

# SANCTUARY OF BELCHES

By Jon Sawatsky

*A temple delve for four 5th-level characters*



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# SANCTUARY OF BELCHES

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*... and from some far off place, beyond the horizon and the sun's long, cheerless rays, comes the loud bleating of a horn.*

It begins with the sound of a horn filling the characters' ears with a dreadful tune. Dissonant notes form a song so awful, the characters feel compelled to cover their ears, and animals grow skittish and prone to panicking.

The trouble began several weeks ago when a duergar excavation team went to work in a long-abandoned temple. Drawn to the temple by stories of riches and artifacts, the duergar hired several giants as laborers before cracking the temple's sealed doors. The largest of the giants, a loathsome Thursir mutant named Huppo, used his acidic vomit to expedite tunneling into the temple's collapsed hall of worship. Two flab giants, Mord and Tord, were tasked with carrying away the rocks and debris from the dwarves' slow but steady work. The arrangement worked well at first; the giants worked for large amounts of food while the dwarves pocketed the uncovered treasure. Among these treasures was a simple silver tiara that the leader of the duergar, a woman named Eltha, claimed as her own. After donning it, the dwarf grew distant and cold toward her crew. Eventually she retreated into a small chamber to commune with the primal spirit that was once worshiped in the temple.

Then, Huppo found the horn—an unusual instrument made from a single piece of stone, with a mouthpiece so intricate only a master carver could have made it. The horn became the giant's obsession. Seeing only the horn's potential sale value, the dwarves demanded Huppo turn it over to them, but Huppo refused. To force compliance, the dwarves stopped feeding the gluttonous brute, but Huppo had already found his own source of food; in deep areas of the temple, worms were chewing out of the rocks, and Huppo ate them by the fistful. He also played the horn. Its call was supernaturally loud, and the duergar tried in vain to persuade him to stop. Then, after several days of blowing the

horn and devouring the strange worms, Huppo released a belch so noxious the dwarves had no choice but to lock him in a sealed chamber and carefully consider their next move.

The horn's call, however, had caught the attention of passing nomadic orcs. They set up camp outside the temple entrance in the hope of finding the horn and its player.

That's the current situation at the temple: the giant refuses to stop blowing the horn and belching out deadly clouds of stomach gas; the dwarves are frightened and edgy while their leader is obsessed with malevolent whispers; orcs are threatening to overrun the place; and the population of worms grows steadily as something awakens deep in the stone beneath the sanctuary of belches.

## THE VILLAGE WITH NO CHEER

Upon entering the village of Olsha, you see a few pale residents going about their daily routines. Everyone is wearing a homemade contraption strapped to their heads that covers their ears. The hollow looks on their faces reveal only the dimmest curiosity as you pass by.

The characters arrive in the remote village of Olsha as they travel in the cold north. Everyone in Olsha is dangerously sleep-deprived. Several weeks ago, the sound of a distant horn of monstrous quality drifted down from the foothills. Locals judge that it's coming from many miles away, based on echoes coming from multiple directions. The horn has sounded ten or more times a day since then, at all hours of the day and night. It's loud enough that no one is getting any decent sleep, everyone's nerves are frazzled, and the animals are nervous and aggressive. Characters hear the horn for themselves soon after arriving, if they hadn't heard it before then.

Aside from the sound of the horn, the village is unremarkable. Characters can resupply at Haldy's General Store or stay the night at the village inn, the Icicle. The inn's owner has sealed and insulated one room of the inn against the tones of the horn; it's the only room in town where it's possible to take a long rest. Residents have been taking

### TOME OF BEASTS

Many of the monsters that appear in Sanctuary of Belches are from the Kobold Press publication *Tome of Beasts*. Abbreviated statistics are provided for all the monsters in the adventure, and they should be sufficient to run the game. If you want full details on Thursir giants, flab giants, rime worms, fraughashar, bone crabs, and sparks—and more than 400 other great new monsters—pick up the *Tome of Beasts*.

turns sleeping there, often cramming in up to ten sleepers per night. The innkeeper will rent it to the characters for 20 gp per night or 5 gp per character, whichever is more. If, however, characters have agreed to assist the town by silencing the horn, they can use the room for free.

In general, the residents of Olsha ignore the characters. They're too tired to take an interest in anything beyond what's absolutely necessary. As soon as word spreads that adventurers have come to town, however, the mayor (Brulle Gioso) seeks them out and invites them to talk with her at the Icicle. Gioso is short but powerfully built. Her piercing, sky blue eyes give a hint of her sharp mind. She is gruff, outspoken, and able to keep order in the small frontier village with both her natural leadership and her fists. Like most northerners, she dresses in warm, well-made furs, and she carries a handaxe on her belt. She heads a lumber crew in the village and in her off time helps keep the trade roads clear of bandits and worse.

Gioso is eager to hire adventurers to find and eliminate the awful horn. As payment, she offers a comfortable home in Olsha that characters can use as they see fit (see the section "Conclusion" for details about the manor). She admits that the home wouldn't have a high monetary value, but she argues that Olsha would make an excellent base for ambitious adventurers. There are many unexplored regions in the icy hills to the east, and rumors abound of treasures buried in nearby caves and woods. She also has 300 gp in a chest stored under the guardhouse, but she offers this (starting at 100 gp) only if characters seem tempted but reluctant. Either once characters accept the challenge, or to answer their questions, Gioso reveals the following information.

- A scout was sent into the hills 10 days ago to locate the horn. The scout followed the sound to a stone doorway that led into carved halls and caves. A foul smell emanated from the place, and strange belch-like sounds rumbled deep within. The horn's call definitely originated there. The place is a day's walk east into the ice hills along a trail.
- Stories have circulated for years about an ancient temple in the nearby hills. She never believed the tales, but is beginning to.
- Animals are especially unsettled by the sound of the horn. The scout reported that all animals larger than a mouse had fled from the vicinity of the stone doorway, and her own horse eventually ran away in terror. Gioso offers to stable the characters' horses or other animals for free until they return.

## PREPARING TO LEAVE

You make your way to the edge of town with a small crowd of slumping villagers trailing behind you. "Good luck," one young girl calls after you. The awful horn blows again, and everyone winces and covers their ears. "Hurry," the young girl pleads.

Allow the characters to equip themselves for the journey. The trail into the hills is visible from the eastern edge of the village. The villagers are happy the party has agreed to make the attempt, but several weeks of sleep deprivation makes them unenthusiastic. Should the characters try to gather information about the task at hand, the villagers offer information similar to the mayor's. The villagers know nothing concrete about the temple or its history.

Riding animals buck and bolt when the horn sounds. Only magic or a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check prevents the beasts from fleeing into the surrounding area. Rounding the animals up again takes an hour. Should characters still insist on bringing along their animals, they will flee into the wilds at the next horn call and be lost forever. Only companion animals and familiars return 24 hours after the horn's last winding.

## INTO THE HILLS

*See the Camp map for this series of encounters.*

The trail winds upward through the rocks, ice, and tall pines. The heatless rays of the sun shine brightly in the cloudless sky. You squint against the glare coming off the snow. Occasionally, branches snap in the clusters of trees beyond the trail, and a stomach-turning smell is carried on the cold wind blowing down from the hills.

This region of the hills is controlled by the Snow Scavengers, a tribe of cunning fraughashar. Led by Hoondo Icepoker, the Snow Scavengers survive by hunting for game and for errant humanoids in the region. The horn's maddening call cost the tribe dearly in the first week as crazed fraughashar killed each other in squabbles over what to do. The tribe's shaman, Old Rock, solved the problem by enchanting the arctic goblin's hats with silencing magic. The ear coverings prevent the goblins from hearing the horn, or much else. Though the effects of the horn have been mitigated, the Snow Scavengers have been unable to hunt effectively while deaf, so they're very hungry.

As characters climb the trail, they are assaulted by two fraughashar and their "tamed" yeti.

For campaigns set in Midgard, the Sanctuary of Belches and the town of Olsha should be located in Bjeornheim near the human city of Bjornstad. The icy hills of the ursine homeland provide the perfect landscape for the abandoned temple. The mayor of Olsha would then hold the proper huskarl title. The NPCs Aomy and Brista can hunt the Thursir giant clans of the north.

## POL AND HIXY'S NEW HORSE

Suddenly, crashing onto the trail ahead of you, a monstrously large, apelike creature thrashes through the snow. Two diminutive figures with huge earmuffs strapped over their pointy ears are seated on its shoulders. By the way the monster occasionally swats at them, it doesn't seem too happy about having riders. One pale passenger points a spear at you as the unlikely trio careens down the trail toward you, a mass of white fur and madness.

A yeti ridden by 2 fraughashar (Pol and Hixy) appear up the trail from the characters and attack; see the Fraughashar Camp map. The trio act on the same initiative. The yeti dashes toward the party, closing the distance in one round. The yeti moves and attacks first, then the fraughashar fire their slings from the yeti's back before rolling off into the snow. They continue using their slings until they're engaged in melee. If the odds turn against them, they try to flee west off the trail and to their camp on the ridge (location 2). The terrain off the trail is icy and difficult (area 1), which should allow the goblins to outdistance pursuers with their *frost walker* trait. They'll launch stones at characters who chase them. The fraughashar carry small carved malachite and leather charms (worth 5 sp each), and each wears a pair of *fraughashar earmuffs* (see appendix for details).

Whether or not the goblins escape, the characters automatically notice humanoid tracks crossing the main

trail and heading west toward the goblin camp. The ridge and camp are 15 feet above the trail, making it an excellent position for launching ranged attacks down onto approaching enemies. The fraughashar in the camp, however, are otherwise occupied; approaching characters hear the sound of a fight raging atop the outcropping. The characters can climb the ridge unchallenged.

**Fraughashar (2):** AC 15; HP 18 (4d6+4); Spd 25ft; **Melee** bite (+4, 1d4+2 piercing), dagger (+4, 1d4+2 piercing); **Ranged** sling (+4, 1d4+2 bludgeoning); **SA** multiattack (bite + dagger); **Immune** cold; **Str** -2, **Dex** +2, **Con** +1, **Int** +0, **Wis** +0, **Cha** -2; **Skills** Stealth +4; **Traits** frost walker (speed unimpeded by rocky, snowy, or icy terrain; automatically succeeds on Dex checks to avoid falling on ice or snow); **AL** NE; **CR** 1/2; **XP** 50.

**Yeti:** AC 12; HP 51 (6d10+18); Spd 40ft, climb 40ft; **Melee** claw (+6, 1d6+4 slashing plus 1d6 cold); **SA** multiattack (claw x2 plus chilling gaze), chilling gaze (1 creature within 30ft; DC 13 Con save or take 3d6 cold and paralyzed for 1 minute; paralyzed creature repeats save at end of its turns); **Immune** cold; **Str** +4, **Dex** +1, **Con** +3, **Int** -1, **Wis** +1, **Cha** -2; **Skills** Perception +3, Stealth +3; **Senses** darkvision 60ft; **Traits** fear of fire (has disadvantage on attacks and ability checks until end of its next turn after taking fire damage), keen smell, snow camouflage (advantage on Stealth checks to hide in snowy terrain); **AL** CE; **CR** 3; **XP** 700.



## WORMSIGN AT CAMP FRAUGHASHAR

Half-a-dozen tents crudely made from untanned hides form a semicircle around a smoldering fire. Several goblin bodies lie on the stony ground near your ascent. At the far northern tip of the ridge, more goblins battle a wormlike horror half buried in a snowbank. A large goblin in an oversized fur coat barks orders and throws javelins at the clattering beast.

The fraughashar are under attack from a **rime worm grub** at location 3 which originated in the temple farther north along the trail. The monster is very hungry and attacks goblins or characters indiscriminately. **Eight fraughashar** are in or around the camp, led by a **hobgoblin captain** called Doont. Upon noticing the characters, Doont ceases his attacks against the grub and commands six of the fraughashar to join him in attacking the characters. The fraughashar rush into melee while Doont hangs back and throws javelins. Once two or more fraughashar have been killed by the characters, Doont enters melee with his greatsword. Given the opportunity, the goblins cooperate in trying to push characters off the ridge. Sharp, icy shards on the ground below the ridge add 2 (1d4) slashing damage to normal falling damage. The rime worm grub eats one fraughashar on its initiative until both goblins that were left to fight it are eaten; then it burrows into the snow and travels toward the larger melee, where the grub emerges behind the characters and attacks them.

A search of the camp reveals eight more of the carved malachite and leather charms (5 sp each), two *potions of climbing*, and one *potion of healing*. Each fraughashar and Doont wear *fraughashar earmuffs* (see appendix). In Doont's tent is a satchel containing 40 gp, five silver ingots (3 gp each) and four +1 *javelins* wrapped in soft leather. The silver ingots can be recognized as trade bars used by duergar with a successful DC 14 Intelligence (History) check; PCs who've dealt with duergar before recognize them automatically. Also tucked away in Doont's tent are the remains of a rime worm larva. Its white flesh is already turning black from decay, and the creature's maw is caked in dried blood. Behind the tents is a recently dug grave holding the body of a fraughashar with strange injuries. An enormous wound in its head is obvious. A closer examination by a character with proficiency in Medicine reveals the wound was made by something bursting out of the goblin's skull; without Medicine

proficiency, a successful DC 15 Intelligence check reveals the same information. The goblin died when the rime worm larva burst from its skull.

If characters examine the remains of the worms, a DC 12 Intelligence (Nature) check reveals that neither the grub nor the larva are mature versions of the creature. If the Nature check result is 17 or higher, characters notice glands inside the grub's mouth that suggest it can spit powerfully.

**Rime Worm Grub:** AC 15; HP 105 (10d10+50); Spd 30ft, swim 30ft, burrow (snow, ice) 30ft; **Melee** tendril (+5, 1d6+3 slashing), gnash (+5, 2d8+3 slashing); **SA** multiattack (tendrils + gnash); **Saves** Str +5, Con +5; **Resist** cold; **Str** +3, **Dex** +1, **Con** +3, **Int** -3, **Wis** +1, **Cha** -4; **Senses** darkvision 200ft; **Traits** born of rime (breathes air and water), ravenous (can make opportunity attacks against disengaging enemies); **AL** N; **CR** 2; **XP** 450.

**Fraughashar (8):** AC 15; HP 18 (4d6+4); Spd 25ft; **Melee** bite (+4, 1d4+2 piercing), dagger (+4, 1d4+2 piercing); **Ranged** sling (+4, 1d4+2 bludgeoning); **SA** multiattack (bite + dagger); **Immune** cold; **Str** -2, **Dex** +2, **Con** +1, **Int** +0, **Wis** +0, **Cha** -2; **Skills** Stealth +4; **Traits** frost walker (speed unimpeded by rocky, snowy, or icy terrain; automatically succeeds on Dex checks to avoid falling on ice or snow); **AL** NE; **CR** 1/2; **XP** 50.

**Doont (Hobgoblin Captain):** AC 17; HP 39 (6d8+12); Spd 30ft; **Melee** greatsword (+4, 2d6+2 slashing); **Ranged** javelin (+4, 30ft/120ft, 1d6+2 piercing); **SA** multiattack (greatsword x2), leadership (recharges after rest; for 1 minute, creatures friendly to hobgoblin captain can add



1d4 to attack rolls and saving throws while within 30ft and hearing); **Str** +2, **Dex** +2, **Con** +2, **Int** +1, **Wis** +0, **Cha** +1; **Senses** darkvision 60ft; **Traits** martial advantage (1/turn, does 3d6 extra damage with weapon attack if ally is within 5ft of target); **AL** LE; **CR** 3; **XP** 700.

## A LOATHSOME FOG

Continuing north along the trail from the fraughashar camp, the characters pass through a noxious cloud of coalesced belches billowing down through the woods.

As the sun begins its late afternoon descent, a strange green mist appears on the trail ahead. Swirling thickly through the trees and over the snow, it appears unwilling to disperse despite the frosty gusts of wind urging it forward.

The expelled gas from the gluttonous Thursir mutant deep in the temple ahead forms a nauseating barrier on the trail. The cloud is 65 feet from front to back and extends more than a hundred feet on either side of the trail. A character who starts his or her turn in the cloud must make a successful DC 14 Constitution saving throw or take 6 (1d6 + 3) poison damage and be poisoned for one hour. A successful save halves the damage and negates the poisoned condition. The gas can be dispersed with a *gust of wind* spell.

## DARK DWARFCICLE

A short distance beyond the gas cloud, characters discover a corpse face down in the snow. An examination of the body reveals it to be the remains of a young duergar clad in studded leather armor and carrying a warpick, two javelins, a mining pick, a shovel, an explorer's pack, and a leather pouch. The corpse is frozen through and probably has been here for at least a week. The pouch contains three silver trade bars (3 sp each) and a parchment on which is written a short missive in dwarvish. The parchment is badly damaged,

## THURSIR MUTANT

*It melted our sage before our eyes. We ran for our lives, but the sound of that monstrosity, slurping the remains of loyal Olaf with infernal gusto—it never leaves my ears.*

On the rare occasion when a Thursir giant fully embraces its gluttonous nature, it spawns a mutant offspring. The transformation is painful and hideous to behold. The giant's belly distends to an impossible size and its skin erupts in oozing sores. It must eat constantly or suffer horrific cramps. The mutant is identical to the giant in most ways, but its toughened hide and greater mass make it a more robust combatant. The mutated giant stumps about slowly on inadequate legs and it loses all its standard actions. Instead, the slaving foodnaught gains the ability to spit worms at foes and to retch up the bilious contents of its festering gut.

but the following phrases can be discerned by someone who reads dwarvish.

- ... *found temple entrance and secured a section ...*
- *Giants are effective but willful workers ...*
- ... *gone very badly. The biggest now plays some horn ...*
- ... *has attracted orcs. They've fortified the entrance ...*
- ... *failure.*

## PANDEMONIUM AT THE TEMPLE ENTRANCE

*See the Fort map for this encounter.*

The trail crests onto a large clearing flanked by tall pines. Several hundred feet to the north, a scene of mayhem unfolds. Green-skinned humanoids in furs and rough leathers defend a crude wooden fortification from a pair of lumbering giants. The fleshy giants careen repeatedly into the side of the buckling shelter as the defenders launch arrows through breaches and cracks. A few dozen paces beyond that is a looming doorway set into the rock face of a rising hill. More greenskins appear to be fighting unseen enemies beyond its threshold.

The inevitable confrontation between the duergar excavation team and the interfering orcs camped outside the temple is taking place as the characters arrive. On the battlefield are:

- **4 orcs** in the fortified structure (4)
- **1 orog** (Pinelord Harxox) and **6 orcs** fighting at the temple entrance (5)
- **3 duergar** just inside the temple entrance (5)
- **2 flab giants** (with half normal HP) hammering at the south wall of the fortified structure (4)

A battle pitting the characters against all possible opponents on the map is likely to result in the deaths of all player characters. There are many possible alternatives, depending on what the characters do.

When the two flab giants attacking the orc fortification see the characters, they are drawn toward the easier prey in the open. The four orcs in the fort respond to that reprieve by clambering out to join the attack against the characters, who they suspect are the greater danger. The duergar at the doorway kill 3 orcs in two rounds, then retreat into the temple, freeing Harxox and 3 orcs to join the larger battle.

If characters wind up fighting the giants and/or the orcs, Aomy and Brista enter the fray from the woods (location 7). The orcs are their chief concern; see "That's Some Sled" for their tactics.

A few rounds into the battle, the horn sounds from deep inside the temple and affects the battlefield as described in "Musical Accompaniment."

## TERRAIN

The snow in front of the temple has been packed down by traffic, so it's not difficult terrain. The trees that line the trail and clearing provide cover for characters who are scouting and sneaking. At four spots on the Orcs' Fort map (labeled 6), a thin crust of ice hides a deep snow drift. Any creature stepping onto the thin snow immediately sinks 4 feet and is restrained. Escaping from the drift requires 5 feet of movement and a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check. If you want to add more danger, these hazards can also be populated with **rime worm larvae** that attack the trapped character.

## MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT

From deep in the hillside temple, the horn sounds again, tremendous and terrible.

The horn sounds on the second or third round of combat (your choice). All combatants in the battle must make successful DC 12 Constitution saving throws or be deafened for two rounds. Additionally, the horn's call fills its listeners' minds with horrible visions of toothy maws writhing in the dark. Have each player briefly describe how their character overcame a childhood fear to ensure they can withstand the horror of the horn's cacophonous hallucinations. You are the judge of their tales; poor storytellers are incapacitated for one round. Alternatively, characters and NPCs can avoid being incapacitated by making successful DC 10 Wisdom saving throws.

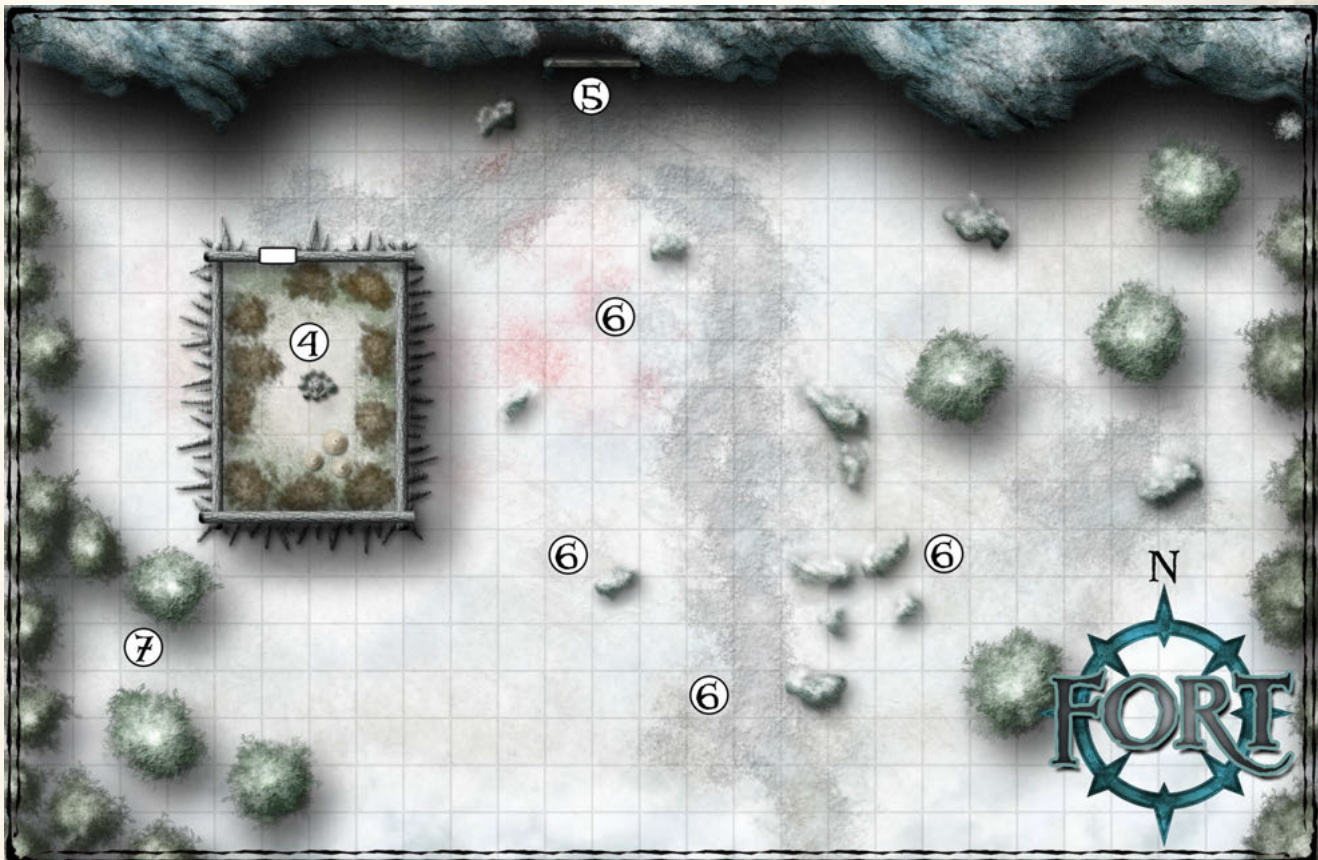
## ORC FORTIFICATIONS

A hastily built structure consisting of four spike-topped walls and a teetering rooftop platform has been built over a simple camp. Smoke from a fire within the walls wafts upward. Several figures move inside.

The fortified orc camp (location 4) is under attack from the flab giants. Built from timbers and rocks, the elementary structure is inelegant but sound. The exterior walls are adorned with wooden spikes, making a climb up the fort's 10-foot height dangerous. The wall is easy to climb thanks to the handholds provided by the spikes, but a successful DC 14 Dexterity check is required to avoid 7 (2d6) slashing damage from the lacerating points.

The roof of the structure provides half cover to anyone standing on it. The main entrance is a strong door made from thick timbers (AC 15, 40 HP). It can be forced open with a successful DC 18 Strength check. A small hole on the roof provides entry as well, and it's unobstructed by anything except the angry orcs inside.

Inside are eleven sleeping furs, a low-burning campfire, crude cooking tools, and several sacks of the orcs' supplies. The sacks contain 14 days worth of rations (dried meat, origin unknown), a healer's kit, crude but useful carpenter's tools, and twenty lumps of electrum ore (worth 1 gp each). Rummaging through the piles of furs uncovers a badly damaged but still functioning *belt of dwarvenkind* that none of the orcs have recognized as being magical.





## THAT'S SOME SLED

Suddenly, careening wildly from a ridge of pines, comes a sight that stops all combatants in their tracks. A massive wooden sled pulled by four loping white wolves and ridden by two wild-eyed women is momentarily airborne before crashing onto the battlefield. One woman, a human seated and surrounded up to her waist by thick hide panels, draws an arrow on an elegant bow; the second, a fierce half-orc standing on the runners at the back of the sled, holds onto the sled with one gauntleted hand and swings an axe with the other.

The sled is controlled by Aomy and Brista, and they've come for the orcs. These two warriors have made a life for themselves hunting and killing the nomadic orcs who wander the northern wilderness. Partners in work and love, they travel the snow scrub together in an armored sled pulled by 4 **dire wolves**. The women are not aligned with any specific faction in the north, though they often agree to work as scouts or security for those whose aims run parallel to theirs. They rarely stay in towns or villages for more than a day or two.

**Aomy** is an intense woman with broad shoulders and a bright red mane of curly hair. She speaks with authority and chews a small length of bark. Aomy is a skilled archer and survivalist. She has spent all her life in the north and knows the secret trails that lead through the hills and beyond. She has always loved being in the wild, and in her youth she trained with a company of rangers. Her career was cut short when her legs were crushed by a falling tree, and she's been unable to walk since. It was during her convalescence that Aomy met Brista, and the two fell in love. When orcs overran the town they were in, the pair escaped into the surrounding wilderness, where they thrived. Now Aomy travels the north with her partner, hunting orcs and safeguarding the region.

**Brista** is a towering half-orc woman in thick hide clothing adorned with colorful tassels and painted accents. An intricately braided pile of white hair and leather strips rises from her head. Unable to find acceptance in the civilized places of the north and disgusted by the warring nature of the orcs, Brista spent her formative years alone. A fierce warrior and talented leatherworker, she made her living as a mercenary and a craftsperson. Her tendency toward fits of rage on the battlefield reduced her usefulness as a hired sword, so she more often lived on the meager sales of her leather goods. She was inspired when she saw a young woman pulling herself through a market square on a makeshift sled with a look of defiance on her face. When the town they were in was attacked by Brista's brethren, she helped the disabled woman escape. The bond between them grew strong as they struggled to survive in the wilderness. Today, she travels with Aomy, who accepts Brista's divided nature.

The pair emerge from the forest at location 7 and remain together on the battlefield, where they exhibit tremendous

patience and cunning. They are in constant motion. The orcs are their targets; they don't attack giants or duergar without being attacked first. Aomy uses her bow against vulnerable targets while Brista defends the sled with her greataxe. Under the right conditions, Brista will leap from the sled and fight on foot while Aomy and the wolves continue circling, but Brista never strays far from the sled in case a rapid retreat is necessary. There's no room on the sled for characters who might want to jump aboard during the fight.

**Orc (10): AC 13; HP 15 (2d8+6); Spd 30ft; Melee** greataxe (+5, 1d12+3 slashing), javelin (+5, 30ft/120ft, 1d6+3 piercing); **Str +3, Dex +1, Con +3, Int -2, Wis +0, Cha +0; Skills** Intimidation +2; **Senses** darkvision 60ft; **Traits** aggressive (can move its speed toward a hostile creature in sight, as a bonus action); **AL CE; CR 1/2; XP 100.**

**Pinelord Harxox (Orog): AC 18; HP 42 (5d8+20); Spd 30ft; Melee** greataxe (+6, 1d12+4 slashing); **Ranged** javelin (+6, 30ft/120ft, 1d6+4 piercing); **SA** multiattack (greataxe x2); **Str +4, Dex +1, Con +4, Int +1, Wis +0, Cha +1; Skills** Intimidation +5, Survival +2; **Senses** darkvision 60ft; **Traits** aggressive (can move up to its speed toward an enemy it can see, as a bonus action); **AL CE; CR 2; XP 450.**

**Duergar (3): AC 16; HP 26 (4d8+8); Spd 25ft; Melee** war pick (+4, 1d8+2 piercing or 2d8+2 when enlarged); **Ranged** javelin (+4, 30ft/120ft, 1d6+2 piercing or 2d6+2 piercing when enlarged); **SA** enlarge (becomes Large for 1 minute; makes **Str** checks and saves with advantage; recharges after rest), invisibility (turns invisible until it attacks or enlarges; recharges after rest); **Resist** poison; **Str +2, Dex +0, Con +2, Int +0, Wis +0, Cha -1; Senses** darkvision 120ft; **Traits** duergar resilience (has advantage on saves against poison, spells, illusions, charm, and paralysis), sunlight sensitivity (has disadvantage on attacks and Perception checks that rely on sight while in sunlight); **AL LE; CR 1; XP 200.**

**Flab Giant (2): AC 14; HP 56 (15d8+45); Spd 20ft; Melee** slam (+7, 2d6+5 bludgeoning); **SA** multiattack (slam x2; if both hit same target, target is grappled and giant uses squatting pin as bonus action), squatting pin (target is grappled and restrained, escape DC 17; giant can use slam against other targets; pinned creatures are freed if giant moves; up to 2 Medium or smaller creatures can be pinned; creature that starts its turn pinned takes 1d8+3 bludgeoning); **Immune** poisoned; **Str +5, Dex -2, Con +3, Int -1, Wis +1, Cha -1; Saves** Con +5; **Skills** Perception +3; **Traits** massive (push, trip, and grapple attacks have disadvantage); **AL CE; CR 4; XP 1,100.**

**Aomy (Veteran, human): AC 17; HP 58 (9d8+18); Spd 0ft; Melee** longsword (+3, 1d8+1 slashing); shortsword (+5, 1d6+3 piercing); **Ranged** longbow (+5, 150ft/600ft, 1d8+3 piercing); **SA** multiattack (longbow x2 OR longsword x2 plus shortsword); **Str +1, Dex +3, Con +2, Int +0, Wis +0, Cha +0; Skills** Athletics +3, Perception +2; **AL NG; CR 3; XP 700.**

**Brista (Berserker, half-orc): AC 13; HP 67 (9d8+27); Spd 30ft; Melee** greataxe (+5, 1d12+3 slashing); **SA** multiattack (greataxe x2); **Str +3, Dex +1, Con +3, Int -1, Wis +0,**

**Cha** -1; **Traits** reckless (can opt to have advantage on all melee weapon attacks on her turn, but attacks against her have advantage for 1 round); **AL** NG; **CR** 3; **XP** 700.

**Dire Wolf (4): AC** 14; **HP** 37 (5d10+10); **Spd** 50ft; **Melee** bite (+5, 2d6+3 piercing and creature must make DC 13 **Str** save or be knocked prone); **Str** +3, **Dex** +2, **Con** +2, **Int** -4, **Wis** +1, **Cha** -2; **Skills** Perception +3, Stealth +4; **Traits** keen hearing and smell, pack tactics (has advantage on attack roll if target is within 5ft of wolf's ally); **AL** un; **CR** 1; **XP** 200.

## DEVELOPMENTS

Aomy and Brista don't linger long after the battle, but they'll talk briefly if they were impressed with the characters' prowess at slaying orcs. They are currently on the trail of Pinelord Harxox's clan, which recently slaughtered everyone at a nearby trade outpost. They won't suffer fools, and they leave without speaking if the characters are insulting, disrespectful, or appear weak. A conversation with the duo reveals the following information.

- The orcs are from a large clan that's currently on the move, killing as it goes. They probably saw the newly-opened temple as a target of opportunity and had no plan beyond that.
- The doorway in the hill leads to a very old temple that was sealed for decades. They don't know much about the place's history, but stories about it all mention that it was purposefully collapsed by its high priestess. The stories don't say why.
- The horn's call is a menace that needs to be stopped.
- Because Aomy can't get around without the sled, neither she nor Brista will come into the temple. If asked for further help, they offer the characters four vials of holy water and wish them well before departing.

## TEMPLE ENTRANCE

The door into the hill is an 8-foot-tall half circle with an ornate stone frame. Small piles of rubble sit just inside the entry, and tool marks mar the rock surface of the walls. Strange writing, partially obscured by erosion and chisel marks, spans the frame of the door. Several bodies lie on the floor. The air inside is warm and foul smelling.

The duergar cleared a large amount of fallen rock to gain entry. Evidence of their labor is obvious. A successful DC 10 Intelligence check made while examining the entry reveals that the ceiling was collapsed deliberately a long time ago, but the tool marks are new. The writing on the door frame is in a dialect combining the Primordial and Dwarven languages. Characters who speak either language or who wear the *belt of dwarvenkind* can read the message

Youm, locked in stone, our prayers are the key ... horn ... lips a song, a temple for your truth.

This is the first mention of the deity worshiped at the temple. See the appendix for information on the temple's past. Allow characters to make Intelligence (History or Religion) checks if they wish, and provide them with information you deem suitable based on how well they roll.

# HALLS OF WILLING STONE

See the Temple map for these areas and encounters.

The duergar have explored the entire temple, but since Huppo started eating worms and blowing the *clarion of Youm*, most of them have stayed in just a few areas: Eltha hasn't left her chamber (area 17), and the rest of the duergar have stayed at the entrance barricade (9) and their base (14-16).

**Smoothed Stone.** The halls and chambers of the temple are not carved. Aside from the very recent marks left by the





duergars' excavations, the stone walls are smooth, with a subtle undulation pattern. The temple's passages contain no straight lines. A DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check suggests the interior of the temple was shaped using some unknown process; dwarves have advantage on the check.

**Shape of Youm.** The ubiquitous spiral motifs are sacred etchings made long ago by Ilda's congregation. They adorn the walls, floors, and ceilings of the entire temple. They were made using a caustic silver ink. A *detect magic* spell or a DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check uncovers the spirals' magical nature. Once the magic is revealed, a character can attempt a DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana) check to trace the pattern with a finger; success earns the character advantage on all saving throws while interacting with the temple's story stones (location 18). A character can make this check only once.

## 8. MAIN ENTRY

Just inside the door, a tall corridor splits to the east and west. The western length ends abruptly at a sturdy-looking barricade made from stone and iron tools. To the east is darkness. A spiral pattern is etched onto the walls at random intervals throughout the place; glistening silver spirals give the illusion of being set apart from the stone.

When characters enter the temple, they are immediately attacked by four duergar from behind their sturdy barricade down the west corridor (location 9). Characters are ordered in Dwarven to leave the temple, and four crossbow bolts punctuate the demand. The duergar continue shooting their crossbows until the characters leave or the duergar are overcome. See the duergar base (area 15) for information on negotiating with them. The duergar won't pursue or interfere if characters retreat eastward away from the barricade toward the temple's ritual chambers (areas 10-13).

## 9. DUERGAR BARRICADE

An impressive wall of worked stone and metal tools has been erected to keep trespassers out.

The barricade is solid (AC 19, 50 HP) and it's resistant to piercing and slashing damage. The 4 duergar have three-quarters cover behind it, and only ranged attacks or melee weapons with a reach of 10 feet or more can be used against them. They also have advantage on Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution saving throws against spells. Tearing the wall down requires three successful DC 20 Strength checks; using a sledgehammer gives advantage on the checks. The duergar launch crossbow bolts until the characters flee or the barricade falls. They don't enlarge unless characters get through the barricade and into hand-to-hand fighting.

A successful DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals that many of the stones forming the barricade are melted along their edges.

**Duergar (4):** AC 16; HP 26 (4d8+8); Spd 25ft; **Melee** war pick (+4, 1d8+2 piercing or 2d8+2 when enlarged); **Ranged** heavy crossbow (+2, 100ft/400ft, 1d10 piercing); **SA** enlarge (becomes Large for 1 minute; makes Str checks and saves with advantage; recharges after rest), invisibility (turns invisible until it attacks or enlarges; recharges after rest); **Resist** poison; **Str** +2, **Dex** +0, **Con** +2, **Int** +0, **Wis** +0, **Cha** -1; **Senses** darkvision 120ft; **Traits** duergar resilience (has advantage on saves against poison, spells, illusions, charm, and paralysis), sunlight sensitivity (has disadvantage on attacks and Perception checks that rely on sight while in sunlight); **AL** LE; **CR** 1; **XP** 200.

## 10. RITUAL CHAMBERS

The corridor veers north, revealing three doorways along the east wall. The spirals are abundant in this area, so that the walls reflect light in a dizzying spectacle.

The ritual chambers have been partially explored by the duergar. Eltha, the duergar crew chief, found *Youm's tiara* (see appendix) in this area, and now she suffers the consequences of having donned it. Duergar boot prints can be seen in the dust here.

As characters explore the ritual chambers, a long and grisly belch resonates through the place. Time the arrival of the gas cloud as you see fit.

A belch, starting low and rising to a distressing pitch, rattles through the halls. The air quickly turns nauseatingly sour.

The Thursir mutant in the sanctuary has finished another meal of foul worms. The effects of the belches are getting stronger and more difficult to resist. Shortly after the belch, the air takes on a greenish hue. The acid in the mutant's stomach is dispersed in the cloud. Each character in the area is blinded for 1d4 rounds and takes 3 (1d4 + 1) acid damage plus 3 (1d4 + 1) poison damage; a successful DC 15 Constitution saving throw negates the poison damage only. The gas passes through the area in one round.

## 11. CHAMBER OF CARVING

This small, circular room contains two long stone tables. The surfaces of the tables are badly chipped. Broken stone idols and pottery litter the floor. A massive silver spiral occupies the entire far wall. A trick of the light causes the silvery channels of the glyph to seem to swirl.

This was the chamber where acolytes practiced their stone shaping powers. The results of an acolyte's early efforts were sometimes violent; stones cracked or sundered under the uncontrolled power granted by Youm.

An empty stone box with an ornate top sits open on the floor under the large glyph. It once contained the *Tiara of Youm*, which is now in the possession of the duergar Eltha.

## 12. CHAMBER OF JOINING

A large stone dais sits in the center of this room. Fist-sized holes dot the top of the dais and extend down into the stone in perfectly smooth channels. The walls are marked by similar holes extending deep into the hill. The remains of a duergar lie on the floor near the dais.

Here, acolytes to Youm were bound to the table and joined with the parasitic rime worm larvae. A larva would crawl through the hatching chambers and into the flesh of the believer. With the opening of the temple and the blowing of the horn in the sanctuary, the worms have once again returned to the stony channels running through the chamber.

The duergar corpse has been gnawed on. It carries a warpick, two javelins, and two silver trade bars (worth 3 sp each).

A wet plop is heard from a dark corner of the room, soon joined by another, and then another. Suddenly, from every hole, a pale white worm is wriggling out.

Initially, 2 **rime worm larval swarms** emerge and attack characters standing closest to the dais. After one round, 2 **venomous rime worm larval swarms** drop noisily next to characters closest to the door.

During the battle, on initiative count 20, a single larva wriggles out from one of the many holes in the ceiling. A random character must make a successful DC 10 Dexterity saving throw or take 2 (1d4) piercing damage from the falling worm's teeth and be frightened for one round. The worm falls off the character after one round and becomes completely harmless once it's on the floor.

**Rime Worm Larval Swarm:** AC 13; HP 22 (5d8); Spd 20ft, swim 20ft, burrow (snow, ice) 10ft; **Melee** scour (+3, 0ft, 4d4 slashing, or 2d4 slashing if swarm has half or fewer hit points); **Resist** cold, bludgeoning, piercing, slashing; **Str** -4, **Dex** +1, **Con** +0, **Int** -5, **Wis** -2, **Cha** +1; **Senses** darkvision 200ft; **Traits** born of rime (breathes air and water), swarm (can share space with another creature and move through any opening large enough for a tiny creature; can't regain HP or gain temporary HP); **AL** N; **CR** 1/2; **XP** 100.

**Venomous Rime Worm Larval Swarm:** Identical to larval swarm but the scour attack does an additional 4d6 poison damage, or half poison damage with a successful DC 10 Constitution saving throw; **CR** 1; **XP** 200.

## DEVELOPMENT

A hidden compartment in the dais contains three mundane leather restraints and one set of *bands of Youm* (see appendix) that were used during the ritual of joining. The sliding panel on the north side of the dais can be spotted with a careful search of that area or with a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check.

### 13. CHAMBER OF SACRIFICE

This circular room features a deep pit with smooth walls. Bones and rubble litter the floor of the pit. A long stone bench circles around the lip of the pit. Two large holes pierce the pit's walls, a few feet above the floor.

Worshippers of Youm sacrificed animals to their god in this pit. A character who makes a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) or Intelligence (Nature) check recognizes the bones as belonging to elk, bears, and other taiga-dwelling animals. The pit is 15 feet deep and its walls are very smooth; without a rope, attempts to climb up or down the walls have disadvantage. Two pairs of antlers and eight bear claws can be scavenged from the pit. They are valuable as medicine or trophies in northern villages, including Olsha, where they can be traded for 5 sp each or 3 sp each, respectively.

There are 3 **darkmantles** camouflaged in the high ceiling here. As soon as a character reaches the edge of the pit, the darkmantles activate their darkness auras and attack. The ceiling is 20 feet high, allowing the creatures to trigger their ability while clinging to the ceiling without being noticed. A character with passive Perception 13 or higher or one who was specifically scanning the ceiling is not surprised by the darkmantles' attack, but all others are. A character who takes damage on the first round of combat while standing within 5 feet of the pit's lip must make a successful DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or fall into the pit, taking 1d6 + 2 bludgeoning damage from the fall onto loose rocks and splintered bones. A darkmantle attached to a falling character takes 2 bludgeoning damage and detaches automatically.

Hidden in the holes in the sacrificial pit are 2 **gricks**. The gricks have a taste for darkmantles and prefer them as prey over humans and humanoids. They attack characters only if there are no darkmantles in the pit. The gricks don't leave the pit; they don't even come into view unless someone enters the pit. One of the grick burrows contains two 16-inch disks of azurite with intricate spirals carved into them, weighing 10 pounds apiece and worth 10 gp each as artistic curiosities. The other contains an identical disk and a *ring of warmth*.

**Darkmantle (3):** AC 11; HP 22 (5d6+5); Spd 10ft, fly 30ft; **Melee** crush (+5, 1d6+3 bludgeoning and darkmantle attaches to target; target is blinded and unable to breathe; darkmantle can be removed with an action and a DC 13 Str check); **SA** darkness (1/day; creates 15ft-radius magical darkness that moves with darkmantle; lasts 10 minutes or while darkmantle concentrates; impervious to darkvision and magical light); **Str** +3, **Dex** +1, **Con** +1, **Int** -4, **Wis** +0, **Cha** -3; **Skills** Stealth +3; **Senses** blindsight 60ft; **Traits** echolocation (can't use blindsight while deafened), false appearance (indistinguishable from natural stone formation while motionless); **AL** un; **CR** 1/2; **XP** 100.

**Grick (2):** AC 14; HP 27 (6d8); Spd 30ft, climb 30ft; **Melee** tentacles (+4, 2d6+2 slashing), beak (+4, 1d6+2 piercing); **SA** multiattack (if tentacles attack hits, grick also attacks

same target with beak); **Resist** nonmagical bludgeoning, piercing, slashing; **Str** +2, **Dex** +2, **Con** +0, **Int** -4, **Wis** +2, **Cha** -3; **Senses** darkvision 60ft; **Traits** stone camouflage (has advantage on Stealth checks to hide in rocky terrain); **AL** N; **CR** 2; **XP** 450.

### 14. SECONDARY DUERGAR BARRICADE

The duergar built a fortified base for themselves in the western section of the temple.

Like the barricade at the entrance to the temple, this smaller barricade is resistant to piercing and slashing damage, and duergar defending it have three-quarters cover, can be attacked only with ranged attacks or by melee weapons with a reach of 10 feet or more, and have advantage on Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution saving throws against spells. This one is weaker, however, with AC 12 and 25 HP. It can be dismantled with a single successful DC 15 Strength check, and a sledgehammer provides advantage on the check. There are 8 **duergar** beyond the barricade ready to defend it with crossbows, but the narrow barricade allows only two duergar per round to use their crossbows. The duergar won't enlarge unless characters get through the barricade and into hand-to-hand fighting.

**Duergar (8):** AC 16; HP 26 (4d8+8); Spd 25ft; **Melee** war pick (+4, 1d8+2 piercing or 2d8+2 when enlarged); **Ranged** heavy crossbow (+2, 100ft/400ft, 1d10 piercing); **SA** enlarge (becomes Large for 1 minute; makes **Str** checks and saves with advantage; recharges after rest), invisibility (turns invisible until it attacks or enlarges; recharges after rest); **Resist** poison; **Str** +2, **Dex** +0, **Con** +2, **Int** +0, **Wis** +0, **Cha** -1; **Senses** darkvision 120ft; **Traits** duergar resilience (has advantage on saves against poison, spells, illusions, charm, and paralysis), sunlight sensitivity (has disadvantage on attacks and Perception checks that rely on sight while in sunlight); **AL** LE; **CR** 1; **XP** 200.

### UNLIKELY ALLIES

The surviving duergar are desperate to leave the temple. The mutant's horn playing prevents them from sleeping properly, and their wills are breaking; they have disadvantage on Wisdom saving throws because of their poor mental state. Furthermore, their leader has retreated into her quarters (area 17) and appears to have gone mad, and their supplies are getting dangerously low. Characters with proficiency in Insight notice the duergar are exhausted and fatalistic, almost as if they'd welcome death.

Persuading the dwarves to cease their crossbow attacks long enough to negotiate requires a successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion or Intimidation) check. Characters can make this check just once per day for the whole group; one character makes the check, but others can help. The duergar speak only Dwarvish and Undercommon; diplomacy is possible only if someone among the player characters speaks one or both of those languages. The duergars' spokesman is an older male called Aarne Dagmarskohn. He's irascible and paranoid even beyond what you'd expect from someone in his situation, but he

respects courage and plain talk. Aarne will negotiate with one person, not a whole group shouting at him. He is openly derisive if the character negotiating with him is any sort of dwarf, but he seems intimidated and slightly awe-struck in the presence of high elves.

Once the duergar are persuaded to pause their attacks long enough to communicate, use their concerns listed below to guide the conversation. Their top priority is getting out of the temple safely. Three obstacles block their way.

- The orcs besieging the temple will attack any duergar who leave. The duergar quickly accept the characters' presence as proof that the orcs were overcome, but if no guard was left outside the temple, a few of them grumble that the orcs could have returned and re-established the siege since the characters came inside.
- Surface dwellers are liars and tricksters. If the characters killed the orcs to get inside, then what guarantee do the duergar have that the characters won't kill them, too, to steal the temple's treasure? The best tack for allaying the duergars' paranoia is to explain that the characters came to silence the horn and nothing more. Antagonistic approaches such as threats or demands for surrender won't work.
- Their leader has gone mad. At this point, the duergar really don't care whether Eltha escapes with them or is left behind, but they'll use her as a bargaining chip if they can. Their strongest approach is to wave Eltha's condition as a warning of what might befall the characters (even though the duergar suspect her madness has little to do with the horn) and offer to tell the characters what the duergar know only if they're guaranteed safe passage out of the temple.

Successfully negotiating with the duergar results in the dwarves willingly dismantling the barricade. If the characters remain peaceful, the dwarves pack up their personal belongings and leave the temple. They don't bother with their recovered artifacts or supplies in the supply room. Eltha remains in her quarters. For this outcome, characters should earn XP as though they defeated the dwarves.

If characters talk further with the duergar as they pack up, Dagmarskohn explains the following.

- The temple is infested with dangerous worms that have distinct stages of growth.
- The giants were brought along to serve as laborers.
- The largest giant, Huppo, found a strange horn somewhere in the rubble. He's now barricaded himself in the main hall, where he eats the worms and blows the horn at random intervals.
- The duergars' leader lost her mind and locked herself in her room. If he's pushed on this point, Dagmarskohn admits that the horn probably didn't cause Eltha's madness. He suspects a tiara she found in the east ritual chambers is the real culprit. The horn isn't helping, but he saw a big change in her behavior from the first moment she donned the tiara.

## 15. DUERGAR QUARTERS

This long oval shaped chamber contains ten sleeping mats, several recently constructed tables with stools, and a variety of sacks and boxes. A few torches smoke and smolder from makeshift sconces. A single hallway winds into the dark on the north wall.

If characters fight their way through the barricade instead of talking, the dwarves retreat and take up secondary defensive positions in their quarters. The surviving duergar flip sturdy wooden tables onto their sides to form a barricade that gives them three-quarters cover. They establish this along the north wall of the room so it blocks the exit. When characters enter the room, the duergar loose their crossbows from behind the tables.

Once the situation reaches this point, it's no longer possible to negotiate with the duergar. The dwarves believe the characters are here to kill them, so they fight without hesitation or thought of surrender. When four or more duergar have been killed, however, the remaining dwarves disengage and dash into the supply room (area 16), where they try to hide behind barrels and boxes. They keep fighting if characters track them down, but they fight fatalistically and without much tactical sense.

The quarters contain the dwarves' personal effects.

- 60 crossbow bolts
- 6 mining picks
- 2 sets of carpenter's tools
- 3 sets of mason's tools
- 20 silver trade bars (worth 3 sp each)
- the logbook of the mission

The logbook is written in Dwarvish. Early entries were written by Eltha and later entries were written by Dagmarskohn; their handwriting is notably different. The logbook details the dwarves' initial success with the giant laborers and mentions Huppo's ability to melt stone. One of the late entries questions why the giant hasn't tried to escape the main worship hall, given his ability to crush and dissolve rocks.

## 16. SUPPLY ROOM

This room is noticeably colder than other areas you've been in the temple. The floor is stacked with dwarf-made crates and barrels. Wooden shelves line the walls on either side of a curtained passage leading north. White and blue lights flash from behind the curtain.

The duergar keep supplies in this room. The crates and barrels contain:

- 2 crates of heavily salted jerky (20 days of iron rations)
- 1 half-full barrel of water (40 waterskins worth)
- 6 flasks of duergar whiskey
- 1 sack containing 5 lb. of dried fruit

- pots, pans, and cooking utensils
- plates, bowls, mugs, and eating utensils
- 25 torches

The shelves on either side of the curtained exit contain the various treasures and artifacts the dwarves managed to collect before the excavation mission went wrong. Most of what's here is carved curios depicting the spiral motif, bits of broken pottery, and tattered woven rugs. There are six items of particular interest: 4 azurite disks with spirals carved into them (worth 10 gp each), a 3-lb. chunk of uncut azurite (worth 100 gp), and a +1 *warhammer* with silver spirals inlaid on the head.

Duergar who fled from the battle in their quarters will be found hiding in this room, where they make a final stand. If a fight occurs here, or even if characters make much noise while searching the room, Eltha emerges from her quarters (17) and attacks.

## 17. ELTHA'S CHAMBER

This small room looks markedly different from other areas of the temple. The stone walls are smooth as if pressed, and their surface appears to undulate slightly, almost like a liquid, if you stare at it for more than a few seconds. A wall-to-wall spiral motif is etched into the floor. Its channels appear eroded, as if they were carved by water flowing over the rock for centuries.

Eltha occupies this room; Youm currently occupies Eltha. The tiara that Eltha found in the ritual chamber formed a mental link to the primordial god, similar to Ilda's experience so many years ago (see the appendix for the temple's history). Youm has little patience for deception now and seeks total control of the duergar. Through her, Youm plans to bring his will and his larvae to the duergar cities below. Aside from the tiara of Youm, this room holds nothing of value.

Read the following when the characters face Eltha. Include the final sentence only if at least one of the characters understands Dwarven. Otherwise, indicate only that she speaks to them in Dwarven but they can't understand what she said.

A female duergar steps into view. Her midnight black hair floats through the air as though immersed in water. Her face contorts, showing rage and fear simultaneously. Bright blue and white light shines from her eyes in a swirling spiral pattern. "I shall be known, and released," she says in Dwarven, in a voice containing two distinct pitches.

Eltha is inhabited by the malevolent spirit of Youm (a **spark**), making her tougher than the typical duergar. The spirit of Youm replaces the normal spell-like abilities of the spark with the following:

At will: *ray of frost*  
3/day: *animate dead*  
1/day: *ice storm*

The spirit of Youm uses its abilities in place of Eltha's normal attacks. Eltha might reject the spark during combat, as described in the spark's inhabit ability. If Eltha is ever stunned during the fight, she immediately makes a saving throw with advantage against the spark's possession. If Eltha is freed from Youm's grasp, she collapses unconscious on the floor, leaving the spark exposed. Otherwise, she fights to the death.

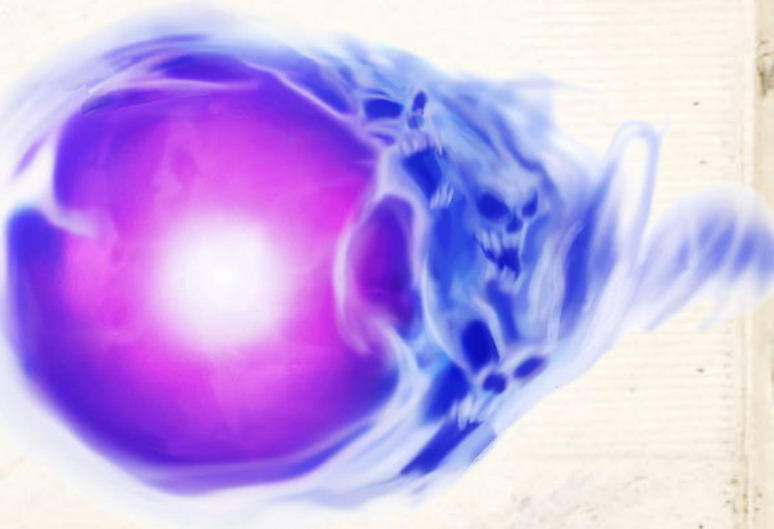
In combat, the spark first uses its *animate dead* spells on the slain duergar, if any are nearby. Then it unleashes its *ice storm*.

## EXPELLING THE SPARK

If Eltha expels the spark during combat in any manner, she passes out and remains unconscious for six hours. She can be roused before then with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) check. She awakens terrified and scrambles like a frightened animal into a corner if allowed to. Only magic or a successful DC 14 Charisma (Persuasion) check calms the rattled dwarf. Once calm, she inquires about her crew. Whether they're dead or alive, she's glad to leave the temple and takes no interest in the treasures in it.

If the spark is driven out of Eltha by any means, it returns into the tiara immediately. Everyone in the chamber can see this happening, as the spark pulses with light and flows into the headpiece. It then tries to inhabit one of the characters at the first opportunity.

**Eltha (Duergar):** AC 16; HP 90 (12d8+36); Spd 25ft; **Melee** war pick (+4, 1d8+2 piercing or 2d8+2 when enlarged); **Ranged** javelin (+4, 30ft/120ft, 1d6+2 piercing or 2d6+2 piercing when enlarged); **SA** enlarge (becomes Large for 1 minute; makes Str checks and saves with advantage; recharges after rest), invisibility (turns invisible until it attacks or enlarges; recharges after rest); **Resist** poison; **Str** +2, **Dex** +0, **Con** +3, **Int** +0, **Wis** +0, **Cha** +1; **Senses** darkvision 120ft; **Traits** duergar resilience (has advantage on saves against poison, spells, illusions, charm, and paralysis), sunlight sensitivity (has disadvantage on attacks and Perception checks that rely on sight while in sunlight); **AL** LE; **CR** 2; **XP** 400.



**Spirit of Youm (Spark):** AC 16; HP 84 (13d4+52); Spd 10ft, fly 60ft; **Melee** inhabit (+6; DC 14 Cha save or target becomes dominated by the spark, as the *dominate person* spell; spark merges into target's body and becomes immune to physical attacks; target gains +4 bonus to Dex and Cha; host repeats saving throw each time spark casts a spell); **Save** Dex +8; **Immune** exhaustion, grappled, lightning, paralyzed, poisoned, prone, restrained, unconscious; Resist acid, fire, force, thunder, plus nonmagical bludgeoning, piercing, slashing; **Str** -3, **Dex** +5, **Con** +4, **Int** +0, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +3; **Senses** darkvision 60ft; **Traits** innate spellcasting; AL CN; CR 7; XP 2,900.

**Innate Spells:** at will—*ray of frost*; 3/day—*animate dead*; 1/day—*ice storm*.

## 18. THE STORY STONES

Just in front of the rubble (19) intended to keep Huppo contained in the worship hall are the story stones of Youm: four large, perfectly smooth half spheres of shiny black stone that rise from the floor. Each stone has a hand print pressed into the top. The stones radiate strong magic.

The duergar avoided the stones entirely, believing they were cursed. Ilda made them in the early days of the temple's creation. They were intended to tell new acolytes the stories of Youm. Given the god's evil deception and the events leading up to the temple's ruinous end, the stones are now imbued with darkness. Numerous stone benches stand south of the stones; they served as seating for an audience of worshippers watching the story stones in use.

A successful DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check suggests that four people could stand between the stones; each could place their hands in the hand prints. A DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) check suggests the stone's magic is ritual based.

To activate the stones, four characters must stand between the stones and place their right hands in the hand prints. The instant this occurs, the characters experience a rushing sensation and have visions of being trapped at the bottom of a long, vertical tunnel. Inform the activating characters that they may choose to know his sadness, his glory, or his love; they must all choose the same to activate the vision. Once all three truths have been seen, move on to Youm's Deception.

In the event that your playing group has fewer than four characters, you have two options. The characters could be joined by one or more cooperative duergar NPCs, if characters negotiated a peaceful settlement at the barricade; these could be duergar who don't want to give up their share of the treasure or who just want revenge against Huppo. Alternatively, you can reduce the number of story stones to equal the number of player characters.

## THE SADNESS OF YOUM

You are alone, trapped in a deep place made from stone. You hunger to see light and taste the nectar of living things. Your feet and hands are bound; above you, a single star torments you.

The activating characters are overwhelmed by a feeling of loneliness and despair. To withstand the emotion, each character must make a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw. Failure results in the character gaining one level of exhaustion. Each character must name the thing they love the most before being able to lift their hand from the stone and escape the pit of sadness. When everyone has done this, they can try again and choose a different vision.

## THE GLORY OF YOUM

You stand at the base of a massive mountain. Drawing on a well of power deep inside you, you raise your hands and the mountain reshapes itself into your image. Clouds churn at your cheeks and snow gathers on your shoulders, mighty, glorious, and unstoppable.

The activating characters are filled with feelings of power and pride. Each must make a successful DC 10 Constitution saving throw to contain the feelings of elation. Failure results in the character taking 3 (1d4 + 1) psychic damage. Each character must recount a humbling experience before being able to lift their hand from the stone. When everyone has done this, they can try again and choose a different vision.

## THE LOVE OF YOUM

You stand over a stone table. Before you, a rapturous acolyte lays bound by the wrists. A beautiful, writhing shard of your god emerges from a hole in the table. It dissolves a hole into the acolyte's neck and worms inside. The acolyte's eyes glow and spiral. Through the love of Youm will they know his glory!

Activating characters are filled with an urge to allow one of the worms in the temple to feed on them. To fight the urge, they must make a successful DC 10 Wisdom saving throw. Failure results in the character becoming obsessed with finding a rime worm larva and allowing it to burrow into their neck. Affected characters repeat the saving throw every 15 minutes, ending the effect on themselves with a success. Unless the proper ritual is performed by a priest of Youm, allowing the larva to feed results in 2 (1d4) piercing damage and ends the obsession. Affected characters aren't manic or violent about this desire, but they can't keep their minds on anything else. Spellcasting and concentration are impossible. Regardless of the saving throw, each character must recount a moment when a sacrifice was made on their behalf to leave this vision. When everyone has done this, they can try again and choose a different vision.



## YOUM'S DECEPTION

Your mind fills with pain. You feel a great sense of betrayal. A dozen of your brothers and sisters writhe on the stone floor, clutching at their heads. One by one, their torment ends as the worm accepted in love emerges teeth first from their skulls. Too late, too late, you use the power of his glory and seal the hall.

The activating characters see the nauseating secret of Youm. Each character who sees the stomach-turning horror of the vision must make a successful DC 15 Constitution save or be poisoned for 1 hour. Poisoned characters can repeat the saving throw every 15 minutes, ending the effect with a success. Characters tumble out of the story stones without any effort. Afterward, read the following:

A watery sound can be heard coming from the area just northeast of the stones. Suddenly, a wave of stone ripples toward you.

The wall hiding the temple's vault (area 21) has turned to flowing stone. Characters must react quickly or be caught by the wave. PCs who are obsessed with Youm's love can avoid the wave normally but proceed on their quest to find a larva once they're safe.

Avoiding the liquid stone requires a successful DC 10 Dexterity saving throw. A failed save results in the character becoming restrained as the stone solidifies again around their feet and ankles. Trapped characters can chip themselves out in 15 minutes with a successful DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check; the check can be repeated every 15 minutes until it succeeds. Those who have mason's tools and proficiency with them can also add their proficiency bonus for that, potentially gaining a double proficiency bonus on the check.

## 19. RUBBLE

Stony rubble is heaped on the floor so that it completely blocks a passage to the north. Foul-smelling air wafts through the rocks from the chambers beyond.

The duergar sealed Huppo into the sanctuary out of fear and anger. The stones are heavy but aren't fitted together with any strategy. All that's needed to remove them is time and strength, but the longer it takes, the more of Huppos' horrid belches the characters will be exposed to.

If a player indicates that their character is inspecting the rubble pile to figure out the most efficient method for clearing the passage, allow that character to make a DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check. Dwarves and characters with appropriate backgrounds (mining, stone carving, etc.) can add their proficiency bonus for that, too. A successful check means a period of rubble-clearing work represents 30 minutes; if the Intelligence check fails or no one asks to make such a check, then each work period represents 60 minutes of effort.

For each work period, the strongest character makes a DC 14 Strength check; other characters can help. The passage to the north is cleared enough for everyone to get through after two successful primary Strength checks.

While this work is going on, Huppo belches once every 60 minutes. When he does, characters hear the belch and see a greenish cloud blowing out through the rubble. Each character in the area is momentarily blinded and takes 3 (1d4 + 1) acid damage plus 3 (1d4 + 1) poison damage; a successful DC 15 Constitution saving throw negates the poison damage only. The gas dissipates in one round. Holding your breath doesn't help; the gas is just as harmful to a person's outside as it is to the inside.

The doorway beyond leads to Ilda's final resting place.

## 20. YOUM'S VAULT

This room has smooth compartments carved into the walls. The compartments are lined with packed earth and contain myriad strangely-shaped stones and gems. A dozen spirals adorn the floor. The east wall is collapsed into rubble, revealing a massive, fossilized serpent's skull.

Youm's glory allowed the acolytes minor stone shaping-powers, which they practiced in the Chamber of Carving (area 11). The most successful of these efforts were considered sacred and stored in the vault. The oddly-shaped stones are of little value but mixed in among them are 2 blue tourmalines shaped into perfect spheres (100 gp each) and a star sapphire with razor-sharp spines (1,000 gp; anyone who handles it without sturdy gloves takes 1 piercing damage; can't be carried in a soft pouch or case, as normal jostling causes the spines to slice through soft material).

The fossilized skull in the east wall is home to a colony of **10 bone crabs** that clatter out and attack if any character approaches within 10 feet of their home.

**Bone Crab:** AC 13; HP 33 (6d6+12); Spd 20ft, swim 10ft; Melee claw (+4, 2d6+2 slashing); SA multiattack (claw x2); Resist bludgeoning; Str +0, Dex +2, Con +2, Int -5, Wis +1, Cha -3; Skills Perception +3, Stealth +4; Senses darkvision 60ft; Traits amphibious, bone camouflage (has advantage on Stealth checks while among bones), hive mind (communicates perfectly with all bone crabs within 100ft), leap (can leap up to 10ft straight ahead or backward), white ghost shivers (living creature that makes physical contact with bone crab must make a successful DC 12 Con save or be infected; disease manifests after 24 hours, beginning as mild chill, becoming fever with frightful hallucinations; at onset, infected creature gains 2 levels of exhaustion that can be removed only by *lesser restoration*, comparable magic, or rest; infected creature repeats saving throw after each long rest, removing 1 level of exhaustion on success; victim recovers when all exhaustion removed); AL N; CR 2; XP 450.

## AN EARTHY REBUKE TO GREED

The precious gems previously listed sit together in a compartment along the north wall. Removing any of them activates the vault's magical wards.

Suddenly, the hard-packed earth lining the wall compartments cracks and tumbles to the floor. Fine dust rises in the room. The soil swirls and coalesces into a vaguely humanoid figure. Its massive fists clench and release before diving headfirst into the stone.

An **earth elemental** forms out of the compartments' lining. It burrows under the party and emerges at the doorway to the vault (19), where it attacks when characters draw near.

In addition to its normal abilities, this earth elemental has **Youm's Rage**: If the elemental moves at least 10 feet straight toward a creature and hits it with a slam attack on the same turn, that creature must make a successful DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or be thrown 5 feet backward and knocked prone.

During combat with the elemental, characters notice its crushing effect on the walls and floor. The elemental's movements inadvertently clear away the rubble from in front of the doorway to the north.

**Earth Elemental**: AC 17; HP 126 (12d10+60); Spd 30ft, burrow 30ft; **Melee** slam (+8, 10ft, 2d8+5 bludgeoning); **SA** multiattack (slam x2); **Immune** exhaustion, paralyzed, petrified, poison, unconscious; **Resist** nonmagical bludgeoning, piercing, slashing; **Vulnerable** thunder; **Str** +5, **Dex** -1, **Con** +5, **Int** -3, **Wis** +0, **Cha** -3; **Senses** darkvision 60ft, tremorsense 60ft; **Traits** earth glide (doesn't disturb earth and stone as it burrows through), siege monster (does double damage to structures and objects); **AL** N; **CR** 5; **XP** 1,800.



## THE SANCTUARY OF BELCHES

See the Sanctuary map for these encounters.

With the rubble cleared from location 19, the party can enter the temple's main worship hall and sanctuary. The area is divided into Ilda's Final Rest (area 21) and the Sanctuary of Belches (area 22).

### 21. ILDA'S FINAL REST

Read this description when characters first see the chamber.

An oval-shaped chamber extends to both east and west. An awful smell wafts into the room from a large exit along the northeast wall. A dizzying number of spirals mark the walls and floor around the exit to the north. The west half of the room contains three tall hollows shaped into the stone wall. Each hollow is filled with hard-packed, dry earth.

Ilda and her most devout followers sealed themselves into these crypts a century ago. When Eltha donned Youm's tiara, the evil deity awakened and its influence inspired other dark awakenings. Ilda and her closest followers dig their way out of their tombs as characters enter the chamber.

The dirt in one of the hollows crumbles slightly, then several large chunks fall to the floor. A hand, translucent and bony, erupts from the surface, and clawed fingers thrust from each hollow.

Clawing their way through the dirt are Ilda (**wraith**) and her followers (**2 putrid haunts**). Ilda appears as a tall, shadowy woman dressed in gray robes embroidered with a



large spiral pattern. Ilda's life drain attack is weaker than a typical wraith's, but she is a spellcaster.

As long as Ilda has 30 or more hit points, on initiative 20 of every round, she causes a sharp stone spike to erupt under the feet of one or two PCs (1d2) of her choice. Affected characters take 3 (1d6) piercing damage and are pushed 5 feet in a random direction; a successful DC 14 Dexterity saving throw negates the damage but not the movement. The spikes are permanent and can't be moved through; smashing a spike requires an action and a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check.

**Ilda (Wraith):** AC 13; HP 67 (9d8+27); Spd 0 ft, fly 60ft; **Melee** life drain (+6, 2d8+3 necrotic and target must make a DC 14 Con save or its maximum HP are reduced by the same amount; HP maximum returns to normal after long rest; creature dies if HP maximum reduced to 0); **SA** create specter (1 corpse within 10ft of wraith, dead no more than 1 minute, rises as specter under wraith's control; limit 7 specters); **Resist** acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder, plus nonmagical/nonsilvered bludgeoning, piercing, slashing; **Immune** charm, exhaustion, grappled, necrotic, paralyzed, poison, prone, restrained; **Str** -2, **Dex** +3, **Con** +3, **Int** +1, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +2; **Senses** darkvision 60ft; **Traits** incorporeal movement, sunlight sensitivity (has disadvantage on attack rolls and Perception checks that rely on sight while in sunlight); AL NE; CR 5; XP 1,800.

**Innate Spells** (DC 14): **at will**—*sacred flame* (necrotic damage); **1/day**—*bane, protection from evil and good, silence*.

**Putrid Haunt (2):** AC 13; HP 44 (8d8+8); Spd 30ft; **Melee** slam (+5, 2d8+3 bludgeoning); **SA** vomit leeches (5ft; 2d6 undead leeches attach to target, which takes 1 necrotic/leech on it at the start of its turn; putrid haunt gains temporary HP equal to damage from leeches; a creature can destroy 1d3 leeches from itself or an adjacent ally as an action); **Immune** charm, exhaustion, poison; **Resist** nonmagical bludgeoning, piercing; **Str** +3, **Dex** -1, **Con** +1, **Int** -2, **Wis** +0, **Cha** -2; **Senses** darkvision 60ft; **Traits** dead still (putrid haunt is invisible while buried in swamp muck), swamp shamble (no movement penalty in marshy terrain); AL NE; CR 2; XP 450.

## DEVELOPMENT

At some time during this battle, Huppo lets go one final, horrendous belch. Time the belch as you see fit, either to create a greater challenge during the battle against Ilda or to maximize the yuck factor just before characters enter the Sanctuary (22). The giant's ingestion of Youm's worms has reached a critical mass. Each character takes 4 (1d4 + 2) acid damage plus 4 (1d4 + 2) poison damage; a successful DC 15 Constitution saving throw halves the damage. Additionally, all characters are incapacitated for 1d4 rounds. The gas dissipates at the end of the round.

## 22. THE SANCTUARY OF BELCHES

A short corridor opens into a large, circular chamber. The ceiling of this place extends up into darkness. On the floor toward the north wall are signs of an excavation that revealed a seemingly bottomless hole.

Seated in the center of the room is a gruesome mass of flesh that vaguely resembles a gigantic, naked humanoid. Its belly is so swollen that the skin is tearing open and bleeding. In one hand, the giant holds a small horn made of stone, and in the other it clenches a writhing cluster of gray worms. It grins luridly at you and puts the horn to its flabby lips.

The characters have reached the source of the poisonous gas and horn blasts. Huppo (**Thursir mutant**, at 22) welcomes them with a psyche-rending blast from the horn. The characters are immersed in waves of sound and terror. The horn blast lasts three rounds, during which all characters are stunned; even deaf characters are affected. Every character must make three saving throws. First is a DC 15 Constitution saving throw to avoid being deafened for 24 hours; success means the character is deafened for only 1 hour. Second is a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw to avoid falling prone as the stone floor buckles and heaves beneath the sonic assault; this chamber and the adjoining corridor become difficult terrain permanently. Third is a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw to avoid being frightened for 1d4 rounds after the blast stops, by visions of Youm's wormy avatar slithering up from the pit in the floor, its voracious maw spiraling madly.

Before the dice are rolled, however, characters can get bonuses on these saving throws if their players describe unique ways their characters resist. Encourage players to get creative with their characters' personalities and gear. You are the judge of how effective their countermeasures are, which saving throws are affected, and whether the character earns a bonus (+1 to +3) or advantage on the roll.

Three chunks of rock in the room are large enough for a Medium creature to shelter behind. Each rock can provide three-quarters cover to one character.

The hole isn't truly bottomless, but it drops hundreds of feet into the earth. Anyone who falls in is killed automatically (not just reduced to 0 hit points) unless they can *fly* or use *feather fall* or comparable magic.

A quick study of Huppo combined with a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check suggests the creature has not moved in a long time. In fact, Huppo can't move. On his first turn in combat, he thrusts the worms into his gullet and then uses his caustic breath against the characters, and he reuses it as often as he can. Huppo has none of the standard physical attacks of Thursir mutants but instead gains the following.

**Spit Worm.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 50/100 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (2d6) piercing damage, and the creature takes 1 piercing damage at the start of each of Huppo's turns until the worm is removed. A creature can use an action to remove a worm automatically from itself or from an adjacent creature.

**Putrid Aura.** Characters that start their turn within 10 feet of Huppo take 4 (1d4 + 2) poison damage, or half damage with a successful DC 14 Constitution saving throw.

When Huppo is reduced to 40 or fewer hit points, read the following.

The floor trembles and shakes, and you feel the air vibrating like water around a swimming snake. The vibrations are rippling outward from the gaping hole in the floor. A huge, toothy maw emerges from the darkness, rises until it towers over the chamber, then plunges down on the horrified giant and bites. Blood and bile spray across the floor as the worm raises its head, leaving only the bottom half of your former foe slumped and oozing across the stones.



This **rime worm** is the avatar of Youm. After eating Huppo, it tries to eat the characters. Depending on how difficult you want the encounter to be, the avatar can be joined by one (hard) or two (deadly) **rime worm grubs** to assist it. The avatar and its worms are not affected by the difficult terrain in the chamber.

If characters kill all the rime worms, they can explore the sanctuary. The horn (*Youm's Clarion*, see appendix) lies beside the gory remains of the giant. In the rubble of the excavation that exposed the avatar's tunnel is a duergar-made iron box containing chisels, wedges, hammers, and a *gem of seeing*.

**Huppo (Mutant Thursir Giant):** AC 16; HP 143 (15d10+60); **Spd** 10ft; **Ranged** spit worm (+6, 50ft, 2d6 piercing and creature takes 1 piercing at start of each of Huppo's turns until worm is removed with an action); **SA** digestive spray (30ft cone; 6d6 poison damage and creatures are poisoned for 1 minute; DC 15 Dex save for half damage and no poisoning; recharge 5-6); **Save** Con +6; **Immune** poison; **Str** +4, **Dex** +0, **Con** +4, **Int** +1, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +0; **Skills** Athletics +6, Perception +4; **Senses** darkvision 60ft; **Traits** putrid aura (creatures that start their turn within 10ft take 1d4+2 poison; DC 14 Con save for half); **AL** NE or LE; **CR** 3; **XP** 700.



**Avatar of Youm (Rime Worm Adult):** AC 13; HP 45 (6d8+8); Spd 30ft, swim 30ft, burrow (snow, ice) 30ft; **Melee** tendril (+8, 10ft, 1d6+5 slashing; target is grappled if 2 tendrils hit same target in 1 turn, escape DC 15), devour (+8, 2d12+5 slashing, plus 2d12 cold if target was grappled); **SA** multiattack (tendrils x2), black ice spray (recharge 5-6; 30ft line; 4d12 necrotic damage and targets must make DC 15 Con saves or be blinded; blinded creature repeats save at end of its turns); **Saves** Str +8, Con +8; **Immune** cold; **Str** +5, **Dex** +2, **Con** +5, **Int** -2, **Wis** +2, **Cha** -4; **Senses** darkvision 200ft; **Traits** born of rime (breathes air and water), ringed by ice and death (enemies within 5ft at start of rime worm's turn take 1d4 cold plus 1d4 necrotic; if 2 or more enemies take damage, black ice spray recharges automatically); **AL** N; **CR** 6; **XP** 2,300.

**Rime Worm Grub (0-2):** AC 15; HP 105 (10d10+50); Spd 30ft, swim 30ft, burrow (snow, ice) 30ft; **Melee** tendril (+5, 1d6+3 slashing), gnash (+5, 2d8+3 slashing); **SA** multiattack (tendrils + gnash); **Saves** Str +5, Con +5; **Resist** cold; **Str** +3, **Dex** +1, **Con** +3, **Int** -3, **Wis** +1, **Cha** -4; **Senses** darkvision 200ft; **Traits** born of rime (breathes air and water), ravenous (can make opportunity attacks against disengaging enemies); **AL** N; **CR** 2; **XP** 450.



## RETURNING TO OLSHA

The streets of Olsha are all but empty. A strange sound is heard coming from the homes of the small village. After a time, it becomes clear the residents are fast asleep; their snoring resonates between the humble buildings.

Mayor Brulle is overjoyed to see the characters have survived and returned. A small celebration is held at the Icicle in their honor, and the characters are paid what they were promised.

The characters now own a small, sturdy manor in the town of Olsha. It can comfortably house six Medium-size humanoids. It contains everything the characters need to live a modest lifestyle and should make an excellent home base for further adventures in the region.

With a comfortable home base established, the characters are ready to explore the northern region. There are countless directions to take the story in; here are two ideas to get you started.

- Aomy and Brista arrive in Olsha shortly after the characters return to town. They bring the news that the death of Pinelord Harxox enraged the chieftains of the nomadic orcs, who are planning war. The pair offer the characters a chance to join them in the fight.
- A passage in the temple leads to an ancient complex containing a portal to Youm's fortress on another plane. Though Youm's avatar is defeated, the evil deity's influence on the region gradually increases until something must be done.

# APPENDIX

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE TEMPLE OF YOUM

The following is a general outline of the temple's history. You can provide dates where and as needed, to suit your own campaign.

- Ilda, a barbarian shaman, discovers a discarded silver tiara in a cave. Donning the tiara, she is possessed by the spirit of Youm, a primordial deity.
- The spirit leads Ilda to a magical horn and shapes the cave into a proper temple.
- Through Ilda, the spirit opens a tunnel to the god's minions and avatar, a colony of icy worms locked deep in the earth.
- Worshipers are drawn to the temple, and they become convinced the worms are symbiotes that grant their hosts divine powers. Ilda requires all followers to merge with worms.
- The worms proliferate. Worshipers grow in number until Ilda commands fifty acolytes.
- Eventually the worms destroy their hosts, emerging to bring nutrients to Youm's avatar. Ilda, horrified, seals herself and her followers in the temple.
- The temple sits empty for decades or centuries.
- Duergar led by Eltha arrive to excavate and plunder the temple.

## NEW MAGICAL ITEMS

### FRAUGHASHAR EARMUFFS

*Wondrous item, uncommon*

Made from crude leather and suspect wool, these earmuffs can be worn by any Small or Medium humanoid. They are so uncomfortable to wear that the first time they are donned, the wearer must make a successful DC 10 Constitution saving throw or tear them off and throw them to the ground. A wearer is effectively deafened while wearing the earmuffs. They provide advantage on saving throws to avoid the effects of the *Clarion of Youm*.

### YOUM'S TIARA

*Wondrous item, unique (requires attunement)*

This simple, silver tiara is cursed and has but one purpose: to allow the spirit of the primordial god Youm to possess the wearer. When the tiara attunes to a creature, the wearer is immediately subjected to the inhabit attack of the spirit of Youm (spark). A character inhabited by the spark is completely under its control, and the spark uses its abilities in place of the character's. Youm replaces the spark's standard spell-like abilities with the following: **At will**—*ray of frost*; **3/day**—*animate dead*; **1/day**—*ice storm*. Removing the tiara doesn't break the inhabitation or the curse. The cursed character won't willingly part with the tiara, and *remove curse* and comparable magic don't break Youm's hold on the inhabited character; the spark must be expelled as described in the monster's description.

### BANDS OF YOUM

*Wondrous item, uncommon*

These simple leather straps are nearly unbreakable when used as restraints. They can be used on the wrists or ankles of a Small or Medium creature. Escaping from the bands requires a successful DC 25 Strength (Athletics) check, and the wearer has disadvantage on all Strength checks.

### CLARION OF YOUM

*Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement by a bard)*

This instrument of the bards is magically carved from a single chunk of stone, but with a separate stone mouthpiece. Playing this horn is extremely dangerous if the user is not attuned to it. Any note sounded on the horn by a non-attuned creature comes out as a deafening blast that can be heard for 10 miles. Creatures within 1 mile must make a successful DC 14 Constitution saving throw or be stunned for one minute and deafened for 24 hours. If properly attuned by a bard, the horn can be used to cast *stone shape*, *meld into stone*, or *blindness/deafness* (3rd level), in a manner identical to any other instrument of the bards.

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