



THE SWARMED HEART

An Avernus Rising Adventure

Covered in bees! The peace of Mahadi's Emporium is shattered as a swarm of hellwasps has descended upon it. Since this is odd behavior for hellwasps, Dara senses a higher power at work and asks you to discover the truth about the creatures' attacks. Are you up to the task, or will you just end up getting stung?

Part Two of the *Call for Aid* series of adventures.

A Four to Six-Hour Adventure for 11th through 16th Level Characters.

Optimized For: APL 13



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ADVENTURE PRIMER

"If I be waspish, best beware my sting."

— William Shakespeare

This adventure is designed for **three to seven 11th- to 16th-level characters** and is optimized for **five characters with an average party level (APL) of 13**. Characters outside this level range cannot participate in this adventure.

This adventure is set in Avernus, the first layer of the Nine Hells. The rule against fighting in Mahadi's Emporium is broken by a swarm of hellwasps, fiendish insects native to the Nine Hells. A divine aura sets the adventurers on a path to discover the truths hidden in the hive.

BACKGROUND

The owl-headed angel **RASKAMEDIES** was one of Zariel's wisest advisors. As **ZARIEL** prepared for her ride into the **NINE HELLS**, **RASKAMEDIES** begged her to reconsider. As she and her host tore across the plains of **AVERNUS**, he continued to plead with her to abandon her plans. And as **ASMODEUS** placed a fiery crown atop her head, he wept for the heavens' loss.

Eyes thick with tears, **RASKAMEDIES** wandered the battlefields until he was beset upon by swarms of angry **HELLWASPS** and ultimately overcome by their numbers and ferocity. The creatures flayed flesh from bones, leaving only a skeleton and his **BEATING HEART**—around which they constructed their hive. Recently, his heart has begun to beat faster and with greater ferocity in response to the **CALL TO AID**, driving the wasps into uncharacteristic frenzy.

OVERVIEW

The adventure's story is spread over **two parts** and takes approximately **four hours** to play. The adventure begins with a Call to Action. It also contains **two optional bonus objectives**—each taking **one additional hour** to play.

- **Call to Action: Haven Broken.** Mahadi's Emporium is attacked by hellwasps and many visitors are slain in the attack. Dara senses the residue of a divine presence upon the creatures and asks the characters to seek out their hive to discover the truth of the situation.
- **Part 1: Hellwasp Horde.** The characters track the hellwasps to their nest by following the trail of carnage. The route leads to another group of adventurers fighting the swarm. This is **Story Objective A**.
- **Part 2: Heart of the Hive.** The characters arrive at the hellwasp hive—a twisted mass of tunnels and chambers. At its center lies the heart of Raskamedies. Rewards deep in the nest may lead to temptation later. This is **Story Objective B**.
- **Bonus Objective A: Phalanx Protection.** Upon defeating the hellwasps attacking the adventurers in Part 1, the characters are asked to protect the other adventurers while they prepare the ritual that will return them to the Material Plane. The ritual only takes a minute to prepare, but during this time, they are attacked by waves of devils. This bonus objective is found in **Appendix 1**.

- **Bonus Objective B: A Solitary Wasp.** A chamber deep in the hive is blocked by a trapped tunnel. A dwarven warlock named Griditch Thunderrune is stuck inside the chamber, and he promises a great treasure as a reward for being rescued—but he can't be trusted. This bonus objective is found in **Appendix 2**.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The characters find themselves taking a break in Mahadi's Emporium, the one place in Avernus where they know—or think—that they are safe. That peace is shattered when a frenzied swarm of hellwasps attack.

This story follows the events of the previous adventure in the trilogy (see **Veteran Adventurers**, below). If the characters did not participate in that story, a number of additional adventure hooks can help onboard these newcomers.

Veteran Adventurers. Characters that helped Dara retrieve the skull of Verwyrr in DDAL09-12 *The Breath of Life* want to continue assisting her divine mission. The newly restored hound-headed angel is emphatic that they assist as he remains behind to protect Dara.

Divine Direction. Dara senses a divine presence on the bodies of the hellwasps. Wondering if this explains their atypical attack, she asks the characters to investigate.

It's Not A Bug, It's A Feature. Mahadi is livid that any creature would disturb the Emporium. He offers the services of one bath to the characters in exchange for destroying the source of the hellwasps.

The Tell-Tale Heart. Characters with a good-aligned deity or patron momentarily hear the faint sound of a beating heart emanating from the direction of the nest.

ADVENTURE FLOWCHART

This section provides a basic understanding of not only the flow of the adventure, but also the outline of the different paths that your players may take in reaching their stated objective.





CALL TO ACTION: HAVEN BROKEN

Estimated Duration: 30 minutes

A DAY AT THE MARKET

The Wandering Emporium is a bazaar that travels Avernus via infernal war machines, with merchants and lodging for hell-weary adventurers. It is ruled by Mahadi, the master of the emporium, who ensures delight for every customer—usually with a steep (and unexpected) price. Delicious food and a safe sleep at the Infernal Rapture comes at a high cost, which might be worth it to desperate adventurers.

If the adventurers are continuing from the previous adventure, they refreshed after a long rest. If all characters at the table have the **No Exceptions!** story award, then they're banned from entering the emporium itself.

If the adventurers are entering the emporium for the first time, they notice the sign above the entrance that proclaims “No fighting. No spellcasting. No exceptions.” They may spend some time preparing spells, shopping, and talking to the many guests to the Emporium.

NEUTRAL TERRITORY

Mahadi strictly enforces the rules that are written on the banner hanging over the entrance: “All are welcome. No fighting! No spellcasting! No exceptions!” Any violence or use of magic—even for benign effects—breaks these dictates and brings down the wrath of Mahadi on those foolish enough to tempt fate.

As warned, Mahadi doesn't suffer a rulebreaker. Anyone caught (and the enchantment placed over the space to detect spellcasting ensures it), is banished from the emporium by Mahadi (a **rakshasa**) and earns the **No Exceptions!** story award. Those who resist are beset upon by Mahadi, along with many of his indentured servants (**salamanders**, **hobgoblin captains**, **incubi** and **succubi**, and even an **erinyes**). Characters forcibly ejected from the emporium gain a level of exhaustion and are reduced to 1 hit point.

AREA INFORMATION

The encampment of Mahadi's Wandering Emporium is an oasis amidst the surrounding wasteland of Avernus. The black, oppressive clouds remind travelers that the acrid brimstone smell, hot winds, and ancient battlefields wait for them outside this small bastion of comfort. But for now, they can relax.

The emporium has the following features:

Dimensions & Terrain. The emporium is ringed by nine infernal war machines arranged in a semicircle, which is filled with tents set up by merchants and guards. Curtains and banners crisscross the camp and are strung up with chains. **Dara** and the angel **Verwyrr** stay inside a large pavilion that is approximately 40 feet on a side.

Light. Lanterns hang from the chains to create a welcoming space for weary travelers.

Sounds & Smells. Merchants advertise their wares as soft music plays across the bazaar. In a land where food is ruined, the scent of an enticing meal is a welcome one.

If the characters wish to shop, they can buy any equipment found in chapter 5 of the *Player's Handbook* at a 150% markup in the emporium. Players may know Burney the Barber, FhetAhla, and Elliach from previous adventures and may interact with them if you are familiar with these figures, but it's not necessary for this adventure.

CREATURE INFORMATION

The otherwise normal activities are interrupted as a small group of **hellwasps** attack—heading for Dara's pavilion.

The bustle of business is broken by the slicing sound of metallic wings as four hellwasps crest over the surrounding infernal war machines. Mahadi's guards and merchants defend against the attack striking the open courtyard. A moment later, Mahadi himself joins the fray.



The characters are welcome to defend the emporium without punishment, but the hellwasps retreat after one is slain by either the party or Mahadi (whichever you decide happens first). If the characters are outside the emporium as a result of the **No Exceptions!** story rewards and make an attempt to defend the encampment, Mahadi reluctantly (and temporarily, mind you!) grants them access.

The area secured; the characters see the bodies of visitors slain by the hellwasps. Shaking with anger over the intrusion, Mahadi returns to the Infernal Rapture.

INFERNAL RAPTURE

The Infernal Rapture has whatever your heart desires. Mahadi provides services ranging from spa treatments to dining, and his goal is to upsell as much as possible. A meal starts at one *soul coin*—which is tempting because this is the one place in Avernus where food tastes delicious. Travelers should be careful with what they commit to buying—Mahadi wants nothing more than for them to be in his debt.

CALL TO ACTION: A DIVINE INVESTIGATION

Dara walks out of her pavilion with Verwyrr, who looks incredibly irritated that she is leaving the safety of the tent.

Dara looks at the hellwasp intently. She murmurs to herself as she passes her hand across the insect's remains, telling the characters that she can sense an unusual residue of a divine presence. After a moment, she looks hopeful at the thought of finding a fallen celestial. She asks the characters to find the hellwasp hive and discover the truth behind the attack.

WHAT WENT BEFORE

In earlier adventures in this season, the characters experienced the following:

- Dara, a chosen of Ilmater, asked the characters to accompany her to Avernus, where she is gathering the remains of holy knights from the city of Elturel, which has also been pulled into the first layer of the Nine Hells.
- Thanks to a connection with a traveling magic item trader named Fai Chen, the characters and Dara have a place to stay in the wastelands of Avernus. Mahadi, a rakshasa and the owner of the Wandering Emporium, allows the characters to travel and stay in his caravan in exchange for the occasional adventuring job.
- The characters convinced Mahadi to attend a ball hosted by the Archdevil Qirozz, who possessed the first of these remains: the skull of the hound-headed angel, Verwyrr.
- When the characters returned the skull to Dara, the child revealed her true power—breathing life back into a slain angel with a single kiss.

PART 1: HELLWASP HORDE

Estimated Duration: 1 hour

AREA INFORMATION

The landscape of Avernus stretches before the characters.

Terrain. Like the rest of the hellscape, this land is barren and broken up by molten rifts, sharp and jagged rocks, and pools of lava.

Light. Avernus is illuminated by an eternal reddish-orange glow, providing bright light.

Smells. Burning tar and brimstone hang heavily in the air, sometimes replaced by the stench of death.

Hellwasp Trail. The trail left by the hellwasps isn't difficult to follow outside the emporium. The characters' attention is drawn to a group of slain **stirges** a few hundred feet from the encampment. Puncture and slash wounds are found with a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Medicine) check.

The use of Divine Sense or *detect evil and good* indicates a trail of frass (insect excrement) with a celestial presence scattered to the northeast. The spell *locate object* fails, as the characters haven't met Raskamedies.

A mixed trail of dead stirges, imps, and a few abyssal chickens leads the characters in a winding northeast direction for about three hours of travel. Use one or more encounters from the table while the characters travel.

After three hours of travel, the characters are alerted by the clashing and yelling of a battle obscured by a large outcropping of rocks.

HELLWASP HORDE RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

d6	Result
1	One of the characters steps into a small area of quicksand and becomes restrained. They can escape with a successful DC 12 Strength check or can be pulled out by another character who succeeds on a DC 8 Strength check. On a failure, the character sinks 1d4 feet. Thankfully, the quicksand is only 4 feet deep.
2	A lone hellwasp scout attacks.
3	The characters enter a bone field which is difficult terrain for 70 feet. They find nothing of interest among the dead.
4	It feels like something is watching. No, there is definitely something watching. Any Wisdom (Perception) checks are made at disadvantage for the next hour of travel...but nothing is there.
5	The characters attract the attention of an airborne wraith, who stares at them for a moment before flying off into the distance.
6	An abyssal chicken was playing dead and attacks.

UNEXPECTED FIENDS

A group of five adventurers are fighting for their lives against a number of hellwasps. Body after body of dead insects are piled in a circle surrounding them as they fend off flying insects slicing at them with sharp-taloned legs and stingers. Seeing you, they call out for help.



CREATURE INFORMATION

A **swarm of hellwasps** and an additional **hellwasp** break off from attacking the other adventurers. While the characters attack the hellwasps, the other group continues to fight. The other group's attack and damage rolls needn't be tracked individually. Instead, roll a single attack and damage roll for one hellwasp. For each cumulative 40 hit points that the hellwasp deals to the other group, one of them falls—dying at the end of the fourth round if not attended to. If utilizing **Bonus Objective A**, Javi falls last.

The other adventurers call themselves the **Skarback Company**. They are:

- **Dorn**, a non-binary silver dragonborn dual-wielding a longsword and a shortsword. They are blunt but kind.
- **Mistrelle**, a lightly armored female Chultan human cleric of Torm. She is graceful and determined.
- **Bristol**, a heavily armored male dwarf cleric of Moradin. His armor and clothing are shockingly purple, and he is loud and energetic.

- **Javi**, a male Bedine human wizard. He is smug when he isn't frightened of the attacking hellwasps. He's used all but one spell slot (he's saving it to cast *plane shift* in order for him and his allies to escape).

ADJUSTING THE SCENE

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this scene:

- **Very Weak:** Reduce the AC of the **swarm of hellwasps** to 16 and have the **Skarback Company** assist through the characters' direction. The Skarback Company is considered one creature for ease of combat and initiative tracking.
- **Weak:** Reduce the AC of the **swarm of hellwasps** to 16.
- **Strong:** Add two **hellwasps**.
- **Very Strong:** Add a second **swarm of hellwasps**.

What Do They Want? The Skarback Company has been fighting for some time and looks bloodied and worn out. If the characters do not help, the swarm continues their flight to the northeast after killing the adventuring party. Otherwise, once the swarm is defeated and the adventuring party survives, Mistrelle pulls a wineskin of Waterdhavian wine that she had been saving off her belt and hands it to the characters as thanks.

What Do They Know? The Skarback Company saw a hellwasp nest about an hour's walk to the northeast. They tried—unsuccessfully—to avoid the hellwasps.

Bonus Objective A. If utilizing this additional content, the other adventurers ask the characters to help them one last time by protecting them as they cast *plane shift* to return home to the Material Plane. Alternatively, the characters can cast *plane shift* for the Skarback Company and avoid the encounters in the bonus objective.

PART 2: HEART OF THE HIVE

Estimated Duration: 2 hours and 20 minutes

AREA INFORMATION

After an hour of travel, the unmistakable shape of a wasp nest rises as the characters come to the end of the path of carnage. A large papery sac floats listlessly from side to side about 100 feet above a steaming chasm of lava.

Dimensions & Terrain. Hundreds of indistinguishable bones crunch underfoot and large iron chains keep the structure from floating away.

Light. Avernus is illuminated by an eternal reddish-orange glow, providing bright light.

Smells. Sulfur and rotting flesh are the only two distinguishable scents. Bodies jut out and writhe throughout the outside of the structure, which is pocketed with holes for entry. The characters gaze with horror as the unmistakable shape of wings rise from each body—these are celestials. Characters must make a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw or suffer short-term madness from the overwhelming feeling of despair, as determined by the table below.

A *calm emotions* spell can suppress the effects of madness, while a *lesser restoration* spell can rid a character of short-term madness.

SHORT-TERM MADNESS

d100	Result (lasts 1d10 minutes)
01-20	The character retreats into his or her mind and becomes paralyzed. The effect ends if the character takes any damage.
21-30	The character becomes incapacitated and spends the duration screaming, laughing, or weeping.
31-40	The character becomes frightened and must use his or her action and movement each round to flee from the source of the fear.
41-50	The character begins babbling and is incapable of normal speech or spellcasting.
51-60	The character must use their action each round to attack the nearest creature.
61-70	The character experiences vivid hallucinations and has disadvantage on ability checks.
71-75	The character does whatever anyone tells them to do that isn't obviously self-destructive.
76-80	The character experiences an overpowering urge to eat something strange, such as dirt, slime, or offal.
81-90	The character is stunned.
91-100	The character falls unconscious.

ENTERING THE NEST

There are several viable options for entering the hellwasp nest, depending on what the characters wish to do.

Climbing. The characters can climb the large iron chains with a successful DC 14 Dexterity (Acrobatics) or Strength (Athletics) check. If a character takes a rope or other aid to help the others climb up, they gain advantage on their checks.

Flying. Any characters that have the ability to fly can enter through any of the tunnels.

Just Throw Something. If a character uses a rope attached to a thrown javelin, arrow, or something similarly clever, and succeeds on a 16 Strength or Dexterity check, they manage to secure the rope to the hive and can climb it with a successful DC 14 Dexterity (Acrobatics) or Strength (Athletics) check.

Don't Forget the Lava. If a character falls into the lava through a spectacular failure, they take 55 (10d10) fire damage each round they are touching the molten rock.

INTO THE HIVE

When the characters enter the hive, read the following boxed text aloud:

The “floor” is a soft mixture of thin material glued together by ichor and wasp saliva. Torsos and legs jut out from the walls. The sound of metallic wings slicing the air is unescapable.

There are three main layers inside the hive. Choose the current layer by determining where the characters made their entry. If the characters climbed up from the chain, they start at the bottom layer.

Terrain. While squishy and disgusting, the hellwasp nest isn't difficult terrain.

Light. There is very dim light within the nest; only characters with darkvision are able to see without assistance.

UNREASONING WASPS

Hellwasps are intelligent, evil fiends that communicate through a form of telepathy perceptible only to their kind. They use their stingers to paralyze a victim, then bring the unfortunate being to the top level of the nest and store them for a future meal. Hellwasps spit a golden bile that hardens, similar to amber.

If the characters aren't being quiet, one **hellwasp** attacks and the remaining **hellwasps** in other chambers join the fight, using flanking tactics and blocking exits so that the characters can't escape.

What Do They Want? The hellwasps have been driven to a frenzied rage due to the proximity of Raskamedies's beating heart. The incessant celestial presence has led them to attack any creature they notice.

What Do They Know? The hellwasps know that the source of the sound is in the hellwasp queen's chamber, but they don't know how to make it stop. The hellwasps defend their queen and larvae to the death.

A1. BOTTOM LAYER

The room is a rough oval 70-foot-wide by 90-foot-long. There are exits to the northwest, northeast, south, and west. The west exit is blocked by packed effluvium and the exit to the south leaves the nest. All other exits require climbing or flying to reach.

If the characters aren't being quiet, the patrolling **hellwasp** enters the chamber from the northeast and attacks. It calls for the hellwasps in **area B1** (if they have not been defeated) to assist during the first round.

ADJUSTING THE SCENE

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this scene:

- **Very Weak and Weak:** Remove a **hellwasp** (none come for aid).
- **Strong:** Add one **hellwasp**.
- **Very Strong:** Add two **hellwasps**.

A character who succeeds on a DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check finds a soggy torn scrap of parchment on the ground. It is written in Infernal. The complete message can be found in the handout in **Appendix 3**.

THE HANDOUT

Four scraps of parchment can be found within the nest. Once all four scraps have been found, they can be put together to read the message. Tear the handout in **Appendix 3** into four parts and give a piece of the paper to the players as they are discovered.

The west exit leads to **area A2**. The northwest exit leads to **area B1**, and the northeast exit leads to **area B2**.

A2. HOLLOW PURSUITS

The pathway extends about 15 feet before it is blocked by a solid wall made of a hardened resin similar to amber. The wall has AC 17, 60 hit points, and immunity to poison and psychic damage.

A character who succeeds on a DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check finds a soggy, torn scrap of parchment on the ground. It is written in Infernal. The complete message can be found in the handout in **Appendix 3**.

Bonus Objective B. If utilizing this **additional content**, the characters encounter Griditch Thunderrune after they break the wall and enter the chamber.

B1. THE WEST CHAMBER

The tunnel to this chamber splits into a Y, but both branches lead to the same location. The 60-foot-wide by 140-foot-long chamber rises above the characters. Two exits lead to the west, but the floor-level exit is blocked by a wall of angelic corpses sealed in amber. The top-level exit is 100 feet above the ground.

Three **hellwasps** (who have a passive Perception score of 10) in the area attack if they detect the characters. They call for the patrolling hellwasp (if it has not been defeated) to assist during the first round of combat.

ADJUSTING THE SCENE

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this scene:

- **Very Weak and Weak:** Remove a **hellwasp** (none come for aid).
- **Strong:** Add one **hellwasp**.
- **Very Strong:** Add two **hellwasps**.

In front of the bottom exit is a pit trap that can be detected with a successful DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check. If a character falls into the pit, which is a covered incubation chamber, they slide down 10 feet and are attacked by four **hellwasp grubs**.

B2. THE EAST CHAMBER

This chamber can be accessed from the south (**area A1**) or from the west (**area B1**). A possible entry point from outside the nest is in the southeast. This wide chamber is 80 feet wide and 140 feet long. An exit at the very top of the ceiling leads north. A dead-end path encased in amber to the southwest cannot be broken.

If the characters aren't being quiet, the patrolling **hellwasp** enters the chamber from the southwest and attacks (if it was not defeated in **area A1**). It calls for the hellwasps in **area B1** (if they have not been defeated) to assist during the first round.

ADJUSTING THE SCENE

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this scene:

- **Very Weak and Weak:** Remove a **hellwasp** (none come for aid).
- **Strong:** Add one **hellwasp**.
- **Very Strong:** Add two **hellwasps**.

A character who succeeds on a DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check finds a soggy torn scrap of parchment on the ground. It is written in Infernal. The complete message can be found in the handout in **Appendix 3**.

As the characters reach the north exit, one of the dead celestial's arms randomly swings out as the larvae squirm inside. A random character must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw. On a failure, the cadaver explodes with 2d6 hostile **hellwasp grubs** as the character is touched by the arm.

C. THE TOP LAYER

One pathway leads to the top of the nest, a small 60-foot-by-80-foot chamber. Angelic bodies crowd the walls, mixed in with the remains of unlucky adventurers and a horse. Their belongings are scattered across the floor.

Terrain. The floor is sticky with the gore of the fallen, making it difficult terrain.

Light. There is no light within the chamber.

Queen of the Hive. In the center of the room is a **hellwasp queen** attended by four **hellwasps**. The hellwasp queen is hidden and can be detected with a successful DC 19 Wisdom (Perception) check.



THE MAD QUEEN

The hellwasp queen is unusually intelligent and is measuring the situation. She knows if any hellwasps or larvae have been destroyed in the nest. The queen can resist the maddening influence of the beating heart enough to think clearly for short amounts of time.

What Do They Want? The queen is protective of her hive. She is keeping most of the hellwasps outside of this chamber to protect them from the beating heart.

What Do They Know? The queen knows that the source of the beating is located deep within the far west side of the chamber, encased in amber.

PLAYING THE PILLARS

Here are some suggestions for this encounter:

Combat. The characters may fly or hold onto the side of the south exit to take cover; the queen won't follow. On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), the queen takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects; the queen can't use the same effect two rounds in a row:

- Acidic pus erupts from a point on the ground the queen can see within 120 feet of her, creating a 20-foot-high, 5-foot-radius geyser. Each creature in the geyser's area must make a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw, taking 21 (6d6) acid damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.
- A tremor shakes the lair in a 60-foot radius around the queen. Each creature other than the queen on the ground in that area must succeed on a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw or be knocked prone.
- Toxic gases form a cloud in a 20-foot-radius sphere centered on a point the queen can see within 120 feet of her. The sphere spreads around corners, and its area is lightly obscured. It lasts until initiative count 20 on the next round. Each creature that starts its turn in the cloud must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned until the end of its turn. While poisoned in this way, a creature is incapacitated.

If the characters defeat the hellwasps, they can find the heart in the far west corner with a successful DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check.

Exploration. Strands of amber connect the floor to the ceiling for support. They are wide enough for a medium creature to take cover.

Social. The queen can understand Infernal but can't speak it. Creatures can directly communicate with her using *telepathic bond*. She can understand a message through *sending* and respond in Infernal.

The hellwasp queen can be convinced to not attack with three successful skill checks, as described below. These skill checks may be made at advantage if no hellwasps have been killed inside the nest. Any failed checks cause the hellwasp queen and her guards to attack, as does any attempt to intimidate the hellwasps.

- **Persuasion (DC 20).** The characters can try to explain that they only want to take the heart.
- **Nature (DC 16).** The characters can explain that the beating heart is causing the frenzy, and that removing it restores the hellwasps to normal.
- **Investigation (DC 18).** The characters can prove that they will remove the heart by finding it in the west wall of the room. The queen shows aggression, but doesn't attack, if the characters attempt to remove it without her permission. If all three checks succeed, the queen indicates her permission. She and her guards watch the adventurers remove the heart.

The heart is held in the arms of a long-dead deva encased four feet deep into the wall. A successful DC 18 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check allows the characters to remove it from the coagulated blood and amber using a sharp object; otherwise, the explosion of cruor causes 21 (6d6) acid damage. This is the heart of the angel Raskamedies, beating ever so softly. Characters with a good-aligned deity or patron can feel a pulsing warmth as they hold the heart.

The fourth and final scrap of paper can be found on the body of what was once a halfling next to the angel holding the heart. The halfling was torn apart and only the torso remains. The torso has three claw marks across a once-fine jacket, which contains the final parchment and ten *soul coins*. It is written in Infernal. The complete message can be found in the handout in **Appendix 3** and assembled.

REWARD

The characters find a *+3 quarterstaff*, a *broom of flying*, two *potions of greater healing*, and two *potions of climbing*. Ten *soul coins* are tucked in the halfling's jacket.

A FINAL TEMPTATION

The characters can return to the Wandering Emporium without any issues. The handout translates to, "Redeemable for one meal for your party at the Infernal Rapture," and is signed by Mahadi.

If the party presents the certificate to Mahadi, he is delighted. He explains that a young male halfling paid for the certificate to give to a friend. Mahadi is willing to let the party redeem the certificate as long as they do so immediately, which he feels is quite generous.

The menu for the day is a charcuterie board featuring sea hag crumbled cheese with pickled purple worm eggs, a main dish of two fried merfolk fillets with garlic butter potato fries, and yeti sorbet with a sweet infernal sauce for dessert.

Consuming a meal at Infernal Rapture confers the same benefits as a *heroes' feast*, with the added effect that those who eat the food have disadvantage on Wisdom (Insight) checks made against Mahadi.

Mahadi wants nothing more than for the party to overspend so that they owe him *soul coins*—and possibly service to pay the debt. The certificate only covers the meal and none of the amenities. He makes every effort to tempt the party with the following upsells, which he does not mention are at an extra cost.

- **Alcohol.** Wine, ale, and cocktails cost an additional *soul coin* per drink.
- **General Grooming and Bathing.** A hot bath with soap and scented oils costs one *soul coin*.
- **Massages.** A 1-hour massage focused on aching muscles costs one *soul coin*.
- **Dream Therapy.** A magical pleasant dream, which feels exactly like being at the character's home, costs two *soul coins*.
- **Hookah Room.** The use of the finest tobacco in Avernus in the private hookah room for the evening costs ten *soul coins* per person.

Any guest leaving the Infernal Rapture is expected to pay their bill in full before leaving. Because no contract was signed upon entry (and they get to keep their soul), they may negotiate to pay off their debt through service by expending 10 downtime days or paying Mahadi 5,000 gp per *soul coin* they cannot provide.

A FRIEND'S RETURN

Dara stands in the frame of her pavilion as though she knew the characters's exact time of arrival. She has a soft smile on her lips and invites the characters inside.

The air is perfumed by warm candles that combat the fetid stench outside. The angel Verwyrr stands up from the colorful pillows tastefully placed along the ground. He gives a nod of acknowledgement and stands next to Dara. If the character who gives the heart to Dara has a good alignment, they have a brief vision when their fingers touch hers.

The light of the pavilion and the voices of your friends fade as your vision blurs. The sensation of rushing downward through darkness is disorienting. You see a dark room filled with skeletons scattered across the floor. A stone column stands in the chamber and you can hear the rattle of chains.

You are suddenly aware of the pavilion again. Dara watches you intently, then nods with understanding.

Whether or not the above vision occurred, read the following as Dara takes the heart:

Dara closes her eyes briefly. A moment later, the amber crumbles away and the room is bathed in soft radiant light. A burst of scintillating feathers fills the pavilion and an angel with the head of a great horned owl appears before Dara, who hugs him tightly around the waist.

The pupils of the angel's immense eyes grow wide as it sees Verwyrr. "It...um...appears that we've got a friend in trouble."

Verwyrr claps Raskamedies on the shoulder and all three look to the characters with gratitude—and hope.

REWARDS

At the **end of the session**, the characters receive rewards based upon their accomplishments.

CHARACTER REWARDS

The characters earn the following rewards:

ADVANCEMENT

Upon successfully **completing** this adventure, each character gains a level. At their discretion, they may choose to decline advancement. Remind your players that the amount of gold that their characters can earn per level is limited; declining advancement means that they may reach a point where they earn no gold.

GOLD

Award each character gold for each hour of the session. Adventures typically features cues for this, but you can add it where you see fit. The maximum gold that you can award a character per hour is determined by their tier, as follows:



Tier	Hourly GP Award	GP Limit per Level
1	20 gp	80 gp
2	30 gp	240 gp
3	200 gp	1,600 gp
4	750 gp	6,000 gp

MAGIC ITEM(S)

If found during the adventure, the characters can keep the following magic items; these items are described in **Appendix 4**:

- *+3 quarterstaff*
- *Broom of flying*
- *Potion of greater healing*
- *Soul coins*

STORY REWARDS

The characters may earn the following story awards during the adventure; these awards are described in **Appendix 5**:

- **No Exceptions!**
- **A Solitary Wasp**

DUNGEON MASTER REWARDS

For running this adventure, you gain a **DM Reward**. This reward can be redeemed for levels, magic items, and other season-themed things. See the Adventurers League DM Rewards document for more info.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

The following NPCs feature prominently in this adventure.

Dara (DAH ra). Dara is a ten-year-old human girl, wise beyond her years, who was raised by priests of Ilmater in Amn. She found and read from the *Book of Exalted Deeds*—which bestowed upon her great wisdom and the powers of a full-fledged cleric of Ilmater.

- **What They Want.** Dara is on a sacred mission into Avernus to find the souls of lost angels and mortal Hellriders who accompanied Zariel during her Descent into the Nine Hells.
- **Wise Beyond Her Years.** Dara is single-minded about accomplishing her mission and often sounds much more knowledgeable and mature than her years would suggest.

Verwyrr (VER weer). This celestial deva looks like a tall human with deep brown skin, with the exception that his head resembles that of a great hound.

- **What They Want.** Impatient and a little rash, Verwyrr would love to kill every fiend in Avernus, but his main goal is to protect Dara.
- **Jovially Menacing.** Verwyrr suffers no evil in his presence. However, he is otherwise pleasant-natured and quick with a joke.

Raskamedies (RASS kuh mee dees). This celestial deva looks like a squat human with ivory skin, with the exception that his head resembles that of an owl.

- **What They Want.** Nervous and a little hesitant, Raskamedies is a wise advisor and strategist. His only goal is to protect Dara.
- **Awkwardly Scholastic.** While much more reserved than Verwyrr, Raskamedies is able to see things in the varying shades of grey that exist beyond Verwyrr's black and white worldview. He is clumsy in social situations and loath to be put in the spotlight.

Mahadi (muh HAH dee). Mahadi appears to be a brown-skinned Turmish merchant lord, but he is actually a rakshasa who serves Asmodeus. He is completely dedicated to his policy of neutrality with customers.

- **What They Want.** Mahadi serves his master by collecting information on customers, and he certainly collects plenty of souls and debts for himself in the process.
- **A Charismatic Host.** Mahadi is more than willing to act as a negotiator and broker for all sorts of creatures in Avernus. His adherence to rules makes him a smart choice and endears him to those he spies on for Asmodeus.

Elliach (EL ee ak). This strange creature is mostly human, but oddly warped by his experiments with demon ichor. His arms are elongated tentacles with fingers at the ends and he has no ears, so he reads lips and signs to communicate with customers.

- **What They Want.** Elliach is a talented transmuter and his experience with demon ichor has excited him about possibly unlocking magical secrets. More than anything, he wants access to materials for his experiments.
- **Morally Flexible.** The mage is largely unconcerned with the cost of his experiments to others. He sees understanding as its own reward and doesn't care what it takes to get his hands on more demon ichor and *soul coins*.

Burney the Barber (BUR nee). Burney appears as a polite and friendly Calishite woman. She is happy to tell stories (often with a moral message) and willing to provide cosmetic or medical treatments as well as spellcasting services.

- **What They Want.** Burney is an ancient copper dragon named Balarystul, keeping an eye on the fiends in Avernus on behalf of Bahamut. She wants to ensure any goodly folk have a chance to walk away with their lives and their souls, but only so long as she can keep her cover intact. Her stories can direct good-aligned characters toward help.
- **Talented Healer.** Burney is treated as having the Healer feat and proficiency in herbalism and healer's kits with a +3 to relevant rolls. All non-spellcasting services cost 1gp. She won't even touch *soul coins* when payment is due.

THE SKARBACK COMPANY

Dorn (DOORN). Dorn, a non-binary silver dragonborn fighter (Eldritch Knight). They are very protective of their party and quick to bark orders.

Mistrelle (Mist REE el). Mistrelle is a female human cleric (War domain) who worships Torm. She has black hair and dark skin. She is adventuring from Chult and longs for the finer things in Waterdeep.

Bristol (Bris TOLL). Bristol is a male dwarven cleric (Knowledge Domain) who worships Moradin. He has dark red hair and an elaborately braided beard. He is very loud and talkative.

Javi (HA vee). Javi is a slender male human wizard (School of Conjuration) with pale skin, short black hair, and a goatee. He is smug when he isn't frightened of the attacking hellwasps. His hubris often gets the better of him.

- **What They Want.** This tired and beaten adventuring party travelled to Avernus at Javi's request to study the first level of the Nine Hells. Overwhelmed, they want nothing more than to return home to the Material Plane.

Griditch (GREE ditch) Thunderrune. Griditch is a male hill dwarf sorcerer driven mad by Avernus.

- **What They Want.** Griditch travelled to Avernus with his companions to search out items they can sell in the Material Plane.
- **A Steep Price.** Exposure to the terrors of the Hell Plane has driven Griditch insane.

CREATURE STATISTICS

The following creatures appear in this adventure.

ABYSSAL CHICKEN

Tiny fiend (demon), chaotic evil

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 10 (3d4 + 3)

Speed 30 ft., fly 30 ft. (see Bad Flier below)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (-2)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	4 (-3)	9 (-1)	5 (-3)

Damage Resistances cold, fire, lightning

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities blinded, poisoned

Senses blindsight 30ft. (blind beyond this radius), Passive Perception 9

Languages Understands Abyssal but can't speak

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Bad Flier. The abyssal chicken falls at the end of a turn if it's airborne and the only thing holding it aloft is its flying speed.

Actions

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

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 5 (1d6 + 2) slashing damage.

BARBED DEVIL

Medium fiend (devil), lawful evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 110 (13d8 + 52)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	17 (+3)	18 (+4)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)

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

Skills Deception +5, Insight +5, Perception +8

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

Damage Immunities fire, poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 18

Languages Infernal, telepathy 120 ft.

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Barbed Hide. At the start of each of its turns, the barbed devil deals 5 (1d10) piercing damage to any creature grappling it.

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

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

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The devil makes three melee attacks: one with its tail and two with its claws. Alternatively, it can use Hurl Flame twice.

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

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 10 (2d6 + 3) piercing damage.

Hurl Flame. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +5 to hit, range 150 ft., one target. Hit: 10 (3d6) fire damage. If the target is a flammable object that isn't being worn or carried, it also catches fire.

BEARDED DEVIL

Medium fiend (devil), lawful evil

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 52 (8d8 + 16)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	15 (+2)	15 (+2)	9 (-1)	11 (+0)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws Str +5, Con +4, Wis +2

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

Damage Immunities fire, poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Infernal, telepathy 120 ft.

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

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

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

Steadfast. The devil can't be frightened while it can see an allied creature within 30 feet of it.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The devil makes two attacks: one with its beard and one with its glaive.

Beard. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 minute. While poisoned in this way, the target can't regain hit points. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Glaive. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 8 (1d10 + 3) slashing damage. If the target is a creature other than an undead or a construct, it must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or lose 5 (1d10) hit points at the start of each of its turns due to an infernal wound. Each time the devil hits the wounded target with this attack, the damage dealt by the wound increases by 5 (1d10). Any creature can take an action to stanch the wound with a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Medicine) check. The wound also closes if the target receives magical healing.

GRIDDITCH THUNDERRUNE

Medium humanoid (dwarf), any alignment

Armor Class 12 (15 with *mage armor*)

Hit Points 78 (12d8 + 24)

Speed 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Wis +4, Cha +7

Skills Arcana +4, Deception +7, Persuasion +7, Religion +4

Damage Resistance slashing damage from nonmagical attacks that are not made with silver weapons

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Abyssal, Common, Dwarvish

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Blurred Lines. While within 5 feet of a hellwasp, Gridditch can use a bonus action to turn invisible until he attacks, his concentration ends, or he ends his turn further than 5 feet away from a hellwasp.

Innate Spellcasting. The warlock's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (Spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). It can innately cast the following spells requiring no material components:

At will: *alter self*, *false life*, *levitate* (self only), *mage armor*, *silent image*

1/day each: *feblemind*, *finger of death*, *planeshift*

Spellcasting. The warlock is a 17th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Charisma (Spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). It regains its expended spell slots when it finishes a short or long rest. It knows the following warlock spells:

Cantrips (at will): *eldritch blast* (+7 to hit, 4 beams), *firebolt*, *friends*, *mage hand*, *minor illusion*, *prestidigitation*, *shocking grasp*

1st-5th level (4 5th level slots): *banishment*, *burning hands*, *counterspell*, *flamestrike*, *hellish rebuke*, *scorching ray*, *lightning bolt*, *stinking cloud*, *suggestion*, *wall of fire*

Dark One's Own Luck (Recharges after a short or a long rest.)

When the warlock makes an ability check or saving throw, it can add a d10 to the roll. It can do this after the roll is made but before any of the roll's effects occur.

ACTIONS

Mace. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage and 10 (3d6) fire damage.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Gridditch can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. Gridditch regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

- **Cantrip.** Gridditch casts a cantrip.
- **Hellwasp Strike (Costs 2 Actions).** Gridditch moves up to its speed without provoking opportunity attacks and makes a mace attack. If the attack hits, the target must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 minute. While poisoned in this way, the target is also paralyzed. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.
- **Hive Mind (Costs 3 Actions).** Gridditch regains a spell slot.

HELLWASP

Large fiend, lawful evil

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)

Hit Points 52 (8d10 + 8)

Speed 10 ft., fly 60 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	7 (-2)

Saving Throws Dex +5, Wis +3

Damage Vulnerabilities cold

Damage Immunities fire

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Infernal, Telepathy 300 ft. (with other hellwasps only)
Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Magic Weapons. The swarm's weapon attacks are magical.

Actions

Multiattack. The hellwasp makes two attacks: one with its sting and one with its sword talons.

Sting. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) fire damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 minute. While poisoned in this way, the target is also paralyzed. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

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

HELLWASP GRUB

Small fiend, lawful evil

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 4 (1d6 + 1)

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
5 (+3)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	1 (-5)	7 (-2)	3 (-4)

Senses Blindsight 30 ft., passive Perception 8

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* (1d4 + 2) piercing damage plus (3d6) poison damage. The target must succeed on a DC 11 Constitution saving throw or take the poison damage. If the poison damage reduces the target to 0 hit points, the target is stable but poisoned for 1 hour, even after regaining hit points, and is paralyzed while poisoned in this way.

HELLWASP SWARM

Huge swarm of Large fiends, lawful evil

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)

Hit Points 187 (25d12 + 25)

Speed 10 ft., fly 60 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	7 (-2)

Damage Resistances cold, fire

Damage Vulnerabilities cold

Damage Immunities fire

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Infernal, telepathy 300 ft. (with other hellwasps only)

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Magic Weapons. The swarm's weapon attacks are magical.

Swarm. The swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through any opening large enough for a Tiny quipper. The swarm can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

ACTIONS

Sting. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 17 (5d6) piercing damage and 17 (5d6) fire damage, or 9 (3d6) piercing damage and 9 (3d6) piercing damage if the swarm has half of its hit points or fewer, and the target must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 minute. While poisoned in this way, the target is also paralyzed. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Sword Talons. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 35 (10d6) piercing damage, or 17 (5d6) piercing damage if the swarm has half of its hit points or fewer.

HELLWASP QUEEN (YOUNG RED SHADOW DRAGON)

Huge fiend, lawful evil

Armor Class 20 (natural armor)

Hit Points 178 (17d10 + 85)

Speed 10 ft., fly 60 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
23 (+6)	10 (+0)	21 (+5)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	19 (+4)

Saving Throws Dex +5, Con +10, Wis +5, Cha +9

Skills Perception +8, Stealth +8

Damage Resistances necrotic

Damage Immunities fire

Senses blindsight 30 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 18

Languages Infernal, Telepathy 300 ft. (with other hellwasps only)

Challenge 13 (10,000 XP)

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the dracolich fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Magic Weapons. The queen's weapon attacks are magical.

Infernal Fortitude. While in dim light or darkness, the queen has resistance to damage that isn't force, psychic, or radiant.

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

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The queen can use its Frightful Presence. It then makes three attacks: one with its sting and two with its sword talons.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 10 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 17 (2d10 + 6) piercing damage plus 3 (1d6) fire damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 minute. While poisoned in this way, the target is also paralyzed. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Frightful Presence. Each creature of the queen's choice that is within 120 feet of the queen and aware of it must succeed on a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to the queen's Frightful Presence for the next 24 hours.

Sword Talons. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d6 + 6) slashing damage.

Shadow Breath (Recharge 5–6). The dragon exhales shadowy fire in a 30-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw, taking 56 (16d6) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. A humanoid reduced to 0 hit points by this damage dies, and a hellwasp spawns from its corpse and acts immediately after the queen in the initiative count. The hellwasp is under the dragon's control.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The queen can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The queen regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

- **Detect.** The queen makes a Wisdom (Perception) check.
- **Sting Attack.** The queen makes a sting attack.
- **Wing Attack (Costs 2 Actions).** The queen beats its wings. Each creature within 10 feet of the dragon must succeed on a DC 19 Dexterity saving throw or take 15 bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone. The queen can then fly up to half its flying speed.



IMP

Tiny fiend (devil, shapechanger), lawful evil

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 10 (3d4 + 3)

Speed 20 ft., fly 40 ft.

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

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

Damage Resistance cold; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't silvered

Damage Immunities fire, poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 120 Ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Infernal, Common

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

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

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

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

Variant: Familiar. The imp can enter into a contract to serve another creature as a familiar, forming a Telepathic Bond with its willing master. While the two are bonded, the master can sense what the imp senses as long as they are within 1 mile of each other. While the imp is within 10 feet of its master, the master shares the imp's Magic Resistance trait. If its master violates the terms of the contract, the imp can end its service as a familiar, ending the Telepathic Bond.

ACTIONS

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

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

APPENDIX 1: PHALANX PROTECTION (BONUS OBJECTIVE A)

Estimated Duration: 1 hour

CLOSE TO HOME

In this bonus objective, the characters are defending the Skarback Company as devils attack.

BONUS OBJECTIVE A

Keeping the waves of devils away from the Skarback Company as they cast *plane shift* to return to the Material Plane is **Bonus Objective A**.

AREA INFORMATION

Bodies of dead stirges, imps, and a few abyssal chickens litter the area, which has the following features.

Terrain. Like the rest of the hellscape, the land is barren and broken up by molten rifts, sharp and jagged rocks, and pools of lava.

Light. Avernus is illuminated by an eternal reddish-orange glow, providing bright light.

Smells. Burning tar and brimstone hang heavily in the air, sometimes replaced by the stench of death.

TIME TO THINK

The characters have saved another adventuring party from a swarm of hellwasps: **Bristol** (a male dwarf), **Dorn** (a nonbinary dragonborn), **Javi**, (a male human), and **Mistrelle** (a female human). The adventurers call themselves the **Skarback Company**.

Dorn seems to be the unofficial leader of the group and is exhausted. They introduce the members of the Skarback Company, who were exploring Avernus to satisfy Javi's curiosity.

"I'm Dorn," the dragonborn says as they point to themselves. "The short one is Bristol, the lady is Mistrelle, and the wizard is Javi. He's going to get us out of this mess if you can help protect him while he sends us home. Please."

Bristol scans the sky as Javi explains that he needs to gather his components—and wits—to prepare for a *plane shift* spell to return to the Material Plane. This is the last spell he can cast today, so he needs to get it right the first time.

Bristol shouts and points to the sky, where dark shapes are moving quickly towards the characters. A successful DC 17 Wisdom (Perception) check confirms that four **barbed devils** and two **bearded devils** are closing fast, with more shapes in the distance. Javi fumbles with his component bag for a moment, takes a deep breath, and centers himself to begin the casting.

The rest of the Skarback Company surround Javi, standing shoulder to shoulder. The creatures in the air are clearly visible to all of the characters as they descend to attack.



CREATURE INFORMATION

The scattered corpses of fiends and the clamor of battle attracted this group of patrolling devils. The patrol is split up and attacks in three waves.

Wave 1. Four **barbed devils** and two **bearded devils** attack. After three rounds of combat, proceed to Wave 2.

Wave 2. Add six **imps** to the encounter. After three rounds of combat, proceed to Wave 3.

Wave 3. Add four **imps** and three **bearded devils** to the encounter.

ADJUSTING THE SCENE

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this scene:

- **Very Weak:** Remove waves two and three.
- **Weak:** Remove wave three.
- **Strong:** Add three **imps** to wave one.
- **Very Strong:** Add two **barbed devils** to wave two.

What Do They Want? The military devil Bel sends out regular patrols into Avernus to report on anything out of the ordinary.

What Do They Know? They know that the hellwasps are acting unusual in this area and came to investigate.

DEVELOPMENT

As the final devil falls, a look of triumph flashes across Javi's face and he grabs Mistrelle's hand. As each member of the Skarback Company joins hands, Javi says, "I won't forget this. Thank you." The Skarback Company disappears in a flash of light as *plane shift* is cast. Proceed to **Part 2**.

APPENDIX 2: A SOLITARY WASP (BONUS OBJECTIVE B)

Estimated Duration: 1 hour

STUCK IN THE HIVE

In this bonus objective, the characters have broken a wall that had sealed a chamber off from the rest of the hive. Inside, they are surprised to find a dwarf standing protectively by an angel carcass.

BONUS OBJECTIVE B

Avernus has finally driven the adventurer Griditch Thunderrune insane. Stopping him from killing the characters as a sacrifice to the hellwasp larvae is **Bonus Objective B**.

AREA INFORMATION

The chamber is smaller than the bottom layer of the nest, about 30 feet by 30 feet. The bodies of a halfling and gnome lie face down, partially encased in amber. An angel carcass writhes against the far wall of the chamber.

Dimensions & Terrain. While squishy and disgusting, the hellwasp nest isn't difficult terrain.

Light. There is dim light within the nest; only characters with darkvision are able to see without assistance.

DWARVEN DELUSION

The dwarf standing in the middle of the area wears long, dirty robes. He looks (and smells) like he has been in the room for a few days. A staff in his left hand has a faint glow that dimly lights the room.

CREATURE INFORMATION

After a moment, the dwarf smiles and introduces himself as **Griditch Thunderrune**.

What Does He Want? Griditch is a warlock who travelled with his companions to find treasure in Avernus. His party heard that abandoned and expensive gear is discarded in hellwasps nests, so they came to investigate. They were all sealed in the chamber by the hellwasps as a meal for the hellwasp grubs (who will soon hatch from the corpses). The sight of them and the other terrors of Avernus drove Griditch mad; he killed his companions as an offering to the hellwasps so that he could prove his loyalty and become part of the hive.

What Does He Know? Griditch knows that the hellwasp larvae will hatch soon, as he has studied them during his imprisonment. He intends to kill the characters as additional "tributes" to the nest. The angel carcass holds 2d6 hostile **hellwasp grubs**. It explodes if a character takes piercing or slashing damage within 15 feet of the carcass or if a character moves within 5 feet of it.

A FALSE PROMISE

Griditch tells the characters that he is the sole survivor of an adventuring party that was searching for a great treasure in the nest. He promises to lead the characters to the treasure if they escort him to the level above them. A DC 16 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals that he is lying. A DC 14 Wisdom (Investigation or Medicine) check on the bodies of his companions indicates that they have no puncture wounds consistent with a hellwasp attack.

If confronted, Griditch snarls that he will become a part of the hive and he attacks the characters. He protects the incubating larvae and attacks if the characters attempt to interact with them.

GLIMMERS OF HOPE

If Griditch is defeated, nothing of interest is found in the room or on his remains. However, Griditch can be convinced to accompany the characters through a series of three checks that decrease in difficulty. After two failed checks, Griditch attacks the characters. After three successful checks, he hesitantly follows the characters out of the nest but he doesn't assist with any attacks against hellwasps. The first check has a DC of 25, followed by a DC 18 check, then a DC 14 check using the following methods or similar tactics:

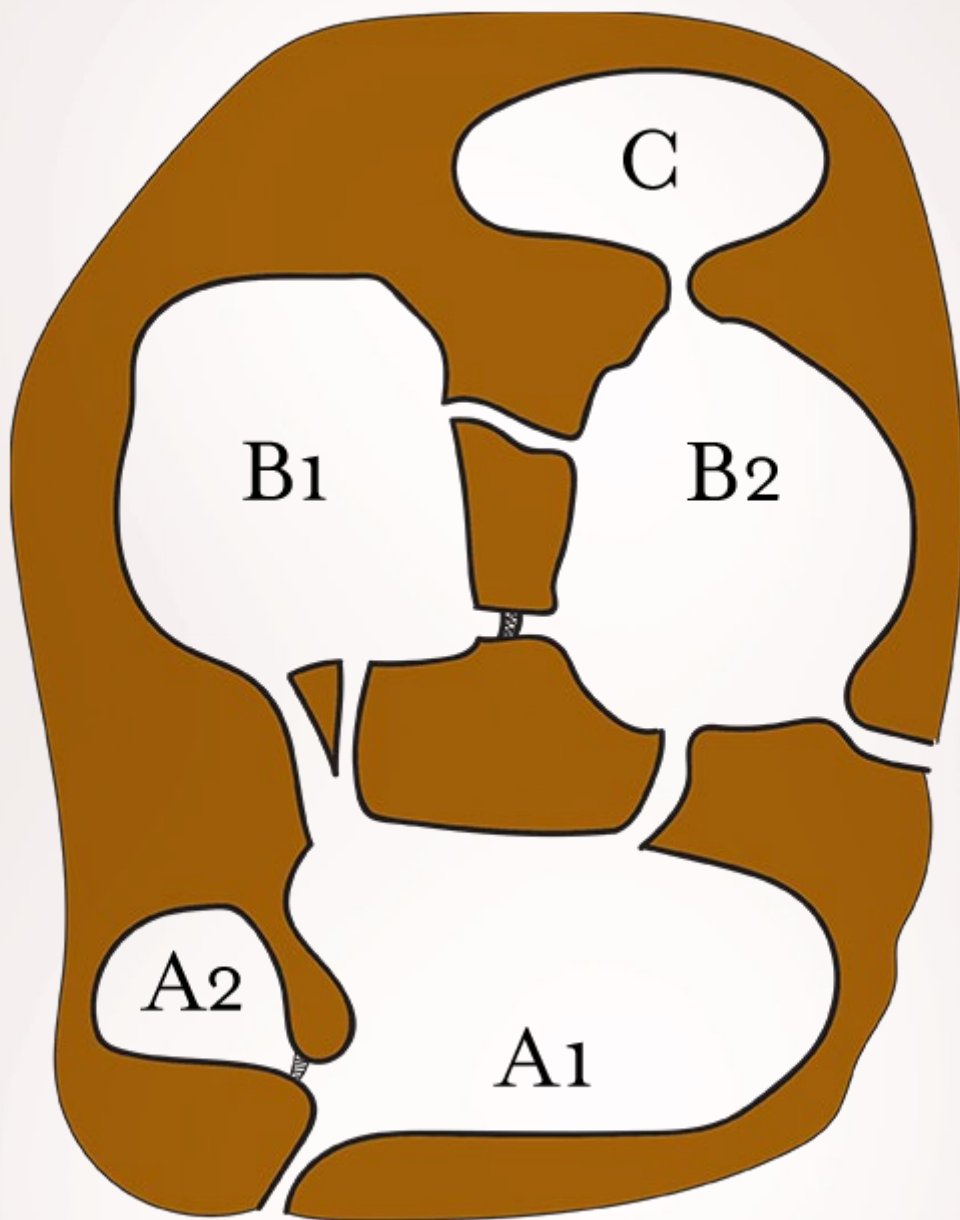
- **Persuasion.** The characters can try to reason with Griditch or promise to help him feel better.
- **Deception.** The characters can try to convince Griditch that they know a way to turn him into a hellwasp if he leaves the nest with them.
- **Intimidation.** The characters can try to make it clear that Griditch will die if he fights them.

Alternatively, the characters can fight Griditch and knock him unconscious.

CURING MADNESS

Griditch is suffering from indefinite madness. A *greater restoration* spell or similar magic can cure the affliction. Verwyrr or the newly restored Raskamedies can also cure Griditch at the Wandering Emporium.

APPENDIX 3: HELLWASP NEST MAP (SIDE VIEW)



Beffenn lēp̄ s̄wif
m̄f̄n̄s lēp̄ s̄wif
p̄n̄s̄f̄ n̄f̄ s̄f̄
Ic̄l̄f̄h̄m̄s̄ B̄n̄p̄st̄f̄f̄

M̄n̄m̄f̄t̄

APPENDIX 5: CHARACTER REWARDS

If found during the adventure, the characters can keep the following magic items; it's suggested that you print off enough copies of this page to be able to give one to each of your players (crossing out rewards they didn't receive during the session):

+3 QUARTERSTAFF

Quarterstaff, very rare

You have a +3 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon. This item can be found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

BROOM OF FLYING

Wondrous item, uncommon

This wooden broom, which weighs 3 pounds, functions like a mundane broom until you stand astride it and speak its command Word. It then hovers beneath you and can be ridden in the air. It has a flying speed of 50 feet. It can carry up to 400 pounds, but its flying speed becomes 30 feet while carrying over 200 pounds. The broom stops hovering when you land.

You can send the broom to travel alone to a destination within 1 mile of you if you speak the Command Word, name the location, and are familiar with that place. The broom comes back to you when you speak another command Word, provided that the broom is still within 1 mile of you. This item can be found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

POTION OF CLIMBING

Potion, common

When you drink this potion, you gain a climbing speed equal to your walking speed for 1 hour. During this time, you have advantage on Strength (Athletics) checks you make to climb. The potion is separated into brown, silver, and gray layers resembling bands of stone. Shaking the bottle fails to mix the colors. This item can be found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

POTION OF GREATER HEALING

Potion, uncommon

You regain 4d4 + 4 hit points when you drink this potion. The potion's red liquid glimmers when agitated. This item can be found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

SOUL COIN

Wondrous item, uncommon

Soul coins are about 5 inches across and about an inch thick, minted from infernal iron. Each *coin* weighs 1-third of a pound and is inscribed with Infernal writing and a spell that magically binds a single soul to the coin. Because each *soul coin* has a unique soul trapped within it, each has a story. A creature might have been imprisoned as a result of defaulting on a deal, while another might be the victim of a night hag's curse.

Carrying Soul Coins. To hold a *soul coin* is to feel the soul bound within it—overcome with rage or fraught with despair. An evil creature can carry as many *soul coins* as it wishes (up to its maximum weight allowance). A non-evil creature can carry a number of *soul coins* equal to or less than its Constitution modifier without penalty. A non-evil creature carrying a number of *soul coins* greater than its Constitution modifier has disadvantage on its attack rolls, ability checks, and saving throws.

Using a Soul Coin. A *soul coin* has 3 charges. A creature carrying the *coin* can use its action to expend 1 charge from a *soul coin* and use it to do one of the following:

- **Drain Life.** You siphon away some of the soul's essence and gain 1d10 temporary hit points.
- **Query.** You telepathically ask the soul a question and receive a brief telepathic response, which you can understand. The soul knows only what it knew in life, but it must answer you truthfully and to the best of its ability. The answer is no more than a sentence or two and might be cryptic.

Freeing a Soul. Casting a spell that removes a curse on a *soul coin* frees the soul trapped within it, as does expending all of the *coin's* charges. The *coin* itself rusts from within and is destroyed once the soul is released. A soul can also be freed by destroying the *coin* that contains it. A *soul coin* has AC 19, 1 hit point for each charge it has remaining, and immunity to all damage except that which is dealt by a hellfire weapon or an infernal war machine's furnace. Freeing a soul from a *soul coin* is considered a good act, even if the soul belongs to an evil creature.

APPENDIX 6: STORY AWARD

Characters can earn the following story award during the adventure:

NO EXCEPTIONS!

You've broken Mahadi's only rules: No fighting! No spellcasting! No exceptions!" By choosing to break the rules, you've been kicked out of Mahdi's Wondrous Emporium. Now you must survive in the wastes without its safe shelter. You start any tier 2 or higher Avernus Rising adventure at half hit points and with a level of exhaustion that can't be removed.

THE SOLITARY WASP

If the characters cast *greater restoration* on Griditch or he is cured by one of the revived angels, Griditch regains his senses and chooses to rest in the Wandering Emporium. Griditch is willing to run errands for the characters by purchasing items at cost in the Material Plane and returning with them within a few hours if they provide the coin.

APPENDIX 7: DUNGEON MASTER TIPS

To DM an adventure, you **must** have 3 to 7 players—each with their own character within the adventure's level range (see Adventure Primer). Characters playing in a **hardcover** adventure may continue to play to but if they play a different hardcover adventure, they **can't return** to the first if outside its level range.

NEW TO D&D ADVENTURERS LEAGUE?

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

NEW TO THE ANNUAL STORYLINE?

<http://dndadventurersleague.org/storyline-seasons/descent-into-avernus/>

PREPARING THE ADVENTURE

Before you start play, consider the following:

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

Players can play an adventure they previously played as a Player or Dungeon Master but may only play it once with a given character. Ensure each player has their character's adventure logsheet (if not, get one from the organizer) with their starting values for level, magic items, gold and downtime days. These are updated at the conclusion of the session. The adventure information and your information are added at the end of the adventure session—whether the completed the adventure or not.

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

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

ADJUSTING THIS ADVENTURE

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

DETERMINING PARTY STRENGTH

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