

CCC-JGD-01



Left Black & Blue

A Red War Story

JASPER'S GAME DAY

With Red Wizards and fouler things about, a power struggle among forgotten foes draws adventurers into peril. A Two-Hour Adventure for Tier 3 Characters. Optimized for APL 13.

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Adventure Primer

The enemy of my enemy is my friend

– Sanskrit Proverb.

Background

While all eyes of the heroic factions have been focused on the Thayans, who they believe to be a menace and a corrupting influence, an older source of troubles for the people of Mulmaster has been allowed to regain strength: the elemental evil cults. Quickest to rise was the Cult of Eternal Flame, who experienced a schism that resulted in a flame cultist taking the lead of the Cult of Black Earth. Following their reorganization, they were swift to make deal with the Thayans who sought to control the elemental rifts throughout Mulmaster.

Now the old master of the Cult of Eternal Flame leads the Cult of Black Earth, but not all are happy about the change in leadership. One among the black earth members, **YARSHA STONEMELDER**, recalls how adventurers were hired to slay her previous leader, Marlos Unrayle. No longer a cultist, Yarsha has headed for the **TRAVELER'S CLOAK INN** to find a group of adventurers to do her own dirty work – which just happens to also ruin the plans of the Thayans.

Episodes

The adventure's story is spread over three **story episodes** that take approximately **two hours** to play in total. The adventure begins with a **Call to Action** scene.

If you're planning to play the entire adventure at once, you only need to introduce the **Call to Action** once. However, if you plan to play them over several sessions, you'll want to revisit the **Call to Action** each time you play.

- **Episode 1: Hone-stony Will Get You Everywhere.** The characters are recruited to pierce the **STONEVAULT** by entering at the **HAMMER-FELLED TREE**. This is the **Call to Action**.
- **Episode 2: Stone-Faced Killer.** Within the reclaimed Stonevault, the characters may encounter the Thayan overseer and gain proof of the pact between the Red Wizards and the cultists – which would be in useful to turn Mulmasterites against the Thayans. This is **Story Objective A**.
- **Episode 3: We Who Are About to Rock Salute You.** The characters press into the central sanctum to defeat the Black Earth Hierophant and stop the cult from controlling the **EARTH RIFT**. This is **Story Objective B**.

Bonus Objectives

However, this adventure also includes two, 1-hour bonus objectives that the characters can pursue if they have additional time to do so—earning additional **advancement and treasure checkpoints** in the process. These bonus objectives are found in this adventure's appendices, as follows:

- **Bonus Objective A: Objective Title. Between a Rock and a Hard Place.** At the **HAMMER-FELLED TREE**, the characters meet other former Cult of Black Earth members and are able to gain information from them that is invaluable to piercing the **STONEVAULT**. This bonus objective is found in **Appendix 3**.
- **Bonus Objective B: Gneiss to Meet You.** Within the **STONEVAULT**, the characters find war machine forges going strong – and their operation blocks the way to the main sanctum. The characters must disrupt the operations and obtain the secret plans to press on. This bonus objective is found in **Appendix 4**.

Episode Sequence

Depending on your time constraints, play style and environment, this adventure takes approximately two-to-four hours to play.

How Will You Play?

The duration of your session depends on how much of this adventure you utilize. At the very least, your session will last approximately **2 hours**. However, if you wish, you can provide a longer experience for your players by utilizing the **bonus objectives**.

Story Objectives Only. To complete the both of the adventure's story objectives, the characters play in Episodes 1 through 3 in order.

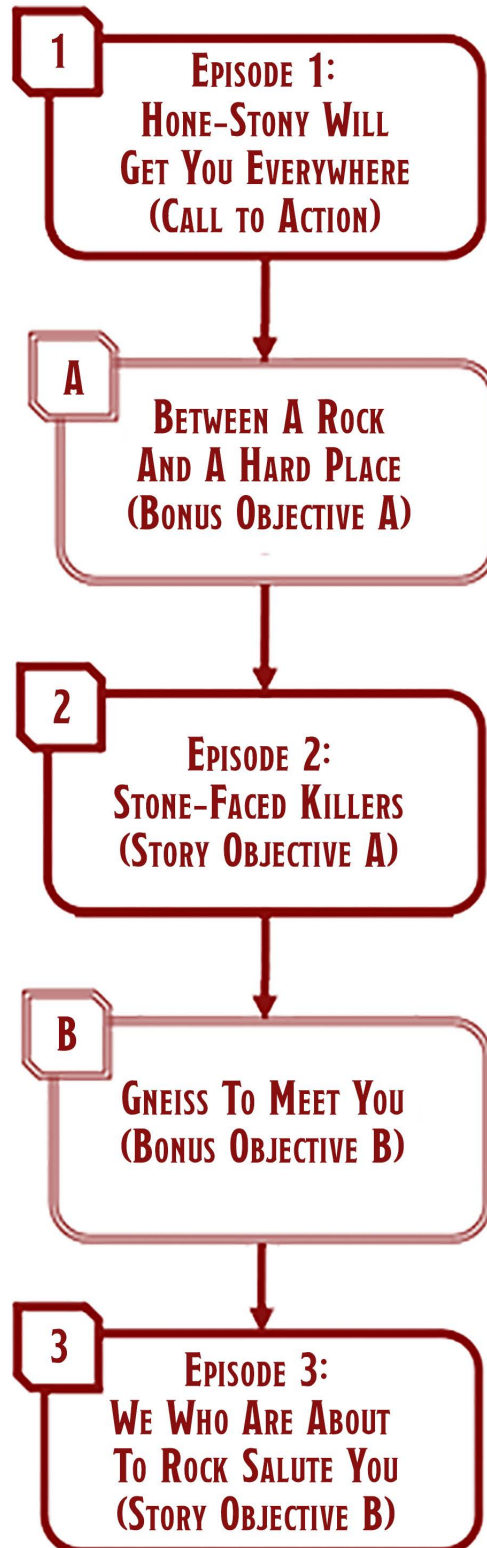
Bonus Objectives. You can extend this adventure by **one- or two- hours** by utilizing the bonus objectives provided in the appendices. These objectives branch off Episode 2 and 3, but their order is fluid—they set the scene for the final episode and may even have an impact on the events that transpire.

On the Precipice of War!

At the beginning of the adventure, Hierophant Lucratsio has begun to use the Earth Rift in a worship chamber found in the heart of the Stonevault to summon Ogremoch's agent, Urthok the Endless, a titanic earth elemental and a primary antagonist in The Red War. After eight uninterrupted hours of the casting, the ritual will release the monstrosity to pierce the rift and move into the material plane, where it will begin to destroy the city so it can return to the natural earth (outside Thayan controlled areas, at least). If the characters take a long rest during the adventure, the evil will be let loose upon Mulmaster.

Episode 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.



Episode 1: Hone-stony Will Get You Everywhere (Call to Action)

Estimated Duration: 15 minutes

Setting: The Traveler's Cloak Inn

The adventure begins in the Traveler's Cloak Inn, where the characters are introduced to Yarsha Stonemelder by the proprietor, Dela. How the characters came to be at the Traveler's Cloak may be one of the following options:

- **Faction Activity.** Characters with the Safe Haven background feature have likely found themselves here as it is a frequent meeting place for the factions of adventurers who are planning to strike against the Thayans.
- **Excellent Place to Spend Coin.** The Traveler's Cloak is one of the finest establishments in Mulmaster, and one of the best places for adventurers to find work. Catering to a wide variety of sell-swords means a wide variety of high quality food and drink at premium prices.

Area Information

The Traveler's Cloak Inn has the following general features:

Dimensions & Terrain. The Traveler's Cloak makes its bread and butter on successful adventurers, merchants, and nobility. Its opulence and prices are reflective of that, at 20 gp a night (plus 5 gp per stabled animal). The common room has space for 20 tables, and offers a wide selection of foods prepared by a Waterdhavian chef as well as an ale and wine cellar tended to by a master dwarven brewer and sommelier. The tables are well spaced apart and in a somewhat haphazard pattern to disrupt the energies of the Weave and to provide privacy here.

Lighting. The Traveler's Cloak is well appointed with a grand fireplace that illuminates the common area, and affixed driftglobes provide soothing light to the private tables.

Sounds. The inn has a resident bard, exceptional firbolg harpist Sheyanla, serving as the house entertainment. Characters attempting to earn free room or board as entertainment must beat Sheyanla's Charisma (Performance) check of +14. The androgynous firbolg is graceful and reserved in victory or defeat.

Creatures/NPCs

Dela, a human woman, is the owner of the Traveler's Cloak Inn, and a fixer of some renown in Mulmaster. When a patron paid for the evening with a thumb-

sized emerald, she knew that they had the kind of problems that adventurers should handle. Dela is supported by a vibrant redheaded woman human with a vicious tongue named Grace and a handsome, self-centered triton named Sebastyen.

Yarsha sits at a table to the side with an excellent view of Sheyanla's performance. She has asked for a large table – another sign to Dela that she expects company.

Objectives/Goals. Dela's goal is to connect a serious set of adventurers with Yarsha. Yarsha's goal is to hire capable adventurers. To that end, she's paid Dela well and positions herself at an open table with three to seven open seats.

What Do They Know? Dela knows Yarsha has been here for about an hour and is clearly waiting for sellswords. Yarsha knows the following:

- The cults of Fire and Earth have been able to rise again because local authorities have been busy working to keep the peace with the Thayans.
- The Water and Air cults have not yet regained a foothold in Mulmaster.
- The Earth cult has new, ambitious leadership with allies in the Fire cult and must be stopped.
- She suspects that the Thayans are working with the elemental cults but has no proof – otherwise she'd go to the Hawks and the Blades instead of looking for adventurers to check it out.
- Yarsha knows that the Earth cult is planning something terrible that could happen any day now and encourages the Adventurers to act with haste.
- Yarsha doesn't know exactly what is happening but she knows that there is something terrible happening in the Stonevault.
- If pressed about how she knows these things, she will reluctantly admit she is a former Black Earth cultist. She refuses to join the adventurers in their mission.

Call to Action

Yarsha charges the characters with two tasks: find proof that the Thayans and the Cult of Black Earth are in cahoots and dissipate the Elemental Earth Rift in the Stonevault. To that end, she gives the characters a map to the abandoned Hammer-Felled Tree, a former pub with an entrance into the Stonevault.

Episode 2: Stone-Faced Killers (Story Objective A)

Estimated Duration: 60 minutes

Setting: The Sanctum of Sorrow

Within the reclaimed Stonevault, the first large chamber has been claimed by Kyros, a Thayan serving as overseer to make sure that the Cult of Black Earth performs well. And if they don't, they'll make excellent zombies in the ranks of the Thayan armies.

Prerequisites

The characters must complete the **Call to Action** before beginning this episode.

Story Objective A

Within Kyros's sanctum are contracts and documents that prove that the Cult of Black Earth is receiving support from Thayan allies. However, as the Thayan project manager, the **archmage** Kyros is unwilling to give them up.

In order to dismantle the cult's war machine, the characters must put an end to both workshops and stop the flow of stones down the chutes so they can access the Earth Rift in the chamber above.

Area Information

This area features:

Dimensions & Terrain. Kyros's sanctum is near the entrance, as he likes to keep an eye on the comings and goings of the cultists that he considers under his purview. The area is made of stone and marked with mosaics and icons to Ogremoch, which Kyros has largely ignored. Thick, black metal chains hang from the walls and across the floor, making many areas difficult terrain.

Sounds & Smells. The area smells of old earth, and the gentle rattle of chains can be heard.

Flammable. While some of Kyros's relics are fire resistant, many his maps, notes, and diagrams are written on paper. If there is area of effect fire damage, it may be difficult to prove anything of note.

Lighting. The lighting in this area is provided by ambient bright blue light from the cave walls.

A Red War Story

The following two effects are in play as soon as the characters enter the Stonevault as it has been a test area for Thayan magic.

Szass Tam's Necrotic Kiss

Szass Tam – with the aid of Zulkir Dar'lon Ma – has used the Stonevault as testing ground for a series of enchantments that will blanket the city of Mulmaster. All living humanoids other than those intentionally excluded by Szass Tam and the Zulkir are immediately afflicted with the following curse: Szass Tam's Necrotic Kiss. Any living creature that ends its turn within 5 feet of this creature must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or else immediately gain one level of exhaustion.

Cancerous Magic

The Thayans have been toiling away in an effort to harness the rifts into the elemental plane. These rifts are an abomination in the fabric of the Weave, and magic has begun to behave erratically as a result. Every spell that is cast by the characters and their allies automatically triggers a wild surge as per the chaos magic archetype for wizards in the Player's Handbook. Furthermore, any creature afflicted with Szass Tam's Necrotic Kiss has disadvantage on the first saving throw they make each round. NPCs in the Stonevault are not subject to these effects

Playing the Pillars

COMBAT

Kyros focuses on castings of counterspell (accompanied by quips of his superiority) and spells such as banishment to reduce the number of foes. His allies punish grouped adventurers in non-difficult terrain.

EXPLORATION

Investigating the area can unearth enough documents (if unburned) that provide proof of collusion between the Red Wizards and the Cult of Black Earth.

SOCIAL

Kyros is a proud and imperious Thayan archmage. If interrogated, he is willing to monologue and share details of Szass Tam's plan to take over the city.

Scene A. Sanctum of Sorrow

Proceed here if the scene moves to combat.

Creatures/NPCs

Kyros the Thayan **archmage** is here overseeing the activities of the Cult of Black Earth and conferring with a **chain devil** that serves as the mage's enforcer. The chain devil's pet **bulette** lurks nearby, always hungry for those that fail Kyros.

Objectives/Goals. Kyros's main goal is to see the Cult of Black Earth rise to be an important tool of the Red Wizards - and to gain the prestige of managing the cultists.

What Do They Know? Kyros knows that the Cult of Black Earth is trying to use their earth rift to cause trouble in Mulmaster, but he frankly doesn't care, as long as it does more harm to the factions and nobles. He also knows that Szass Tamm and Zulkir Dar'lon Ma have placed great importance in the Stonevault as an area to test their greater plans for Mulmaster, including powerful war machines and unstoppable magics. If these nosey adventurers know what's good for them, they'll flee the city before it is too late.

Due to a permanent *alarm* spell, Kyros is immediately alerted to anyone entering his sanctum.

Adjusting the Scene

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this scene:

- **Strong:** Add a second **chain devil** in Kyros's service.
- **Very Strong:** Add a second and third **chain devil** (total of three) in Kyros's service.

Treasure & Rewards

If Kyros and his servitors are defeated, the characters find:

- Provided they weren't burned during combat, documents proving that the Thayans rallied the Cult of Black Earth and put Slabneck Ingotbeard from the Cult of Eternal Flame in charge. This is **Story Objective A**.
- Kyros's spellbook (see his stat block and add the *gate* spell)

Episode 3: We Who Are About to Rock Salute You (Story Objective B)

Estimated Duration: 45 minutes

Setting: The Stonevault Worship Chamber

The Adventurers come face to face with the unleashed elemental's might and its fervent followers as they do battle with one of the new cult leaders.

The Grand Worship Chamber

The heart of the and renovated Stonevault is its worship chamber. Here, Hierophant Lucratsio and his flock commune with the earth rift that the Thayans taught them to stabilize while seeking guidance from Ogremoch.

Prerequisites

This episode follows Bonus Objective B in Appendix 4 if it is included in the playthrough.

Story Objective B

The Adventurers must find a way to deactivate the Earth Rift and defeat Hierophant Lucratsio.

Area Information

This area features:

Dimensions & Terrain. The worship chamber is 40 feet high, 50 feet wide, and 35 feet long. It features a number of stone pews which can provide cover against ranged attacks, and the center is dominated by the 20 feet high 15 feet wide 2 feet long earth rift. The area is primarily unworked stone that has been modified through spell and devotion, and much of it is difficult terrain save for a few spots.

Focusing Crystals. Arrayed around the earth rift are five focusing crystals - translucent, dark minerals which just about a foot up from the ground. These help to stabilize the rift and have 60 HP, immunity to psychic and poison damage, vulnerability to thunder damage, and an AC of 14. If one is destroyed, the rift begins to escalate wildly (see **The Rift Destabilized**). If all are destroyed, the rift is destroyed as well. In addition, a Strength (Athletics) check of 26, an Intelligence (Arcana) check of 24, or a Dexterity (Thieves' Tools) check of 24 can disable one crystal as an action.

Lighting. 6 braziers hanging on the wall that glow blue with arcane intensity provide bright light.

Scene A. Call to Ore-Ship

The Adventurers must find a way to deactivate the Earth Rift and defeat Hierophant Lucratsio.

Objectives

The Hierophant's objective is to continue reverent worship of the earth rift to keep it stable until Ogremoch sends his agent to crush the city and bring it back to rubble.

What Do They Know?

It is only through the Hierophant's focus and the support of his faithful that they are able to use the Thayan crystals to stabilize the link to Ogremoch. This requires them to hold their concentration. If it is broken, one of the focusing crystals shatters, and the rift begins to destabilize.

The Rift Destabilized

When the rift is destabilized, the connection to the elemental plane of earth is disrupted and two **earth elemental myrmidons** and a **bulette** are ejected into the worship chamber. They and Lucratsio immediately attack the party (unless Lucratsio was convinced otherwise).

At the start of every round after the first, refer to the destabilization table below:

D4	Destabilization
1	The rift and the myrmidon change to be of air element. The rift spirals out of control if it was not air before. The rift activates an additional time this turn - immediately - and one of the focusing crystals is destroyed.
2	The rift and the myrmidons change to be of water element.
3	The rift and the myrmidons change to be of fire element.
4	The rift and the myrmidons change to be of earth element. The rift stabilizes, and its next effect is at +2 to the save difficulty or attack roll, and the damage increases one step if not already deadly.

After the rift is closed, the Stonevault begins to collapse - proceed to Episode 6.

Adjusting the Scene

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this scene:

- **Very Weak or Weak:** Remove an **earth elemental myrmidon**.
- **Strong or Very Strong:** Add an **earth elemental myrmidon** and change the faithful to **cultists**.

Playing the Pillars

COMBAT

This objective can be completed violently by simply killing all enemy combatants and destroying the focusing crystals.

EXPLORATION

While none of the focusing crystals are disturbed, the Hierophant and his flock are undisturbed by the presence of Adventurers as they rightly know that keeping the rift stable requires their full attention.

SOCIAL

The Hierophant is devoted to Ogremoch but also is beginning to have doubts about whether the Thayans have aided the cult or are merely using the faithful for their own nefarious ends. If the Adventurers take a social approach, they can turn Lucratsio to their side - making him an ally in the combat.

Wrap-Up: Concluding the Adventure

When the Adventurers reach the door to the Stonevault after defeating the faithful and deactivating the rift, they find any of the surviving exiles huddled together in the cellar of the Hammer-Felled Tree. These exiles are the same ones from Bonus Objective A. "The dead surround us, and Thay has brought war to Mulmaster! Nowhere is safe!" If the characters magically escaped, a character nearby native to that area gives the same information - the Red War has begun!

Adventure Rewards

At the end of the session, the characters each receive rewards based upon their accomplishments. These rewards include advancement and treasure, and may include player rewards—magic item unlocks, story awards, or new downtime activities, as follows:

Advancement and Treasure Checkpoints

The characters receive **1** advancement checkpoint(s) and 2 treasure checkpoint(s) for each **story objective** **that** they complete, as follows:

- **Story Objective A:** < Defeat the Archmage >
- **Story Objective B:** < Destroy the Rift >

The characters receive 1 advancement checkpoint(s) and 2 treasure checkpoint(s) for each **bonus objective** that they complete, as follows:

- **Bonus Objective A:** < Solve the Puzzle >
- **Bonus Objective B:** < Interact with the Dao >

Player Rewards

The characters earn the following player rewards for **completing the adventure**:

Magic Item Unlock

Characters completing the adventure unlock:
+2 Stone Plate. Made so that it cannot be affected by the heat in the dungeon and can be worn by druids. This item can be found in **Appendix 6**.

Dungeon Master Rewards

In exchange for running this adventure, you earn **advancement and treasure checkpoints** and downtime as though you played the adventure, but none of the adventure's **player rewards**.

However, this adventure may qualify for rewards earned by completing DM Quests. See the ALDMG (*Adventurers League Dungeon Master's Guide*) for more information about DM Quests.

Appendix 1: Locations & NPCs

The following NPCs and locations feature **prominently** in this adventure.

- Yarsha Stonemelder (YAR-sha Stone Mel DER).
She may know more than she lets on – she may be a fanatic following an evil god, but she knows not to let that on to the people she’s trying to hire. She’s got a stone-cold poker face, and a convincing web to weave.

Appendix 2: Creature Statistics

Air Elemental Myrmidon

Medium Elemental, neutral

Armor Class 18 (plate)

Hit Points 117 (18d8+36)

Speed 30 ft. Fly 30ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	9 (-1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Damage Resistances Lightning, Thunder; Bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from non magical weapons

Damage Immunities Poison

Condition Immunities Paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone

Senses Darkvision 60ft

Languages Auran and a language of the creator's choice.

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Actions

Multiattack. The myrmidon makes three flail attacks.

Flail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

Lightning Strike (Recharge 6). *The myrmidon makes one flail attack. If the attack hits, it deals an extra 18 (4d8) lightning damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or be stunned until the end of the myrmidon's next turn.*

Archmage

Medium Humanoid, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 12 (15 with mage armor)

Hit Points 99 (18d8+18)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	20 (+5)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Int +9, Wis +6

Skills Arcana +13, History +13

Damage Resistances Damage from spells; nonmagical bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing (from Stoneskin)

Senses Passive Perception 12

Languages Any six languages.

Challenge 12 (8,400 XP)

Actions

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

Spellcasting. *The archmage is an 18th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 17, +9 to hit with spell attacks). The archmage can cast disguise self and invisibility at will and has the following wizard spells prepared:*

- **Cantrips (at will):** fire bolt, light, mage hand, prestidigitation, shocking grasp
 - **1st level (4 slots):** detect magic, identify, mage armor*, magic missile
 - **2nd level (3 slots):** detect thoughts, mirror image, misty step
 - **3rd level (3 slots):** counterspell, fly, lightning bolt
 - **4th level (3 slots):** banishment, fire shield, stoneskin*
 - **5th level (3 slots):** cone of cold, scrying, wall of force
 - **6th level (1 slot):** globe of invulnerability
 - **7th level (1 slot):** teleport
 - **8th level (1 slot):** mind blank*
 - **9th level (1 slot):** time stop
- * **The archmage casts these spells on itself before combat.**

Dagger *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

Dagger *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 20/60ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

Bulette

Large Monstrosity, unaligned

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 94 (9d10+45)

Speed 40 ft. Burrow 40ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	11 (+0)	21 (+5)	2 (-4)	10 (+0)	5 (-3)

Skills Perception +6

Senses Darkvision 60ft, Tremorsense 60ft, Passive Perception 16

Languages Terran and a language of the creator's choice

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Magical Weapons The myrmidon's attacks are magical

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: (4d12 + 4) piercing damage.*

Deadly Leap. *If the bulette jumps at least 15 ft. as part of its movement, it can then use this action to land on its feet in a space that contains one or more other creatures. Each of those creatures must succeed on a DC 16 Strength or Dexterity saving throw (target's choice) or be knocked prone and take 14 (3d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage plus 14 (3d6 + 4) slashing damage. On a successful save, the creature takes only half the damage, isn't knocked prone, and is pushed 5 ft. out of the bulette's space into an unoccupied space of the creature's choice. If no unoccupied space is within range, the creature instead falls prone in the bulette's space.*

Chain Devil

Medium fiend, lawful evil

Armor Class 16 (natural)

Hit Points 85 (10d8+40)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	15 (+2)	18 (+4)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Con +7, Wis +4, Cha +5

Damage Resistances Cold; Bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from onmagical wWeapons that aren't silvered

Damage Immunities Fire, Poison

Condition Immunities Poisoned

Senses Darkvision 120ft, Passive Perception 8

Languages Infernal, Telepathy 120 ft.

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Devil's Site 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 two attacks with its chains.

Chain. *Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: (2d6 + 4) slashing damage. The target is grappled (escape DC 14) if the devil isn't already grappling a creature. Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained and takes 7 (2d6) piercing damage at the start of each of its turns.*

Animate Chains (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest)

Up to four chains the devil can see within 60 feet of it magically sprout razor-edged barbs and animate under the devil's control, provided that the chains aren't being worn or carried. Each animated chain is an object with AC 20, 20 hit points, resistance to piercing damage, and immunity to psychic and thunder damage. When the devil uses Multiattack on its turn, it can use each animated chain to make one additional chain attack. An animated chain can grapple one creature of its own but can't make attacks while grappling. An animated chain reverts to its inanimate state if reduced to 0 hit points or if the devil is incapacitated or dies.

Reactions. Unnerving Mask. When a creature the devil can see starts its turn within 30 feet of the devil, the devil can create the illusion that it looks like one of the creature's departed loved ones or bitter enemies. If the creature can see the devil, it must succeed on a DC14 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened until the end of its turn

Champion

Medium Humanoid, any alignment

Armor Class 18 (plate)

Hit Points 143 (22d8+44)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)	10 (+10)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Str +9, Con +6

Skills Athletics +9, Intimidation +5, Perception +6

Languages any one language (usually Common).

Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Indomitable (2/Day). The champion rerolls a failed saving throw.

Second Wind (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). As a bonus action, the champion can regain 20 hit points.

Actions

Multiattack. The champion makes three attacks with its greatsword or its light crossbow.

Greatsword. Melee Weapon Attack: +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 12 (2d6+5) slashing damage, plus 7 (2d6) slashing damage if the champion has more than half of its total hit points remaining.

Light Crossbow. Ranged Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d8+2) piercing damage, plus 7 (2d6) piercing damage if the champion has more than half of its total hit points remaining.

Commoner

Medium Humanoid, neutral

Armor Class 10 (none)

Hit Points 4 (1d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Actions

Maul. *Melee Weapon Attack: +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: (1d4) bludgeoning damage.*

Cultist

Medium Humanoid, any alignment

Armor Class 12 (leather)

Hit Points 9 (2d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

Skills Deception +2, Religion +2

Senses Passive Perception 10

Languages Any one language (usually Common)

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Dark Devotion The cultist has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened.

Actions

Scimitar. Melee Weapon Attack: +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: (1d6 + 1) slashing damage.

Dao

Large Elemental, neutral evil

Armor Class 18 (natural)

Hit Points 187 (12d10+105)

Speed 30 ft. Burrow 30 ft, Fly 30ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	10 (+0)	17 (+3)	8 (-1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws Int +5, Wis +5, Cha +6

Condition Immunities Petrified

Senses Darkvision 120 ft., Passive Perception 11

Languages Terran.

Challenge 11 (7,200 XP)

Earth Glide The dao can burrow through nonmagical, unworked earth and stone. While doing so, the dao doesn't disturb the material it moves through.

Elemental Demise If the dao dies, its body disintegrates into crystalline powder, leaving behind only equipment the dao was wearing or carrying.

Innate Spellcasting The dao's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: detect evil and good, detect magic, stone shape

3/day each: passwall, move earth, tongues

1/day each: conjure elemental (earth elemental only), gaseous form, invisibility, phantasmal killer, plane shift, wall of stone

Sure-Footed. The dao has advantage on Strength and Dexterity saving throws made against effects that would knock it prone.

Actions

Multiattack. The dao makes two fist attacks or two maul attacks.

Fist. Melee Weapon Attack: +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 15 (2d8 + 6) bludgeoning damage.

Maul. Melee Weapon Attack: +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 20 (4d6 + 6) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a Huge or smaller creature, it must succeed on a DC 18 Strength check or be knocked prone.

Earth Elemental Myrmidon

Medium Elemental, neutral

Armor Class 18 (plate)

Hit Points 127 (17d8+51)

Speed 30 ft. Fly 30ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	10 (+0)	17 (+3)	8 (-1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Damage Resistances Bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from non magical weapons

Damage Immunities Poison

Condition Immunities Paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone

Senses Darkvision 60ft

Languages Terran and a language of the creator's choice.

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Magic Weapons The myrmidons attacks are magical

Actions

Multiattack. The myrmidon makes two maul attacks.

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

Thunderous Strike (Recharge 6). *The myrmidon makes one maul attack. If the attack hits, it deals an extra 16 (3d10) thunder damage, and the target must succeed on a DC14 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.*

Evoker

Medium Elemental, neutral

Armor Class 12 (15 with Mage Armor)

Hit Points 66 (12d8+12)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (-1)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	17 (+3)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws Int +7, Wis +5

Skills Arcana +7, History +7

Languages Any four languages.

Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Spellcasting The evoker is a 12th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks).

The evoker has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): fire bolt, light, prestidigitation, ray of frost*

1st level (4 slots): burning hands, mage armor, magic missile

2nd level (3 slots): mirror image, misty step, shatter*

3rd level (3 slots): counterspell, fireball, lightning bolt

4th level (3 slots): ice storm*, stonewall

5th level (2 slots): Bigby's hand, cone of cold

6th level (1 slot): chain lightning, wall of ice

*Evocation spell

Sculpt Spells When the evoker casts an evocation spell that forces other creatures it can see to make a saving throw, it can choose a number of them equal to 1+the spell's level. These creatures automatically succeed on their saving throws against the spell. If a successful save means a chosen creature would take half damage from the spell, it instead takes no damage from it.

Actions

Quarterstaff. *Melee Weapon Attack: +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 2 (1d6-1) bludgeoning damage, or 3 (1d8-1) bludgeoning damage if used with two hands.*

Fire Elemental Myrmidon

Medium Elemental, neutral

Armor Class 18 (plate)

Hit Points 117 (18d8+36)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	18 (+4)	15 (+2)	9 (-1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Damage Resistances Lightning, Thunder; Bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from non magical weapons

Damage Immunities Fire, Poison

Condition Immunities Paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone

Senses Darkvision 60ft

Languages Ingan and a language of the creator's choice.

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Actions

Multiattack. The myrmidon makes three Scimitar attacks.

Flail. *Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 8 (1d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage.*

Fiery Strikes (Recharge 6). *The myrmidon uses Multiattack. Each attack that hits deals an extra 5 (1d10) fire damage.*

Salamnder

Large Elemental, neutral evil

Armor Class 15 (natural)

Hit Points 90 (12d10+24)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)

Vulnerabilites Cold

Damage Resistances Bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Damage Immunities Fire

Senses Darkvision 60ft, Passive Perception 10

Languages Ignan

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Heated Body A creature that touches the salamander or hits it with a melee attack while within 5 ft. of it takes 7 (2d6) fire damage.

Heated Weapons Any metal melee weapon the salamander wields deals an extra 3 (1d6) fire damage on a hit (included in the attack)

Actions

Multiattack. The salamander makes two attacks: one with its spear and one with its tail.

Spear. *Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: (2d8 + 4) piercing damage plus (1d6) fire damage. Two handed.*

Spear. *Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: (2d6 + 4) piercing damage plus (1d6) fire damage.*

Spear. *Ranged Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 20/60 ft., one target. Hit: (2d6 + 4) piercing damage plus (1d6) fire damage.*

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: (2d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage plus (2d6) fire damage. The target is grappled (escape DC 14). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, the salamander can automatically hit the target with its tail, and the salamander can't make tail attacks against other targets.*

War Priest

Medium Humanoid, any alignment

Armor Class 18 (plate)

Hit Points 117 (18d8+36)

Speed 30 ft. Fly 30ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	17 (+3)	13 (+1)

Saving Throws Con +6, Wis +7

Skills Intimidation +5, Religion +4

Languages Any two languages.

Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Spellcasting The priest is a 9th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). It has the following cleric spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): light, mending, sacred flame, spare the dying

1st level (4 slots): divine favor, guiding bolt, healing word, shield of faith

2nd level (3 slots): lesser restoration, magic weapon, prayer of healing, silence, spiritual weapon

3rd level (3 slots): beacon of hope, crusader's mantle, dispel magic, revivify, spirit guardians, water wall

4th level (3 slots): banishment, freedom of movement, guardian of faith, stonewall

5th level (1 slot): flame strike, mass cure wounds, hold monster

Actions

Multiattack The priest makes two melee attacks.

Maul. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 10 (2d6 +3) bludgeoning damage.

Reactions

Guided Strike (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest).

The priest grants a +10 bonus to an attack roll made by itself or another creature within 30 feet of it. The priest can make this choice after the roll is made but before it hits or misses.

Water Elemental Myrmidon

Medium Elemental, neutral

Armor Class 18 (plate)

Hit Points 127 (17d8+51)

Speed 40 ft. Swim 40ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	10 (+0)	17 (+3)	8 (-1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Damage Resistances Acid; Bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from non magical weapons

Damage Immunities Poison

Condition Immunities Paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone

Senses Darkvision 60ft

Languages Aquan and a language of the creator's choice.

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Magic Weapons The myrmidons attacks are magical

Actions

Multiattack. The myrmidon makes three trident attacks.

Trident. *Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage.*

Freezing Strikes (Recharge 6). *The myrmidon uses Multiattack. Each attack that hits deals an extra 5 (1d10) cold damage, and the target's speed is reduced by 10 feet until the end of the myrmidon's next turn.*

Xorn

Medium Elemental, neutral

Armor Class 19 (natural)

Hit Points 73 (7d8+42)

Speed 30 ft. Burrow 30 ft, Fly 30ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	10 (+0)	22 (+6)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)

Skills Perception +6 Stealth+3

Condition Immunities Petrified

Damage Resistances Piercing and slashing from nonmagical weapons that aren't adamantine

Senses Darkvision 60ft, Tremorsense 60 Ft, Passive Perception 16

Languages Terran.

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Earth Glide The xorn can burrow through nonmagical, unworked earth and stone. While doing so, the xorn doesn't disturb the material it moves through.

Stone Camouflage The xorn has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide in rocky terrain.

Treasure Sense The xorn can pinpoint, by scent, the location of precious metals and stones, such as coins and gems, within 60 ft. of it.

Actions

Multiattack. The xorn makes three claw attacks and one bite attack.

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

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

Appendix 3: Between a Rock and a Hard Place (Bonus Objective A.)

Estimated Duration: 45 minutes

In this section, the Adventurers find themselves drawn to the Hammer-Felled Tree pub, a former frequent haunt for Phlan refugees in Mulmaster. Now it's home to a clientele of beggars and the weak-willed that are obsessed with earning their way back into the Stonevault.

Stone Vault Door

The first challenge they encounter in the Stone Vaults, and must solve the puzzle to obtain access to the stone vaults.

Prerequisites

The characters must have completed the Call to Action.

Area Information

The Hammer-Felled Tree pub quickly closed up shop when it became public knowledge that Aleyd Bural had become a member of the Cult of Black Earth. Aleyd had use the Pub as her recruitment base, and with that partnership and the knowledge that the Black Earth Cultists aren't the most legal of people, she ruined the bar's reputation. As such, the tavern and its secret entrance to the Stonevault in the wine cellar have become a frequent place for exiled and desperate cultists to congregate in the hopes that they will be allowed re-entry. They tell the characters that they know that the puzzle must've changed since they were last there, but it used to have something to do with the deities important to the Thayans.

This area features:

Dimensions & Terrain. The Hammer-Felled Tree pub was boarded up and left to rot.

Lighting. Only the light which makes its way through the boarded up windows. Darkness in the cellar.

Smell. The place smells of old, spilled beer, the unwashed, and desperation.

A 6 ft by 4 ft by 3 ft obsidian altar. It has a singular phrase inscribed on it, written over and over in almost every different language: "Grant Ogremoch your gift and receive the stone lord's thanks." occupies the middle of the room.

The Door. The Stonevault door is marked by 32 runes. It is near impregnable (120 HP, resistance to all, vulnerability to thunder, immunity to acid, psychic, and poison), but a Wish would do the trick. The lock has a large circle with eight runes upon it. There are two in each of the 12, 3, 6, and 9 o'clock positions. Within the two choices, there is a rune for a god of the Thayans and a god of their slaves. The times on the circle each represent a season of the year. The characters must choose the correct rune that signifies the god that the Thayans worship during that time of the year.

Playing the Pillars

COMBAT

While the exiles are incredibly suspicious of one another, they realize they are a family of sorts and will quickly give up if pressed into combat or if torture is brought to bear.

EXPLORATION

While getting through the door takes socializing or powerful magic, getting around it is another matter. A spell such as Transmute Rock or Passwall allows characters to simply circumvent the door, as does good ol' digging.

SOCIAL

Refer to episode as written.

When an incorrect set of runes is selected, a gush of acidic water spews forth (+16 to hit for 3d10 cold and 3d10 acid damage) and each time an incorrect set is entered after, the amount of acid damage increases by 2d10.

A possible way to bypass the puzzle, if they are unable to figure it out from the patrons of the tavern or by themselves, is to sacrifice a magic item or sentimental item to Ogremoch on the altar in the center of the room.

The altar is a large piece of black obsidian, with a carving on the top. The message says: "Place your most valuable item here if you wish to survive. Ogremoch thanks you."

The exiled cultists cling to the Stonevault door in a mix of cooperation and competition to reopen it, suspicious but needing one another to uncover the clues. The survivors have been told that help is coming in a vision from Ogremoch that will stamp out the flames – and let them all back in. As such, they are exceptionally eager to trade the characters information for specific things they think will help them once inside, so long as they don't share their secrets with the others.

Appendix 4: Gneiss to Meet You (Bonus Objective B.)

Estimated Duration: 60 minutes

The Forged Stones

Setting Description

Within the reclaimed Stonevault, the first large chamber after the interaction with the mage has been devoted to the Forge Stones, where many of the Cult of Black Earth's war machines are made. It is one of the areas most perverted by the Cult of Eternal Flame, where Efreets have begun to encroach on the assembly lines of the stalwart. Normal cultists are rarely seen here, other than to collect the apocalyptic creations that will remake Faerûn in their image.

Prerequisites

The characters must have completed the Call to Action before beginning this episode.

Bonus Objective B

In order to dismantle the cult's war machine, the characters must put an end to both workshops and stop the flow of stones down the chutes so they can access the Earth Rift in the chamber above.

The scenes that follow provide suggested encounters to how the characters can do that, but you're not limited to these scenes; if the characters think of other ways to disrupt the workshops, let the characters take the lead:

- **The Dao Workshop.** The characters learn more about the war machine and unhappy workers in **Scene A**.
- **The Efreets Workshop.** The characters encounter brutish Efreets in **Scene B**.
- **The Ruined Library.** The characters encounter cultists dissatisfied with the new leadership who may be able to help them in **Scene C**.

Area Information:

Dimensions & Terrain. The Forge Stones are deep underground, with vaulted stone ceilings 20 feet high. The dao's area is kept impeccably clean, while the efreets' area is a mess of slag and molten stone. There are separate two rooms, one that the Efreets run and one that the Dao run. To both sides, stones frequently tumble down chutes toward their workshops.

Chutes and Ladders. 10-foot-wide chutes lead from the ceiling down into the workshops and are the only way up to the worship chamber above. Each workshop also has a lever which can be used to pause the flow.

Heat. The temperature here is uncomfortably hot due to both workshops.

Lighting. The lighting in this area is provided by ambient bright blue light emitting from the cave walls.

Playing the Pillars

COMBAT

This area can be completed violently by defeating the Deem sisters or Forge Tyrant Qwathye in combat. If either is defeated, the other claims victory in the arms race and allows the characters to reach the worship chamber while they take a much-needed break.

EXPLORATION

Should the characters choose to explore other areas nearby, they can find the ruined library where they can retrieve the Deem sisters' contract, which would give them power to shut down or free the Dao.

SOCIAL

Should the characters speak with the Deem sisters, they may be able to work out many ways for them to escape their contract. One of which for the dao is to forge their essences into a piece of equipment which the characters can take away from the Stonevault and later free them.

Scene A. Sedimentary, Dear Watson

The nearest workshop is that belonging to the dao Xavra Deem (and her identical sister Xadra). There, she is working on creating armored plates and unlike the efreeti, does not attack immediately.

Creatures/NPCs

Xavra and her sister Xadra Deem are **dao** that have been in the service of the Cult of Black Earth since the Marlos Unrayle led the organization.

Objectives/Goals. While the Deem sisters are contractually shackled to the will of the Cult's Hierophant Lucratsio, they have worked at a breakneck pace to match the efreeti. They believe they are only empowering the Earth cult and seek to be freed from their contract.

What Do They Know? The Deem sisters know that terrible things have happened to the Cult of Black Earth since Slabneck Ingotbeard took control in a coup. Slabneck has filled the ranks of the Cult hierarchy with former Eternal Flame Cultists and displaced most of the loyal Black Earth Cultists. He has also summoned forth efreet to create terrible war machines that will be unleashed upon Mulmaster. Ingotbeard had the worship chamber above excavated, where a massive rift to the elemental plane of earth is spewing out high-quality material as long as it is worshipped and fed with sacrifices. If they can be freed from their contract, the Deem sisters will share their masterwork armor with the adventurers and shut down the flow of earth down the chute, which will allow the adventurers to access to the worship room above.

Complication: Best in Show (Optional).

In addition to being master armor and weapon smiths, the Deem sisters are champion xorn breeders and trainers. Two blue ribbon-winning xorn - Sonia and Ruth - are present in the workshop with them and are well-behaved unless they smell the lure of fine gems. The xorn, while well trained, know that gems only come out as a treat so they immediately rush any characters that have gems upon them to paw and lick at them hungrily.

If the characters react with violence, so do the xorn and the dao. If the characters react calmly, the Deem sisters quickly get their xorn under control.

Adjusting the Scene

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this scene:

- **Very Weak or Weak:** Remove an **xorn**.
- **Strong or Very Strong:** Add **xorn**, **Oberon**.

Scene B. Ba-salt of the Black Earth

On the far side of the chamber across a ten-foot-wide river of magma, the efreeti's workshop is maddeningly hot and busy with activity. Forge Tyrant Qwathye (an **efreeti**) whips its thirty slaves (**commoners**) to the bone to meet demands imposed by the leaders of the Cult of Black Earth.

Creatures/NPCs

The Forge Tyrant and its two **salamander** servants have spared no time to celebrate after finishing the Hatemonger and are already working on improvements to it. They are consumed by their task and have no time or interest in interruptions.

Objectives/Goals. Work uninterrupted to outperform the dao. Slay or enslave any nuisances.

What Do They Know? The efreet and their servants will only speak to one of the higher-level cultists, such as the Hierophant (or someone dressed at the Hierophant, as all puny mortals look alike). If presented as such, they will complain about not having enough space to work and that they could work much better if they had the daos' space, too. Anyone who pesters them without proper clothing is in for trouble, to be beaten into submission and turned into a new slave.

Complication: RIIIOOOT! (Optional).

If the adventurers come by and are humanoid and not in cultist garb, a set of slaves plead for the adventurers to free them. Unless the slaves can be quieted by a successful DC 18 Charisma check, they'll make enough racket to quickly attract the attention and anger of The Forge Master.

Scene C. Gem-tleman and a Scholar

Down a side passage that has been excavated, the adventurers come to an active dig site in a ruined library. Rather than restore it, the new Hierophant has decided that it is better for harvesting rich volcanic ash than for storing the holy scriptures of Ogremoch.

Each scene uses the Area Information, Creature/NPC, or Treasure & Rewards sections as needed.

Creatures/NPCs

Godandukk and Nawinglach (**war priests**) did not worship and prostrate themselves before Ogremoch to do manual labor. The two are both armed with shovels and up to their knees in ash, shoveling for Hierophant Lucratsio's mud bath for after the summoning is completed.

Objectives/Goals. Godandukk and Nawinglach begrudge Hierophant Lucratsio for selecting them for grunt work. They'd very much like to stop working and get the respect they deserve - and if someone else is willing to dig, they'll supervise a short while before wandering off for more important business. That would leave the treasures of the study - a few volumes that could be saved and a stone tablet with the contract for Xavra and Xadra Deem's service unguarded.

What Do They Know? The two here are some of the old Black Earth guard from before members of the Cult of Eternal Flame joined the Earth ranks and have lived this long by selling out anyone under them they can. They haven't had the opportunity to stop to examine the volumes because Hierophant Lucratsio's soldiers come by often to collect the ash-rich dirt.

Complication: Collections (Optional).

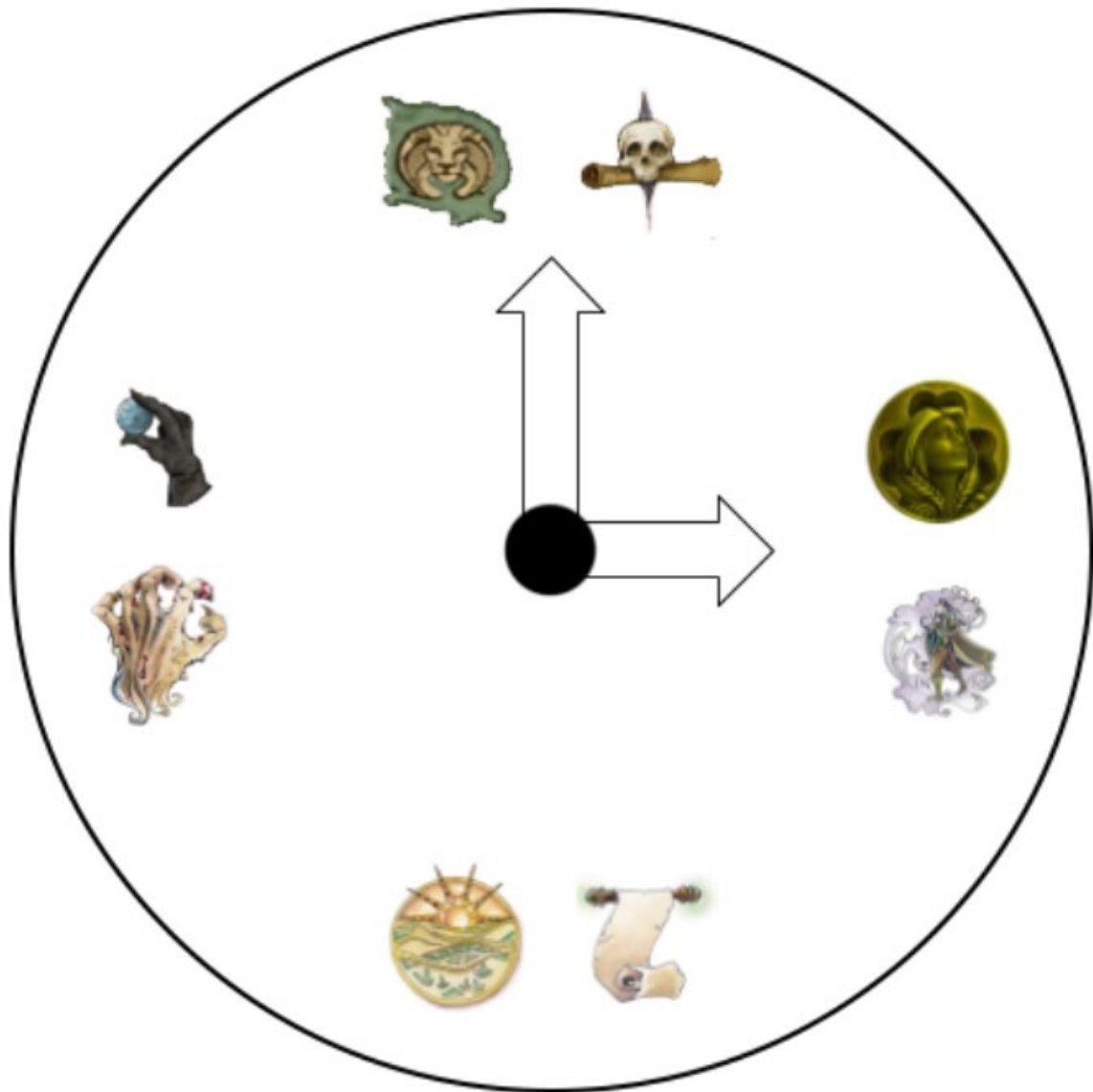
At an inappropriate time, Hierophant Lucratsio's personal guards (**champions**) emerge from the walls to demand the next load of earth for the Hierophant. Should they find non-cultists, they will attack immediately as will Godandukk and Nawinglach for fear of being exiled.

Adjusting the Scene

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this scene:

- **Very Weak or Weak:** Godandukk flees (remove one **war priest**).
- **Strong or Very Strong:** The ensorcelled walls of the Stonevault negate the first *counterspell* cast every round and grant the champions resistance to all bludgeoning, slashing, and piercing damage but vulnerability to thunder damage.

Appendix 5: Stone Door Challenge (Player Handout 1)



Appendix 6: Magic Item

Characters completing this adventure's objective unlock this magic item.

+2 Stone Plate (Table 1)

Heavy Armor, Very Rare

You have a +2 bonus to AC while wearing this armor. This item is found on Magic Item Table I in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

This suit of plate armor was created by Cultists of the Black Earth and is fashioned from slabs of stone (instead of metal). The armor resizes to fit its wearer.

Appendix 7: Dungeon Master Tips

This adventure is designed for **three to seven 1st-4th level characters** and is optimized for **five characters with an average party level (APL) of 3**. Characters outside this level range cannot participate in this adventure.

New to D&D Adventurers League?

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

New to the Annual Storyline?

<http://dnd.wizards.com/story/waterdeep>

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To DM an adventure, you **must** have 3 to 7 players—each with their own character whose level is within the adventure’s level range. 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 one if they’re outside its level range.

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 Wisdom (Perception), and anything specified as notable by the adventure (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). The players fill out the adventure name, session number, date, and your name and DCI number. In addition, the player also fills in the starting values for advancement and treasure checkpoints, downtime days, and renown. These values are updated at the conclusion of the session.

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

When combat is a possibility, the adventure will provide a sidebar that helps you to determine the best mix/number of opponents to provide them with to create an appropriate challenge. While you’re not bound to these adjustments; they’re here for your convenience and consideration.

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	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