead)		XP 1,000
Initiative +13	Senses Perception +7; darkvision	
HP 142; Bloodied 71		
AC 30; Fortitude 26, Reflex 26, Will 26		
Immune disease; Resist 10 necrotic, 10 poison		
Vulnerable 10 radiant		
Speed 6		
m Greatsword (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
+21 vs. AC; 1d10 + 8 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the blaspheme knight's next turn.		
C Sweeping Cleave (standard; encounter) ♦ Weapon		
Requires greatsword; close burst 1; +21 vs. AC; 2d10 + 8 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the blaspheme knight's next turn.		
Blasphemous Might (when a creature marked by the blaspheme knight makes an attack that doesn't include the knight) ♦ Necrotic		
Until the end of its next turn, the blaspheme knight deals 2d10 extra necrotic damage when it hits the marked creature.		
Alignment Unaligned		Languages Common
Str 25 (+14)	Dex 18 (+11)	Wis 10 (+7)
Con 22 (+13)	Int 14 (+9)	Cha 14 (+9)
Equipment greatsword		

Wrath Spirit		Level 17 Soldier
Medium shadow humanoid (undead)		XP 1,600
Initiative +11	Senses Perception +12; darkvision	
HP 110; Bloodied 55		
AC 33; Fortitude 27, Reflex 29, Will 30		
Immune disease, poison; Resist insubstantial		
Speed fly 6 (hover), phasing		
m Keening Sword (standard; at-will) ♦ Psychic		
+24 vs. AC; 2d8 + 7 psychic damage, and the target is marked until the end of the wrath spirit's next turn.		
A Exploding Head (standard; recharge 5 6) ♦ Fear, Necrotic		
The wrath spirit materializes a flaming semblance of its missing head and hurls it; area burst 2 within 10; +21 vs. Fortitude; 3d10 + 7 necrotic damage, and the target is immobilized and marked (save ends both). Miss: Half damage, and the target is marked but not immobilized.		
Burning Challenge (immediate reaction, when a target marked by the wrath spirit makes an attack that does not include the wrath spirit; at-will) ♦ Psychic		
The triggering enemy takes ongoing 10 psychic damage and is dazed (save ends both).		
Alignment Evil		Languages Common
Str 16 (+11)	Dex 17 (+11)	Wis 18 (+12)
Con 15 (+10)	Int 22 (+14)	Cha 24 (+15)

ENCOUNTER 4: TOMB OF VOL ZAFFRAS (HIGH LEVEL)

Baelnorn Lich (level 18)	Level 18 Elite Controller
Medium fey humanoid (undead)	XP 4,000
Initiative +13 Senses Perception +14; darkvision Baelnorn's Will aura 5; any enemy within the aura takes a -2 penalty to Will and to saving throws against psychic effects. HP 344; Bloodied 172 Regeneration 5 AC 32; Fortitude 30, Reflex 33, Will 32 Immune disease, poison; Resist 10 necrotic Saving Throws +2 Speed 6 Action Points 1	
m Grasp of Enfeeblement (standard; at-will) ♦ Necrotic +22 vs. Fortitude; 1d10 + 9 necrotic damage, and the target is weakened until the end of the baelnorn's next turn.	
r Dream Haunting (standard; at-will) ♦ Psychic Ranged 20; +22 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 8 psychic damage.	
R Voice of Solemnity (minor 1/round; at-will) ♦ Charm +22 vs. Will; the target falls into a sleepy trance. While in this trance state, the target is immobilized and dominated (save ends both). In addition, the target truthfully answers any question the baelnorn asks.	
A Fey Ire (standard; recharge 4 5 6) ♦ Psychic, Radiant Area burst 2 within 10; +20 vs. Will; 2d8 + 11 radiant damage, and the target takes ongoing 5 psychic damage and is dazed (save ends both). Miss: Half damage, and the target is instead slowed (save ends).	
Ethereal Shift (immediate reaction, when an enemy's melee attack misses the baelnorn; at-will) The baelnorn shifts up to 3 squares.	
Fey Step (move; encounter) ♦ Teleportation The baelnorn teleports up to 5 squares.	
Projection (standard; recharges when first bloodied) ♦ Conjuration, Teleportation Ranged 10; the baelnorn creates a conjuration of itself, turns invisible, and teleports up to 5 squares. The conjuration can be attacked and damaged, though it is unaffected by conditions and effects. The conjuration occupies one square and has 1 hit point (a missed attack never damages the conjuration). The baelnorn becomes visible if it attacks or when the conjuration is reduced to 0 hit points. As a move action, the baelnorn can move the conjured illusion up to 6 squares. It uses the baelnorn's defenses.	
Second Wind (standard; encounter) ♦ Healing The baelnorn spends a healing surge and regains 86 hit points. It gains a +2 bonus to all defenses until the start of its next turn.	
Indestructible When a baelnorn is reduced to 0 hit points, its body and possessions crumble into dust, but it is not truly destroyed. It reappears in 1d10 days within 1 square of its phylactery (if it has one), unless the phylactery is also found and destroyed.	
Alignment Evil Languages Common, Elven Skills Arcana +23, History +23, Insight +19 Str 16 (+12) Dex 18 (+13) Wis 21 (+14) Con 20 (+14) Int 25 (+16) Cha 23 (+15)	

Note: Vol Zaffras (the Baelnorn Lich) possesses a *phrenic crown* and *orb of translocation interference* +4. These items grant her the following additional powers:

Critical: +4d6 damage.

Property: Whenever the Baelnorn Lich attacks a creature's Will defense, the target of that attack takes a -2 penalty to the first saving throw it makes against an effect imposed by that attack.

Power (Encounter): Free Action. Use this power when an enemy within 10 squares of you uses a power that has the teleportation keyword. Choose the space where the enemy appears. The location must be within the power's normal range.

Slaughter Wight (level 20)	Level 20 Brute
Medium natural humanoid (undead)	XP 2,800
Initiative +15 Senses Perception +15; darkvision HP 200; Bloodied 100 AC 32; Fortitude 32, Reflex 29, Will 28 Immune disease, poison; Resist 20 necrotic Vulnerable 10 radiant Speed 7	
m Claw (standard; at-will) ♦ Healing, Necrotic +23 vs. AC; 3d8 + 6 necrotic damage, the target loses 1 healing surge and is weakened (save ends), and the slaughter wight regains 15 hit points.	
C Death Wail (when reduced to 0 hit points) ♦ Necrotic Close burst 5; targets enemies; +23 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 5 necrotic damage. Undead allies in the burst can make a basic attack as a free action.	
Alignment Chaotic Evil Languages Common Str 27 (+18) Dex 21 (+15) Wis 10 (+10) Con 23 (+16) Int 13 (+11) Cha 19 (+14)	

Blaspheme Knight (level 16)		Level 16 Soldier
Medium natural animate (construct, undead)		XP 1,400
Initiative +14		Senses Perception +8; darkvision
HP 159; Bloodied 79		
AC 32; Fortitude 28, Reflex 28, Will 28		
Immune disease; Resist 10 necrotic, 10 poison		
Vulnerable 10 radiant		
Speed 6		
m Greatsword (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
+23 vs. AC; 1d10 + 9 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the blaspheme knight's next turn.		
C Sweeping Cleave (standard; encounter) ♦ Weapon		
Requires greatsword; close burst 1; +23 vs. AC; 2d10 + 9 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the blaspheme knight's next turn.		
Blasphemous Might (when a creature marked by the blaspheme knight makes an attack that doesn't include the knight) ♦ Necrotic		
Until the end of its next turn, the blaspheme knight deals 2d10 extra necrotic damage when it hits the marked creature.		
Alignment Unaligned		Languages Common
Str 26 (+16)	Dex 19 (+12)	Wis 11 (+8)
Con 23 (+14)	Int 15 (+10)	Cha 15 (+10)
Equipment greatsword		

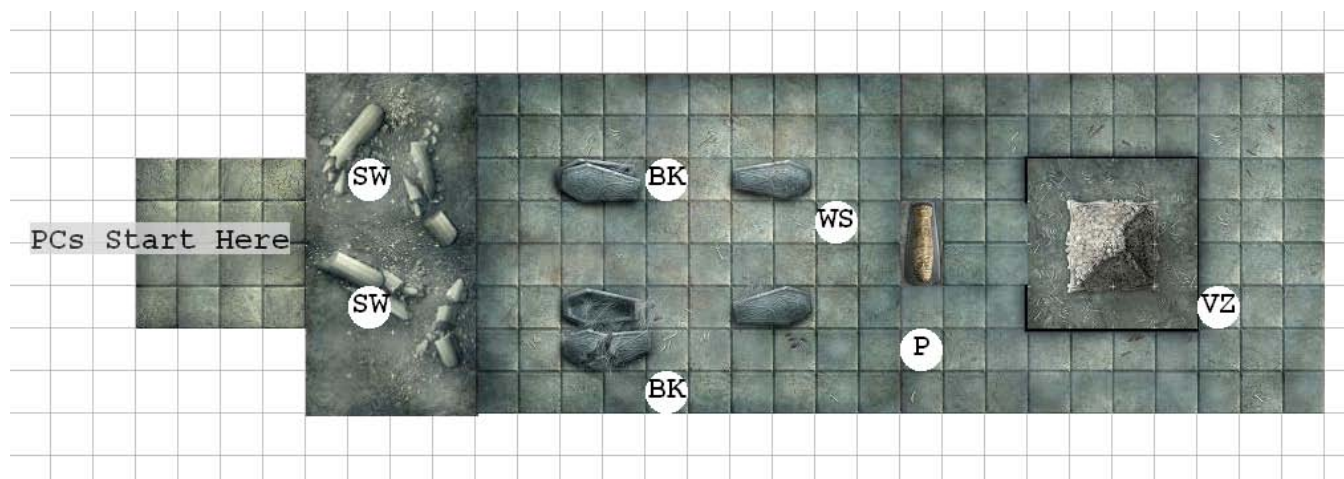
Wrath Spirit (level 19)		Level 19 Soldier
Medium shadow humanoid (undead)		XP 2,400
Initiative +13	Senses Perception +13; darkvision	
HP 122; Bloodied 61		
AC 35; Fortitude 29, Reflex 31, Will 32		
Immune disease, poison; Resist insubstantial		
Speed fly 6 (hover), phasing		
m Keening Sword (standard; at-will) ♦ Psychic		
+26 vs. AC; 3d6 + 8 psychic damage, and the target is marked until the end of the wrath spirit's next turn.		
A Exploding Head (standard; recharge 5 6) ♦ Fear, Necrotic		
The wrath spirit materializes a flaming semblance of its missing head and hurls it; area burst 2 within 10; +23 vs. Fortitude; 4d8 + 8 necrotic damage, and the target is immobilized and marked (save ends both). Miss: Half damage, and the target is marked but not immobilized.		
Burning Challenge (immediate reaction, when a target marked by the wrath spirit makes an attack that does not include the wrath spirit; at-will) ♦ Psychic		
The triggering enemy takes ongoing 10 psychic damage and is dazed (save ends both).		
Alignment Evil		Languages Common
Str 17 (+12)	Dex 18 (+13)	Wis 19 (+13)
Con 16 (+12)	Int 23 (+15)	Cha 25 (+16)

ENCOUNTER 4: TOMB OF VOL ZAFFRAS

TILE SETS NEEDED

Dungeon Tiles x1

Hidden Crypts x1



BK = Blaspheme Knights

SW = Slaughter Wights

WS= Wrath Spirit

VZ = Vol Zaffras (Do not place on map at beginning of combat.)

P = Projection of Vol Zaffras

REWARDS SUMMARY

At the conclusion of the adventure, the PCs earn experience points, treasure, and possibly story awards. All totals listed here are per PC. A number before the slash is the low-level value; after the slash is the high-level value.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

Give PCs a full award for each encounter they successfully completed, and a half award if they were unsuccessful. Give no award if the characters did not play the encounter at all.

Encounter 2: Leading the Troops

480 / 640 XP

Encounter 3: Riddle of the Necrosphinx

1,400 / 2,000 XP

Encounter 4: Tomb of Vol Zaffras

2,080 / 2,960 XP

Major Quest: Circle of Stones

1,080 / 1,120 XP

Total Possible Experience

3,960 / 5,600 XP (5,040 / 6,720 XP for those who completed the major quest.)

Note: The XP awards for this adventure are slightly higher than normal for a levels 14-17 adventure. This is by design; this adventure represents the culmination of a major regional plotline.

Gold per PC

2200 / 6000 gp

(Encounter 3: 1100 / 3000 gp, Encounter 4: 1100 / 3000 gp)

TREASURE

Each PC receives treasure in the form of gold pieces as well as one share from a treasure bundle. The treasure bundle may give the PC more gold, a magic item, or something else of value. Each player makes one and only one selection for their character; players may choose the same treasure bundle. Note that it is possible (and likely) that some characters will not select a bundle for each session of play.

If characters buy or sell magic items or other gear during the adventure (or pay for services) add or subtract that amount from the total gold the PC receives at the end of the adventure. If a player selects an option that gives their character more gold, add that amount to

that character's base gold award. It is possible and permissible for a character who spends more gold than he or she earns to have a negative total for the adventure. PCs receive 20% of the item's market price when they sell any magic item or consumable. They receive 50% of the market price for ritual books and alchemical formulas.

If a player selects a magic weapon or suit of armor for their PC that is not specific on the type of item listed, they must select the exact item at the time they choose that bundle. For example, if a *duelist's weapon +1* is listed as a choice in a bundle, a player selects the form of the weapon amongst the choices possible for that magic item (light blades). If the player selects the item as a *+1 duelist's dagger*, the player writes that information down on the PC's adventure log and the item is forever after that specific weapon.

An asterisk next to a magic item means that it is an item that appears in the **New Rules** section.

EACH PC SELECTS ONE OF THE FOLLOWING BUNDLES:

Bundle A: *ring of shadow guard* (low-level version only) (level 18; AV)

Found in Encounter 4

Bundle B: *orb of translocation interference +4* (level 18; MoP)

Found in Encounter 4

Bundle C: *phrenic crown* (level 17; AV)

Found in Encounter 4

Bundle D: *tombforged armor +4* (level 18; PH)

Found in Encounter 3

Bundle E: *ring of dimensional escape* (high-level version only) (level 20; PH)

Found in Encounter 4

Bundle F: (Major Quest only) Any magic item from any player-legal source of your character level + 1 or less, after counting the XP that you earned in this adventure.

More Gold: If a player doesn't want to select one of the bundles listed above for their character, they can choose to add 3300 / 6500 gp to their rewards from this adventure. That character (and only that character) receives more gold instead of any other treasure bundle.

STORY AWARDS

Award these if the PC completes the condition for the award in the adventure. Pass out certificates to the players for their story awards.

Only one PC at the table may earn story award AGLA19; allow the players to decide this however they see fit (assuming they met the conditions specified in the adventure). The character who earns AGLA19 may earn all three story awards, if appropriate.

AGLA17 *Hero of the Battle of the Menhirs*

You have struck a mighty blow in the defense of Aglarond, defeating the leader of an Thayan invasion force and destroying the teleportation circle that would have been used to bring an army of undead into the heart of the Yuirwood.

Aglarondan bards will forever sing your praises and the Zulkirs of Thay curse your name. You are given a medal for your participation in this battle. When displayed prominently, this marks you as a hero of Aglarond and conveys whatever benefits the DM deems appropriate in future regional adventures. One thing is for certain: you will never again need to pay for drinks at any tavern in Aglarond.

AGLA18 *No Stone Left Unturned*

You thwarted the plans of Vol Zaffras to invade Aglarond and have completed the *Circle of Stones* major quest. In order to earn this award, you must already have earned the story awards **AGLA09 *Suspicious Stones*** (from AGLA1-5 *Silver Lining*) and **AGLA17 *The Saffron Devil's Plans*** (from AGLA2-1 *The Undumor Connection*).

AGLA19 *Alas Poor Uthvec*

You recovered the talking skull, Uthvec Prator. With Vol Zaffras dead, he no longer has the power to open a portal to the Shadowfell. He is now nothing more than a talking skull - and an evil, annoying one at that. Possessing Uthvec provides no mechanical benefits, but he may at least make a decent conversation piece, assuming you can get him to shut up.

If you are able to take a familiar, and you want to make Uthvec your familiar, you may do so. He uses the game statistics of a standard familiar of your chosen type (to be clear, this is just a roleplaying option).

ADVENTURE QUESTIONS

Mark the answers to the following adventure questions on the tracking form.

1. Did the party defeat Vol Zaffras?

- a. Yes.
- b. No.

2. Did the party destroy the phylactery of Vol Zaffras?

- a. Yes.
- b. No.

3. Did any of the PCs keep the skull of Uthvec Prator?

- a. Yes.
- b. No.

4. How many members of the party completed the *Circle of Stones* major quest?

- a. None.
- b. Less than half
- c. Half or more
- d. All

5. How do you (the DM) rate this adventure? (Please also feel free to e-mail specific feedback to the author or the campaign staff.)

- a. Five stars (best possible rating).
- b. Four stars.
- c. Three stars.
- d. Two stars.
- e. One star (worst possible rating).

6. How do the players rate this adventure? (You can average their individual ratings or come up with whatever other method works for everyone.)

- a. Five stars (best possible rating).
- b. Four stars.
- c. Three stars.
- d. Two stars.
- e. One star (worst possible rating).

NEW RULES

Orb of Translocation Interference +4

This insubstantial orb taps into the space between the planes, altering the course of teleportation.

Level: 18

Price: 85,000 gp

Implement (Orb)

Enhancement: +4 attack rolls and damage rolls

Critical: +4d6 damage

Power (Encounter): Free Action. Use this power when an enemy within 10 squares of you uses a power that has the teleportation keyword. Choose the space where the enemy appears. The location must be within the power's normal range.

First published in *Manual of the Planes*.

Phrenic Crown

This pink coral coronet is eerily reminiscent of brain matter, yet is still bewitching.

Level: 17

Price: 65,000 gp

Item Slot: Head

Property: Whenever you attack a creature's Will defense, the target of that attack takes a -2 penalty to the first saving throw it makes against an effect imposed by that attack.

First published in *Adventurer's Vault*.

Ring of Dimensional Escape

You might escape death, but only if you have friends nearby.

Level: 20

Price: 125,000 gp

Item Slot: Ring

Property: Add 1 square to the maximum distance of any teleport you make.

Power (Daily • Teleportation): No Action. Use this power when an attack drops you to 0 hit points or fewer. Teleport 20 squares.

If you've reached at least one milestone today, you also stabilize. You don't make death saving throws unless you take more damage.

First published in *Manual of the Planes*

Ring of Shadow Guard

While wearing this dark iron ring, your shadow is infused with black tendrils from the Shadowfell.

Level: 18

Price: 85,000 gp

Item Slot: Ring

Property: Gain resist 10 cold and resist 10 necrotic.

Power (Daily • Cold, Necrotic): Standard Action. You infuse your shadow with the essence of the Shadowfell. Until the end of your next turn, any enemy that starts its turn or moves adjacent to you takes 2d10 cold and necrotic damage.

If you've reached at least one milestone today, you also gain 15 temporary hit points. This benefit lasts until none of these temporary hit points remain or until you take an extended rest.

First published in *Adventurer's Vault*.

HANDOUT – RIDDLE OF THE NECROSPHINX

*It can take you to another land
Even if you have no gold in hand.
It can give the starving a loaf of bread,
or reunite you with loved ones dead.
It can make a dwarf fly through the air.
For an eladrin, there's nothing there.
Your darkest thoughts it can see,
but sometimes it can set you free.*

What is it?