

# Dark Lord's Doom

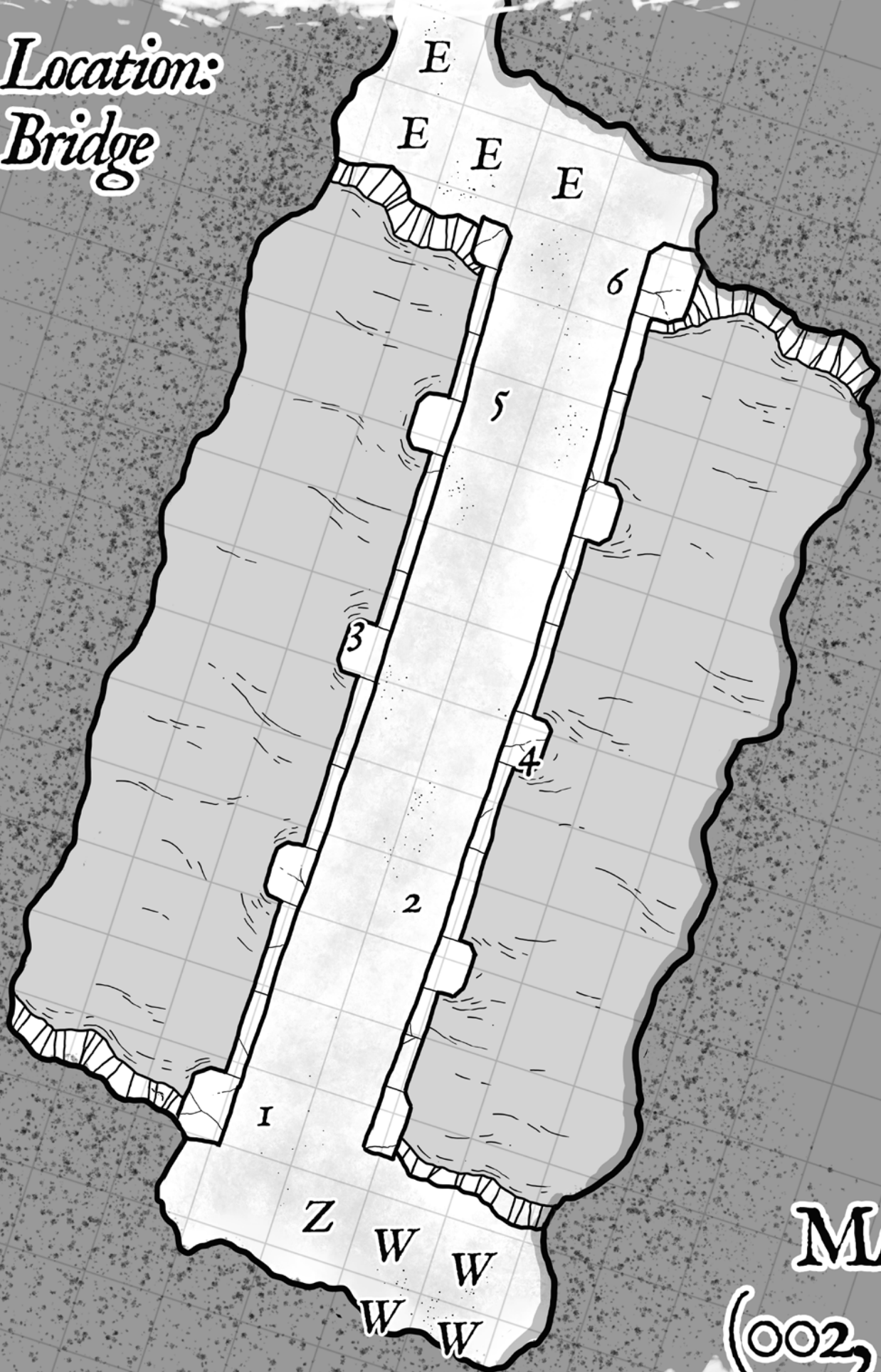


by David Pulver

DESIGNED FOR USE WITH  
**OLD-SCHOOL  
ESSENTIALS**



*Location:  
Bridge*



**MAP I**  
**(002, II2)**

# Dark Lord's Doom



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ISBN: 978-1-950368-60-0 (SOFTCOVER); 978-1-950368-59-4 (PDF)

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# Dark Lord's Doom

In a distant land lies a small but prosperous kingdom. Its capital is the city of Ireton, host to the great Temple of Tenok and bustling markets. It is divided into several baronies. Its south and east borders are peaceful, but its western frontier is a bleak wilderness where hardy settlers contend with barbarian tribes of fierce reptile men.

The Kingdom's greatest threat is to the north—beyond the Amberwood forest, Red Fang Mountains, and Plain of Sorrow—where the sinister Overlord rules from the city of Mourn.

Mourn was once a free city and an ally of the Kingdom. It was a bulwark against the Red Fang orcs and a trading partner with their foes, the elves of Amberwood. That was before it fell into the grasp of a murderous despot. There was a year of poor harvests, famine, and a peasant revolt. To put it down, a desperate city council hired a ruthless mercenary company, the Dark Legion (whose name should have given the game away right there). Their captain, the renegade adventurer Saethor, exceeded his orders, ruthlessly murdering and torturing rebels. When the council questioned his excesses, he massacred them, proclaiming himself Overlord. Saethor squashed all dissent and reorganized Mourn under his cruel, efficient rule. He expanded the Dark Legion into an army and embarked on a campaign of conquest.

His first targets were the Red Fang orcs. Weakened by their feud with the elves and divided into warring clans, they were subdued one by one in a grueling campaign by his veteran soldiers. Some grew alarmed, but few listened. After all, the victims were “just” orcs! After their defeat, many Red Fang orcs embraced the Overlord's rule, drawn by his sinister charisma and orc-like displays of power and ruthlessness: They soon swelled the ranks of the Dark Legion. One, General Zond, rose to stand at his right hand. After assimilating the orcish hordes, the Overlord turned against the elves of Amberwood who had previously cheered his victories. Their fall was swift, their fate brutal. Their Countess Taelandra chose to submit rather than see her people massacred; she was taken in chains to the Overlord's palace.

Elvish refugees carried blood-curdling tales of his brutality southward, and the Kingdom slowly awakened to the dark lord's menace. Some of the King's advisors believe the Overlord is content to consolidate his gains. Others fear his ambition, unchecked, will engulf the entire Kingdom. Perhaps too late, the King opened his treasury to hire new mercenary soldiers to expand the Royal Border Guard. He hopes this show of strength will deter the Overlord. If not, there will be war.

# Mercenary and Hero

You're battle-tested adventurers and soldiers of fortune who have answered the Kingdom's call to arms. The lure of good service for a just cause has drawn you to the fight; the King's silver doesn't hurt either.

As combat veterans, you've been given positions in the Royal Border Guard but your deployment has not worked out as expected! While most of the royal and baronial forces are preparing to guard the northern border against the Overlord, garrisons are still needed to suppress common bandits and barbarians. Unfortunately for your dreams of winning military glory against the dark lord's legions, as a new recruit you've found yourself sent far from the threatened northern theater.

Your squad has been assigned to the western frontier, where a tiny garrison must keep the peace and protect border villages from local tribes of reptile men. The Kingdom's natural border is the Osric River, which winds through a deep gorge. Beyond the river is a wilderness of forests and swamps, inhabited by scum-bunnies, monsters, and barbaric reptile men.

There are valuable hardwoods and amber deposits found in the region: Hardy yeomen have settled the borderlands, establishing villages beyond the Osric.

The reptile men lack armor or iron weapons, and the scattered bands dwell in primitive villages. They ambushed traders and raided villages for captives—often eating them—until the Royal Border Guard established garrisons and launched punitive expeditions. That was a few years ago. Now a cold peace prevails, punctuated by occasional skirmishes and headhunting.

Your squad is assigned to garrison the small woodland village of Cedar, a few miles beyond the Osric River. You serve under Captain Griswold, who commands 40 soldiers. The terrain is bad for cavalry, so most are light and medium infantry fighting in loose order: effectively skirmishers. Many in the garrison wish they were out north, ready to take on the dark lord, rather than guarding the bilge end of nowhere. A steady stream of transfers out reinforce the northern army; those remaining grumble about having to stay. Even so, easy duty and good pay keep morale in check.

Besides your own foot company, there are more men-at-arms—including a couple of griffon riders—based a day's ride south of the river at Castle Eyrie. It's comforting knowing you might get air support if things get bad!

So far, your company hasn't seen much action. In fact, Captain Griswold worries his troops are growing complacent. He's heard a report from Fort Eyrie that one of their griffon riders is overdue from a reconnaissance flight in the southwest forest. That's a bit outside Griswold's area of operations, and he doesn't think the reptile men could down a griffon; maybe they just got lost. On the other hand, the reptile men tribes have been very quiet lately—maybe too quiet.

You think the Captain might be right. With his permission, you decide it's time to lead a patrol into the wilderness, and see what the reptile men are up to...

## How to Play

Dark Lord's Doom is a programmed adventure intended for four 2nd-level fighters. It is played using the **OLD-SCHOOL ESSENTIALS** rules (but is compatible with most **OSR** rule sets). You won't need a referee. Branching paragraphs direct you from encounter to encounter as you make choices. Resolve combat using game rules, using the maps for reference.

Feel free to declare that the Temple in Ireton is dedicated to the (militant) holy faction of your choice instead of "Tenok." Likewise, the names and allegiances of rulers, baronies, and other details can be changed to fit an existing campaign world, if desired!

## THE SQUAD

You control a small squad of four troops to start with. You may not divide the squad unless allowed specifically by paragraph instructions. If squad members are incapacitated, you can leave them behind or carry them.

Either use the Typical Squad below (four 2nd-level fighters) or create four 1st through 3rd-level characters: Adjusting character level changes the difficulty of completing the scenario. For story-related reasons, characters should be humans, halflings, or elves, and primarily fighters. Thieves and clerics from militant orders would also be welcome.

### Seniority

Determine the most senior squad member: decide first by level, then the higher of Wisdom or Charisma. After that, assign seniority to the rest of the squad as desired, ranking them in highest to lowest seniority.

The highest seniority character is **squad leader**. If the leader is put out of action—killed, missing, incapacitated, asleep, frozen, etc.—the next in seniority takes over as squad leader, and so on. Replacements always enter at lowest seniority.

The *squad leader* determines initiative. If the squad is split among several players, the squad leader's player gets to decide which paragraph to choose when there are

several options. Only the squad leader's **DEX** bonus counts towards the squad's initiative rolls; only the squad leader's **CHA** bonus influences NPC reactions.

In any situation where it's important that something happen to a single character or a single character makes a decision, the current squad leader is the "you" referred to.

## Elimination

If everyone in a squad is killed or incapacitated during a fight, the squad is **eliminated**. Your adventure is usually over.

## TYPICAL SQUAD

Use these characters...or make your own! All characters are presumed to start at 3,000 XP, halfway between level 2 and 3.

### Gentry

Youngest child of a landed-gentry family fallen on hard times. Gentry turned professional duelist and soldier. Convinced to join the Royal Army while drunk in a tavern. Hasn't regretted it yet. He wears chainmail and carries a large shield. He fights with a shortsword and carries a dagger; he also carries a longbow and 20 arrows. His pack contains a tinder box, four torches, a steel mirror, and the obligatory 50' of rope and a grappling hook. He speaks Elvish as well as Common.

---

2nd level fighter.

**STR** 13 [+1], **DEX** 15 [+1], **INT** 13, **WIS** 11, **CON** 11, **CHA** 13 [+1].  
**AC** 3 [16], **HD** 2 (13 hp), **Att** 1× short sword (1d6+1) or dagger (1d4+1). **THACO** 19 [0],  
**MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D12 W13 P14 B15 S16, **AL** Neutral.

---

### Angel

Used to be part of the elite guard of a high priest, until an affair with one of the temple dancers required a rapid exit and new career. He prefers to fight with a polearm, but carries a dagger for close encounters. Wears leather armor. Carries a pack with 50' of rope, a grapnel, a tinder box with flint and steel, a small hammer, 12 iron spikes, and two torches. Hidden deep in the pack is an old holy symbol, its blessings long since worn out.

---

2nd-level fighter.

**STR** 16 [+2], **DEX** 13 [+1], **INT** 9, **WIS** 10, **CON** 15 [+1], **CHA** 11.  
**AC** 6 [13], **HD** 2 (15 hp), **Att** 1× polearm (1d10+2) or dagger (1d4+2). **THACO** 19 [0],  
**MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D12 W13 P14 B15 S16, **AL** Neutral.

---

### Misery

Misery is a veteran of the Ironskulls. When that infamous mercenary company was dissolved, Misery elected not to join Eldritch Arms, instead traveling west over the sea to join the Border Guard. Well versed with many different weapons, he wears chainmail and carries a shield. He's armed with a spear, sword, and dagger, and carries a pack with 50' of rope, a grapnel, a tinder box with flint and steel, a small hammer, and 12 iron spikes.

---

2nd-level fighter.

**STR** 16 [+2], **DEX** 15 [+1], **INT** 9, **WIS** 10, **CON** 12, **CHA** 9.  
**AC** 3 [16], **HD** 2 (13 hp), **Att** 1× sword (1d8+2) or spear (1d6+2).  
**THACO** 19 [0], **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D12 W13 P14 B15 S16, **AL** Neutral.

---

### Hawk

Hawk "shot someone who needed shooting" and went into exile, taking up the mercenary life. He carries a crossbow with 20 crossbow bolts, a sword, two torches, and wears leather armor. Thanks to his **DEX**, he's gets a bonus of +2 to hit with his crossbow

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2nd-level fighter.

**STR** 12, **DEX** 16 [+2], **INT** 10, **WIS** 12, **CON** 13 [+1], **CHA** 10.  
**AC** 5 [14], **HD** 2 (15 hp), **Att** 1× crossbow (1d6) or sword (1d8).  
**THACO** 19 [0], **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D12 W13 P14 B15 S16, **AL** Neutral.

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## WAYS TO PLAY

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**Solitaire:** A single player controls the entire party and runs them through the adventure. When combat occurs, follow the instructions regarding the foes in each location and play both sides of any encounter. Feel free to give enemies simple strategies while you use better tactics for the party!

**Two-Player:** One player plays the party. Upon encountering enemies, the other player acts as referee, controlling the opposition during each fight. If the referee is more experienced, they can help the player with the *OSE* rules or adjudicate situations not covered in the instructions.

**Multi-Player:** 2–4 players each take one character within the party. Choose one player to act as referee as above, and one as the leader. The leader makes decisions or dice rolls whenever as called for by paragraphs but may opt to ask for advice from the squad (that is, the other players) first. During combat, each player plays their own party member as “their” character, with the referee controlling the enemies. Any allies/companions are run by the squad leader’s player. If the squad leader is killed/incapacitated, the next in line becomes squad leader. If any player loses their character, whenever the adventure indicates replacements are available, they may introduce a new one; see [Replacements](#).

## STARTING PLAY

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**DARK LORD’S DOOM** is organized into a series of numbered instructions or “paragraphs” (although many instructions are several paragraphs long). To begin, go to instruction [001] and read it. These set the scene for what your party experiences, much like a referee describing the situation. Instructions say what your character encounters and, sometimes, calls for a decision between multiple options. Choose which one to take before reading the next instruction. Don’t read instructions to which you haven’t been directed!

## FIGHTING

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Paragraphs may say to set up a map according to a particular diagram in the adventure and begin combat. *All* maps—even the outdoor ones—are scaled at 5’ grid and use letters or shading to mark starting points of characters or obstacles. (Some markings or letters aren’t used in every encounter.) Resolve fights normally. You may need to place markers, draw on the map, or otherwise indicate features such as rough going or walls. Your starting point and the locations of allied and enemy figures are specified by letters on the map.

Resolve fights with *OSE* rules. Win or lose, the instructions indicate what happens next, perhaps allowing you to search for loot, rescue a captive, or, if your party is eliminated, end the adventure.

Sometimes an option to retreat is explicit. Otherwise, for simplicity, stay on the tactical map. If anyone “runs off the map” you *could* extend the map and decide what that terrain is. To keep things playable and contained to the scenario, fight to the finish.

For battles involving narrow spaces, assume one character can fit per 5’ square unpenalized. Polearms and spears strike over or through allies; missile weapons fire through allies at –2. Funnel foes into choke points: It’s good tactics!

## RECORD KEEPING

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If acting as your own referee, track your party’s status and that of any companions you accumulate. Also record statistics of foes you’re about to fight. Keep notes on possessions, provisions, coin, current HP, etc.

**Mapping and Tracking.** Unlike some solos, there is no need to “map” this adventure. Your squad is part of a larger army, so you’ll generally be following orders rather than haring off exploring an area on your own. Maintain a record of paragraph instructions you have been to, so if you go to the wrong one by accident, or decide to stop playing and resume later, you can do so from the last paragraph you reached.

**Soldiers loot!** If you defeat a foe, you can take their weapons, armor, and equipment if you like. As you acquire extra equipment and loot, make notes on your record sheets to show who is carrying it. Adjust your AC, movement rates, and attacks to reflect encumbrance, new weapons, or armor as needed.

## PLAYING ENEMIES SOLO

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If playing solitaire, you play both sides. Play foes in a logical fashion based on the instructions. Where no specific instructions are given, assume the following:

- ▶ Foes fight to the death. No retreat, no surrender.
- ▶ Foes generally attack whichever target is closest. They engage with their best ready weapon or attack.
- ▶ Magic-users should take a round to cast defensive spells (such as *shield*, *invisibility*, or *mirror image*), befuddle or pacify foes (as with *charm person*, *sleep*, or *mirror image*), and then use whatever offensive damaging spells they possess. If they have non-wizard help, they support from behind.
- ▶ Missile-armed foes shoot from a distance as long as possible, then shift to melee weapons as needed.
- ▶ If you can’t decide between two tactics, roll a die.

## PLOT WORDS

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A paragraph may say to record (or sometimes erase) a “PLOT WORD” (written in SMALL CAPITAL LETTERS). You may encounter a situation where, if you have that PLOT WORD, something happens or doesn’t happen.

## ALLIES

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You may acquire temporary allies. If so, you'll be given their stats to record and the squad leader controls them for the duration of a single fight.

Paragraphs may restrict what an ally will do (e.g., a frightened peasant might not engage opposing figures). Follow these instructions, but otherwise control allies as you see fit.

**Allies are present only for a single combat encounter.** Afterward, they're no longer part of the squad. You may not keep any of their equipment after the fight is over.

### *Companions*

Unlike other allies, **Companions** stay with your squad for the remainder of the adventure unless otherwise indicated. If anything happens to them, you can keep their equipment and distribute it among squad members. They share in experience awards and can improve with the squad.

## TIME AND RECOVERY

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Outside of combat, the passage of time is indicated during the paragraphs themselves. At various times in the adventure you will get time to rest.

**Brief Rest:** All spells which are not instant or permanent run out. This time may be used to treat injuries, eat and drink as supplies permit, or swap equipment between squad members (or abandon it) if you wish.

**Long Rest:** means you have one or more *days* to recover as part of the company. As per **brief rest**, and you also heal 1d3hp per rest day. If you gain enough experience to level up, you do so during a long rest.

## REPLACEMENTS

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If your squad has three or fewer figures—excluding allies/companions—you may replace dead, missing, incapacitated, or badly hurt (**2hp** or fewer) members. New 2nd-level characters join the squad: recruits or transfers from another unit. You may not have more than four active members on your roster. They arrive with class-appropriate armor (possibly including a shield) and weapons worth not more than 55gp, plus a backpack with six torches, a full waterskin, and seven days' worth of iron rations. Other squad members can loan them spare gear.

## REWARDS

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On periodic occasions experience awards are given. All surviving members of your squad each receive the same award; division of total experience is pre-calculated. Do not give experience points immediately upon defeating a monster!

## WAGES/UPKEEP

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Your upkeep is paid by the army. Pay is often late in the field, but expect a sizable sum if you survive! If you reach **Paragraph 125** alive, you collect back pay based on a random die roll. This simplifies tracking time, pay, rank, extra random loot, and other potential rewards into a lump sum at the end.

## ENDING THE ADVENTURE

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**DARK LORD'S DOOM** ends if "end game" events are triggered for good or ill, or your squad suffers elimination.

If such a "bad end" happens, the adventure is over. However, one can always replay the adventure with a new group of characters in the hope of getting a better outcome or seeing what happens if you make different choices.

# Paragraphs

**001** Your company is based out of the small village of Cedar, the most exposed human settlement west of the Osric River. The nearest of many reptile man villages in the wilderness is a half-day's march away through the forest that borders the swamp. Your squad is departing on a scouting mission to see what the barbarians are up to. Go to [078].

**002** Roll **1d6**. On a 1–2, all goes according to the dwarf's plan; go to [054].

On a 3 or higher, refer to **Map 1** and place yourselves and the dwarf in any squares there. Each squad member may make a **Wisdom** check. If anyone succeeds, go to [066]; otherwise, go to [093].



**003** The last reinforcements for the royal army trickle into Ireton. The city's mood is tense. Taverns are doing a thriving business thanks to the thousands of soldiers.

Your squad is off duty at a local tavern, drinking, gambling, and discussing rumors. Each day brings word of more frontier skirmishes with the Overlord's armies. Orc wolf-riders from the Red Fang mountains are burning and looting northern villages; Ireton is crowded with frightened refugees. Barracks gossip says you'll be marching north within a week. Time for another round of cheap ale while you have the chance!

The barmaid is busy serving a haughty squad of templars from the Ireton Temple. They're drinking expensive wine (apparently sacred to their god), frowning disdainfully at anyone who gambles, and making rude remarks toward a mercenary dwarf siege engineer quaffing ale at a nearby table. Apparently the dwarves follow "heathen gods" of which the Templars disapprove. They remark how the "godless elves" of Amberwood were cowards for having surrendered to the Dark Lord. Will the dwarves do the same?

Upset at being so maligned, the dwarf slams down his cup. He says he won't sit here and take insults from "deluded fools that worship a powerless god only worshiped in a smoke-filled room by money-grubbing grifters."

Oh, it's *on* now: The Templars lose it! Shouts of "nonhuman heretic!" ensue and after a brief struggle, two Templars grab the dwarf and a third starts punching him. "Acknowledge the Light of Tenok, lick our boots, and we won't cut off your beard and make you eat it!"

If you have no love of dwarves, you can ignore the incident; go to [056]. If you dislike bullies and step in to even the odds, record plot word **DWARF** and go to [023].

**004** "That can't be Rickon! That man is dead!"

You shout a warning and prepare to stop him entering the royal tent.

"Rickon" curses and attacks! You're fighting him! Go to [032] and roll initiative.

**005** A barrage of arrows from below attempts to keep the enemy back, but to no avail. Before you reach the top, a Dark Legion soldier pushes the ladder away.

Each character in the squad can try jumping to safety with a successful **Dexterity** check. If you fail, take **2d6** falling damage.

If the squad hasn't been eliminated, go back to [014] *unless* you have plot word **DWARF**; then go to [095].

**006** The captain isn't pleased you were brawling, but he's livid you let yourself get beaten by those arrogant Templars. You're confined to the stockade until your injuries recover, then assigned latrine duty. Fortunately, the army receives marching orders before you have to scrub too many chamber pots! Go to [052].

**007** With their general's fall, panic spreads through the Overlord's army. Fear of their dark lord's wrath cannot hold them. They break and flee the field!

The Kingdom's host takes up the pursuit, driving them across the plain, harrying them back to the very gates of the city of Mourn.

The Overlord orders the gates shut. Many of the Dark Legion trapped outside are slain or captured.

Go to [094] if your squad's only survivor is your ally the King, or [124] otherwise.

**008** You retreated before being noticed by the reptile men and their allies, but the swampy woods are still swarming with hostile troops.

(next page)

As afternoon turns to evening, you escape the swampy forest, following trails you know well from prior patrols. Roll **1d6**; add +1 if any squad member is an **elf** or **halfling** (only collect the bonus once), and +1 if your leader has *Wisdom 16+*. On a **1–2**, go to [091], on a **3–5**, to [114], on **6+**, to [044].

**009** Stuck in the army's rear, you're in a good position to retreat from the debacle. You can choose to die fighting [033], or run away [034].

**010** The Templar leader remembers your squad's earlier fracas at the bar.

"You lot again?" he snarls. "We should have killed you back then! Omnipotent Tenok must have sent you here so we can fix that oversight!" Go to [085].

**011** Reinforcements! Baron Gwalathar rushes in, accompanied by two crossbowmen. "Shoot!" the baron cries. Quarrels slam into the assassin! He staggers and falls.

Dead, the Magic Mask disguising the assassin's face disappears, revealing a different, older man.

Gwalathar is angry you didn't stop the assassin until you explain the duplicitous sorcery used. Then he curses the Overlord. Go to [046].

**012** After you retreated, the enemy filled in the shaft and destroyed the mining gear. The attempt at mining the walls has failed! *Erase* plot word **DWARF**. Time for plan B! Go to [014].

**013** You cautiously climb the wooded slopes of Egg Rock.

Near the summit is a big quartz boulder resembling a giant egg. Now you remember: This symbolizes the "divine egg" local reptile men faith considers sacred.

In any event, from behind the boulder, you now have a clear view of the reptile men village. Looks like something's happening there! Go to [050].

**014** It's time to go over the wall, and once again your squad is picked to lead the assault. Under a fresh storm of arrows and protected by portable mantlets and tower shields, squads of men run forward with scaling ladders.

If you happen to be able to fly, go to [082]. Otherwise the squad leader chooses the first man up from the squad (it can be themselves); they must make a **Dexterity** check to make it quickly up the ladder. If successful, go to [082]; failure goes to [005].

**015** Your platoon was fighting on the east bank of the Osric River, defending the stone bridge while your engineers struggled to demolish it.

The Border Guard company has slaughtered more than a hundred reptile men trying to cross the river, forcing back their first two charges. But the company's archers are out of arrows now. The platoon is down to a single squad: yours. Everyone else is dead or wounded.

A moment ago, the last officer on the bridge took a spear through his guts and toppled off the bridge into the foaming waters in the gorge below.

A huge reptile man steps onto the narrow bridge. He's clad in chainmail and armed with a brand-new two-handed sword.

"I am chief Zurg," he hisses. "I eat your guts!" Rallying, three more reptilians crowd up behind him.

Then you hear a shout from your harried engineers:

"We've got the petards in place! Just hold them off for 30 seconds!"

Go to [112].

## Dark Legionary Generator

1d6 Roll	Statistics
1	<b>Human legionary.</b> AC 3 [16], HD 1 (4hp), Att 1x spear (1d6) or sword (1d8), THACo 19 [0], MV 60' (20'), SV D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (1), ML 8, AL Chaotic, XP 10. Chainmail, shield, +1 AC (DEX).
2	<b>Human legionary.</b> AC 7 [12], HD 1 (6hp), Att 1x polearm (1d10+1) or short sword (1d6+1), THACo 18 [+1], MV 90' (30'), SV D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (1), ML 8, AL Chaotic, XP 10. Leather.
3	<b>Orc legionary.</b> AC 6 [13], HD 1 (4hp), Att 1x short bow (1d6) or sword (1d8), THACo 19 [0], MV 90' (30'), SV D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (1), ML 6 (8 with leader), AL Chaotic, XP 10. Leather, +1 AC (DEX)
4	<b>Orc legionary.</b> AC 6 [13], HD 1 (4hp), Att 1x short sword (1d6), THACo 19 [0], MV 90' (30'), SV D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (1), ML 6 (8 with leader), AL Chaotic, XP 10. Leather, shield.
5	<b>Orc legionary.</b> AC 6 [13], HD 1 (5hp), Att 1x mace (1d6+1 or by weapon), THACo 18 [+1], MV 90' (30'), SV D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (1), ML 6 (8 with leader), AL Chaotic, XP 10. Leather, shield. Strong.
6	<b>Elf Renegade.</b> AC 5 [14], HD 2* (7hp), Att 1x long bow (1d8 or by weapon), THACo 18 [+1], MV 120' (40'), SV D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (2), ML 8, AL Chaotic, XP 25. +2 AC (DEX); +2 hit with longbow (DEX); +1 initiative. Leather. 2 spells prepared, Roll 1d6. 1: charm person, 2–3: magic missile, 4–5: protection from evil, 6: shield.

**016** The high priest, bereft of magic after earlier treating the king, hurries in to examine the King's injuries, then looks grim, and shakes his head.

He turns to you. "We must keep this a secret, or the army will panic! I will say there was an attempt on the King, but the assassin was slain."

But what about the battle, you wonder? If the King does not lead the army...

"Then someone must wear his armor." The priest looks at your squad and points at one member. "You're about the right size. You fought well. Will you stand in for the King?"

If you refuse, go to [110]. If you agree to have a squad member do so, they receive **plate mail +2** instead of regular armor (adjust AC) and an enchanted broadsword (**sword +2**; if your class cannot use the weapon, you need only carry it to provide a convincing disguise). Add plot word **DOUBLE** and go to [042].

**017** They back off, shamed at having failed their vows. One runs off, shaking his fist at you. The other apologizes to you and the elf woman, and humbly asks to join your party. If you refuse, he nods once, and follows his comrade out. If you accept him, add him as a companion (go to [085], ignore the fight, and record his statistics), and then to [081].

**018** You abandon the observation post and climb down from Egg Rock's slope. Go to [008].

**019** With a rumbling noise, part of the passage caves in! Roll **1d6** to determine which part, and consult the number on the map. If you're in that 5' square or an adjacent one, you are threatened by falling debris! Shields and armor help you ward off the danger: The debris "attacks" you as if it were a 4 HD monster (see **ATTACK MATRIX**), and does 2d4 damage if it hits!

A humanoid figure made of solid rock emerges from out of the ground in the central square of whichever location in which the cave-in occurred. It's an **Earth Elemental!** An enemy wizard scrying with a crystal ball must have detected the mine. Go to [024].

**020** You encounter a wide-eyed clerk in a torn robe, who jumps back like a frightened rabbit. Cornered, he begs for quarter!

"The Overlord's crazy," he moans. "Why can't he see we're defeated?" He stares up you. "We were to evacuate through the Gate, but a trebuchet's boulder brought down the ceiling and blocked the portal. Dozens of us were

crushed! And now the slaves who were digging it out have run off! But I don't dare tell the Overlord that! He'll kill me for sure!"

When you ask him where the Overlord is, he shivers.

"We're safe for now! He's down in the Chamber of Fire with Vorlock the Vivimancer, performing some sort of ritual."

The clerk doesn't know how many guards are with the Overlord—he guesses a half-dozen. When you ask how to find the Chamber, he looks incredulous.

"Surely you're not going after him?" he says incredulously. "Just you?"

A few more threats convince him you're serious, and you pry directions out of him.

You can let him run, tie him up, or slay him, then go to [055]

**021** The dark lord must be behind this silver door. Enter [104], or retreat [029].

**022** "We're ready! Pull back now!" As you retreat off the bridge, the engineers shout at you to get under cover. You dive into a nearby trench. Seconds later, a thunderous explosion shakes the earth, followed by rain of water, debris, and a grisly deluge consisting of pieces of reptile men.



Osric Bridge's span is collapsing into the river. On the other side, those of the reptile men horde not caught in the blast howl in rage!

The invaders are trapped on the other side of the river. By the time they reach the next ford or build rafts, the Kingdom's reinforcements will be in place to hold the river line.

For now, you have won. The clerics and healers move forward to treat the wounded. Go to [119].

**023** The Templars don't care for your interference. Time for a bar fight! The barmaid and customers flee while you set up on [Map II](#). Your squad sets up in any W squares, the dwarf's fallen body at D, Templars at any square marked T. Shaded areas are bar tables; each square has a stool, jug of ale, or bottle of wine you can grab to use as an improvised club, if you wish (1d2+1 damage).

As you're off duty and in town, no one has any armor, shields, or weapons beyond a belt knife.

The exit is at E; anyone can exit out it. Those who exit leave the fight and do not return until it's over.

The Templars aren't drunk enough to kill other soldiers; they just want to pound you a pulp in the name of Tenok's Omnipotent Fist! Use the optional rule for **SUBDUING**: A victim admits defeat and surrenders at 0 hp due to **subdual** damage.

### Ornery Tenokian Templars

Three human 2nd-level fighters.

**AC** 9 [10], **HD** 2 (11hp), **Att** 1× fist (1d2+1) or dagger (1d4+1), **THACO** 18 [+1], **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (2). **ML**10, **AL** Neutral, **XP** 20

The dwarf is semi-conscious, too battered to help fight. The templars are members of the Tenokian religious order and usually used as heavy infantry or cavalry; these are warrior-priests rather than clerics (they are trained fighters and know religious rituals but are not empowered with divine magic). They are issued a mix of chainmail and plate mail (**AC** 4), and usually carry shields, but are only wearing white tabards with their holy symbol on them for carousing in town.

If you incapacitate two Templars, the last will give up and run or crawl out the doors. If you opt to flee, they'll let you go. If you win, go to [\[122\]](#). If you lose, go to [\[006\]](#).

**024** You're fighting an **earth elemental** in the mine! It's dark here. The dwarf is holding a torch; if he drops it, you'll be in the dark unless you can produce a light source.

You can fight, but you also have the option to retreat out the East entrance (up to the surface).

If you defeat the elemental, go to [\[064\]](#). If some or all of your squad manage to flee and the elemental is left holding the mine, go to [\[012\]](#). If your squad is eliminated, go to [\[079\]](#).

You have an ally:



### Snorri Ratsinger

4th-level dwarf.

**STR** 15 [+1], **DEX** 12, **INT** 15, **WIS** 12, **CON** 11, **CHA** 12. **AC** 4 [15], **HD** 4 (22 hp), **Att** 1× hammer (1d6+2) or dagger (1d4+1). **THACO** 17 [+2], **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D6 W7 P8 B10 S10 (4), **AL** Neutral.

Speaks highly literate Dwarvish as well as excellent Common. Wears chainmail and carries a small but stout dwarvish shield. Armed with a **war hammer +1** and a dagger. **Detects construction tricks** on 1–2; **detects room traps** on 1–2; 60' **infravision**; **hear noises** on 1–2.

### Stony Earth Elemental

Huge, humanoid figures of earth or stone. The earth elemental tries to smash you all but won't leave the tunnel.

**AC** 2 [17], **HD** 8\* (36hp), **Att** 1× blow (1d8), **THACO** 12 [+7], **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D8 W9 P10 B10 S12 (8), **ML** 10, **AL** Neutral, **XP** 1,200

- ▶ **Size:** 8' tall.
- ▶ **Blocked by water:** Cannot cross a channel wider than own height.
- ▶ **Harm creatures on the ground:** Inflict extra 1d8 damage.
- ▶ **No Magical Immunity:** For whatever reason—probably something arcane—this earth elemental is **vulnerable** to attacks from non-magical weapons!

**025** The captain briefs his squad leaders, his expression grim. "Thanks to a timely warning from our patrol"—the captain nods at you—"we got a message off to headquarters. They're taking the threat seriously; reinforcements are on the way."

"Now for the bad news. They're going to take some time to reach us. Until then, we need to keep those lizards from crossing the river and buy time for the civilian evacuation. The river's swift and deep, the far bank's clear of trees. They won't be building rafts easily. If we can destroy the bridge, they'll have to take the long way around, and our reinforcements may arrive in time."

"First platoon will harass the enemy, then fall back. Engineers will demolish the bridge. Second platoon will protect them. The third platoon's archers will cover the riverbank in case the lizards try to swim it. Get in position, soldiers! We don't have much time!"

Your squad is part of second platoon. Go to [\[015\]](#).

**026** Whoever wears the King's armor is moved up to effective squad leader for this mission.

You accompany Gwalathar and the other captains, helmet down, waving at the troops, as he gives a brief speech, clearly not used to addressing an entire army. Some men look puzzled that the King does not speak, but your stoic presence at the head of the army radiates a certain grim calm. This is the hour of decision. Win or die.

Clad in the King's armor, standing at the head of the royal army, you prepare to do your best, the rest of the squad by your side. Trumpets sound the advance!

You strive to follow the advice of the nobles and the dead king's battle plans, knowing they cannot long survive contact with the enemy. In the chaos of battle, the army looks to you for inspiration and leadership. Are you up to the test?

As fighting intensifies, roll **1d**; add the "king's" Charisma modifier; add 1 if the squad leader has **Intelligence** of 16+; subtract 1 if you have plot word **DESPERATE**. On a **4 or less**, go to [058]; if **5+**, go to [101].



**027** Any squad members with a missile weapon or spell may attack. Each shooter gets one shot at 150' range before smoke from the cruel barbecue obscures line of sight and you must flee to avoid return fire.

Pick targets and roll. To hit either the shaman (AC 7 [12]) or the burning man (AC 10 [9]), attack at -1 for being at long range. Hit or miss, go to [102].

**028** The tide of battle turns! Inspired by the heroic stand of the King's guards, small knots of soldiers rally, pushing the enemy back. General

Zond sees which way the wind is blowing and sounds the retreat. His host falls back in good order to the walls of the city. Some are pinned against the walls and destroyed; others retreat through the gates, covered by fire from Black Legion archers and ballistae on the walls.

Go to [094] if your squad's only survivor was your ally the King; otherwise, go to [124] and record plot word **ZOND**.

**029** In your career, you've learned not to fight cornered rats. If the Overlord's running, why waste good men's lives catching him?

If she's with you, Taelandra agrees. "I spent too long trapped in this awful place. Let's get out of here," she says. Go to [088].

**030** Your squad leader should make a **Wisdom** check. If successful, go to [061]; otherwise, go to [111].

**031** The Kingdom's army has marched through the Red Fang mountains and the Amberwood. Ahead is the Plain of Sorrow, and beyond, the dark lord's city of Mourn.

The Overlord's armies have fallen back, executing a scorched-earth policy. The Kingdom has found only burned fields and villages, whether human, orc, or elfen.

Supplies are running low, and you are on short rations. The few high-level clerics exhaust themselves casting *create food* and other beneficial spells.

As the army emerges from the Red Fangs, scouts report the Overlord's legions massing in the nearby hills overlooking the Plain of Sorrow. A decisive battle seems imminent. Go to [106].

**032** You're fighting the assassin on **Map IV**, the royal tent. If you came here from [083], your squad has initiative on the first round; otherwise, roll it. The tent interior is shaded gray. Its door is at V. The King, your ally in this fight, is at L and "Rickon" the assassin at V, facing the King. Your squad starts in any H or O squares, facing V; one character per square. You can enter/exit the tent via the door at V, or by cutting a new door through walls (5+ hp with sharp weapon; don't roll to hit, just roll damage).

Go to [072] for the King's stats and [077] for the assassin's, then return here to resolve the fight.

If the King hasn't been killed (0hp or lower) or incapacitated (1hp remaining), the assassin tries to get into line of sight and slay him with a spell or his bare hands. If the King's at **1hp** or dead, the assassin attacks other foes; he'll also do that if he can't attack the King because he's fighting another character, or someone is blocking his line of fire.

If desired, one or more of your soldiers can flee to get help. The King will not flee the tent: He is too enraged by this treachery!

If fighting lasts more than five turns, or starting the round after any of your squad opts to run out of the tent to summon help, roll **1d6** at the end of each subsequent round; on a 6 go to [011].

Otherwise, if the assassin is defeated and your squad survived, go to [016] if the King is incapacitated or dead, [063] if he still stands; if your squad perished but you saved the king's life, go to [073]. If the assassin eliminated your squad and the King, go to [113].

**033** Mortally wounded, you gasped out your last breaths amid a sea of corpses. Around you, crows eat the eyes of the dead, while laughing enemy soldiers finish off the wounded, loot the bodies, and drag the few surviving prisoners off in chains. You fought hard, but it was not enough. With the Kingdom's army destroyed, the dark lord's shadow soon extends across the entire realm. It is **The End**.

**034** Everything—including honor—appears lost. At least you survived to **The End**.

**035** Your squad is assigned to the royal bodyguard! For the duration of this battle, record plot word **ROYAL** and add the King to your squad as an ally. Go to [072] to record his stats, then return.

The King gives a rousing speech: This is the hour of decision. We win or we die!

The opposing armies advance, and battle begins. Roll **1d6** (at -1 if you have plot word **DESPERATE**). On a roll of **2 or less**, go to [043]; on a **3+**, go to [101].

**036** Record Zond's stats; return to the paragraph you came from.

## General Zond

The bald, bullet-headed Dark Legion general cuts an imposing figure in black armor. He's a towering half-orc, dressed in black-lacquered half-plate (a mix of chainmail and plate, providing **AC 4 [15]**), and carrying a +1 two-handed studded mace (Melee, Slow, Two-handed). Zond saves at **+1 vs magical effects**. Speaks common and orcish; saving throws as 5th-Level fighter.

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**AC** 4 [15], **HD** 5+1 (19hp), **Att** 1× mace (1d8+3),  
**THACO** 15 [+4], **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D10 W11 P12 B13 S14  
(5), **ML** 10, **AL** Neutral, **XP** 225

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**037** As you reach Cedar village, several soldiers emerge from cover.

"Halt and be identified!"

With a sigh of relief, you recognize sergeant Rictor's squad. You give the counter-sign.

"Looks like you had some trouble," Rictor says. "The captain wants to see you. The village priest, Larson, will tend any wounded." The most wounded character (if any) receive the benefits of a *cure light wounds* spell.

You reached Cedar Hill before dark, ahead of the reptile men, but you suspect it won't be long before they're here.

After tending to any injuries, you share your news with Captain Griswold. He sees from your grim faces how serious the threat is.

Go to [116] if you have plot word **DARK**, or [096] otherwise.

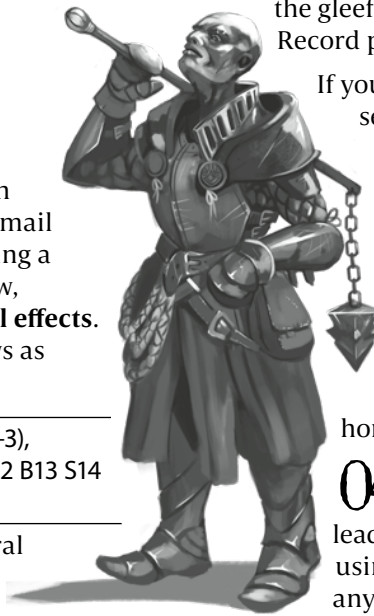
**038** If you have plot word **SHOT** or **BRO** go to [087]. Otherwise, go to [105].

**039** As you watch, the crowd of excited reptile men receiving arms disperses. Several reptile men carry a wicker cage out of a hut. Inside is a human captive, bound hand-and-foot!

It's a young soldier with blond hair in the uniform of the Royal Cavalry Scouts, his face bleak but determined. He's approached by a reptile man dressed in a feather headdress holding a skull-tipped staff. Other reptile men shout and dance, waving weapons and talons and beating drums. One of the Dark Legion officers steps up and leans closer to the man, as if studying him or speaking. The captive shakes his head; the officer steps back, disappearing into the crowd.

Can you help the captive? You're 120 yards away atop Egg Rock; below are hundreds of reptile men and several Dark Legion troopers. The odds suck.

Before you can decide what to do, the reptile man shaman waves his staff at the cage and screams an incantation, and an intense fire erupts within!



The burning captive's screams fill the air, mingling with the gleeful shouts and taunts of the barbarian horde. Record plot word **FIRE**.

If you feel your duty is to report back what you've seen, leaving vengeance for another day, go to [090].

If you have missile weapons and want to take a shot at that shaman, or maybe put the burning soldier out of his misery, go to [027].

**040** Your squad died bravely during the siege of Mourn. The Border Guard remembers your names, and you receive an honorable burial. Go to [047].

**041** You're fighting General Zond on Map I (refer to [036] for Zond's stats) at Z, leading three Dark Legion soldiers (generate each using the Dark Legionary Generator placed on any W square.

If you win, check [057], then go to [021].

**042** The breaking dawn finds the forces of the Kingdom lined up on the field in ranks of burnished steel. Proud banners flying, infantry form the center, with cavalry on each wing. Overhead fly several griffons. The high priest blesses the troops, some with actual diving magic; horns blow, sounding the advance.

Onward to victory or death!

Ahead are the Overlord's hordes, the host larger than the Kingdom's. Mocking cries rise from the orcish war bands, but the Dark Legion stands silent and grim. You make out a few larger figures within the host: ogres or giants.

The Overlord himself does not seem to be on the field, but you spy the banner of his deputy, General Zond.

Far behind them are the walls of Mourn, the Overlord's city, lined with still more defenders. Somewhere inside is their dark lord Saethor.

If you've plot word **DOUBLE** go to [026], otherwise to [035].

**043** The Kingdom's forces are hard pressed! Small knots of men rally for a last stand as the enemy begins to outflank you.

Across the press, you spot the Overlord's trusted half-orc lieutenant General Zond shouting orders. He gleefully urges his personal bodyguard forward. "There is their standard and their king!" Zond shouts. "Onward, in the Overlord's name! Slay them all! They will kneel before Zond!"

Zond's elite guard, led by a huge ogre, charges your small ring of defenders upon the hill's crown. Zond himself hangs well back, confident his men will end your miserable lives without risk to himself.

You're facing a squad of Dark Legionaries in black armor led by an ogre with a giant knobbed club already soaked in the blood of your comrades.

Set up your squad and any allies on Map IV in any H, V, or L square. Attacking are five dark legion soldiers (refer to [098] to generate them) starting in any E square and the ogre Thog (at T). It's a fight to the death!

## Thog

A frightful humanoid, 8–10' tall, dressed in animal hides. Ogres often dwell in caves, but this one has been recruited to fight for the Overlord! While ogres frequently have a goodly stash of plunder in their lair or on hand ... this one prepared for the battle ahead.

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**AC** 5 [14], **HD** 4+1 (19hp), **Att** 1× club (1d10),  
**THACO** 15 [+4], **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D10 W11 P12 B13  
**S14** (4), **ML** 10, **AL** Chaotic, **XP** 125.

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If your squad and allies are eliminated, go to [117]. If you slay or incapacitate all foes, go to [028].

**044** After a tense game of hide and seek, you escape enemy territory. As evening falls, you see the welcoming lights of Cedar village through the trees. Go to [037].

**045** You follow the cries into a luxurious bed chamber, filled with plush couches, a canopied bed, red drapes, silver mirrors, and silk pillows.

Two Tenok Templars menace a woman and a little girl, the woman dressed in tattered finery. Dead on the floor lies a fat orc in a black silk loincloth. He lies in a pool of blood, a scimitar in his hand.

One Templar holds a knife to the child's throat. Addressing the woman, he shouts, "Tell us where the royal treasury is, or I'll slit your brat's throat!"

The other Templar tears the room apart, pulling open drawers and jewelry cases.

Noticing you, he waves his sword: "These belong to Tenok! Find your own booty!"

You notice the woman and child are elves, the woman luminously beautiful even in her fright. "Please," she says. "Don't let them hurt my little sister!"

If you've plot word **DWARF** go to [010].

Otherwise, you can demand the Templars halt their behavior [065], attack them [085], or decide it's not your problem and keep hunting the Overlord [062].

**046** The high priest reenters the tent, eyes wide. Whispering a prayer without the force of divine magic behind it, he examines the King's injuries. If the King is dead or incapacitated, go to [016]; if he's **2hp or more**, go to [042].

**047** The Dark Legion was defeated and the city of Mourn fell, but the Overlord's body was never recovered. All wonder whether he met his doom, or somehow escaped. For now...the Kingdom is safe. **The End.**

**048** The Kingdom's engineers have erected heavy trebuchets. Now these fling boulders into the city walls and towers. A very lucky shot whistles over the wall and smashes into the roof of the Overlord's palace, knocking the top off the dome.

From atop the castle walls, the Overlord's own catapults retaliate, driving whistling spear-sized bolts and hurling rocks, pots of boiling oil, and baskets of live scorpions and wasps into the midst of the besieging army! Then jagged lances and blazing arcs of *lightning* and *fireball* arc down from a window in a high tower, blasting a siege engine to bits. Could this be the Overlord himself? Others say it is Vorlock the Vivimancer, his feared court wizard. Arrows aimed at the wizard suddenly change course, instead embedding into nearby walls. The Kingdom's few clerics not exhausted from healing conjure swarms of insects and summoned creatures who rise up to attack; Vorlock slams his window shut and retreats.

Meanwhile you rest from the rigors of the last fight and await your next orders. They aren't long in coming.

The Kingdom lacks sufficient wizards or siege engines to batter the strong walls or gates down. But you know that is not the plan. The artillery barrage is just cover for the desperate assault on the walls.

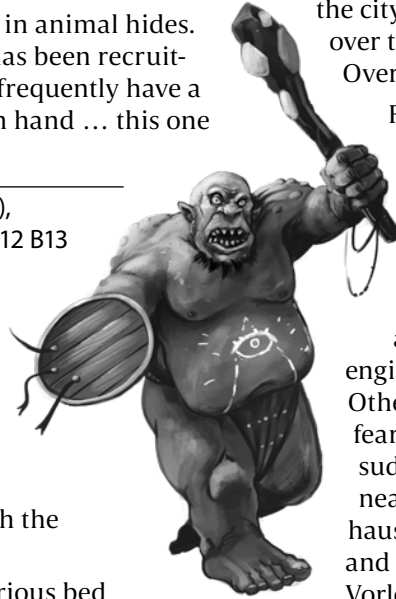
If you have plot word **DWARF** go to [075]. Otherwise go to [014].

**049** You find a bundle of keys in the pouch of a dead soldier and use them to unlock the door he guarded. It leads to a maze of corridors and offices, where the Overlord's hated tax collectors administrated his bureaucracy. You find a few more bodies, but most seem to have fled into the streets or deeper into the palace. You can take a flight of stairs going upward to [059], or continue to explore the maze of offices [020].

**050** Several hundred reptile men, from many clans, are encamped around the village. A feast or ceremony is occurring: You see them roasting what looks like a griffon!

Moving among the reptile men are a dozen or more humans and orcs in black armor. You recognize the uniform of the Dark Legion: the Overlord's army! Accompanying them are four saurian-drawn carts filled with gear. The legionaries are distributing weapons and armor to the reptile men!

Record plot word **DARK**. Go to [039] if you wish to continue observing their ceremonies to get a better count of their numbers. If you've seen enough and want to bug out now with your intelligence, go to [018].



**051** As clerics tend the injured, the siege expert Baron Gwalathar directs the circumvallation of the besieged city. Busy troops dig lines of protective trenches, assemble trebuchets and petards, and construct scaling ladders. You spot Captain Griswold, face bandaged, organizing assault parties.

As this work continues, sporadic missile fire is exchanged with the city's defenders. Everyone knows the final assault is not long in coming. Mourn's walls are strong, and who knows what the Overlord himself is planning?

Now it's time for a long rest. A single member of the squad may heal **1d6+1hp** (treated by the army's cadre of clerics, who are provisioned with healing potions and spells) after the battle. It's **1d+2 days** before the attack's next phase; the injured heal a further **1d3hp** per day. You can also add Replacements. Go to [048].

**052** The King has decided: Dark Lord Saethor must be defeated. To cheers (and sobbing) from those left behind, the army leaves Ireton and marches north. Its objective: Invade through the Red Fang mountains and capture the Overlord's city, Mourn.

If you've plot word **DWARF** go to [092]. Otherwise go to [031].

**053** After hiding the enemy bodies and obscuring your trail, you hasten toward Cedar village. Go to [044].

**054** As you stand on guard in the tunnel, the engineers finish the mine, place kindling around the supports, set fires, then urge you to fall back.

The high priest and his acolytes distribute healing potions to the injured. Any injured characters may regain an extra **1d6+1hp**; they don't give out potions to the uninjured—you can't save them for later!

You wait patiently from a safe distance. Then the fires burn through the supports in the tunnel. With an earth-shaking crash, a section of undermined wall collapses! A waiting company of the Templars and men-at-arms charges through the breach.

It's time to reenter the fray, following the assault! Go to [121].

**055** You turn a corner and suddenly face a brass-bound door, marked with the symbol of a burning skull. The Chamber of Fire!

Arrayed before the door is a squad of grim-faced Dark Legion guards.

"We *must* hold this door," their leader orders. "Lord Saethor commands it!"

If you have plot word **ZOND** go to [041]; otherwise, to [109].

**056** The Templars grow tired of their sport, and the beaten dwarf crawls out of the tavern to general laughter. One of the Templars raises a glass to you, a fellow soldier. Unlike the dwarves, elves, or the orcs, god-fearing men of the Kingdom won't surrender to the Dark Lord!



Half-drunk, you stagger back to barracks, expecting to enjoy another few days of Captain Griswold's diabolical training exercises. It's not to be. "Sober up, boys and girls," the captain says. "New orders. The entire army is marching north! Go to [031]."

**057** The dying General Zond croaks out his last words: "...listen...you fought well. The dark lord...was not always...we were soldiers together. Adventurers. But...he changed. I should have...maybe, if I had..." He expires. Go to [021].

**058** The enemy's numbers seem endless, and the Kingdom's battle plans soon fall apart as the affray turns into a chaotic swirling melee. Perhaps the King would have known what to do, but all you can do is fight as hard as you can!

Roll **1d6**; on a 6, go to [101]; otherwise, go to [043].

**059** This wing of the palace holds apartments for the Overlord and high-ranking henchmen. You encounter the bodies of several orc and human Dark Legion soldiers and liveried servants, along with smashed doors and ransacked rooms.

From the opulent decor, it's clear the oppressive taxes the overlord levied on the backs of his serfs paid for much luxury. There is no time to loot or stare. Saethor may be getting away or rallying his minions for a counterattack!

From down a side passage, you hear shouts and a woman's scream! You can investigate [045] or continue searching elsewhere for the Overlord [062].

**060** The reptile men's village lies in the shadow of Egg Rock, a wooded hill named for an odd rock formation they hold sacred. They avoid it, except on holy days during the full moon. No one should be there this time of month. Of course, if they catch you defiling their sacred ground, they won't be happy! To climb Egg Rock, go to [013]. To turn back, go to [008]; note plot word **BRO**.

**061** You locate a hole punched through the palace wall by a boulder from a trebuchet. Crawling past broken bodies, your squad emerges into a deserted palace kitchen.

Inside you discover a dead Templar of Tenok, three slain Dark Legionaries, and the corpse of a cook in a blood-stained apron. Beyond this carnage, you follow a corridor up a spiral stairway, discovering a suite of luxurious chambers in the palace's west wing.

Go to [059].

**062** No time for distractions or chivalry! You follow a fancy corridor, decorated with grisly frescoes and statues celebrating the Overlord's victories over local traitors, orcs, and elves. Ahead, another door is marked with a silver skull. Arrayed before it is a squad of grim-faced Dark Legion guards. Go to [084].

**063** With the assassin dead, the Magic Mask spell masking him ends. He is an older man than Rickon, with a scarred face.

"So they killed poor Rickon, perhaps weeks ago, and replaced him with this sorcerous assassin," the King says, nudging the assassin's body. "We owe you our life," the King intones formally. "Without your quick action, they could have slain us in our tent!"

He turns to whomever leads the squad.

"I owe you my life. Kneel as soldiers." He produces his sword and gratefully **knights** surviving squad members for their actions. "Rise as Knights of the Crown!"

Give all squad members **250 XP**; go to [042].

**064** After hard fighting you've retaken the mine! Give yourselves **240 XP**, and enjoy a brief rest and treatment from cleric (1d6+1hp of healing from a potion or spell). Before the enemy can try something else, it's time for action! Go to [054].

**065** Make a **MONSTER REACTION ROLL**. Add the squad leader's Charisma bonus, +1 if you were **knighthed**, and +1 if three or more members are left in your squad.

If your modified roll is **9+** go to [017]. Otherwise, go to [085].

**066** You notice a rumbling sound and feel it in your boots. A counter-mine? You shout a warning! Go to [019].

**067** War cries and booming drums herald the imminent appearance of scores more reptile men! The engineers shout, "we're cutting the bridge! Move it!"

You have to disengage and get off the bridge (at E) before it detonates at the end of the seventh round.

At that point anyone on it takes **4d6** damage and is flung into the river below.

If any of your squad survived (avoiding drowning, etc.) go to [119]; otherwise go to [073].

**068** The King's body is smoking, but he still twitches fitfully. Now the assassin turns to attack you: Roll Initiative!

You're fighting on Map IV, the royal tent (interior is shaded gray). Its door is at V. The King's body is at L. The assassin's at A. Your squad starts in any H or V squares. You can exit via the existing door at V, but the tent walls are fabric: You can cut a new door by inflicting 5hp with a sharp weapon; this can be over several turns).

The page will run out to get help, but if you want to save the King, you need to stop his assassin! Go to [077] for his stats and tactics, then finish the fight.

If you defeat the assassin, go to [016]. If the fight lasts more than five turns, go to [011] at the start of the sixth round. If your squad is eliminated, go to [113].

**069** Though many have fallen in the field, the army is eager to press onward. This means capturing the city of Mourn.

Operational command has now passed to the King's trusted vassal Baron Gwalathar, despite nursing a broken arm suffered during the battle. Gwalathar is the veteran commander of several sieges, including the nigh-impregnable goblin fortress of Shad Sharrivar.

"Mourn should be easier," he ponders aloud. "On the other hand, we don't want to take years. It's already past harvest." You've heard the Baron has a young wife at home; you sense a trace of homesickness in his voice, but also grim resolve to get things done. Go to [051].

**070** There are no good choices left. After a bitter council of war, the leaders decide to have the army withdraw back to the Kingdom, vindictively ravaging and pillaging the lands around Mourn as they retreat.

Nevertheless, the Overlord's immediate plans were thwarted, and the Dark Legion defeated in the field.

This war is over. After their return to Ireton, each squad member gets back pay of **2d6gp** (**3d6gp** for the squad leader). Individuals who have been **knighthed** also receive an income of **120gp/year**. They may continue in the Border Guard or end their service. If they join the guard, they are given a one-time allowance of 150gp from which they must at *least* purchase a riding horse and tack (100gp).

The dark lord did not meet his doom, but for now, you have checked his evil plans. **The End.**

**071** You've taken a tower gatehouse! As more men pour up the ladders, your squad finds a key to the trap door on a body. You head down to secure the gate house and raise the gates. You quickly locate a windlass; with some hard work, the gates of Mourn creak open!

The Kingdom's soldiers pour through the city gates! Mourn's defenses have been breached!

Survivors in the squad earn **100 XP** each. Go to [121].

## 072 *The King*

Radiating confidence, the King commands the human forces arrayed against the Dark Legion. He wears arms befitting his station. He has a full suit of **plate mail +2** and a **shield +2**, always worn in the field but removed and placed on an ornate armor stand while in his tent. He carries an enchanted **broadsword +2** and a **dagger +1**. His crown is made of gold and encrusted with diamonds (1,000gp), and enchanted to act as a **CRYSTAL BALL** and a **SCARAB OF PROTECTION**. On his belt he has a drinking goblet made of unicorn horn: any drink poured into it is treated as if a *purify food and water* spell had been cast on the liquid. Saving throws as 7th-level fighter. Speaks Common and Elvish.

Note his stats; return to the paragraph you came from.

7th-level fighter.

**STR** 15 [+1], **DEX** 14 [+1], **INT** 14, **WIS** 14 [+1], **CON** 12, **CHA** 17 [+1]. **AC** -3 [22]\*, **HD** 7 (11/30 hp), **Att** 60' . **THACO** 14 [+5], **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D8 W9 P10 B10 S12 (7), **ML** 12, **AL** Lawful.  
\*Only **AC** 8 [11] relaxing in his tent.

073 Your squad died bravely in service to the Kingdom. **The End**.

074 After several days of running and hiding, those in your squad who fled eventually reach friendly lines. The news is bad: Most of the west country is being ravaged by reptile men.

You hear panicked rumors that the Overlord is taking advantage of the confusion, his forces advancing. Other survivors of the rout are consolidated with soldiers from a second depleted company. Your unit is ordered to the capital of Ireton.

Give yourselves **50 XP** each and go to [107], recording plot word **DESPERATE**.

075 It's late evening. The following day you were about to be "volunteered" for a storming party when you recognize a familiar face: Snorri Ratsinger, a dwarf siege engineer.

"Well, well, we meet again," he says. "I still owe you one for the help at the bar against those sons of Tenok. Look, charging up them ladders over the walls is going to get you killed. All this archery and assault, light and flash, is just a distraction. I've convinced Baron Gwalathar I have a better way. Underground. Want to see my mine?"

He's talking about a tunnel dug under the walls. If you want to go with him, go to [095]. If you politely refuse, get a good night's sleep and, at dawn, go to [014].



076 In front of the host, the victorious King is cheered by the army. He praises the bravery and prowess of the army, but warns that there is hard fighting to come before the Overlord's rule can be brought to an end. Your squad are among those recognized for their valor.

Give everyone in the squad **200 XP**; the squad leader is given a **sword +1**. Go to [069].

## 077 *Assassin*

Hired by Saethor, this assassin has access to a special disguise spell, and is dressed as a griffon rider. His sole 3rd-level spell slot is *lightning bolt*, used to blast the king; he cast *magic mask* earlier in the day for infiltration. Beyond that, he has *magic missile*, *shield*, and *mirror image* prepared. He gets +1 to damage, AC, and saves versus magic due to high implicit ability scores. Speaks Common, Elvish, and Orcish.

5th-level human magic-user.

**AC** 8 [11], **HD** 5\*\* (13hp), **Att** 1× dagger (1d4+1), **THACO** 19 [0], **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** D13 W14 P13 B16 S15 (5), **ML** 10, **AL** Chaotic, **XP** 425.

If you came here from [100], the assassin tries to kill the King. Once the King is at **1hp** or fewer, he'll attack other foes. If he can't attack the King and someone else is adjacent or blocking his line of fire, he'll attack them instead.

If you came here from [068], the assassin used his only 3rd-level spell slot throwing a lightning bolt, and now focuses on the squad. His goal is to slay them and escape before reinforcements arrive.

After noting his stats and tactics, return to the paragraph you came from and fight.

078 Your squad moves carefully through the damp woods and bogs, seeking any sign of unusual reptile men activity. After several hours, you arrive within two miles of their nearest village. From there, you spot smoke rising from what might be multiple campfires and hear a great sound of drumming.

### *Magic Mask*

**2nd-level arcane spell**

**Duration:** *One day*

**Range:** *The caster or a creature touched*

*The spell creates a magical disguise over a living creature. The spell requires a model (may be alive or dead), but the disguise is otherwise visually perfect. Behavior, odor, touch, or other "tells" may still reveal the presence of the mask.*

*The spell may be dismissed by the caster at will; it vanishes if the subject of the spell dies.*

Sounds like something's up! To have one of the squad climb a tree to get a better view, go to [118]. To try and sneak closer to the village, go to [080].

**079** Several bloody assaults fail to take Mourn by storm, costing the Kingdom hundreds of soldiers. Its commanders fear they now lack the provisions and manpower for a long siege. They order a pause in the attacks. Go to [070].

**080** From your current position, it appears the best vantage point to see the village up close without being spotted is Egg Rock, a tree-lined hill that overlooks the village.

Do you recall anything about it? Make an **Intelligence** check. If successful, go to [060]. Otherwise, go to [013].

**081** The charming elven lady expresses her gratitude for the rescue from these brutes. She introduces herself as Princess Taelandra of Amberwood, taken hostage by the Overlord's army when her homeland was conquered. The child is her little sister Peri.

Your squad earns **100 XP each**.

After realizing you're hunting the Overlord and in a hurry, Taelandra warns you that the Overlord and some of his minions are in the Inner Sanctum.

She knows the Overlord has a secret door enchanted with **TELEPORT** (as per the spell) in the palace, created for him by magical researchers. He is planning to use it to escape if all seems lost. She was to be taken with them as a hostage, but the Templars killed the harem guard who was to bring her to the Overlord. Then you arrived...

You ask Taelandra if she knows where the Overlord is. "The guard did not say before your Templars slew him," she says. "But perhaps I can help." She gestures at the bedroom mirror.

"While they held my sister and my people hostage, I dared not use my powers, but I know a few spells that might aid you. I can use this mirror to scry for his location."

If you accept her aid, go to [089]. If you don't trust this elf, and would abandon her and continue searching yourselves, go to [062].

**082** You've scaled the wall, but are in a desperate fight to clear the battlements!

Determine the order that your soldiers enter. At the start of each round, one member of your squad (leader's choice) enters at L, facing V, starting with the first up the ladder.

You're fighting three Dark Legion soldiers on the gate tower battlements (**Map IV**), who start on the H squares, facing L. Determine their statistics using [098], then return here.

Shaded squares are the top of the battlements you're fighting on. Open areas are a 60-foot drop (a **6d6** fall, and you're out of the fight; if you live, you may rejoin if your squad if they win). If you defeat the enemy, go to [071]. If your squad is eliminated, go to [040].

**083** There's something about the scout standing before you that bothers you. Suddenly you remember: "Rickon" is the spitting image of the captive griffon-rider you saw immolated in a cage a few weeks ago! How he still alive? To arrest and question him, go to [004]. To attack immediately, go to [032].

**084** Set up **Map I**. Your squad and companions start in or adjacent to any E squares. Gray squares are impassible walls. The enemy guards the door at W. For enemy stats, refer to [041] if you've plot word ZOND, otherwise go to [109].

**085** One Templar pushes the child away and draws his sword; the other prepares to rush you. They must've discarded their shields to loot: It's on! Use **Map III**. You set up in any E square, the Templars at T. The shaded squares are the bed (higher ground, but hit rolls are at -1 to AC and -2 to hit rolls due to bad footing). The two unarmed elves hide at W behind the bed until the fight ends, the woman shielding the child.

Roll initiative, unless you came from [065]—if so, you have initiative the first round.

### *Tenok Templars*

The templars are members of the Tenokian religious order; these are warrior-priests rather than clerics (they are trained fighters, and know religious rituals but are not empowered with divine magic). They wear a mix of chainmail and plate mail, and usually carry shields.

Two human 3rd-level fighters.

**AC** 4 [15], **HD** 3 (16hp), **Att** 1× sword (1d8+1) or dagger (1d4+1), **THACO** 17 [+2], **MV** 60' (30'), **SV** D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (3). ML10, **AL** Neutral, **XP** 35

If you win, go to [081]. If you retreat out the entrance, go to [062]; if your squad's eliminated, go to [040].

**086** With the battle won, the high priest and barons allow the truth of the monarch's grievous injuries to come out. In the flush of victory, this does not harm morale. Instead, the host is outraged by the news of a sneak attack by the Overlord's assassin and proud to have won the field despite such treacherous stratagems. There is hard fighting to come if they are to storm the city, but the army will see it through.

Your squad must return the King's weapons, but as a reward for valor, whoever wore his suit of full plate armor may retain it. If you cannot use the armor, you can keep it in camp as a trophy. (Of course, you won't wear the King's coat of arms on surcoat or shield, nor his crown.)

Give everyone in the squad **250 XP**. Go to [069].



**087** Another sub-chief—Zurg’s twin brother Karg, with conveniently identical stats to Zurg (see [112])—enters the melee. Add him at the West entrance of the bridge.

**088** You retreat from the palace, and after a time, rejoin the rest of your unit. There you are praised for having rescued the elven Princess Taelandra, who speaks favorably of you.

Some time later, you hear that soldiers reached the Dark Lord’s chamber, but he was gone, having fled the city for parts unknown.

The war is over. Each squad member gets **2d6 gp** (3d6 gp for the squad leader) in back pay and shares of booty. You may continue in the Border Guard, or end your service.

The Dark Lord did not meet his doom, but his evil was checked. For now, it’s **The End...**

**089** “The Overlord has many wards, but these won’t protect him from scrying from within his own palace,” Taelandra laughs. “I can guess where he might be. If I am correct...”

She concentrates, whispering a spell.

“We seek the present, not past or future,” Taelandra intones. An image fills the mirror:

It reveals a grim-faced man with long silver hair, clad in black and crimson. He wears a horned crown, an amber ring and a strange, six-fingered gauntlet. In the foreground is a huge flaming pit.

You recognize the Overlord’s features from the many statues that adorn the city. Kneeling before him is a trembling Dark Legion officer.

“I was right,” says Taelandra. “The Chamber of Fire, the second level beneath the palace! Listen! The mirror’s surface vibrates; I cast my spell well. We shall hear their voices!”

*“Have they secured the Gate?” The Overlord’s cold, menacing voice.*

*“Dread Lord, the slaves still clear debris from the roof collapse,” the cringing officer answers. “It could take another hour...”*

*“An hour?” Saethor’s voice rises in fury. “The enemy are here, dolt! You will fail me no more!” He grabs him with the weird claw-like gauntlet covering his right forearm. There’s a flash, a scream, and a sound of sizzling bacon. A hunk of charred meat collapses where a Dark Legionary once stood.*

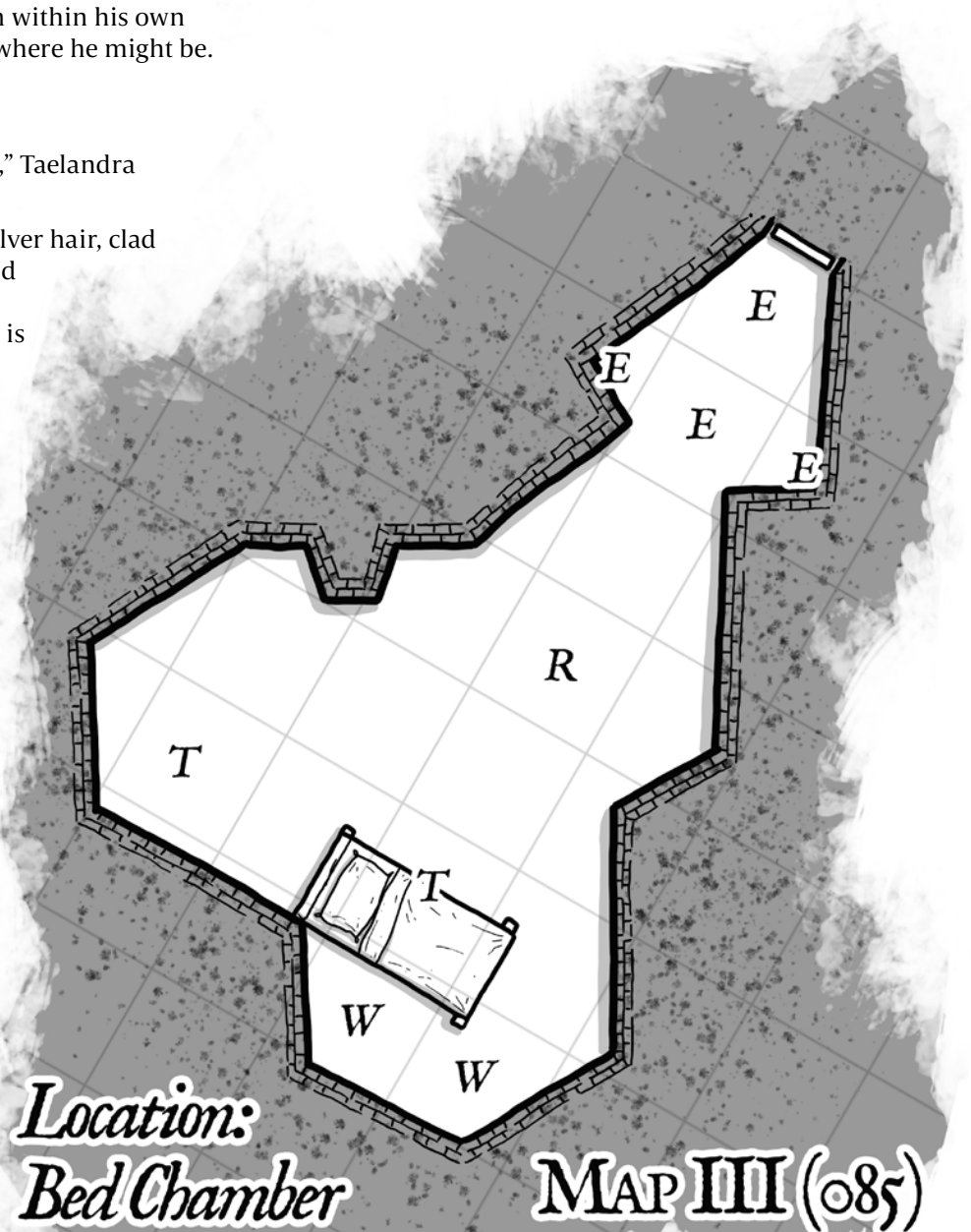
*“Fetch my Vivimancer,” Saethor shouts, addressing another guard. “If we cannot use the Gate, Vorlock must conjure a greater demon.” He kicks the corpse. “Throw that in the fire!”*

The mirror turns black. Taelandra seems tired. “The dark lord knows the jaws of your trap closes upon him,” Taelandra gasps. “But if he can summon and bind a demon, it could transport him and several minions wherever he wishes.”

You realize time is short; once the wizard arrives, it will take a few minutes at most to perform the summoning. Unless his wizard fouls up, he could escape, or, in a fit of rage, unleash the demon.

“The Chamber of Fire is not far from here,” Taelandra says. “There is a stairway behind a silver door.” She looks nervous. “Are you really going to confront the Overlord?”

There is no time to get reinforcements. If you believe duty compels you to face the Overlord, go to [097]. If you fear that task is beyond you, go to [029].



## Taelandra

The elvish princess is a diplomat and leader by training and by nature. She has **+2 to all NPC reactions** and commands loyalty by her lightest touch; she has **+1 to saving throws versus magic** due to implicit attribute scores. Speaks Elvish and Common. She is dedicated to her sister Peri and will not see her harmed. She has *protection from evil*, *shield*, and *mirror image* prepared.

5th-level elf.

**AC** 9 [10], **HD** 5\* (17hp), **Att** 1× unarmed (1d2), **THACO** 17 [+2], **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** D10 W11 P11 B13 S12 (5), **ML** 10, **AL** Lawful, **XP** 300.

(Little sister Peri is a 1st-level elf, with 4hp and no spells memorized.)

**090** You stay concealed, grim witness to the enemy's atrocity and the soldier's courage facing death. After all is done, you make your escape through the trees and down Egg Rock's reverse slope. Go to [018].

**091** Your squad tried its best to outrun and outfox their pursuers, but the reptile men hunters know the region as well as you do—maybe better!

You're two miles from Cedar when reptile men hunters burst out of the undergrowth: three fleet-footed young scouts, eager for their first kill. Fortunately, the veteran warriors were left behind during the rapid pursuit.

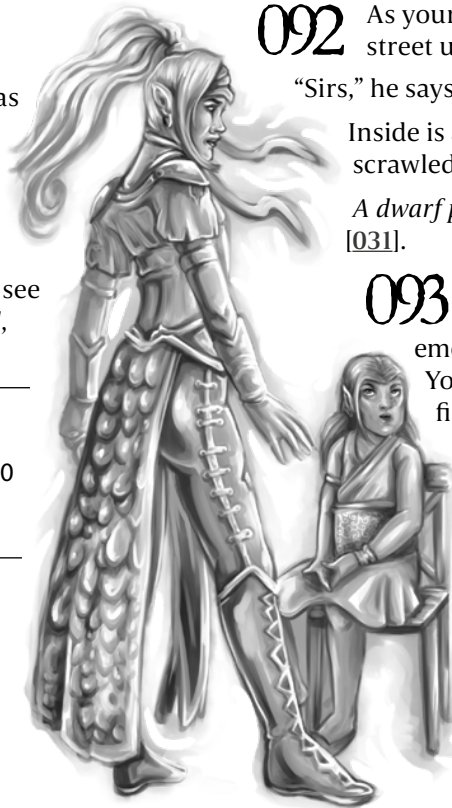
First, dwarves, elves, halflings, and thieves may each make a check as if listening at doors; additionally, the party leader may also roll 1d6, with success on a 1–2. Success on any of these means you noticed the signs of a carefully prepared ambush in time. Otherwise, the canny reptile men hunters surprise you!

The fight occurs on Map II. If they ambushed you, your squad can't act at all on the first round. Otherwise, roll initiative. Shaded squares are bushes (count as 2 squares for ground movement, and **–4 to hit** for thrown/missile attacks into them). Your squad sets up within two squares of any T square, facing W. Place the reptile men in the W squares. It's a fight to the death; go to [053] if the squad wins; if it's eliminated, go to [073].

## Hunters

Three reptile men, armed with three javelins and a light hide shield. They first throw javelins, then close to fight with teeth and claws.

**AC** 7 [12], **HD** 1+2 (6hp), **Att** 1× javelin (1d4+1) or 1× claws (1d4), **THACO** 18 [+1], **MV** 105' (35') / 120' (40') in water, **SV** D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (1), **ML** 12, **AL** Neutral, **XP** 15. **TT** D.



**092** As your company marches out Ireton's gates, a street urchin runs up to you with a sack.

"Sirs," he says. "Some dwarf said to give you this."

Inside is a flask of the finest dwarven ale and a scrawled note.

*A dwarf pays his debts –Snorri Ratsinger. Go to [031].*

**093** You're taken by surprise when the floor of the mine erupts and a monster emerges! Go to [019] but you're **surprised**. Your squad and allies may not act on the first round of combat, and if within the cave-in zone you are caught flat-footed, at **–3 penalty to Armor Class** when "attacked" by the falling rocks.

**094** As your eyes close, you are comforted in your final moments by the shouts of victory from the royal army, accompanied by the lamentations of your foes.

How this war will end you do not know. As you breathe your last, it seems you have done your part; there's hope of victory in **The End**.

**095** A grinning Ratsinger takes you to an area of the siege works concealed under a tent. It is a shaft, sloping underground toward the city walls.

He explains it was hastily dug under cover of darkness using a combination of powerful dwarven earth-magic and hard labor with pickaxes. The mine is a narrow tunnel, braced with heavy wooden beams cannibalized from wagons. When it's ready, they'll set fire to the supports, and the collapse of the mine shaft will bring down the walls.

"We'll be ready to go before dawn," he says. "After the walls collapse, I'll need some stout fellows to lead our charge into the breach. They won't be expecting it. Are you in?"

If you agree, go to [002]. If not, go to [014].

**096** Griswold considers your report and consults with his platoon leaders. If hundreds of reptile men are massing, his little village of Cedar is directly in their path. There's no way his small company can defend the village against that kind of horde.

He begins planning the defenses and the evacuation of Cedar.

Meanwhile, your squad can take a **Brief Rest** and recover 1d3hp. You can also add **Replacements** to the squad from other platoons. Give the squad leader **100 XP** for every soldier that survived your recon mission. Go to [025].

**097** If Saethor isn't stopped now, he may rise again. You won't let the army's sacrifices be in vain!

Your courage kindles Taelandra's. "I will accompany you," she declares. "Perhaps my small magic can help. I also have a score to settle." She'll guide you to the Chamber of Fire. "It's a private study where he *entertains*," Taelandra explains. "He enjoys seeing his foes thrown into a burning pit." Add Taelandra and Peri as **Companions**; go to [108]. Taelandra pulls aside a loose stone, producing a **potion healing** with **two doses** for you. "Take these," she says. "You'll need them."

**098** If directed here, determine each Dark Legion soldier's stats by rolling **1d6** on the Dark Legionary Generator table. All carry daggers (**1d4**).

**099** A harried knight in Baron Gwalathar's retinue directs you to reinforce a detachment of knights and Tenok Templars. They are storming the palace's west wing. Go to [061].

**100** You tell Rickon to wait under guard, while you check with the King.

"Rickon?" The King says, obviously pleased. "I am done with my prayers; my nephew Rickon is our best scout and pathfinder. I would hear his news."

The high priest leaves while Rickon hands over his sword, submitting to a search. He's clean. You escort him into the tent.

"I feared you were lost on patrol, good Sir Rickon," says the King. "Your father will be most pleased you lived. What news do you bring?"

"The best, your majesty," says Sir Rickon, his voice gloating. "The war is over!" He points a finger and screams a word of power. A crackling bolt arcs from his hand and smashes into the King, blasting the monarch down! Go to [068].

**101** The two armies crash together like raging bulls. The courageous charge of the royal guard and men-at-arms slices through the enemy center.

You spot the enemy battle standard and the King nods, urging his men forward. He hacks and slashes through the host with his magical sword, the rest of the army following behind.

Men fall like wheat before a scythe—on both sides. Most of the King's guard are scattered or slain, but you stay with him as he cuts through the enemy ranks.

The enemy falls into disorder! Ahead is the Overlord's general Zond, cut off from most of his guards. He shouts frantic commands as he struggles to rally his soldiers. It is the moment of decision. You see an opening and urge the attack.

Set up on Map I. You're facing Zond (at Z) and three Dark Legion soldiers (start in each T square, facing G).



Refer to [036] for General Zond's stats and generate Dark Legionaries as detailed in [098], then return here to fight.

Shaded squares represent a low ridge (higher ground): it costs an extra square of movement to cross up into it, and anyone on it fighting a foe in adjacent clear squares gets the advantage of high ground (melee attacks at **+2 to hit**, enemy strikes at **-2 to hit**). Deploy your own squad (and any allies) within two squares of squares O and/or V, facing E.

If your squad and allies are eliminated, go to [117]. If your side eliminates all enemies, go to [007]. If Zond is killed or incapacitated but other foes remain, roll **1d6**. On a **1-4**, go to [007]; on a **5-6**, continue fighting.

**102** If you hit their shaman, and reduce him to 1hp or fewer, he's dead or incapacitated; record plot word **SHOT**. Otherwise, he's injured; note his remaining hp in case you meet him later. If you hit the captive, he dies. No need to roll damage; he's at 2hp already. Mercy-killing the soldier or dropping the shaman each earn your squad **125 XP**.

There are enough reptile men that your missiles will hit someone even if they miss both of the other targets! It is hard to tell if they were killed or injured, but the hisses, shouts, and chaos informs you that you got their attention! Some deduce the attack came from Egg Rock and charge up the hill toward you. Time to scoot! Go to [018].

**103** The enemy was too strong! The engineers struggle with the petards. When they see swarms of reptile men in close pursuit and no one to shield them, they abandon the explosives and take to their heels.

"The bridge has fallen!" a man cries. "Flee!"

A sergeant steps forward to stem the panic, but a reptile man chucks a spear into him, and he falls. Soldiers drop shields and weapons. It's a rout!

If your squad was entirely eliminated when you abandoned the bridge, go to [073]; if some of you fled before the sixth round, survivors instead go to [074].

**104** You've forced your way into the Chamber of Fire. It is a hexagonal hall dominated by a blazing fire pit, behind which sits an ornate throne.

Before the fire pit, arms upraised, a bald man in black and gold robes brandishes an ornate wizard's staff. He chants terrible words in the Sorcerer's Tongue. The pit flickers with greenish flame. Beside him two Black Legion guards fidget nervously.

The imposing figure of the Overlord sits on the throne. He is a grim-faced man with burning eyes and long silver hair, dressed in black and crimson velvet. He wears a simple helmet, though gilded in gold. On one hand is a strange gauntlet; he also wields a black metal scepter. He stares fixedly at the wizard before him, his face twisted with barely suppressed fury and impatience.

As you enter, the wizard is saying "But my lord, I haven't even created a protective barrier! My apprentices are dead. I cannot..."

"Shut up and conjure, wizard, or I'll kill you myself!"

Then the Overlord notices the unwelcome guests. His expression changes, now that he has time for action. He makes a come-hither gesture to you with his clawed gauntlet

"Ah, uninvited guests at last! Welcome," he says, "to your doom." Go to [123].

**105** A tribal shaman in a feathered headdress and carrying a skull-tipped staff joins the battle. (If you injured him previously, he's regained two of those lost hit points.)

The shaman jumps up and down, literally hopping mad.

"The ancestors have spoken! You defiled the Sacred Egg Rock during the flame offering! I'll eat your hearts myself!"

The shaman probably used *clairvoyance* and fingered your squad as the culprits. He supports his comrades with spellcasting: Place him in any W entry square, then finish the fight at [112].

### *Reptile-man Shaman*

This powerful reptile-man is a capable divine spellcaster. He supports his allies, having prepared *cause light wounds*, *cause fear*, and *2x bless*,

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**AC** 7 [12], **HD** 5 (12hp\*), **Att** 1x staff (1d4), **THACO** 17 [+2], **MV** 60' (20') / 120' (40') in water, **SV** D10 W11 P11 B13 S12 (5), **ML** 12, **AL** Neutral, **XP** 35.

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\*Lower if you already wounded him.

**106** The army encamps near the River Tear on the edge of the Plain of Sorrow. This evening, the Border Guard has the honor of guarding the king's tent; for the evening shift, your squad are presently assigned to the post. The comings and goings of officers and nobles can mean only one thing: Battle is expected, tomorrow or the following day.

Your shift on guard duty almost over; you look forward to supper and some rest before the fighting tomorrow. Inside, the King is being shriven and healed after the day's fighting by the high priest, attended by his page. You overhear the priest's prayers and the King's responses. Mighty divine magic issues from the priest, leaving both visibly exhausted; the king still carries unhealed wounds from the day's fighting.

A battered and weather-stained soldier approaches the royal tent. He wears the uniform of the elite griffon riders of the Royal Army. He gives the password and identifies himself as Sir Rickon, an air cavalry scout, returned from reconnaissance. He bears urgent news of enemy movements!

If you have plot word **FIRE** go to [083]; otherwise, to [100].



**107** Your battered company arrives at the capital of Ireton. As you march through the city gates, you realize the King has mustered his vassals. The streets echo to the tramp of knights, men-at-arms, and archers from across the Kingdom. The harbor is filled with warships; you witness a contingent of soldiers disembarking from far-off Gwalathar beyond the narrow sea. A company of religious Templars, haughty in their gold-trimmed armor and bright shields bearing the symbol of the Omnipotent Tenok, proclaim their eagerness to battle the “godless hosts” of the dark lord to all who listen (and many who don’t).

You find yourselves barracked in a drafty corner of the King’s castle. Gossip says the King, captains, nobles, and high priest are arguing over whether to attack or stand on the defensive; you’ll be in garrison for several days.

Enjoy a **long rest** of **4d6** days (heal 1d3 hp/day), add **Replacements**, then go to [003].

**108** You hurry through the labyrinthine corridors. “Take the right turn, not the left,” Taelandra says, shuddering. “The right leads to the Vivimancer’s laboratory” she continues. “Hurry, but beware: The Overlord always has several guards with him. But he is the worst of all!” Go to [055].

**109** Your opponents are four Dark Legion soldiers (created using the **Dark Legionary Generator** at [098]), placed at any W on **Map I**. If you defeat them go to [021].

**110** The high priest and baron decide your squad can’t be trusted to keep the secret while another man acts as the King’s double. You’re sent to the rear to guard the baggage.

Roll **1d6** (at –1 if you have plot word **DESPERATE**). On a **0–3**, go to [009]; on a **4–6**, record plot word **ZOND** and go to [124].

**111** You locate a doorway on the palace’s east side. Three tough-looking Dark Legion soldiers guard it. The bodies of several royal soldiers sprawl nearby.

“Kingdom scum,” one of them sneers, spotting you. He spits on the ground. He’s got a bandage ‘round his head, but looks ready for a fight; the other two seem unhurt. “We ain’t beat yet!”

The fight’s on! Go to [098] and generate three **Dark Legion** foes, and return; the first is wounded (down 3hp), the others are unhurt.

Fight them on **Map II**. Your squad starts at any E square, they’re at W. If you beat them, go to [049]. If your squad is eliminated, go to [040]. Shaded squares are fallen bodies.

**112** Set up **Map I**. It depicts the bridge spanning Osric River. Clear squares are the bridge. Shaded squares are water. It’s a 10-yard drop to the rushing river (30’ deep). Anyone falling/jumping in is out of the fight. If you retreat—or are forced off the bridge—you risk drowning. **Roll 1d6**: You drown on a roll of **1 or lower**. The roll is at –2 at light encumbrance, –4 at heavy encumbrance (or –1 per 100 coins weight over 400 if using **DETAILED ENCUMBRANCE**). You may abandon weapons, treasure, packs/sacks, and shields to reduce weight, but not remove armor. Removed gear is lost!

Your orders: Hold the bridge for at least six turns! Deploy the squad anywhere on the bridge within one 5’ square of those labeled 5 or 6.

The enemy are four reptile men: Zurg (at Z) and three warriors (any W).

Roll initiative and start fighting, but keep track of time.

At the end of the third round, roll **1d6**. On a **1–3**, go to [038]. On a **4+**, keep fighting.

If you choose to withdraw, or do so when the engineers give the signal, squad members can retreat off the west map edge at any time, or by jumping into the water (check for drowning.) Injured soldiers can retreat early (but this means leaving the others).

If the squad kills or incapacitates all their reptile-man opponents in six turns or fewer, you’ve stopped their charge and held the bridge! Go to [022].

If your squad and the reptile men are still contesting the bridge at the end of the sixth round (both sides have conscious figures on it), go to [067].

If your squad is eliminated, go to [073]; if your squad abandoned the bridge to the reptile men before the sixth round, survivors go to [103].

## Sub-Chief Zurg

This huge reptile man carries a massive polearm in two hands. He may use his weapon, bite and claw (1d6+2), or strike to rear squares with his tail (1d4+2). He also carries a war club (1d4+2) as a backup on his belt. He wears chainmail.

---

**AC** 4 [15], **HD** 4+2 (20hp), **Att** 1× polearm (1d10+2), **THACO** 13 [+6], **MV** 60' (20') / 120' (40') in water, **SV** D10 W11 P12 B13 S14 (4), **ML** 12, **AL** Neutral, **XP** 125. TT D.

---

## Warriors

Three reptile men, armed with clubs (1–3) or spears (4–6) and a light hide shield. In melee they may use their weapons, or strike with their tails to rear squares for 1d4+1.

---

**AC** 7 [12], **HD** 1+2 (6hp), **Att** 1× club (1d4+1) or spear (1d6 +1), **THACO** 17 [+2], **MV** 60' (20') / 120' (40') in water, **SV** D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (1), **ML** 12, **AL** Neutral, **XP** 15. TT D.

---

**113** Word of the massacre in the King's tent spreads, and despair settles over the army. War drums sound: The Overlord's army attacks! The army is ordered to form up, but bereft of their King, the battle lines are ragged and chaotic. Go to [117].

**114** A reptile-man scouting party has picked up your trail: The chase is on (see *EVASION AND PURSUIT*)! Resolve as a *PURSUIT*. They pursue for three days, with a 50% chance of catching the party each day. Success (the party is not caught) goes to [044]; failure to [091].

**115** The Overlord Saethor has fallen! Each survivor earns **1250 XP**.

A few minutes after your victory, a wounded Baron Gwalathar and two squads of the Kingdom's soldiers stagger into the chamber.

Upon discovering the dark lord's doom, you are hailed as heroes! Go to [125].

**116** "Curse those savages," the captain says. "Looks like the Overlord's agents have been busy. They've united and are arming the reptile-man tribes! The Kingdom needs to know the Overlord is preparing to start the long-dreaded war—in the west!"

Someone needs to warn the villagers to evacuate and have the Border Guard prepare to hold the river line. If not, hundreds of reptile men, some with iron arms and armor in place of the usual crude clubs, will swarm into the Kingdom!

"Headquarters will want to know about those Dark Legionaries." He scribbles a message onto a piece of good parchment. "I'll have this sent by our fastest runners to Fort Osric, and then by griffon to the capital. The King must be informed!"

He smiles wearily at you. "Good job." Give your squad **100 XP**; go to [096].

**117** Panic spreads like wildfire through the Kingdom's host! An orderly retreat quickly becomes a rout.

The Overlord's host gleefully pursues, joined by fresh troops from the city. The Overlord takes to the walls, and his mocking laughter rings across the battlefield. It's a massacre.

Go to [033] if your squad died in the king's tent or in battle, or [009] if you're stuck guarding the baggage.



**118** From the treetop, your spy sees the village about two miles away. It's a primitive settlement of several dozen longhouses built on stilts, partly shrouded by smoke from peat-bog fires. Normally it has sixty or seventy residents.

Now surrounding it are the tents of hundreds more reptile men! Still more arrive as you watch: You can see a contingent coming up a trail toward the village. It seems all the reptile men tribes of the swamp have sent warriors here. You also make out what might be a few carts or wagons, and some other figures that look smaller than reptile men. From this distance, you can't really be sure.

Perhaps the reptile men plan a major raid into the Kingdom, or maybe several tribes are going to war against another? To look for a safe way to get closer, go to [080]. If you think sneaking closer is too dangerous with reptile men arriving, and prefer to head back to Cedar to report, go to [018].

**119** The hard-fought action at Osric Bridge enabled the Border Guard to evacuate threatened villages and halt the invasion of the reptile men at the river line. The Overlord's planned backstab has backfired: The kingdom is alerted to the Overlord's threat. It's time to strike back. Your unit is ordered to the capital of Ireton.

You have halted the invasion! Gain **150 XP** each; go to [107].

**120** The battle was won, yet the Overlord remains within his city, with a depleted but powerful garrison.

Go to [086] if your squad wore the King's armor and won, or to [076] if you fought beside the King and he survived the battle, or [069] if your squad survived and won, but the King was slain.

**121** Mourn's walls are breached. The Kingdom's soldiers pour in, but pockets of the enemy still resist. Some retreat to the Overlord's palace, preparing their last stand.

A confused battle rages through the streets of the fallen city! Many Kingdom soldiers are fighting against knots of the enemy. Others lose discipline, breaking into houses or shops and emerging with armloads of valuables. Fires start to break out.

Fearing the Overlord might use this confusion to escape, you lead your squad toward the Overlord's palace, atop Vulture Hill in the city's center.

It's taken damage from catapult bombardment, but the front gate looks to be heavily defended. A formation of Kingdom men-at-arms are heavily engaged against a smaller phalanx of Dark Legion soldiers. The press of fighting is too tight for your squad to make much difference. You can hunt for a superior officer and request orders [099], or search for another route into the palace [030].



**122** Your captain isn't pleased that you were brawling, but you upheld the honor of the Border Guard. You each get **50 XP**. You're confined to quarters until your bruises heal (1d3hp per day). No more pub-crawling for you! Go to [052].

**123** You are facing Overlord Saethor in the Chamber of Fire.

Confident of his prowess, he orders his guards to protect Vorlock (he needs him to finish casting to make his escape), and moves to back them up.

Vorlock is performing a summoning ritual using a scroll, which takes 1d6+4 rounds. If he's knocked down or interrupted (including injury), his spell fails, at which point he joins the fight if he's still conscious.

If he has the time to complete the ritual, **roll 1d8**, and the spell succeeds on **3+**. If successful, Vorlock summons a demon—use the stats for an **INVISIBLE STALKER**—who is capable of planar travel to carry himself and (if the overlord still lives) Saethor to safety. If the roll fails, the demon becomes the players' ally and attempts to kill the wizard, Saethor, and his guards, in that order. Afterwards, it vanishes!

Refer to **Map IV**. Set up your squad and companions within two squares of the entrance (E). Overlord Saethor is at O, beside his throne. Two Dark Legionary guards are at G. Vorlock is at V.





The shaded area is the infernal pit (counts as burning oil for 1d4 passing through a square, or 1d8 if you spend a whole round there; the demon and Saethor are protected against fire).

This is a fight to the finish. If you kill or incapacitate all enemies, go to [115]. If your squad and companions are eliminated (if even the Overlord dies first) go to [047].

### *Vivimancer Vorlock*

Vorlock is focused on escape, and both the charges in his staff of striking as well as his daily allotment of spells have been significantly reduced through the day's fighting. The bonus to AC and saving throws from his **ring of protection** is already figured into the stat block).

6th-level human magic-user.

**AC** 8 [11], **HD** 6 (15hp), **Att** 1× dagger (1d4+1) or Staff of Striking (2d6), **THACO** 16 [+3],

**MV** 120' (40'), **SV** D10 W11 P10 B13 S11 (6),

**ML** 10, **AL** Chaotic, **XP** 625.

- ▶ **Spells:** 1st charm person, magic missile 2nd mirror image
- ▶ **Equipment:** Ring of Protection, Staff of Striking (8 charges left; he does not know this)
- ▶ Vorlock never skips leg day, and is pretty buff for a wizard: +1 to hit and damage from implied STR, already included in THACO and damage.

### *Overlord Saethor*

7th-level fighter.

**AC** 3 [16], **HD** 7\*\* (38hp), **Att** 1× scepter (1d6+1) or gauntlet (1d4+1), **THACO** 14 [+5], (+1 **AC** due to high **DEX**)

**MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D6 W7 P8 B8 S10 (7),

**ML** 12, **AL** Chaotic, **XP** 1,250. TT A

Saethor's conquests have left him in possession of several powerful magic items, including:

- ▶ **Leather Armor +1** and a **dagger +1**. In addition to his armor and dagger, he wields:
- ▶ **Six-Fingered Gauntlet (on right arm):** A **cestus +1** (strikes like a **club +1** for 1d4+1) which can burst into flames, like a **FLAMING SWORD**. Also behaves as a **RING OF FIRE RESISTANCE**: He can move through the fire pit unharmed.
- ▶ **The Black Scepter:** A **mace +1**. Instead of attacking, it can **invoke fear**. The target must **save versus spells** (or make a **morale check** at a -2 penalty) or flee from the mace on their next round, at their maximum speed.
- ▶ **Amber Ring of the Elven Lords (on left finger):** Provides +2 **AC** and +2 to **saving throws** (included in Saethor's stats). Amber and gold are worth 400gp.
- ▶ **Horned Crown:** Grants **infravision**. If the wearer is brought to 0hp or below, it heals them to 1hp...but then breaks on a **1-2 on 1d6**. *The crown is platinum and ivory, worth 700gp.*

**124** The battle is long and hard, but the enemy is defeated on the field!

Remnants of the Dark Legion have retreated to the City of Mourn, and the Overlord is yet undefeated. His black banner still flies from his palace, where he broods, like a poisonous spider in his web. To end his reign, Mourn must be besieged.

The Kingdom's army advances to surround the city. The defenders respond to their demands for surrender with mocking laughs and showers of arrows. Go to [120].

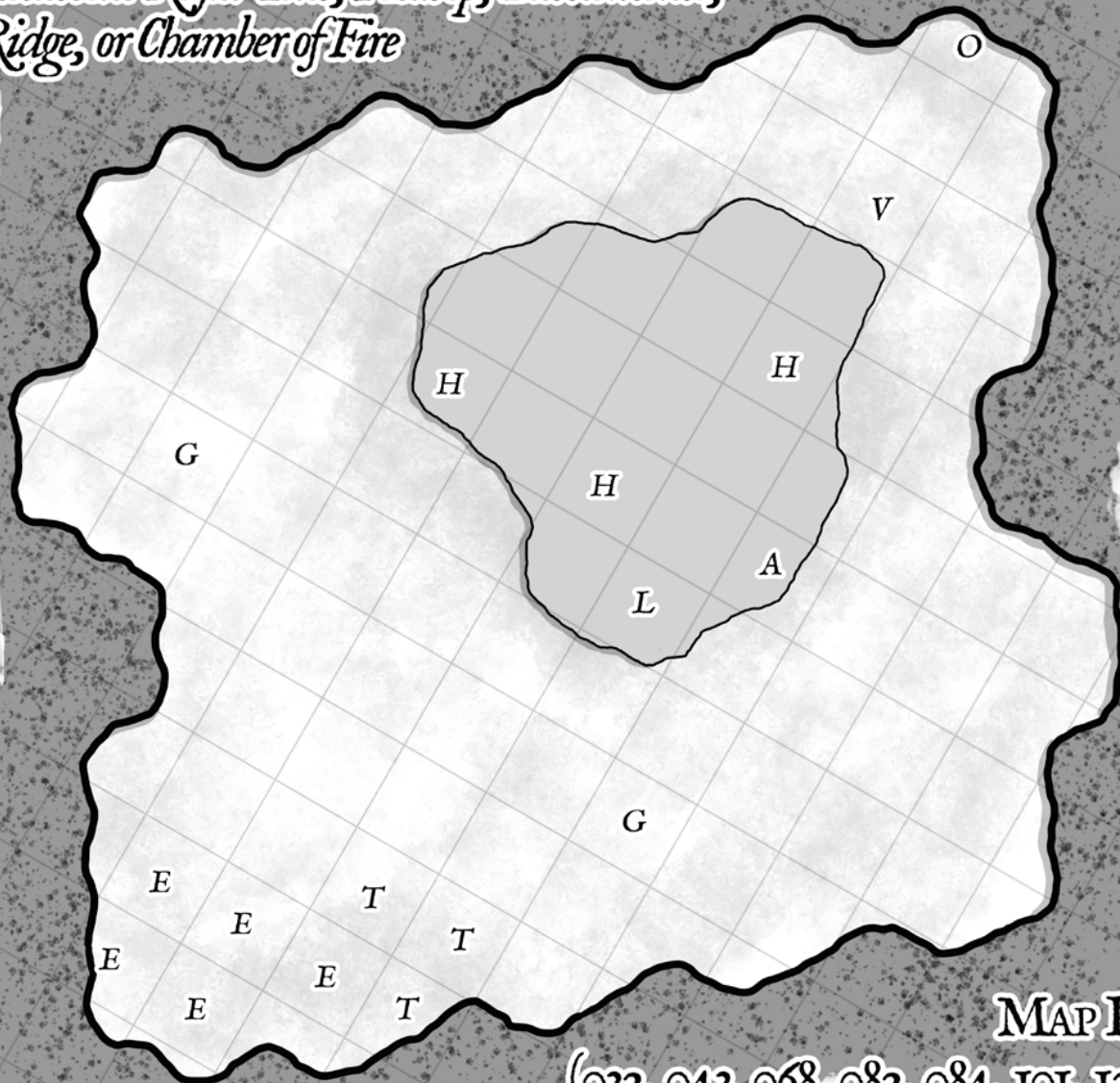
**125** The war is over! A few weeks later, after the injured recuperate and the dead are buried, the Kingdom's armies parade in triumphant splendor through the capital, your squad of heroes leading the way.

All squad members (or their heirs) receive back pay and booty from Mourn's sack: **3d6**×10gp. Ordinary squad members are promoted to Army Sergeant; the squad leader to Army Captain (even if lacking job qualifications).

Whoever struck the blow slaying Saethor, if alive, is **knighted** (or if already **knighted**, made an elite King's Companion), with an income of 240gp/year. King's Companions are gifted with a warhorse complete with tack (but not barding), a set of plate mail, and a +1 sword identifying them as a member of the Companions, with "fidelity" etched into the blade.

If Taelandra and Peri survived, any compatible surviving squad member who is a human or elf having **CHA 16** or higher may attract her romantic interest. Taelandra seeks a partner to help restore Amberwood to its former glory. **The End.**

*Location: Royal Tent, Hilltop, Battlements, Ridge, or Chamber of Fire*



**MAP IV**

(032, 043, 068, 082, 084, 101, 123)

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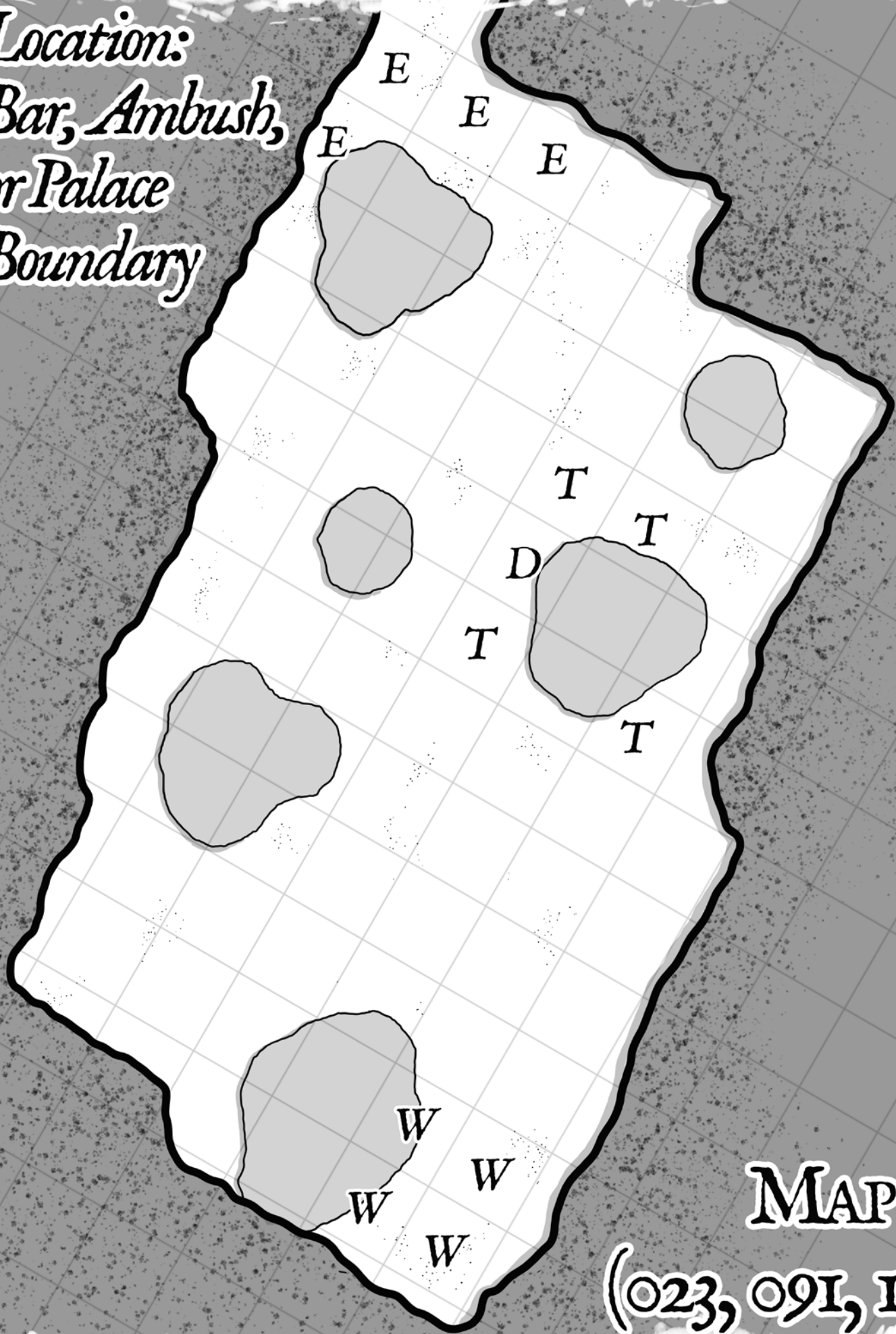
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*Location:  
Bar, Ambush,  
or Palace  
Boundary*



**MAP II**  
**(023, 091, III)**



# No Idle March

Another Dark Lord is on the rise, threatening to bring death and destruction to all who oppose him... and maybe a few who don't.

Saethor, whose Dark Legion was hired to keep order in a time of famine, betrayed and massacred the council that hired him, and seized power.

With a name like "the Dark Legion," could one really expect it to end any differently?

He assimilated the Red Fang orcs and defeated the elves of Amberwood. Now, his avaricious gaze turns on the Kingdom...

This solo/programmed adventure for low-level Old-School Essentials character features a squad of soldiers fighting in an all-out war to defeat the evil Lord before it's too late.

Will the Dark Lord's Doom fall upon the party, or on the villain himself?



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