

# IRONFIRE

## PART 2



A 6<sup>TH</sup> LEVEL ADVENTURE IN  
FOUR 2-HOUR SESSIONS  
BY ASH LAW



# IRONFIRE

## PART 2



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*Note – At the end of every session characters should receive an incremental advance.*

# ICE & ROCK

## INTRODUCTION

*The dwarves have promised to trade a meteorite to the adventurers, but only if the adventurers first do a favor for the Dwarf King.*

The dwarven city of Frostfire has a problem—recent raids by the Orc Lord have caused the Dwarf King to withdraw his troops from the area, and criminal gangs and cults are taking the opportunity to upend the rule of law.

The Dwarf King has agreed to trade the meteorite that holds the key to stopping the pernicious star-mask menace, but the adventurers were to provide an intact phoenix egg in exchange and have only a broken shell.

The Dwarf King's emissary has agreed to the trade only if the adventurers help restore the rule of law in Frostfire.

## JOURNEY TO FROSTFIRE

The adventurers are currently in the fortified town of Ironfort, having just saved it from a small army of star-mask possessed orcs. Frostfire is a fair distance south of Ironfort and to get there, the adventurers must cross territory controlled by the Orc Lord.

This is a montage. Turn to a player and ask them to describe a problem that the party faced on its way from Ironfort to Frostfire, but not how the problem was solved. *Maybe the party was attacked by a band of orc marauders, maybe the party finds its way blocked by a koru behemoth, or maybe the party encounters a monster lair.* Turn to the next player and ask them how their character solved the problem. Go around the group until everybody has had a chance to describe a problem, and everybody has had a chance to describe how their character solved the issue. There is no need to roll dice during a montage, it is purely a narrative device to get the players warmed up and give everybody a chance to introduce their character.

## A WARM WELCOME IN FROSTFIRE

When the adventurers arrive in the city of Frostfire, they are expected, and members of the depleted city guard form an honor guard for them as they are led to the city council's chambers. The adventurers' deeds in saving Ironfort are well known, and the party are regarded as heroes by the dwarves of the city guard.

Frostfire itself is built into a mountain peak, carved out of the stoneface of the mountain and lining the caverns beneath the peak. Spiral roads lead up and down from each cavern, linking the various districts of the city together. At the heart of the city is the ingeniously named Central District, where the council chambers reside.

The adventurers are given a chance to rest and clean up at the Axedale Tavern before heading on to the council chambers. The major NPCs present at the tavern are:

**Bariv Wormbane**— The overweight owner of the tavern, which has been in the Wormbane family for generations, Bariv will proudly explain to the adventurers that the Wormbane family name is from an ancestor who killed a white dragon—and will show off the dragon skull mounted above the fireplace.

**Russit Rubymaker**— The red haired Russit is one of the guards assigned to the adventurers, and she is very concerned that the adventurers are well dressed before going to see the city council of Frostfire and that they behave properly while in the city. She doesn't insist that the adventurers leave their weapons behind—instead she insists that the adventurers' armor is clean and their weapons are in good working order before standing before the council (after all the council will want to see exactly what help the Dwarf King has sent to them).

**Tssur Coalbelly**— The rake-thin Tssur Coalbelly is a merchant who deals in the ice and salt which the dwarves use to preserve their food. Tssur's suppliers have had problems with gangs extorting money from them which has raised the prices of the ice and salt that he purchases.

**Morg Strongthane**— The elderly Morg Strongthane is a former miner, his face covered in scars from the accident that blinded him in one eye. Morg lives on a pension from the Miner's Guild and is concerned that the city council will raise taxes to pay for extra guards (or pay the adventurers) to deal with the gang problem. Morg doesn't even consider the city to have a gang problem, as far as he's concerned the city council is just trying to create the *perception* of a problem so they can squeeze honest hard-working dwarves for more tax money.

**Hendrake Grimhood**— The cook of the Axedale Tavern likes to hang around the tavern's common room smoking his pipe when he's off-duty. He's widely travelled, having been something of an adventurer in his youth, and is keen to swap stories with members of the party. Hendrake also knows how to get hold of items that aren't strictly legal, so if any adventurer has any unusual needs, he can fulfil them for a nominal price.

**Bella Cogsworth, a gnome**— Bella married a dwarf and settled down in Frostfire, and now owns a shop that makes and repairs clockwork items (mostly clocks, actually). Bella has heard of other stores recently receiving visits from dwarven toughs who attempt to intimidate the owners into paying protection money. So far, few shop owners have paid up, and everybody is waiting to see if the gangs will carry out their threats.

**Ovri Cogsworth**— The wife of Bella, she works in the clockwork repair shop. Ovri is keen for the adventurers to visit the shop so that if the gangs do come to visit they will be scared away. Ovri offers to cook a meal for the adventurers, and if they accept, she will ply the adventurers with drink and invite them to sleep above the shop that night. Ovri tries not to show it, but she is very worried about the gangs now plaguing the city.

## THE COUNCIL OF FROSTFIRE

After the adventurers are rested, the guards form up around them and, with great fanfare, lead the party to the council chambers. The pillars of rock that line the streets and hold up the cavern roof are carved with figures holding glowing stones, the pillars shedding lights into the streets where light from higher caverns doesn't filter down. As the adventurers get closer to the council chambers, the carvings get more and more elaborate, and the lights brighter.

### A GM trick



One or more members of the council are traitors working with star-masks. You don't have to decide who the conspirators are right now, but bear it in mind. This is a heads-up for you as the GM to let you know before the council scene exactly what is on the horizon in a couple of session's time. If you want to make one council member particularly odious (or if the players find one to be objectionable), keep this in mind.

The adventurers are received with pomp and circumstance in the grand council chamber, and the city council of Frostfire explains the situation (*see the section after the next sidebar for the councilors and what they say/want*).

At the conclusion of the meeting, the council gives the adventurers their first task. The ice-miners (who cut ice from the glacier that covers one side of the mountain that Frostfire is built into), have told the council that their camps are being attacked unless they pay protection to a gang. The council wants the ice-miners protected and the gang members arrested.

The council can't give the adventurers any help from the city guard—they are patrolling the streets trying to keep gang activity (and citizen vigilante mobs) under control, but they do issue the adventurers with writs saying that they are legally allowed to arrest people and bring them before the council for judgement. The council also supplies any mundane equipment that the adventurers require (armor, weapons, clothing,

adventuring gear, etc) and gives each adventurer two champion-tier healing potions.

### Role-playing the council



This section has a lot of read-aloud text. You *could* just read it aloud to the players, but it is more immersive to role-play each council member and use their statements as starting points for a back-and-forth conversation. If you go the more immersive route (and I suggest that you should) have each councilmember end their statement with a question directed at the adventurers. Here are some starter ideas for questions that the council can direct to the adventurers:

- *What do the adventurers plan to do about the cults? How do the adventurers plan to identify cult members?*
- *What guarantees does the council have that the adventurers won't cause a riot or burn down houses and businesses?*
- *Have the adventurers any experience with gang-busting? What about dealing with organized crime?*
- *Do the adventurers require any unusual resources to do their job?*

Doubtless after a couple of councilors have asked questions the remaining councilors will have follow-up questions based on the adventurers' answers.

**Sturm Goldflayer**— Councilmember Goldflayer has strong ties to the miner's guild. *"The rule of law in Frostfire is vital to our economic growth. If we let gangs of criminals run rampant how can we operate our mines safely, or brew, or farm? The Dwarf King withdrew his troops to deal with the orc menace, so now we turn to you to restore order"*.

**Brog Strongaxe**— Councilmember Strongaxe strokes his beard as he gives a dissenting opinion *"We shouldn't have to turn to outsiders—if my fellow council members would agree to raise taxes we could hire more guards. What's a few gold pieces compared to the rule of law?"*.

**Nuram Hammerbelt**— Councilmember Hammerbelt settles back in her cushioned throne-like chair *"I've heard of what these*

*adventurers did in Ironfort and am confident that they will show the same bravery here—unless they want to walk away from their deal with the Dwarf King"*.

**Thar Stonehide**— Thar cracks his knuckles nervously *"Personally I don't trust outsiders with this sort of work—they are likely to cause more trouble than the gangs. Still, our own guards have been bribed or subverted, so what else are we to do?"*.

**Daret Kegpike**— Daret rubs a holy symbol as he speaks *"It isn't just gangs, it is cults too. Gods-fearing young dwarves turning to the worship of abominations. Terrible. Something must be done—and quickly!"*.

**Reid Runefoot**— Reid smiles sideways at the other councilmembers ignoring the adventurers *"If we raise taxes, we are the bad guys. If we step down hard on our citizens, we are the bad guys. These outsiders—if they do the job, they are heroes and we get the glory. If they make things worse, the blame is all on them. I see no way we can lose my friends"*.

**Mournbyrn Bristlearm**— Mournbyrn sighs as she looks up from a pile of reports and adjusts her spectacles *"Cults. Organized gangs. This all happened too suddenly to be anything other than a plot against the city. I have the reports here—it is all too organized, too systematic, too... prearranged"*.

**Toren Longbrew**— Toren made his fortune trading dwarven ale to humans *"I feel like I'm staring up at the first rumblings of an avalanche. The gangs shake down one business that has to put up its prices to compensate, then the next business that relies on the first has to raise its prices, and so on. Unless the first rolling rock is stopped, I sense disaster for our city"*.

**Drumlyn Kragmaid**— The good-looking Drumlyn had a furrowed brow when the adventurers first entered, but now graces the party with a smile *"These heroes are here to conclude a trade with the Dwarf King, but I sense in them great bravery and goodness. I'm sure that they will not let us down."*.



# FROSTFIRE

## CENTRAL DISTRICT

- 1 ROAD DOWN (TO LOWER CAVERNS)
- 2 ROAD UP (TO UPPER CAVERNS)
- 3 COUNCIL CHAMBERS
- 4 AXEDALE TAVERN
- 5 GIMMERFAST ROAD
- 6 SHALEBREAK ROAD
- 7 TEMPLE OF LIGHT
- 8 MINERS GUILD



### Arrest, not kill

When NPCs drop to 0 hp, it usually means they've been slain, *unless* the characters' intent is to keep the target alive and the attack seems like a potentially humane blow that could knock the NPC unconscious instead. Some attacks, particularly when gruesomely narrated, don't feel like attacks that can leave the target unconscious, but we leave that mostly up to you and your group's sensibilities.

## THE ICE-MINERS CAMP

The adventurers are taken by a guide overland to the encampment of the ice-miners on the Frostfire glacier. The miners are glad to see the adventurers, as it means that perhaps they can stop paying protection money to the gang of thugs that has been extorting them. Though there are many ice-miners, some notable NPCs that the adventurers might want to talk to are:

**Dami Icebiter**— The dour dwarf warms to the adventurers and offers them steaming hot mugs of soup. *"It's dangerous enough out here on the ice without worrying about thugs jumping us on our way back to the city"*.

**Raan Snowbrows**— The stoic dwarf is concerned with the shaggy pit ponies that haul the ice sleds, but she has time to spare to speak to the adventurers *"We risk our lives up here on the ice, and the council recognizes that. We don't pay tax, and if we get too injured to work we get a pension. The council has always taken care of us, so I trust them when they tell us that you'll keep us safe"*.

**Durik Pickstrue**— The ice-miner brushes ice out of his bristly mustache and mumbles: *"If the council had been more concerned with us in the past, maybe young dwarves wouldn't feel like they had to join a gang to get ahead in life. I'm not saying I approve of those hooligans, but I do understand."*

Life is tough up on the glacier. The air is thin and burns the lungs, sudden winds can send the unwary tumbling over cliffs, and the cold can freeze even a hardy and well prepared dwarf to death if they are caught without shelter. Each adventurer must face one of the following environmental hazards while out on the ice:

LONG DROP, SUDDEN STOP	BITTER COLD	ALTITUDE EXHAUSTION
<i>Difficulty to avoid: DC 15</i> <b>Fall +5 vs PD-3d8</b> damage <i>Miss: Half damage</i>	<i>Difficulty to avoid: DC 15</i> <b>Frostbite +10 vs PD-3d6</b> cold damage and lose a toe	<i>Difficulty to avoid: DC 20</i> <b>Collapse +10 vs PD-1d8</b> damage AND face one of the other two hazards!

## THE GANG STRIKES

The ice miners conclude their business and start back to the city of Frostfire when they are waylaid by the gang of thugs that has been extorting money from them. The gang has chosen a part of the mountain far enough away from the city of Frostfire that no guards can come to the rescue of the ice-miners.

The ice-miners aid the adventurers as best they can, but their main concern is protecting the shaggy-haired pit ponies that haul the sleds and are the reason that they can mine the ice at all. If an adventurer drops to 0 hp an ice-miner will dash forward to feed them any potions that the adventurer is carrying—but that is the extent of the help that the ice-miners can give.





## Fight!

If the adventurers have thought ahead and prepared (disguising themselves as dwarven ice-miners, hiding under blankets on the sleds, using magic to stay away of threats, etc.) then start the escalation die at 1. If the adventurers have prepared really well (probably involving some successful DC 20 skill checks) start the escalation die at 2.

Number of PCs	Dwarf Ruffian	Dwarf Axe Biter
3	7	2
4	7	3
5	7	4
6	7	5

## DWARF RUFFIAN

7th level mook [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +10

**Ancestral hammer +12 vs. AC**—18 damage

*Natural even hit:* The next dwarf to make an attack this round against the target gains a +1 attack bonus to that attack.

**AC 23**

**PD 21    HP 28 (mook)**

**MD 17**

*Mook:* Kill one dwarf ruffian mook for every 28 damage you deal to the mob.

## DWARF AXE BITER

7th level wrecker [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +10

**Berserk axe +12 vs. AC (+14 vs AC if it used unhinged combatant the round before)**—20 damage, and 6 ongoing damage

*Natural even hit:* As a free action, the axe biter can make a second *berserk axe* attack against a different enemy with a –2 attack penalty. If it gets another natural even hit, it can make a third (and final) *berserk axe* attack against a different enemy with a –4 attack penalty as a free action.

*Unhinged combatant:* When the axe biter makes a melee attack and rolls a natural even miss, it pops free.

**R: Axe and chain +12 vs. AC (one nearby enemy)**—22 damage

*Miss: 8 damage.*

### Nastier Specials

*Stronger than stone (group ability):* Dwarves are known for their resilience. Once per battle only, a staggered dwarf heals to full hp as a free action. No matter how many dwarves there are only one can use this ability.

*Spiked shield:* Enemies that intercept a moving dwarf axe biter take 7 damage.

**AC 23**

**PD 21    HP 100**

**MD 17**





## TRACKING THE BANDITS

After the fight, the ice-miners help the adventurers tie up any surviving bandits, and offer to take the captured bandits (and any corpses) back to the council of Frostfire while the adventurers track down the bandit camp. The snow is fresh and the bandit's footprints are deep—it shouldn't be too hard to track them down and go through their possessions for clues.

The bandits are all either unconscious or have been injured too badly to talk (broken jaws, etc). Adventurers who really persist in questioning the gang members will be able to discover that there are further bandits back at the gang's camp and the area around the camp is trapped, if they succeed at DC 20 skill check. If the adventurers discover this information then lower the difficulty of avoiding the traps by 5.

Each adventurer faces a trap, and depending on the marching order of the party, several adventurers might stumble into the same trap.

PIT TRAP	FOOT SNARE	DEAD FALL
<i>Difficulty to avoid: DC 15</i> <b>Spiked pit +5 vs PD—3d6 damage</b>	<i>Difficulty to avoid: DC 15</i> <b>Glass-studded snare +10 vs PD—3d6 damage</b>	<i>Difficulty to avoid: DC 20</i> <b>Collapse +10 vs AC—2d12 damage</b>

## THE BANDIT CAMP

The bandits have set up the camp in an old shelter hut on a ridge, built and maintained to aid ice miners caught out in blizzards.

Sneaking up on the dwarves is a DC 20 skill check. If the adventurers fail the skill check the dwarves get a chance to roll rocks down upon the party, making the following attack:

**Rolling rock +12 vs AC (1d3 enemies in a group)—15 damage.**

## Fight!

Yes, one of the gang members is a dwarf possessed by a star-mask. There is obviously more going on here than petty crime. Keep the star-mask's identity a secret at first as it wears a hood and a scarf covering most of its face so that it looks like any other dwarven gang member, but as soon as an adventurer attacks the star-mask creature reveal it for what it is. Unlike the dwarf gangsters, the star-mask dwarf cultist cannot be taken alive.

Number of PCs	Dwarf Ruffian	Dwarf Stonebreaker	Dwarf Star-mask Cultist
3	7	0	2
4	7	1	2
5	7	2	2
6	7	3	2

## DWARF RUFFIAN

7th level mook [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +10

**Ancestral hammer +12 vs. AC—18 damage**

*Natural even hit:* The next dwarf to make an attack this round against the target gains a +1 attack bonus to that attack.

**AC 23**

**PD 21    HP 28 (mook)**

**MD 17**

*Mook:* Kill one dwarf ruffian mook for every 28 damage you deal to the mob.

## DWARF STONEBREAKER

7th level wrecker [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +14

**Stone gauntlets +12 vs. AC (2 attacks)—10 damage**

*Natural even hit:* The dwarf stonebreaker can make a single *stone gauntlets* attack against the same or a different enemy as a free action.

*Miss:* 5 ongoing damage.

**Stone boots +12 vs. PD (one staggered or unconscious enemy)—40 damage**

*Miss:* 10 damage.

*Stone helm head-butt:* Once per battle when an enemy rolls a natural 1-2 on a melee attack roll against the dwarf stonebreakers and misses, that enemy becomes stunned until the end of its next turn.

### Nastier Specials

*Stronger than stone* (group ability): Dwarves are known for their resilience. Once per battle only, a staggered dwarf heals to full hp as a free action. No matter how many dwarves there are only one can use this ability.

**AC 23**

**PD 21    HP 100**

**MD 17**

## DWARF STAR-MASK CULTIST

7th level leader [ABERRATION]

Initiative: +10

**Long axe +12 vs. AC—28 damage**

[Group ability] **R: Psychic chains +12 vs. MD—22 damage and 8 ongoing damage**

*Natural even hit:* When the target saves against the ongoing damage it becomes confused until it hits an ally.

*Group ability:* For every two dwarf star-mask cultists in the battle (round up), one of them can use *psychic chains* once during the battle as a quick action.

### Nastier Specials

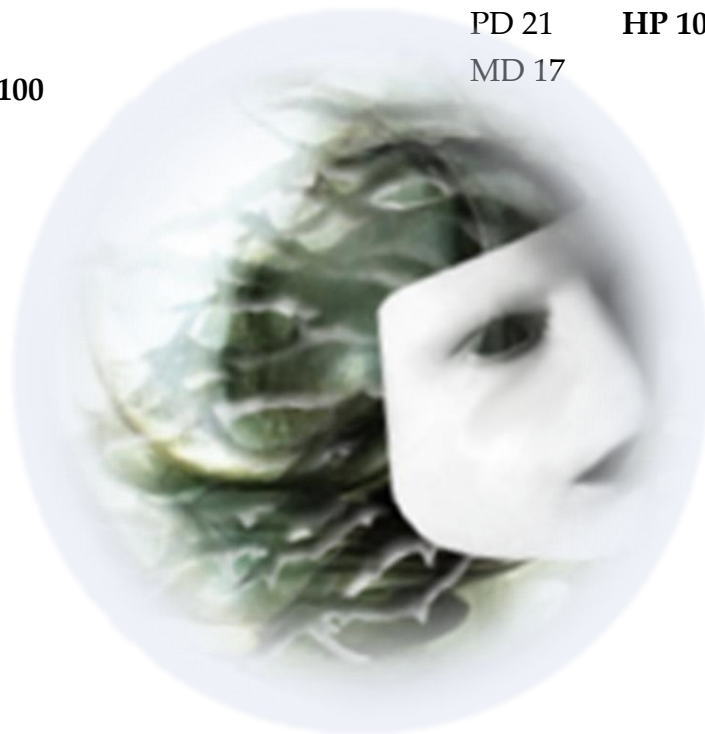
*Stronger than stone* (group ability): Dwarves are known for their resilience. Once per battle only, a staggered dwarf heals to full hp as a free action. No matter how many dwarves there are only one can use this ability.

*Wall-crawler:* The star-mask cultist can use oily tentacles to climb on ceilings and walls as easily as it moves on the ground.

**AC 23**

**PD 21    HP 100**

**MD 17**









## THE TRUTH, UNMASKED

The gang leader is a dwarven thug who has bonded with a star-mask. The other dwarves, when questioned (if the adventurers fought in a way intended to capture rather than kill the gang), reveal that a lot of dwarves have been using the new 'magic masks'. The masks confer strange new abilities, and are much-coveted 'magic items' in the dwarven underworld!

All that remains is for the adventurers to report back to the council. The council will want the adventurers to recount every detail, so this is a good place for the adventurers to make themselves look like the heroes that they are. After a thorough grilling, the council will deliberate and then announce that they are throwing a feast in honor of the adventurers.

### Treasure? Not really.

Adventurers can put on one of the masks from this adventure. The masks are mutated, so act a bit differently from regular star-masks when worn. In fact, most of the star-masks in Frostfire are 'docile' maybe even 'tame', unmoving and flaccid until worn. The criminal element of Frostfire love the masks and their mystical benefits, so why shouldn't the adventurers benefit too?

Adventurers who put on a mask get a +2 bonus to their MD and gain 20 temporary hp at the start of each battle. The adventurer doesn't even need to attune to the mask (and that should be a warning sign right there).

Of course these 'docile' and 'tame' masks just work more insidiously than normal star-masks. In battle, whenever the adventurer rolls a natural 1 they become confused until the end of the fight or until an ally rips the mask off them (a standard action).

Adventurers who become confused in this way three times become an *evil star-mask worshipping NPC* under the GM's control. After the first time the adventurer becomes confused due to the influence of the mask let them know what is on the way so they can make the choice: keep the mask and risk losing their character, or burn the horrid thing in a fire.



*Don't forget – At the end of every session characters should receive an incremental advance.*



# FEAST & FESTER

## INTRODUCTION

*The adventurers wish to trade with the dwarves but before they can do so must aid the governor of a dwarven city.*

The Dwarf King has an intact meteorite that he is willing to trade with the adventurers in exchange for the phoenix egg shell that they have previously obtained (plus other things offered by the icon that the adventurers are working for). The meteorite is a rare intact example of the kind that have been raining down on the Dragon Empire and unleashing the horrid star-mask monsters.

Unfortunately, the original deal was for an intact and whole phoenix egg, and the adventurers only have a phoenix egg shell. Before the Dwarf King will hand over the meteorite the adventurers must do him a favor.

The dwarven city of Frostfire is on the edge of anarchy, with its governor barely able to keep order. If the adventurers help to restore law and order to Frostfire, the Dwarf King promises to complete the trade and give the adventurers the meteorite.

## A FEAST FOR HEROES

The adventurers have started restoring law and order to the city of Frostfire by defeating a gang of bandits demanding protection money from ice-miners. The ruling council of Frostfire has thrown a party for the heroes, a celebratory feast.

Before the feast, the adventurers are given chits by the city council. The adventurers can exchange these chits with stores in Frostfire to obtain fancy clothing for the party, or make other preparations. However, the gang activity in Frostfire means that some store owners are loathe to be seen with the adventurers for fear of retribution by the gangs.

This is a montage. Turn to a player and ask them to tell you a preparation that they are making prior to the feast, preferably a preparation that involves spending a chit. Turn

to the next player and ask them to describe a problem that first player's character faced in their preparations, preferably a problem caused directly or indirectly by the gangs plaguing the city. Then go back to the first player and ask them how they solved the problem. Go around the group until everybody has had a chance to prepare, describe a problem, and solved a problem. There is no need to roll dice during a montage, it is purely a narrative device to get the players warmed up and give everybody a chance to introduce their character.

The chits are worth about 100 gold pieces, but are only redeemable before the feast and can't be swapped for cash. The adventurers can use them to get fancy party clothes and other similar things, but that is about it. Of course, some clever players might want to arrange a trade that would end up with them getting gold—in which case a quick skill challenge emphasizing failing forward (*"You failed the roll, so... yes, you can swap the clothing for a cow, but the cow merchant wants chickens, and the chicken seller wants pumpkin wine. The wine merchant however wants you to take his son to the feast as your date, roll again to convince the wine-sellers son to go on a date with you. Oh you failed again? OK, the wine merchant's son will only go on a date with you if you obtain for him a wolf-skin cloak."*). Don't draw out the skill check too long, just pile on the complications until the player passes the skill check and/or they end up going to the feast on a date with two different dwarves whom they must keep unaware of each other, while wearing a tabard that advertises a local restaurant, while wearing a false beard.

## A TOAST FROM THE COUNCIL

The city council of Frostfire wants to celebrate the adventurers' recent success and, of course, claim some of the glory for themselves.

### Role-playing the council



This section has a lot of read-aloud text. You needn't read it all aloud at once, but instead use pieces you like when there is a break in the flow of role-playing from the players use the council's speeches to get the role-playing restarted or moving in a different direction.

**Brog Strongaxe**— Councilmember Strongaxe is hedging his bets *"We should all celebrate victories against lawlessness and chaos, so I lift my tankard not only to those present but to all our brave guards who work tirelessly to keep us all safe"*.

**Daret Kegpike**— The pious Daret stands on his chair and speaks to the crowd *"The light of righteousness shines upon our fair streets once more, thanks to these brave outsiders. They set an example for us all. Praise be the light."*

**Drumlyn Kragmaid**— The good-looking Drumlyn is too busy dancing in a throng of dwarves to make a speech, and signals the adventurers to join in the dance.

**Mournbyrn Bristlearm**— Mournbyrn reads her speech from a series of small cards *"Erm... these adventurers are... erm... adventurous in seeking out injustice... and... thanks to their bravery saved many... flagon of mead"*. She looks helplessly at her cards, and looks to the adventurers for help.

**Nuram Hammerbelt**— Councilmember Hammerbelt belches loudly *"The Dwarf King sent these adventurers to us as part of a trade, and it seems that so far the trade is good. Now, everybody eat up!"*.

**Reid Runefoot**— Reid smiles but doesn't make a speech, claiming that there is too much hot air in the council chamber already—which gets a laugh from the crowd.

**Sturm Goldflayer**— Councilmember Goldflayer has strong ties to the miner's guild. *"Here's to the brave ice miners who risk their all to make sure that we can have cold beer tonight, and to the brave adventurers who are drinking their fair share"*.

**Thar Stonehide**— Thar thumps a cane for attention *"The outsiders have done well, now if you don't mind I'll cut this speech short so I can have some well-done hog"*.

**Toren Longbrew**— Toren winks at the dwarves serving the ale from kegs that bear his mark *"Tonight we can rest a little easier knowing that our streets are that little bit safer. Of course, when the ale gets flowing dwarves don't do much resting—am I right?"*.

## ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT

The adventurers, by this point should have their guard down, so it is a perfect opportunity for an assassin from one of the gangs to strike.

### POISONED FOOD AND DRINK

*Difficulty to avoid: DC 20*

**Iocane powder +10 vs PD**—4d6 ongoing poison damage

*Miss: 2d6 poison damage.*

Only adventurers whose one unique thing or backgrounds suggest that they would be aware of poisoning attempts get to roll to avoid being poisoned.

The poison damage is ongoing damage, which means making regular saves (normal save, 11+) to stop taking the damage. Potentially an adventurer *could* be killed by the poison, though it is unlikely. Any healing magic, or even one of the healing potions that the party was given last week, will stop the poison.



## Help, I'm dead!



If an adventurer is 'killed' by the poison, they are in fact put into a death-like coma from which they will revive at the start of the following session. The 'dead' adventurer is taken to the Temple of Light where they are laid in state (and where they will revive the following session).

Players whose characters are poisoned can play a dwarf cleric for the rest of the session. The character sheet for the dwarf cleric is at the back of this adventure. The character is not a 'full' character in that it is missing some of the things that it would have if it were created as a standard player character—the cleric is designed instead to be quick to pick up should a stand-in player character be needed. Of course, if multiple adventurers end up laid low by poison then the local Temple of light sends multiple dwarven clerics to investigate.



## INVESTIGATION

The adventurers still standing will obviously want to find out who poisoned their food and drink. In the commotion immediately after the poisoning attempt, lots of plates of food were knocked onto the floor, tables were knocked over, and the party-goers milled about in a panic before being ordered to leave by the council. Investigating the attempted murder of the adventurers is not going to be an easy task.

This is a free-form skill challenge. The adventurers need to accrue three DC 25 skill check successes. Failing a skill check doesn't mean that the adventurers don't find a clue, but rather that the clue that they find leads them elsewhere in their investigation and they end up having to investigate something else before they can move onwards, further complicating matters. Failing the skill check by 10 or more leads to a tangible complication: either 2d6 damage or raising the DC of the next skill check by 5. If anybody crits their skill roll (usually a natural 20) then they get to lower the next skill check DC by 5 or gain some other tangible benefit.

Let the players take the lead in deciding how to investigate. If the adventurers start questioning the council members, then the skill checks will involve Charisma or Wisdom. If the adventurers start looking for physical clues then the skill checks will involve Intelligence or Wisdom. Chasing suspects through the streets will involve Dexterity (for speed) or Intelligence (taking shortcuts). Strength and Constitution based skill checks could involve breaking down doors, or tasting the poison in minute amounts to work out its origin.

Eventually, the players will accrue three successes in tracking down the assassins, and so the party collectively find itself outside a shuttered and apparently abandoned tavern in one of the seedier taverns in one of the lower caverns—apparently the hideout of a gang.

## THE BROKEN TOOTH INN

The inn doesn't look entirely deserted; there is a light on inside one of the upstairs rooms, and the shadows move as though there are people inside.

In a heap of refuse near the boarded-up front door is a big bottle of poison. The smell from the broken poison bottle is overpowering—something that is almost undetectable as just a drop becomes very pungent when concentrated.

The adventurers can easily sneak in through a loose board in a side window and explore. Inside they find several nervous dwarven gang members, who naturally are armed and attack the adventurers.

### Fight!

If the adventurers were trying to be super sneaky and succeeded on a DC 20 skill check start the escalation die at 1.

Note that both the enemy types in this fight are wreckers. Normally we'd avoid a fight with just one type of enemy, but dwarves have a reputation for being tough and dwarves with their backs against the wall would be doubly so. Don't worry though, this fight is a little bit (but just a little bit) easier than normal to compensate for that.

Number of PCs	Dwarf Axebiter	Dwarf Stonebreaker
3	2	1
4	2	2
5	3	2
6	3	3

## DWARF AXE BITER

7th level wrecker [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +10

**Berserk axe +12 vs. AC (+14 vs AC if it used unhinged combatant the round before)—20 damage, and 6 ongoing damage**

*Natural even hit:* As a free action, the axe biter can make a second *berserk axe* attack against a different enemy with a –2 attack penalty. If it gets another natural even hit, it can make a third (and final) *berserk axe* attack against a different enemy with a –4 attack penalty as a free action.

*Unhinged combatant:* When the axe biter makes a melee attack and rolls a natural even miss, it pops free.

**R: Axe and chain +12 vs. AC (one nearby enemy)—22 damage**

*Miss: 8 damage.*

### Nastier Specials

*Stronger than stone* (group ability): Dwarves are known for their resilience. Once per battle only, a staggered dwarf heals to full hp as a free action. No matter how many dwarves there are only one can use this ability.

*Spiked shield:* Enemies that intercept a moving dwarf axe biter take 7 damage.

**AC 23**

**PD 21    HP 100**

**MD 17**



## DWARF STONEBREAKER

7th level wrecker [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +14

**Stone gauntlets +12 vs. AC (2 attacks)—10 damage**

*Natural even hit:* The dwarf stonebreaker can make a single *stone gauntlets* attack against the same or a different enemy as a free action.

*Miss:* 5 ongoing damage.

**Stone boots +12 vs. PD (one staggered or unconscious enemy)—40 damage**

*Miss:* 10 damage.

*Stone helm head-butt:* Once per battle when an enemy rolls a natural 1-2 on a melee attack roll against the dwarf stonebreakers and misses, that enemy becomes stunned until the end of its next turn.

### Nastier Specials

*Stronger than stone* (group ability): Dwarves are known for their resilience. Once per battle only, a staggered dwarf heals to full hp as a free action. No matter how many dwarves there are only one can use this ability.

**AC 23**

**PD 21    HP 100**

**MD 17**



## Rotted abandoned tavern terrain

At the start of each round, roll 1d8 to discover what happens in or to the tavern that round.

1. Rotted floorboards give way under the melee. This round the dwarves are stuck (save ends) but gain +2 to AC against ranged attacks while stuck due to being half-embedded in the floor. Adventurers are stuck (save ends) with +2 to AC against ranged attacks for dwarven, halfling, gnome etc. adventurers while stuck.
2. This round the dwarves can make the following attack as a quick action on their turn:  
**R: Thrown bottles +12 vs AC—20 damage.**
3. One of the dwarves grabs a heavy iron lantern and wields it as a club. The dwarf now gains the following melee attack that they can use until the end of the battle:  
**Iron lantern +12 vs AC—22 damage**  
*Attack roll would also hit PD: 12 ongoing fire damage.*
4. Anybody on the upper level of the tavern who rolls a natural 1-5 attack roll or save drops through rotted floorboards into the level below, taking 1d6 damage in the fall.
5. The fight has caused dust to rain down from the ceiling. Everybody (friend and foe alike) gains +2 to their defenses against ranged attacks as their attackers choke on dust and have their vision obscured.
6. Large verminous rats run through the tavern, disturbed by the fight. Anybody who moves this round must succeed at an easy save (6+) or fall flat as they step on a rat.
7. A dwarf axe biter goes *really* berserk, and now rolls 2d20 for attack and takes the best result. If you roll this result (7) again the dwarf axe biter drops out of their enraged state.
8. Either nothing unexpected happens this round OR roll 2d6 on this chart and combine the results (GMs choice).











## PERFIDITY AT THE BROKEN TOOTH

Just as the fight is winding down and the adventurers are starting to catch their breath, a band of masked and cloaked figures burst in to attack the adventurers.

### Fight!

Yes this is two fights back-to-back, with no chance to rest or to roll to recharge powers. We don't often do that in our adventures—the adventurers weren't expecting it and it is unlikely the players were either. This 'second' fight starts with the escalation die reset to 0, and effectively turns the conflict in the Broken Tooth inn into a single double-tough fight. Don't worry—after this fight the adventurers get a chance to rest and fully heal up.

Fleeing from this fight has the campaign loss that each character must drop their pack as they run away, losing any equipment and potions that they were not wearing or holding in their hands.

If you want to use the terrain effects from last battle just roll d6s instead of d8s on the chart, or you can skip the terrain saying that the previous fight did all the damage that it could to the tavern and there are no more rotted floorboards that will break or rats to scare out of hiding.

Number of PCs	Dwarf Star-mask Cultist	Mutant Star-mask Egg
3	2	10
4	3	10
5	4	20
6	5	20

## DWARF STAR-MASK CULTIST

7th level leader [ABERRATION]

Initiative: +10

**Long axe +12 vs. AC—28 damage**

[Group ability] **R: Psychic chains +12 vs. MD—22 damage and 8 ongoing damage**

*Natural even hit:* When the target saves against the ongoing damage it becomes confused until it hits an ally.

*Group ability:* For every two dwarf star-mask cultists in the battle (round down), one of them can use *psychic chains* once during the battle as a quick action.

### Nastier Specials

*Stronger than stone* (group ability): Dwarves are known for their resilience. Once per battle only, a staggered dwarf heals to full hp as a free action. No matter how many dwarves there are only one can use this ability.

*Wall-crawler:* The star-mask cultist can use oily tentacles to climb on ceilings and walls as easily as it moves on the ground.

**AC 23**

**PD 21**

**HP 100**

**MD 17**





## MUTANT STAR-MASK EGG

*This featureless white mass is carried along on thrashing black tentacles, seeking a host.*

7th level mook [ABERRATION]

Initiative: +10

**Smothering tentacles +12 vs. PD**—6 damage and 6 ongoing damage (hard save ends), ongoing damage ends if the target is no longer engaged with the star-mask

**[Group ability] Sickly sweet feelings +12 vs. MD**—Until the end of the battle, if the target drops to 0 hp; the target gets back up with temporary hp equal to its normal maximum hp, and rejoins the fight on the star-masks side. It is a standard action to pull a mutant star-mask off a host.

*Group ability:* For every four star-masks in the battle (round up), one of them can use *sickly sweet feelings* once during the battle.

*Leap:* On turns when the escalation die is odd the star-mask mutant can leap into engagement with a nearby enemy as a quick action.

### Nastier specials

*Host and shell:* If a humanoid dies while under the influence of *sickly sweet feelings* the egg burrows inside the corpse and hatches into a star-mask abomination in 1d3-1 rounds (if the 1d3-1 result is 0 the dead creature's transformation is instant).

**AC 22**

**PD 17    HP 30 (mook)**

**MD 21**

*Mook:* Kill one mutant star-mask mook for every 30 damage you do to the mob.

## STAR-MASK ABOMINATION

*This terrible creature is a white mask with a supporting humanoid-shaped mass of black shiny tentacles.*

7th level spoiler [ABERRATION]

Initiative: +10

**C: Probing tentacles +12 vs. PD (one nearby enemy)**—The enemy becomes stuck and takes 14 ongoing poison damage, save ends both.

*Leap:* On turns when the escalation die is odd the star-mask mutant can leap into engagement with a nearby enemy as a quick action.

*Sultry exudation:* The star-mask abomination can climb up walls and across ceilings as easily as it runs on the ground. If the star-mask is intercepted, it can make an immediate free *probing tentacles* attack against the creature that intercepted it.

### Nastier specials

*Abominable infection:* If a humanoid dies while under stuck in the grip of *probing tentacles* it becomes a star-mask abomination in 1d3-1 rounds (if the 1d3-1 result is 0 the dead creature's transformation is instant).

**AC 23**

**PD 17    HP 118**

**MD 21**

## INVESTIGATING THE BROKEN TOOTH

The dilapidated inn is in a sorry state, sorer now that there are body parts and blood everywhere. The star-mask cultists were obviously expecting the adventurers, or were at least anticipating that the adventurers would eventually find their way to the tavern.

The tavern was chosen by the cultists because it is not their usual meeting place, so it contains no clues. However, one of the dwarves from the first ‘half’ of the fight actually survived. The adventurers thought that they had killed the gang member, but they had merely stunned the unfortunate fool into unconsciousness.

The dwarven gang member (‘Bale Lightrock’) is shocked by the gratuitous violence and is willing to tell the adventurers whatever they wish to know.

Bale is a dwarf from a poor family, with no prospects; he’s always lived a little on the wrong side of the law but wasn’t a serious criminal. A while ago, a renegade orc general attacked dwarven lands and the Dwarf King pressed a lot of young people from Frostfire into military service. When they returned from the war with the orcs, the city council didn’t treat them well, and the military pay that they were promised by the Dwarf King never really materialized. This made a lot of young dwarves who had had a taste of battle very angry.

When the Dwarf King pulled his troops away from Frostfire, the city council decided to send most of the guard to patrol the mountain’s lower slopes and ward off opportunistic orc attacks. With the city guard depleted, Frostfire’s existing criminal element started recruiting dissatisfied dwarves with the promise that they could get what was owed to them by taking it from the wealthy.

A month or so ago, some of the higher-ranking criminals in Frostfire started wearing magical masks, which they then provided to their most trusted enforcers. It was around this time that the gangs started to coalesce into a single

criminal organization and consolidate their activities.

Bale doesn’t know any more than that, except that there is something important in the lower caverns that the criminal syndicate wants to keep hidden.

### Torture? Intimidation?



Let the players know that Bale is terrified of the adventurers (they are covered in the blood of his friends after all) and has told them *everything* that he knows. The adventurers don’t need to intimidate, torture, or question him in any way—he’s spilling his guts to them.

## GUARDS ARRIVE, & BACK TO THE COUNCIL

As Bale finishes his testimony, the city guards arrive. They heard the sounds of fighting and came running (though not fast enough that they’d get involved in the fight, just fast enough to arrest the survivors—these are *professional* guards after all). The party has less than a minute to decide what to do with Bale Lightrock—turn him over to the guards, kill him, tell him to hide and warn him to get out of town, or whatever else they want to do before the guards arrive.

The guards escort the adventurers back to the city council, who are keen to hear the report of the adventurers. When they hear that the gangs are part of a single syndicate, likely led by a group of dwarves controlled by abominations from beyond the stars, the council will assign a group of guards to aid the adventurers and send them off into the lower caverns to find and end the source of Frostfire’s troubles.

*Don’t forget – At the end of every session characters should receive an incremental advance.*



# DARKER & DEEPER

## INTRODUCTION

*The adventurers are helping to restore law and order in the dwarven city of Frostfire, and have discovered that a star-mask cult is behind the city's troubles.*

The adventurers have been trying to obtain a meteorite from the Dwarf King. The meteorite is possibly the key to unravelling the mystery of the star-masks, an abominable race of aberrations that can take over the minds and bodies of the living and revive the dead.

As part of their deal with the Dwarf King, the adventurers have agreed to aid the city council of Frostfire with restoring order after a wave of lawlessness swept the city. The adventurers have discovered that the star-masks are somehow behind the erosion of the council's rule in the city, and have been tasked with eradicating the menace.

## VICTORY GOES TO THE PREPARED

The adventurers are to descend into the dark of the lower caverns of Frostfire in search of whatever the star-mask cult is keeping down there. Before the adventurers set out, they have a chance to prepare. They will be travelling with guides and guards but still should take care of their own provisions.

This is a montage. Turn to a player and ask them to describe a way on which their character prepares for the journey into the dark. Then turn to the next player and ask them to provide a problem that the adventurer faced in trying to make their preparations, but not how the problem was solved. Then turn to a third player and ask them how they solved the problem. Go around the group until everybody has had a chance to narrate their preparation, describe a problem, and everybody has had a chance to describe how their character solved an issue that another character had. There is no need to roll dice during a montage, it is purely a narrative

device to get the players warmed up and give everybody a chance to introduce their character.

## PERILS AND PITFALLS

A journey into the underworld is never without some hazards, and the deeper one goes the stranger and more dangerous it gets.

As the adventurers descend, each adventurer must face one of the following hazards. Adventurers who journeyed deep into the sunless world in the adventure *Into the Underworld* gain a +5 skill bonus to avoiding the hazards.

PARASITIC SNAILS	HALLUCINO- GENIC FUNGUS	DROP-CRABS
<i>Difficulty to avoid: DC 15</i> <b>Snail slime +5 vs PD—4d6</b> poison damage	<i>Difficulty to avoid: DC 15</i> <b>Spores +10 vs PD—3d6</b> poison damage	<i>Difficulty to avoid: DC 25</i> <b>Piercing shells +15 vs AC—4d8</b> damage

## DARK TUNNEL ATTACK

As the adventurers and their guards and guides reach a partially submerged chamber, they hear a distant screeching noise. The noise gets progressively louder and is accompanied by a sound like flapping wings. In the dim glow of luminescent moss, the adventurers can see something coming down a side-tunnel towards them.

The dwarven guards and guides panic, fleeing back the way that they came. A pair of bat-sharks are on the hunt, with thunder-bat scavengers following close behind.

## Fight!

If the adventurers have fought shark-bats before and come up with a cunning plan that they can execute quickly, have them make a DC 25 skill check, on a success start the escalation die at 1.

Number of PCs	Elder Bat-Shark	Thunder Bat
3	2	1
4	2	3
5	2	5
6	2	7

## ELDER BAT-SHARK

*There is no upper limit to how large a shark-bat could grow; the only regulating factor is access to food.*

*Huge 5th level wrecker [BEAST]*

Initiative: +11

Vulnerable: thunder

**Bite and sever +10 vs. AC—55 damage**

*Crit:* The target is either stuck and must move with the shark-bat and takes 15 ongoing damage (hard save ends all) OR loses a limb (target's choice).

*Scent of blood:* The crit range for shark-bats expands by 1 for every staggered enemy or every staggered ally, whichever is higher.

*Fly+Swim:* Shark-bats can fly and swim with equal grace and speed, but are clumsy when forced to land.

**AC 21**

**PD 19 HP 222**

**MD 15**

## THUNDER BAT

*It likes its meat tender. Luckily it carries a sonic tenderizer in its throat.*

5th level archer [beast]

Initiative: +13

**Fangs +10 vs. AC—15 damage**

*Natural even hit against a dazed enemy:* The target takes 20 ongoing thunder damage.

**C: Thunder screech +10 vs. PD (1d3 nearby creatures in a group)—12 thunder damage**

*Natural even hit:* The target is dazed (save ends).

*Resist ranged damage 16+:* When a ranged attack targets this creature while it's flying, the attacker must roll a natural 16+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage. (Shifty spinning bats are hard to hit unless they're grounded or stuck.)

*Resist thunder 18+:* When a thunder attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 16+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage. Unlike most bats, this one dispenses thunder rather than fearing it.

*Unwieldy flyer:* When the thunder bat is staggered, it must roll an immediate save. On a failure, it loses its ability to fly until the end of its next turn. If flying near the ground, it lands immediately. If flying far away from the ground, it lands badly and takes 25 damage.

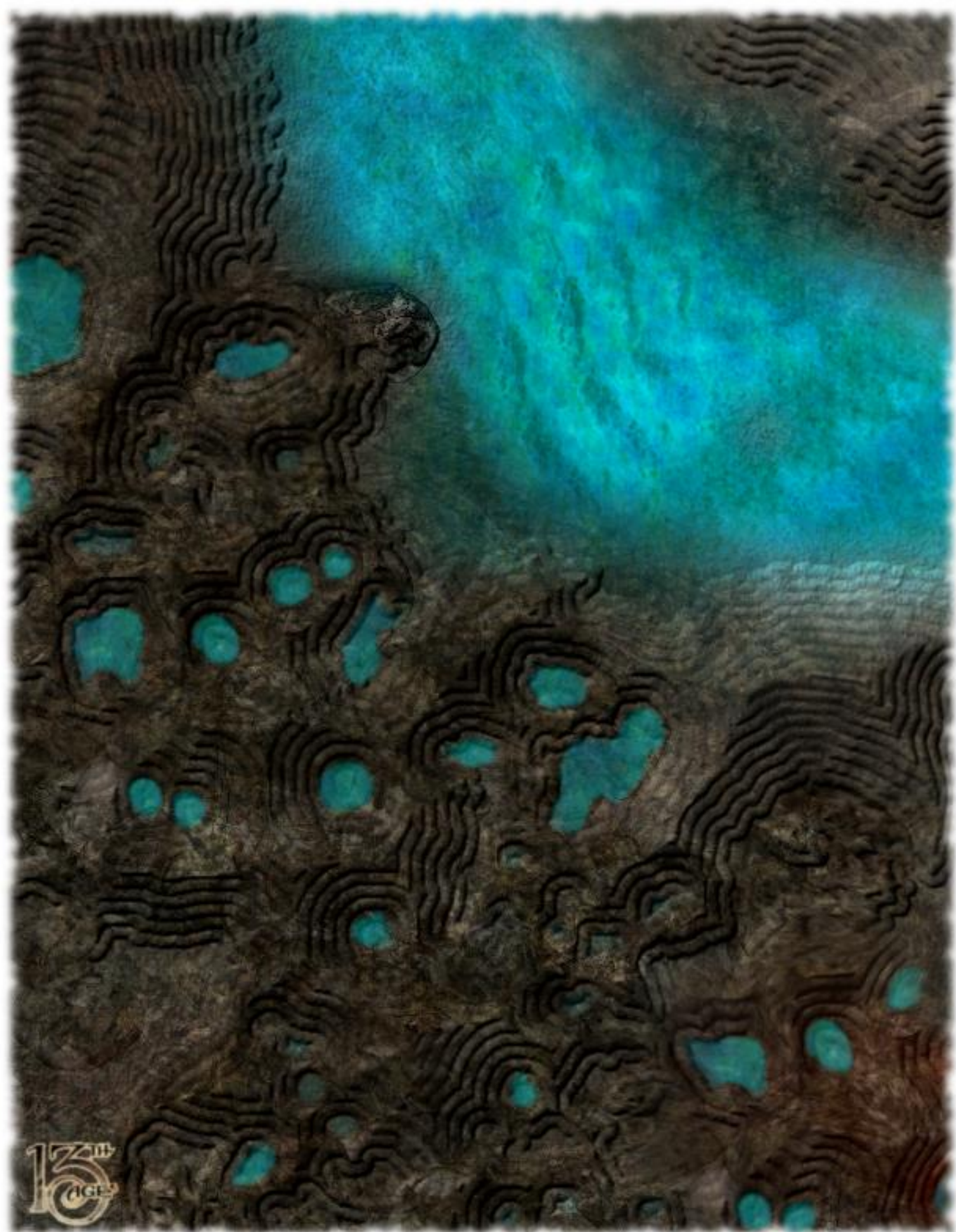
**AC 22**

**PD 18 HP 70**

**MD 15**







## LOST IN THE DARK

The shark-bat attack has left the adventurers without guides, and much of their equipment has been scattered throughout the caves by the fleeing dwarves.

### But my Dwarves are tough!



If you don't like the idea of the dwarven guards and guides fleeing you can instead say that they withdraw to another chamber but were ambushed by shark-bats and eaten. They were brave, stalwart, and tasted good.

The adventurers are now faced with the task of finding their way in the dark, through dangers untold and hardships unnumbered.

This is a freeform skill challenge. The adventurers must accrue three DC 25 successes to find the chamber of the star-masks. Every time the adventurers fail a skill check they wander into danger or end up even more lost (their choice). Getting even more lost raises the DC of the next skill check that they make in this skill challenge by 5. Stumbling into danger means that the one who failed the skill roll and one other character that their player nominates takes 2d8 damage from falling down shafts, stumbling into rocks in the dark, or being attacked by the flora and fauna of the underworld.

Once the party accrues three successes they locate the chamber of the star-masks.

## THE CHAMBER OF THE STAR MASKS

Deep in the dark, the adventurers stumble into a huge chamber, with translucent fluid-filled orbs hanging from the ceiling. Each orb has in it a tiny star-mask, though most are half-formed and unmoving. This is some form of hatchery!

The few star-masks that are here are sluggish, and sickly looking, with the normally porcelain-smooth whiteness of their 'faces' cracked and oozing puss. Something is wrong with the star-mask 'hive' down here. It is sick, or infected.

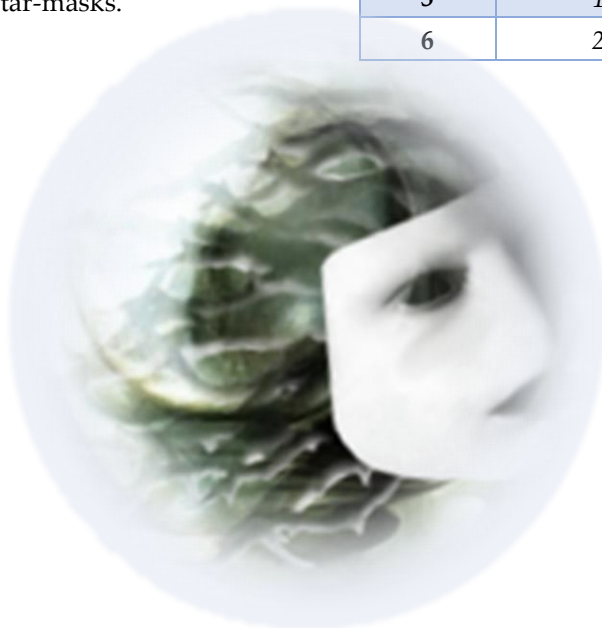
The star-masks are having to use guile to slowly take over Frostfire, instead of just taking over with puppeteered humanoids and walking corpses as they usually do.

Out of the darkness come horrid things, silently climbing the walls like spiders. The star-masks attack, their oily black tentacles seeking to make the adventurers into new hosts for star-masks.

### Fight!

Remember that if the adventurers are using phoenix weapons to use the rules for those magic items as they relate to star-masks.

Number of PCs	Mutant Star-mask Egg	Star-mask Abomination
3	7	2
4	12	2
5	17	2
6	22	2





## MUTANT STAR-MASK EGG

*This featureless white mass is carried along on thrashing black tentacles, seeking a host.*

7th level mook [ABERRATION]

Initiative: +10

**Smothering tentacles +12 vs. PD**—6 damage and 6 ongoing damage (hard save ends), ongoing damage ends if the target is no longer engaged with the star-mask

**[Group ability] Sickly sweet feelings +12 vs. MD**—Until the end of the battle, if the target drops to 0 hp; the target gets back up with temporary hp equal to its normal maximum hp, and rejoins the fight on the star-masks side. It is a standard action to pull a mutant star-mask off a host.

*Group ability:* For every four star-masks in the battle (round up), one of them can use *sickly sweet feelings* once during the battle.

*Leap:* On turns when the escalation die is odd the star-mask mutant can leap into engagement with a nearby enemy as a quick action.

### Nastier specials

*Host and shell:* If a humanoid dies while under the influence of *sickly sweet feelings* the egg burrows inside the corpse and hatches into a star-mask abomination in 1d3-1 rounds (if the 1d3-1 result is 0 the dead creature's transformation is instant).

**AC 22**

**PD 17    HP 30 (mook)**

**MD 21**

*Mook:* Kill one mutant star-mask mook for every 30 damage you do to the mob.

## STAR-MASK ABOMINATION

*This terrible creature is a white mask with a supporting humanoid-shaped mass of black shiny tentacles.*

7th level spoiler [ABERRATION]

Initiative: +10

**C: Probing tentacles +12 vs. PD (one nearby enemy)**—The enemy becomes stuck and takes 14 ongoing poison damage, save ends both.

*Leap:* On turns when the escalation die is odd the star-mask mutant can leap into engagement with a nearby enemy as a quick action.

*Sultry exudation:* The star-mask abomination can climb up walls and across ceilings as easily as it runs on the ground. If the star-mask is intercepted, it can make an immediate free *probing tentacles* attack against the creature that intercepted it.

### Nastier specials

*Abominable infection:* If a humanoid dies while under stuck in the grip of *probing tentacles* it becomes a star-mask abomination in 1d3-1 rounds (if the 1d3-1 result is 0 the dead creature's transformation is instant).

**AC 23**

**PD 17    HP 118**

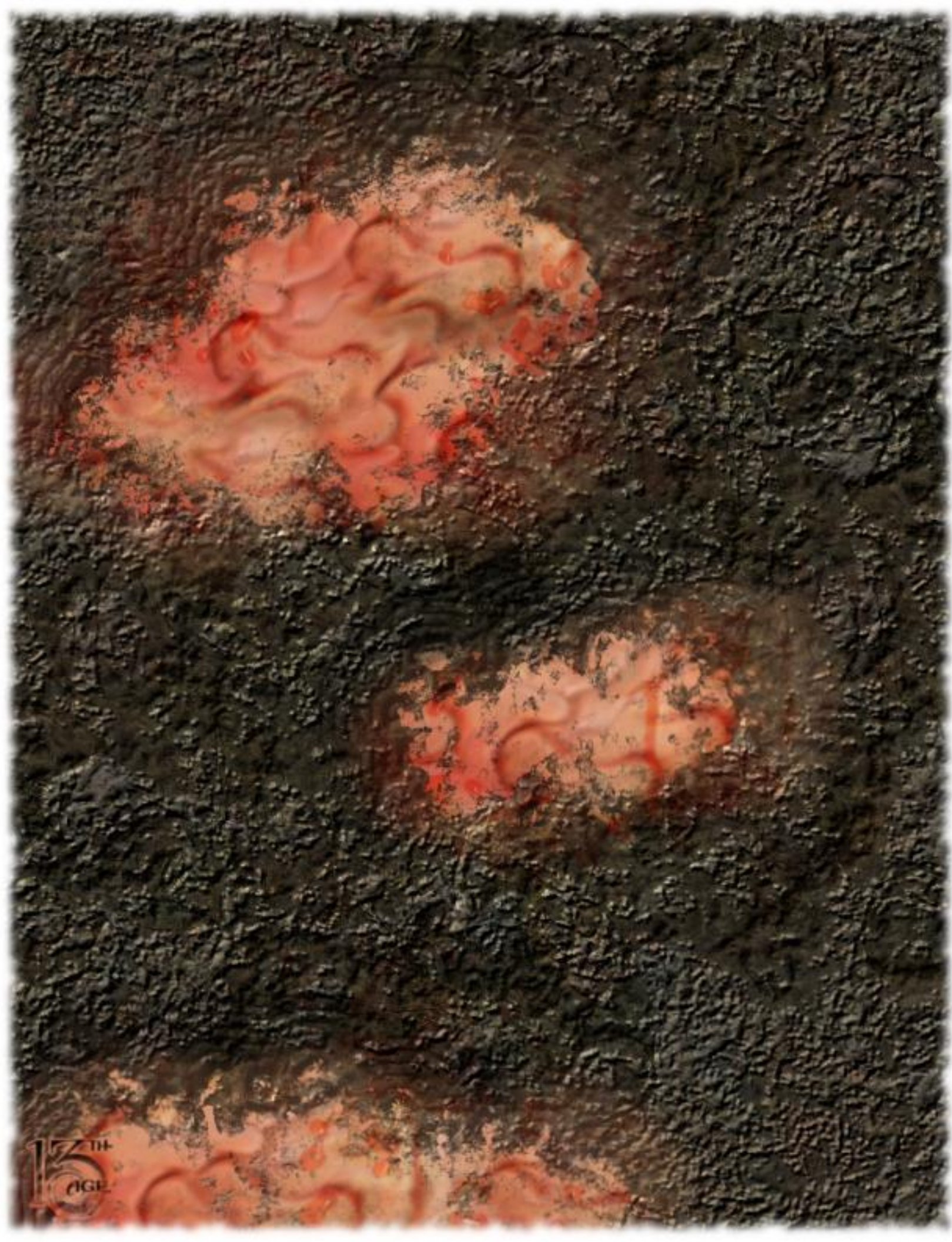
**MD 21**

## INTO THE LIGHT

After the fight, the adventurers have a chance to destroy the star-mask hatchery, burning it with lamp oil or just tearing down the fluid-filled orbs and crushing the sickly half-formed creatures underfoot.

However, the adventurers notice that something big has recently been hauled (or hauled itself) up a side-tunnel, leaving a trail of puss and blood. The tunnel looks smooth, the rock warped as if by great heat or acid; it winds its way in a spiral upwards towards Frostfire.







# TRUTH & CONSEQUENCES

## INTRODUCTION

*The adventurers have become aware of a conspiracy in the dwarven city of Frostfire involving the pernicious star-masks.*

The adventurers made a deal with the Dwarf King to obtain a meteorite that possibly holds the secret to defeating the pernicious star-masks that have been attacking the Dragon Empire. As part of the deal, the adventurers were tasked with restoring law and order to the dwarven city of Frostfire.

During their time in Frostfire, an assassination attempt on the party has led them to uncovering a conspiracy involving the star-masks. Tasked by the council of Frostfire with wiping out the menace, the adventurers descended into the underworld to seek out the source of the star-masks. This has led them to an unnaturally smooth tunnel that leads upwards from the underworld to Frostfire.

## UP THE WINDING SPIRAL

The adventurers are travelling upwards toward the city, negotiating an unnaturally smooth tunnel. The tunnel has strange effects upon the mind. Perhaps it is the reflections in the rippling smooth wall, maybe it is the lingering effects of whatever magic made the tunnel in the first place, but the tunnel causes hallucinations.

This is a montage. Turn to a player and ask them to describe a problem that the party faced on its way up the tunnel, a problem that their character's hallucination caused. Turn to the next player and ask them how their character solved the problem caused by the first adventurer's hallucination. Go around the group until everybody has had a chance to describe a problem caused by a hallucination, and everybody has had a chance to describe how their character solved the issue. There is no need to roll dice during a montage, it is purely a narrative device to get the players warmed up and give everybody a chance to introduce their character.

## BEFORE THE COUNCIL

The adventurers arrive at the top of the tunnel and find themselves in a back room of the Frostfire city council chambers. The room looks like a strong room, with heavy locks on the door. Thankfully, the locks were designed to keep intruders out of the room, not to keep them in, so exiting the room is relatively easy.

The city council is in session, hearing a minor matter of tax evasion. The council members are surprised to see the adventurers emerge from the strong room at the back of the council chamber.

Here is a reminder of the council members...

**Brog Strongaxe**— Councilmember Strongaxe is has never fully welcomed the adventurers into the city.

**Daret Kegpike**— Daret is pious, but perhaps it is all a smokescreen to deflect attention from his newfound allegiance.

**Drumlyn Kragmaid**— Drumlin's good looks and easy smile perhaps hides the dwarf's true intentions.

**Mournbyrn Bristlearm**— The bookish Mournbyrn could have perhaps arranged a massive conspiracy.

**Nuram Hammerbelt**— Councilmember Hammerbelt has never openly thanked the adventurers for their part in cleaning up the city.

**Reid Runefoot**— The constantly smirking Reid may well know more than the dwarf is letting on.

**Sturm Goldflayer**— Councilmember Goldflayer has strong ties to the miner's guild, a perfect cover for activities in the far underworld beneath Frostfire.

**Thar Stonehide**— Thar has always called the adventurers 'outsiders', maybe trying to plant the seed of distrust.

**Toren Longbrew**— Toren made his money in the ale trade—was he behind the poisoning attempt on the adventurer's lives?

### WHO IS THE CONSPIRATOR?

Each councilmember starts talking at once, demanding to know what is going on and accusing each other. So who is behind the conspiracy? Is it all of them, or just one? In this adventure we're not saying. It is up to you as the GM to decide who is the secret conspirator, and who is innocent.

#### A GM trick



If you haven't already selected the traitor, I'd suggest picking whichever council member or members the party *already* suspect as the conspirator or have a reason to dislike. The players will get a warm glow from knowing that they were right all along.

#### AS A SKILL CHECK

The adventurers might prefer to take an investigative approach, questioning each councilmember, watching who flinches.

It is a DC 25 skill check to eliminate each dwarf from consideration, failing the skill check means that suspicion is cast on a previously cleared dwarf. If the adventurers directly question the guilty dwarf and pass the skill check they'll instantly know the dwarf to blame.

#### AS A PURE ROLE-PLAYING ENCOUNTER

You don't need to involve dice if you don't want to. You could just handle the discovery of the secret conspirator or conspirators purely through role-playing. However, if you take this route it is important to let the players know when the adventurers have successfully uncovered the truth—the council member in question has a star-mask attached to their body—just in a place where it was not obvious.

### AND NOW MY PLAN COMES TO FRUITION...

The adventurers have uncovered the mastermind (or masterminds) and the plot is explained.

The Dwarf King sent the intact star-mask meteorite secretly to the council of Frostfire, to be given to the adventurers once they'd handed over the phoenix egg fragments to the Dwarf King and fulfilled their promise to clean up Frostfire.

However, the meteorite wasn't as dormant as the Dwarf King believed, and one (or more) of the city council members ended up influenced and eventually controlled by the weakened star-masks.

The star-mask meteorite was kept in a locked strong room, but it warped the rock to escape into the underworld. Weakened, the star-mask was unable to create a proper hive—but with the help of the conspirator it is taking over Frostfire.

#### Exposition dump?



You could paraphrase the information in this section as the villain explaining the plot in a "*Before I kill you, Mr Bond...*" style, or use it as dialog between the council members as they realize what has been happening under their noses for the past month or so. You could also reveal it piece by piece in the previous *before the council* section as part of the skill check.



## Minions, Attack!

The conspirator ducks away as he or she (or they) call upon their minions to attack. Around the council chambers, guards and citizens alike spring into action, rushing the adventurers. It turns out that the conspirator(s) is not the only one with hidden star-mask parasites hidden under their clothing.

### Fight!

Remember that if the adventurers are using phoenix weapons to use the rules for those magic items as they relate to star-masks.

These star-mask controlled citizens and guards can be knocked out or otherwise debilitated instead of slaughtered, if the adventurers so choose. When NPCs drop to 0 hp, it usually means they've been slain, unless the characters' intent is to keep the target alive and the attack seems like a potentially humane blow that could knock the NPC unconscious instead. Some attacks, particularly when gruesomely narrated, don't feel like attacks that can leave the target unconscious, but we leave that mostly up to you and your group's sensibilities.

Number of PCs	Dwarf Star-mask Cultist	Star-mask Puppet
3	2	3
4	2	5
5	2	7
6	2	9

## DWARF STAR-MASK CULTIST

7th level leader [ABERRATION]

Initiative: +10

**Long axe +12 vs. AC—28 damage**

[Group ability] **R: Psychic chains +12 vs. MD—22 damage and 8 ongoing damage**

*Natural even hit:* When the target saves against the ongoing damage it becomes confused until it hits an ally.

*Group ability:* For every two dwarf star-mask cultists in the battle (round up), one of them can use *psychic chains* once during the battle as a quick action.

### Nastier Specials

*Stronger than stone* (group ability): Dwarves are known for their resilience. Once per battle only, a staggered dwarf heals to full hp as a free action. No matter how many dwarves there are only one can use this ability.

*Wall-crawler:* The star-mask cultist can use oily tentacles to climb on ceilings and walls as easily as it moves on the ground.

**AC 23**

**PD 21      HP 100**

**MD 17**



## STAR-MASK PUPPET

*This unfortunate probably doesn't even know they are host to a star-mask, so complete is the parasite's grip on their mind and body.*

*5<sup>th</sup> level blocker [ABERRATION]*

Initiative: +10

**Tentacles and fists +10 vs. AC—18 damage**

**C: Tentacle whip +12 vs. PD—8 damage** and the target pops free and is pulled into engagement with the star-mask puppet.

*Psychic coordination:* For every star-mask puppet engaged with an enemy, other star-masks not engaged with that enemy that target that enemy gain +1 to attack (maximum +4).

### Nastier Specials

*Stronger than stone (for dwarf puppets only)* (group ability): Dwarves are known for their resilience. Once per battle only, a staggered dwarf heals to full hp as a free action. No matter how many dwarves there are only one can use this ability.

*Wall-crawler:* The star-mask puppet can use oily tentacles to climb on ceilings and walls as easily as it moves on the ground.

*Psychic chaff:* Those with fewer than 24 hit points cannot remember seeing the star-mask parasite—as soon as they look away they forget. They'll remember the host, but not the white mask and black tentacles embedded in its flesh.

**AC 21**

**PD 16      HP 65**

**MD 22**

## THE COUNCIL CRUMBLES

The conspirator(s) have disappeared during the fracas—but right now, there is no time to search for them. The stone of the council chamber is cracking, revealing pulsing, corded flesh and tendrils of brain-like tissue throughout the council chambers.

The adventurers can choose to leave the building, can try to rescue the star-mask controlled citizens and guards still in the council chambers in the hopes that the star-masks can be removed, or can try to rescue the council members.

Running out of the building requires no skill check, but anybody left inside will surely perish as the building shakes itself apart.

It is a DC 15 skill check to haul out unconscious or debilitated star-mask controlled citizens from the collapsing building. On a success the number rolled on the d20 determines how many citizens and guards the adventurer can rescue.

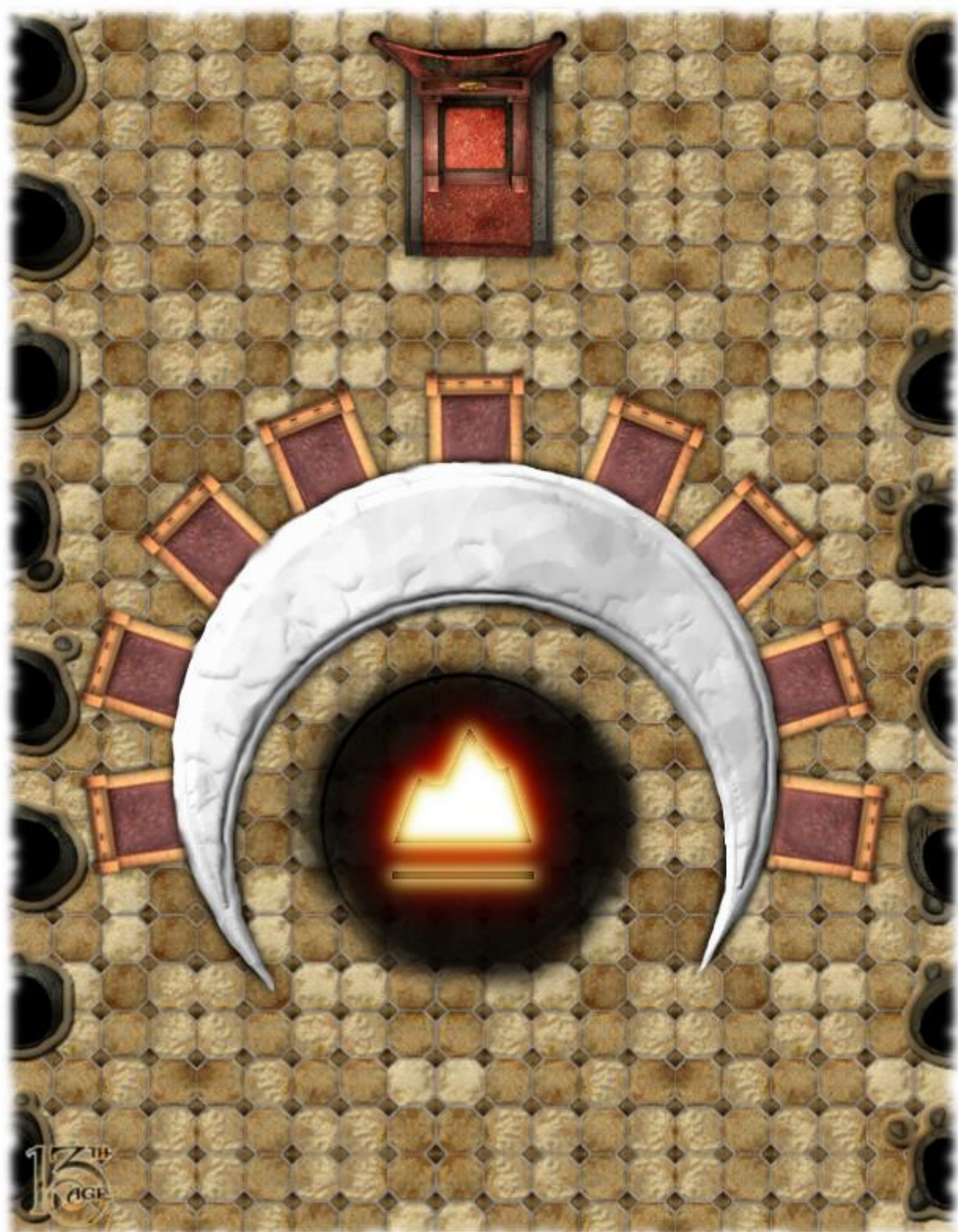
It is a DC 25 skill check to rescue council members, as the star-mask thing infesting the building's structure seems to be concentrating its fury upon them. Failing the roll means that the adventurer takes 2d8 damage and the council member in question is trapped beneath rubble. If three unsuccessful attempts are made to rescue a council member that council member has been killed by falling masonry.

*There is time for a quick rest immediately after the council chambers crumbling, immediately before the next section.*

### A cure?

A star-mask that is controlling a star-mask puppet is able to influence the mind of its host—the host genuinely believes that their choices are their own; their perceptions, thoughts, emotions, and memories can be altered by the star-mask to maintain the illusion. Removing the parasite requires hours of careful work, and it is a DC 15 skill check to remove it completely. Star-masks that are not entirely removed from their puppets eventually grow back.





## RISE OF THE FROSTFIRE BRAIN

With a groaning, rumbling noise the council chambers collapse in a cloud of dust. Rising out of the dust cloud is a huge creature that resembles a brain that walks on multiple tentacles. Absorbed into the brain is the form of the traitorous councilmember(s).

### Fight!

Remember that if the adventurers are using phoenix weapons to use the rules for those magic items as they relate to star-masks.

The star-mask intellect is smart—if the adventurers flee this fight the intellect will take the opportunity to grab as many injured citizens as it can (to use as incubators or as hoists to star-masks) and slither into the underworld. The star-mask intellect will perhaps reemerge later to plague Frostfire, seek out another city to infect, or will find a living dungeon and supplant its heart.

Number of PCs	Star-mask Puppet	Star-mask Intellect
3	2	1
4	4	1
5	6	1
6	8	1

After the fight, the adventurers will be able to recover the meteorite from the rubble (or if it is more dramatic, from inside the giant brain itself).

## STAR-MASK PUPPET

*This unfortunate probably doesn't even know they are host to a star-mask, so complete is the parasite's grip on their mind and body.*

5<sup>th</sup> level blocker [ABERRATION]

Initiative: +10

**Tentacles and fists +10 vs. AC**—18 damage

**C: Tentacle whip +12 vs. PD**—8 damage and the target pops free and is pulled into engagement with the star-mask puppet.

*Psychic coordination:* For every star-mask puppet engaged with an enemy, other star-masks not engaged with that enemy that target that enemy gain +1 to attack (maximum +4).

### Nastier Specials

*Stronger than stone (for dwarf puppets only)* (group ability): Dwarves are known for their resilience. Once per battle only, a staggered dwarf heals to full hp as a free action. No matter how many dwarves there are only one can use this ability.

*Wall-crawler:* The star-mask puppet can use oily tentacles to climb on ceilings and walls as easily as it moves on the ground.

*Psychic chaff:* Those with fewer than 24 hit points cannot remember seeing the star-mask parasite—as soon as they look away they forget. You'll remember the host, but not the white mask and black tentacles embedded in its flesh.

**AC 21**

**PD 16      HP 65**

**MD 22**



## STAR-MASK INTELLECT

*It's a huge brain!*

*Huge 7<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [ABERRATION]*

Initiative: +12

**C: Caressing tentacles +12 vs. AC (1d3 nearby enemies)**—10 acid damage and 10 ongoing psychic damage

*Target a fails save against the ongoing psychic damage:* The target must use its next action to move into engagement with the star-mask intellect.

**[quick action, once per turn] C: Psychic supremacy +12 vs. MD (one nearby enemy)**—The target becomes confused until the end of its next turn.

*Natural 1-5 hit or miss:* The target is immune to *psychic supremacy* until the end of the battle.

*Psychic contamination:* Targets engaged with that star-mask intellect that have fewer than 36 hp cannot target the star-mask intellect.

*Perceptual warp:* Enemies who make ranged attacks against the star-mask intellect that roll a natural 1-5 reroll their attack against a creature engaged with the star-mask intellect.

### Nastier Specials

*Absorb:* Enemies who are engaged with the star-mask intellect who roll a natural 1-5 on a disengage check are absorbed into the flesh of the star-mask intellect. Absorbed characters are stuck, weakened (-4 to attacks and defenses), and move with the star-mask intellect (hard save, 16+, ends all). Natural 2-19 attack rolls against the star-mask intellect do half damage to the star-mask intellect and half damage split evenly between the absorbed creatures. It is a standard action skill check (DC 15) to free an absorbed character, with a natural 1-5 failure meaning the character trying to free their friend becomes stuck!

**AC 21**

**PD 14      HP 350**

**MD 24**



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## THE DUST CLEARS

The star-mask brain collapses in on itself, rivulets of ooze running from its body as it deflates.

### IF NO PHOENIX WEAPONS WERE USED IN THE FIGHT

Across the city riots, start as star-mask infested gang members go wild. Though the star-mask menace has been ended, many dwarves will die this night before the whole sorry affair comes to a close.

The surviving citizens of Frostfire thank the adventurers for their aid, but have little time to celebrate as the city must be repaired and the dead disposed of.

### IF PHOENIX WEAPONS WERE USED IN THE FIGHT

The star-mask menace is ended. The various citizens who had star-masks attached fall into comas, as the star-masks on them wither and die. With time the infested citizens will be themselves once again, but will have to answer to the Dwarf King for what they did in Frostfire.

The citizens of Frostfire are grateful to the adventurers, but wish them gone from the city—there is much work to be done, and many deaths to mourn. They gift each adventurer a champion-tier magic item as a token of thanks.

### IF THE KILLING BLOW WAS FROM A PHOENIX WEAPON

The star-mask menace is ended. Across the city star-mask parasites die, falling away from the bodies of those they were infesting. Almost one in ten citizens were secret hosts to star-masks, most of them unknowingly.

The adventurers are hailed as heroes, and the dwarves of Frostfire wish to honor them. The Miner's Guild set about carving the faces of the heroes into the side of Frostfire so that future generations will remember what happened here.

Among the many gifts and tokens of thanks that the adventurers receive, each is given a champion tier magic item by the dwarves.

## EPILOG

The Dwarf King, when he learns of what happened at Frostfire, gives the adventurers the remains of the meteorite without them having to

give him the remains of the phoenix shell or fulfil any of their previous promises.

The adventurers are welcomed back by their patron and receive a personal audience. The nature of the audience will vary based on which icon the party was working for, and how you and your players envision the icon—here are some suggestions:

### ARCHMAGE

The Archmage greets the adventurers in Horizon, inviting them into his library to discuss their adventure. As the adventurers relay their experiences to him, it seems to them that their parts are pre-scripted, as though this meeting and everything that led up to it was preordained.

### CRUSADER

The Crusader sends for the adventurers and they are bought with an honor guard to First Triumph. There, at the headquarters of the Crusader's army, the icon and his generals listen gravely to the adventurers' tale, discussing how they will incorporate the lessons learned into their future battle plans.

### DIABOLIST

The Diabolist is pleased to meet the adventurers in a palace deep beneath the world, the steps that lead down to the gate are, of course, paved with stones that are inscribed with things like *"I meant it for the best"* and *"What could possibly go wrong"*. The road to hell really is paved with good intentions. The Diabolist laughs delightedly as she hears of the trials and travails that her servants endured, and as the adventurers depart her presence whispers something into the ear of an attendant demon.

### DWARF KING

The Dwarf King meets the adventurers in his throne room, pleased that they have successfully 'won' from him the meteorite so that he did not have to turn it over to another icon. A great feast is held in the adventurers' honor, and the Dwarf King and his court listens to an epic poem that his skalds have composed to honor the party.

### *ELF QUEEN*

The Elf Queen calls for the adventurers to attend her at the Court of Stars. Their time in the Elf Queen's presence seemed to pass in a few minutes, when in reality they spent several days there. Afterwards, nobody can quite remember the words that they spoke to her, and the whole experience seems like a fading yet beautiful dream.

### *EMPEROR*

With great pomp and circumstance, the adventurers are welcomed to Axis, with flights of dragons soaring overhead to herald their arrival. The adventurers stand before the whole imperial court to recount their tale, and the Emperor bestows upon them the title of 'Phoenix Knights'.

### *GREAT GOLD WYRM*

The Great Gold Wyrn comes to the adventurers in the form of a shared dream, and carries them aloft on his back over the Dragon Empire. When the adventurers awake, they are in a different place than they were before, as though the dream were somehow also real.

### *HIGH DRUID*

The animals of the Wild Wood form a silent and majestic procession around the adventurers as they travel into the High Druid's domain. At a circle of standing stones carved by a people long forgotten, the High Druid greets the party in the moonlight. The adventurers recount their tale; the High Druid listens intently until they have run out of words, then disappears in the form of leaves blowing in the night wind. The animals of the forest leave the stone circle one by one in silence.

### *LICH KING*

In his palace of bones, the Lich King greets the adventurers in all his ancient finery. As the adventurers recount their tale, the nobles of the Undying Peerage silently lurk in the

shadows, paying silent homage to the adventurers and their feats. The Lich King gives each adventurer a gift—an hour glass with their name inscribed upon it.

### *ORC LORD*

The Orc Lord meets the adventurers in a ruin from a past age, his horde encamped around it. The Orc Lord's power is palpable, radiating from him as he listens to the adventurers' tale. The orcs of the horde are too scared of those honored by their dread master to attack or harass the adventurers on their way out of the encampment.

### *PRIESTESS*

The Priestess meets the adventurers in a room high in the Cathedral that overlooks the Midland Sea. She doesn't speak to them of their adventure, but instead talks about the boats on the ocean. The adventurers get the impression that more was being said than passed her lips, and that she somehow already knew of their deeds.

### *PRINCE OF SHADOWS*

In Shadow Port, the adventurers take their rest in the famous Crown and Gown inn, where they are waited upon hand and foot by servants. A blind bard approaches the party and wants to hear of their exploits. The following morning, the adventurers hear that the Prince of Shadows enjoyed meeting them the night before. Was he disguised as the blind bard, one of the dancing girls, a lowly servant, the elderly stable hand? Who can tell!

### *THE THREE*

In Drakkenhall, the adventurers are summoned before the presence of the Three in all their terrible and awesome glory. At first, the adventurers assumed that they were meeting in a great hall with a go-between, until one of the three massive statues at the end of the hall blinked.



# 6TH LEVEL DWARF CLERIC

STR	CON	DEX	INT	WIS	CHA
16	16	9	11	18	11
+3	+3	-1	0	+4	0
+9	+9	+5	+6	+10	+6

int

AC	24
----	----

PD	20
----	----

MD	17
----	----

	POW	MAX
HIT POINTS		100
RECOVERIES		8
RECOVERY ROLL	6d8+6	

## AT-WILL ATTACKS & POWERS

**Hammer +9 vs AC**—6d6+6 damage

*Miss:* 6 damage

*Combat Boon:* When you hit with your hammer you or one conscious nearby ally can roll a save against a save ends effect with a +1 bonus.

[daily, quick action] *Hammer of Faith.* Until the end of the battle your hammer glows, uses d12s for damage, and deals half damage (6d12+6 / 2) on a miss.

**R: Javelin of Faith +10 vs PD (one nearby enemy, or one far away enemy but +8 to attack)**—6d6+8 holy damage, or 8d6+8 holy damage against an undamaged target.

*Miss:* 5 holy damage

## LIMITED USE ATTACKS & POWERS

[3x per battle, quick action] *Heal:* close-quarters spell. You or one nearby ally can heal using a recovery and heal an extra 10 hp on top of the target's regular recovery value. If the target has no recoveries, you or a nearby ally can expend a recovery instead.

[daily, quick action] *Divine invocation:* close-quarters spell. This battle critical hits against you and your nearby allies deal normal damage instead of critical damage.

[daily, full-turn action] *Spirits of Radianance:* close-quarters spell. You or one nearby ally can heal using a free recovery, and the person regaining hp heals an extra 10 hp on top of their regular recovery value. Then make this attack:

**C: Holy Sphere +10 vs MD (up to two nearby enemies)**—7d8+8 holy damage, and both you and your nearby ally with the fewest hit points gain a +4 bonus to AC until the end of your next turn.

*Miss:* Half damage (7d8+8 / 2), and both you and your nearby ally with the fewest hit points gain a +2 bonus to AC until the end of your next turn.

## Not a 'full' character

This character is intended to act as a one-session character for those whose regular characters become temporarily unplayable due to poisoning during the 'FEAST & FESTER' session of this adventure; it is missing some class features, powers, spells, etc. that would be found in a player character created for long-term play, and other features have been simplified or merged together (*Spirits of the Righteous with Sphere of Radianance*).

If you intend to switch to playing one of the clerics from *Frostfire* as your regular character it would be best to recreate this character using the character creation rules from the core 13<sup>TH</sup> AGE rule book. However, for a quick fun character ready to pick up and play without any fuss this character will do for a single session.

## BACKGROUNDS

Guardian of the Temple of Light: +4

Citizen of Frostfire: +4

## IS THAT YOUR BEST SHOT?

*Dwarven racial power*

Once per battle as a free action after you have been hit by an enemy attack but you are still conscious you heal using a rolled recovery. If the escalation die is 0 or 1 you only get half healing from the recovery, but if the escalation die is 2+ you get full healing and the recovery is free!

## EQUIPMENT

Blessed hammer. Shield. Dwarven plate mail. Holy symbol. Woolen cloak. Ever-glowing lantern. Dagger (roll d4s for damage). 50 gp.

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