

In the barren lands of the Wilds, where no settlement has survived, there is a place **of darkness and depth**. This is the site of your finest hour, or your final one.

Dwellers of the deep

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5E

A unique module
for Dungeons & Dragons'
5th Edition

SPECIAL NOTE TO READERS – PLEASE READ!

“Dwellers of the Deep” is written for the clients of Heroes B&B to enjoy as part of their ultimate gaming experiences with us. Heroes B&B is a Twin Cities-based company that caters to gaming groups in Minnesota, Wisconsin and Iowa who wish to heighten their 5th Edition gaming experience. If you’re planning on spending a day or weekend playing with us, then **STOP right here!** We don’t want to spoil your fun by giving away the plot twists in “Dwellers of the Deep.”

If that’s not the case, then enjoy this extended adventure module that provides equal doses of RP and combat, not to mention more than a few unique gaming moments.

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For monsters, we’ve either created them from common creature templates or made recommendations on which ones to use from our favorite 5E publisher, Kobold Press.

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ABOUT THE ADVENTURE

For generations a dire prophecy has concerned the courageous folk of Vesta, a mountainous land that acts as a sole and defiant guardian against an invading menace.

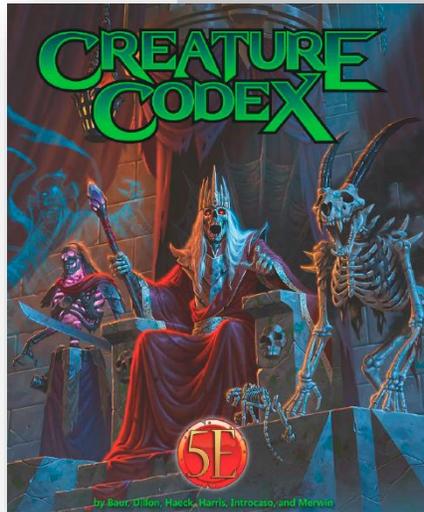
The prophecy tells of the destruction of Vesta's prominent land structure, a volcano, by a natural occurrence of behemoths - a mating of mountain-sized giants. This rare act, as the prophecy foretells, will conclude with the eruption of the volcano. If this happens, the eruption would kill hundreds of Vesta's most populous race, dwarves, and lay low the volcano, the only known defensive structure holding back the invasion of murderous creatures from the nearby barren lands, called the Wilds. In the days before this prophecy occurs, a group of adventurers arrive as contestants in an annual tournament held by a queen of a local nation bordering Vesta, the kingdom of Boscha. The Boscha queen's tournament is simple – slay more of the Wilds' evil creatures than any other group entering the tournament and be crowned winners.

A week before the tournament begins, the adventurers arrive in Boscha are convinced to cross into the Wilds on a scouting and cartography mission. The mission quickly gets caught up in events that signal the imminent occurrence of the dire prophecy.

MODULE OVERVIEW:

Here are special notes on the module:

- It is intended to take at least 6-8 hours to complete and acts as a preview of Heroes B&B's full-length adventure, "Destiny's Divide";
- It has been written to accommodate all player levels in 5th edition Dungeons and Dragons; GMs will have to change creatures and some conditions depending on player levels;
- We have provided monster recommendations as well as where to find these monsters' stat blocks in different 5E publications.
- Locations are loosely described in most parts of this module as Heroes B&B gamers play 5th Edition adventures in a unique gameplay environment that features high-detailed maps, multiple monitors and a sound system.



A memorable creature from our friends at Kobold Press

Heroes B&B would like to credit Kobold Press for its terrific lore of the Mountain Giant, which led in part to the creation of this module. Check out the Mountain Giant and other great 5th Edition creatures in Kobold Press' Creature Codex here:

<https://koboldpress.com/kpstore/product/creature-codex-for-5th-edition-dnd/>

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND & HISTORY

ABOUT VESTA

The land of Vesta was named centuries ago by elves who viewed the rugged, mountainous terrain as a promise of hard living.

The original inhabitants, however, had no idea how much of a “vesta,” meaning promise in the Elven tongue, current-day residents would have to make in order to survive what has become the focal point of a centuries-old conflict. For today the land of Vesta stands as a lone guardian against the evil inhabitants of the nearby Wilds.

Dwarves act as Vesta’s most numerous and prominent defenders. Hundreds of the brave folk dwell as the region’s living shield, living just feet away from the only known territory reachable to the Wilds’ bands of orcs and ogres.

This battle-torn territory is a stretch of crossable river some 100 yards long and across. Massive waterfalls lie to the north and south of it. Between the waterfalls, in the river’s shallows, lie the base of a long-dormant volcano. Here, within the volcano’s depths, hundreds of dwarves dwell, some working lava-heated forges while others guard a series of battlements that have stopped tides of invading orcs over the centuries.

Another Vesta defender, less prominent in



number but no less courageous, are the elves of the nearby woodlands. The elves’ forest home is centuries old and encircles the towering volcano.

Both races seek details about a worrisome prophecy of Vesta, a vision handed down by generation. The vision tells of the eventual destruction of Vesta’s massive volcano by a natural occurrence - a mating of mountain-sized giants. This rare act, as the prophecy tells, will conclude with the eruption of the volcano and the formation of a new mountain.

If the prophecy holds true, the eruption would kill hundreds of dwarves and demolish the only defensive structure holding back the Wilds' invasion.

ABOUT THE PCS

The player characters (PCs) hail from the populous lands south of the Kingdom of Boscha. (All 5th Edition races and classes are acceptable given the dense populations in the South.) The PCs are an established party of adventurers that have worked as mercenaries for different kingdoms as squabbles between rulers in the South are common. However, peace and its bleak outlook on the adventurers' coin purses have forced the PCs to come north, to Boscha and its rumored insane ruler, Queen Merta.

The land of Vesta and its brave residents are well known to the adventurers, who have heard bards sing the praises of the residents of the mountainous land in taverns throughout the South.

Have the PCs do a History check to understand how much knowledge they have of Vesta, beyond what they've heard in taverns:

History Check of 9 or less – The PCs' knowledge is limited to the bard songs, which tell of the valor and courage of the Vesta dwarves, who

dwell in a dormant volcano that acts as a defensive structure against continuous tides of orcs, ogres and other foul races. These evil races occupy a barren land to the north and east of Vesta referred to as the Wilds. This land is arid and inhospitable as no humanoid populations are known to exist there.

History check of 10 or more – Besides the above, the PCs have some book knowledge or learnings on Vesta and the elven heritage of the region. Here, Woodland elves populate the forests around the great volcano. This tribe of elves is reclusive and thought to possess knowledge of the lands that would be equal or surpass the teachings of druids in other kingdoms.

History check of 15 or more – This in-depth knowledge of Vesta includes the sustained and repeated rumor of a dark prophecy concerning mountain giants and their role in the eventual destruction of Vesta's volcano. The PCs' extent of knowledge on the prophecy does not extend to where the giants will come from to reach the land of Vesta – something only the magical map illustrates once a certain spell is cast upon it – nor does it speak to a remarkable side effect of this mating of goliaths – an extremely rare linkage with a celestial plane. Only the elves of Vesta know this information.

ADVENTURE OUTLINE

Part One – A scouting trip!

The PCs are convinced by an ambitious cartographer, the halfling Quory Proudfinders, to cross into the Wilds. There the PCs can scout the territory and find the best spots to slay orcs before a contest begins.

Activity: RP

Part Two –

A chance meeting

The PCs venture into the Wilds and encounter a group of dwarves battling purple worms and very quickly, a party of orcs as well. Here the PCs will meet and fight alongside one of the most famous dwarves of their era.

Activity: RP/Combat

Part Three – A deal proposed

Silveraxe and the dwarves will offer the PCs gold and magical items if they aid in the recovering of a map. The map, its contents of extreme value to the dwarves but kept a secret, is in the hands of an orc priest.

Activity: RP

Part Four – Wormholes

Once the PCs enter the underground cavern, they'll be swept up in an effort by Duergar to



The lands north of the Boscha Kingdom, called the Wilds, are mostly steep, arid mountains.

collect purple worm eggs that lie under the orc encampment. The PCs will ride bulettes underground and attempt to secure these eggs and/or progress further underground in search of the orc priest and the map.

Activity: Combat/RP

Part Five – The egg cavern

The PCs must stealth past a slumbering, adult purple worm and a “clever” ogre intent on an easy meal.

Activity: RP

Part Six – The pyramid

The PCs encounter the orcs’ high priest and the power of his deity, the One-Eye.

Activity: RP/Combat

INTRODUCTION

The adventure begins within the barren lands of the Wilds, a sprawling, high elevation desert that is unlargely unlivable. The PCs are slowly traveling through this area thanks to a rare occurrence – a decade-long peace accord in their home territory.

Hundreds of miles to the south, the kingdoms from where the PCs dwell are in a rare time of peace, meaning gold and plunder for adventurers are all but impossible to find. Which is why the PCs traveled north for weeks to the mostly avoided Kingdom of Boscha, a land zealously ruled by a half-mad woman. The queen, nicknamed Mad Merta, has for the past 20 years held a contest for adventurers that promises victors a fat purse of gold, a magic item and a bard's song in their honor.

Still, in the past decade, few adventurers have deemed it worthy to enter the contest. The reason for this lack of interest is twofold.

First, the contest is held in the highly dangerous Wilds, a mostly arid land filled with a slew of evil creatures, notably orcs, ogres and the occasional monstrous nightmare of a creature. There are precious few resources in this barren land and no known humanoid populations reside here.

Second, while Mad Merta has been generous to victors, those adventurers who fail her expectations are thrown into her dungeons and rarely again see the light of the day. Mad Merta's father was slain by a great axe-bearing orc, who cut the king's head off in one, clean slice. The act, although not seen by the young princess Merta, nevertheless caused her to fixate on avenging her father's death and dozens of orc heads brought back from the Wilds over the years have done nothing to ease



Mad Merta, queen of the Boscha Kingdom.

this pain. Thus the contest is renewed each year, with notices being sent out across the southern kingdoms near the end of summer.

This year, with little else to do and very few coins in their pockets, the adventurers heed the call.

The contest's rules are simple: Leave the kingdom of Boscha on the first day of fall and venture into the Wilds to kill as many orcs and ogres as possible until the last moon of autumn shines down upon the lands. At this time, adventurers must return to the kingdom and are awarded points for each orc and ogre head they return with. (Orc heads count for 2 points, ogre heads as 1 point – as the queen detests orcs!) The party with the most points are

heralded as winners and heroes while the other, less successful warriors are paraded to

the dungeons under a barrage of stale vegetables being thrown by Boscha villagers.



PART ONE: A Scouting Trip!

Cartographer Quory Proudfinders couldn't believe his luck when he found out - through whispered rumors - that a northern territory existed that had yet to be mapped.

Even better, almost unbelievably so!, this territory was the site of an annual tournament where a map would be incredibly valued by adventurers who would travel to this area.

The combination of an unknown area and incoming adventurers was an absolute gold mine, so Proudfinders calculated. Thus the young halfling, with more wit than wisdom, gathered up his mapping materials, what savings he had left, and traveled north to the Boscha Kingdom.

That was three weeks ago. Today, he sits in a Boscha Kingdom tavern, the one closest to the castled community's walls, with his savings depleted and having not spent one day in the very area he had hoped to map – the Wilds.

Despite buying more than his share of drinks over the past several weeks, not one adventurer has agreed to take Proudfinders

across the river bordering the Boscha Kingdom and into the Wilds, an arid land filled with naught but sand, snakes and nightmares.

So Proudfinders keeps a careful eye on any newcomers coming into Boscha from a table in the tavern, owned by one haggard-looking, curse-spewing, human woman named Sunshine. (Most tavern-goers refer to her as 'The Hag' as she has more popped pimples than teeth.)

On this morning – some two weeks before the beginning of fall - as Sunshine rails on about non-paying customers (the halfling's increasing tavern bill hasn't been paid yet), Proudfinders suddenly sits erect, jumps off his chair and races for the tavern's doors.

The PCs have just arrived in town and they've been spotted by the halfling.

"OK, OK," Proudfinders will speak out after he races to stand before the just-arrived PCs, gesturing to them with up-raised hands inside the Boscha wall gates to ensure he's noticed. "OK, OK, you wonderful lot obviously need to

whet your whistles and I'm just the one to help. OK?"

(Proudfingers relies on the word 'OK' to start and end most sentences.)

Proudfingers will try to convince the PCs to come to the tavern and once this is accomplished, will ask the owner, Sunshine, to get them all drinks – on him! At which point, Sunshine will grimace, speak some long-forgotten Northern dialect that isn't recognizable by anyone and that actually includes more grunts than actual words.

Proudfingers will then lay out the following plan to the PCs:

He would like to share in a business venture with them. They will take him to the bordering Wilds, ensuring his safety while he travels through the arid mountains there and maps the area. Upon his safe return – meaning his body would still be fully intact and his breathing still at a regular rate - he will then make copies of these maps and sell them to other adventurers who will come from all over to participate in Queen Merta's annual orc-slaying tournament.

As Proudfingers has lost his entire savings to make this happen, he'll promise as little coin as possible in order to get the PCs to agree to this. Every negotiating sentence will start with, "OK, OK," and end with "OK?"

If the PCs don't readily agree or show any hesitation, Proudfingers will try several arguments to try to persuade them. As each argument is voiced, Sunshine the tavern owner will be in the back grunting and babbling either her agreement of Proudfingers' suggestions or scorning them.

Here are the arguments for why the PCs should help Proudfingers, and Sunshine's corresponding reactions (PCs will need to

Insight these in order to understand them – they should be at disadvantage until they get one right, ie, have a loose understanding of Sunshine's strange vocabulary.):

* They could use this time to scout the area, thereby having an advantage over the other tournament contestants;
Sunshine's reaction: Mixed – she agrees the scouting might be useful but believes it will be dangerous;

* They, the PCs, could even slay some orcs and hide their heads in the Wilds, just to recover them when the tournament has begun;
Sunshine's reaction: Negative – she doesn't like the idea of cheating;

* They are sure to be hundreds of adventurers that will travel here to participate in the tournament and thus, the few maps Proudfingers produces will go for big-time gold!
Sunshine's reaction: Negative. She knows not many adventuring groups agree to be in this tournament because of the mad queen.

Once the PCs have agreed, Proudfingers will tell them he's already secured passage across the river and they simply need to meet him at a designated spot along the riverside.

****Have one PC roll a d4 +1 ... this is how many healing potions Proudfingers secretly carries.

About Proudfingers:

The halfling has leather armor (AC14), a dagger, a few rations and little else, outside of his cartography items and of course, the healing potions. Thus he will try to stay hidden during combat, only to emerge if the PCs are dying. He isn't necessarily cowardly, just practical. Or so he tells himself.



PART TWO: A Chance Meeting

Outside dwarven circles, the name Kunlyn Silveraxe carries little weight, if indeed any at all. Among dwarves, the name is said with utter reverence.

Silveraxe is the Protector of the Vesta Dwarves, a commander of troops and what's more, the most skilled warrior among dwarves who know little else besides battle.

All of that, however, has little prepared her for the current, preposterous mission she finds herself on – to find one particular orc priest in a land littered with orcs. And indeed, countless orc priests as well.

Still, Silveraxe's king assigned her this exact task in hopes she - and a small warband sent with her - could find the orc priest that somehow stole a map from the elves of Vesta. The map is believed to show the paths that two mountain giants will take to reach the Vesta volcano. As noted in the dire prophecy, such a meeting of giants would end in the destruction of the volcano, the dwarves' sacred fortress.

The Dwarven king, Gremnar, hopes to recover the map and then use it to find and intercept

one of the mountain giants before it can reach the volcano.

Luckily the orc priest was spotted by dwarves at their fortress and one of them was able to cast a "Locate Object" spell and thus Silveraxe and her warband was sent – with the dwarven caster – to find the priest.

Since that time, Silveraxe and her band have traveled some distance in the Wilds, encountering orc parties along their way, before finding what appears to be an underground cave. The orc priest – according to the Locate Object spell - is said to be within the cave, although exactly where remains a mystery. More bothersome, initial scouting of the cave by the dwarves has found it to be incredibly large – large enough to have two, separate entrances.

As Silveraxe and her band ponder on how to proceed, they rest in a long, narrow valley bordered by sheer mountains. Things go suddenly awry here as not one but two purple worms surround the dwarves in the area between the mountainsides.

Shortly after this battle starts, two groups hear the rumbling of earth and sounds of combat – first an orc patrol of priests and warriors, and secondly, the PCs.

The orcs are first to arrive, doing so on top of one of the sheer mountain-sides. The priests in the orc party immediately cast an undocumented spell on shields that allow the metal shields to both hover and fly over the mountain-side. It is these shields the orc warriors will “ride” down the mountains – standing atop of them as they fly inches over the mountain’s ground while shooting arrows at the dwarves along the way, and then up the opposite mountain-side. (Orc-hovering shields have 60 feet of movement and can hover and fly up to 5 feet off the ground.)

Unknown to the PCs, the orc priests must maintain sight and concentration on the shields in order for the spell to continue. Meaning, if the priests are seen and hit by the PCs, they must make Concentration checks in order to allow the shields to continue to fly. If the orc

hovering shields are captured by the PCs, the priests will likely stop concentration while the PCs are on the shields, sending them tumbling down the mountain-side.

Meanwhile, the PCs will arrive shortly after the orcs, on the opposite mountainside. Here they can peer down and see the dwarves being attacked in the valley, between the sheer mountain-sides, and as well see the orcs as they begin their descent toward the dwarves.

Silveraxe has a half dozen dwarves with her and they do a valiant job of fighting off the purple worms, doing so with surprising quickness and deft slices of their axes. But they will start taking damage from the orcs, who will get surprise attacks on the dwarves on their first turn.

It will be apparent to the PCs that the dwarves will not be able to survive both the purple worms and the orcs at the same time.



PART THREE: A Deal Proposed

Krum Silveraxe, judging from his considerable fighting skills, is one of the most accomplished

warriors in the small dwarven warband. But he is known mostly for being the young brother of

the Protector. And the friendly competition and the banter between the two Silveraxes never cease, which is why when the dwarves recently traveled through a cavern of goblins Krum took it upon himself to find the smelliest “remains” of a goblin and stealthily wipe it on the backside of his sister’s armor. This secretive achievement was heartily (if quietly) cheered on by his dwarven mates, who when confronted with the discovery by an outraged Protector expressed “shock” surprise at such an action.

None of which the Protector has forgotten. Which is why she will laugh outloud when the PCs come to her after the battle with the Purple Worms and orcs. The idea of how to find an orc priest in a tremendously large cavern – the equivalent of finding a needle in a haystack – and revenge upon her brother has just come to her in the form of an adventuring party, the PCs.

After thanking the PCs for intervening, she’ll come right to the point: She’ll ask the PCs to help the dwarves find an orc priest within the cave, kill the priest if possible and take the map it stole. She would then reward them with a dwarven magical item of their choice.

She will then turn to her brother Krum, and motion to him as she speaks to the PCs, “If you find and return the map to us, you can take anything of his you like.”

As her brother immediately starts protesting, she’ll begin listing the items that a PC can have – each of which is currently being worn by Krum - if they find the orc priest and return the map to the dwarves:

- * a Dwarven thrower;
- * a Belt of Dwarvenkind;
- * a +1 shield;
- * Boots of Striding and Springing;
- * a +1 Ring of Protection.

Silveraxe then tells the PCs her plan: The dwarves will enter one entrance of the cave and for the PCs will enter the other, hoping between them they can find the priest and the map.

Once Silveraxe lays out the plan and the reward, the halfling Proudfinders will bow before the Protector and say, “OK, OK, this cave sounds absolutely riveting but we’re wa-ay too busy to be doing anything of that nature. Not to mention I can’t imagine drawing a map in the dark, OK?”

The PCs, of course, are free to overrule the halfling and in fact will be further encouraged to do so by the Protector who will offer hearty bags of gold.

“Just take his gold pouch as a down payment,” the Protector will say, motioning over to her brother Krum once again, who once again will start protesting.

Before parting with the PCs, the Protector will provide the following:

* A dwarven warhorn – off her brother Krum of course – that can be blown as a “help” aid, but only as a last measure. “If we’re able and near, we’ll come as fast as we can,” she’ll say;

* Orc priest robes, fashioned liked cloaks with clothing that covers most of their head, and a yellow paste, which is darn near the same color as the orcs’ skin, and can be used to paint the PCs’ faces the color of the orcs’ faces. (The dwarves brought this paste from their cave, having used it successfully before.)

* Lastly, knowledge. The dwarves have scouted into the cave but not far. They did discover the following: 1) there are large numbers of orcs stationed in both the cave entrances. The initial interior cavern stretches as far back as one can see; 2) the dwarves did see orcs leaving the massive initial cavern and walking down

tunnels, which the dwarves could barely see because of how far away they were; and 3) there was no religious area – a temple, an altar, etc. – that the dwarves saw in the initial cavern



that would house the priest they seek. The dwarves believe the orc priest they seek must be further down into the tunnels.

PART FOUR: Wormholes

At this point, the dwarven party and the PCs split up, one taking the eastern entrance of the massive underground orc cavern and one taking the western entrance. By the time the PCs arrive near their entrance, they can no longer see nor hear the dwarves.

(GM note: At this point, ensure the PCs are disguised in orc priest robes and yellow paste face coloring as they will immediately be seen as they venture into the cave.)

The cavern entrance the PCs find is a 10-foot-wide opening in the mountainside. The opening is natural rock, about 10 feet high and slopes downward into a dim light environment. From the cavern entrance, orc voices can be heard as well as other voices (Duegar) speaking Undercommon.

Inside the cavern, the PCs spot the following:

* Immediately to the right is a raised area, a natural stone platform within this massive, underground cavern. Within this raised area are a number of penned-in bulettes and their masters, Duergars (grey-colored dwarves from the Underdark). In the back of this raised area there is a massive hole in the mountainside that appears to lead further underground. The Duergar in this raised area are numerous – perhaps a dozen in total – and there are a handful of incredibly large eggs here as well. These eggs are 3 feet wide in diameter, silver in color and have extremely hard shells. Sticky saliva covers parts of the eggs' shells. These are purple worm eggs that orcs – riding atop of bulettes – have brought back from the underground tunnels;

* Spreading all around the cavern – easily 150 feet wide and up to 3 times that in length (at least the size of a football field) – are tents crammed with orcs. The activity around each tent is not hard to see assuming the PCs have Darkvision. There are numerous small campfires around, but nothing in the way of consistent lighting. (There are many pockets of darkness within the cavern, especially at its edges.) Around the tents, the orcs compete in a range of activities, from axe-throwing to different Dexterity-based events, like crossing firey pits on unstable, flimsy platforms.



Wormholes under the underground orc encampment.

As soon as the PCs enter the cavern, they will be approached by a number of Duergar speaking Undercommon. The Duergar are like fair-carnival workers, offering huge rewards in the form of meat feasts and mastercrafted weapons of all sorts if the PCs (who the Duergar initially believe are orcs) can fetch a purple worm egg from the tunnel.

As they speak – and likely the PCs won't understand - the Duergar will gesture toward the silvery eggs nearby and then to the massive meat chunks and mastercraft weapons they carry, clearly indicating what one fetched worm egg will bring in terms of a reward. The Duergar also will point to the bulettes, who are in the pen areas waiting to take any rider down the hole and to the purple worm nests, located hundreds of feet underground.

Allow the PCs Nature or History checks to understand that purple worm eggs are highly sought after by spellcasters who will pay

thousands in gold for each egg in order to get access to these rare components.

If the PCs attempt to cross this massive cavern by simply walking around the tents, they will be quickly approached by an orc who will ask them simple questions – “Did you find any dwarves today?”; “Where are they serving food today?” – but all of these questions will be asked in the orc language. If they don't respond back in orc, they will be stopped and other orcs will draw near, being curious.

Allow the PCs to get out of this first interaction as the first orc is called back to its tent, but if they continue to proceed further into the cavern, another orc will quickly take its place.

The PCs should understand that getting through the cavern – which is long enough that they still can't see the back of it with normal Darkvision range – is going to be nearly impossible without taking the Duergar's “free ride.”

If a PC speaks the orc language, other orcs would tell them:

* The priests are found on the bottom layer of the underground cavern – although the orcs might be surprised why the PCs don't already know this;

* There are tunnels in the rear area of the cavern;

* Have they taken the bulettes down to get purple worm eggs? It's an easy way to get rewarded with an incredible amount of meat plus a brand-new weapon.

Besides orcs in the cavern, there are also a few goblins, although these seem to be rare here and the few here appear to be slaves.

ABOUT THE BULETTES

There are approximately 10 bulettes being kept in the pens. Each of them have primitive saddles and are somewhat tame, although they don't seem comfortable in the enclosed pen environment and get rather testy, even growling, when approached.

Although somewhat tame, the bulettes will act independent of their riders.

These bulettes have been taught not to consume orc flesh but they do have a mind of their own when it comes to other "delicacies," including:

* Any rider that is a dwarf, elf or half-elf will not be sought after by the bulettes and will be transported to the purple worm cavern;

* Any rider that is a halfling or gnome will be taken to a "special" area within the purple worm tunnels, detailed later in the adventure, and subjected to additional bulette "attention," also detailed later in the adventure;

* Any rider that is human or not mentioned above also will be taken to the "special" area but not subject to the extra bulette "attention."

Before a bulette rider is allowed into the worm hole – a massive tunnel found in the bulettes' pen - an old Duergar will issue commands to them in Undercommon. It will repeat – rather slowly! - the same commands to every rider, telling them to grab an egg as quickly as possible, then immediately get back on their mount and ride back. The animal (the bulette) will know and do the rest.

(GM Note: The old Duergar is there to ensure the bulettes leave the cavern at different times, ensuring each rider will be alone for parts of the next encounter.)

THE WORMHOLES

The bulette riders – the PCs – will enter into purple worm holes as soon as they leave the top cavern. These are rugged, misshaped holes, with parts of the holes caved in and other parts appearing likely to fall at any moment as the nearby ground shakes with activity, probably from the massive worm creatures burrowing close by.

The bulettes traverse this ground with ease, even at a quick speed that forces the rider to keep both hands on the saddle as the bulettes' speed and bouncing around make it quite a bumpy ride. Most of the traversing will be going down very steep slopes, steep enough to where the PC is leaning entirely forward in the saddle.

This quick descent will happen for several minutes before the bulette will suddenly slow as it nears a location where multiple, smaller holes appear in a wall in front of them. Here, there are four holes that continue in a downward slope, two smaller ones (on the left side of the map), a large, rectangular hole in the center, and one hole on the right.

These holes are half the size of the other holes, perhaps created by younger purple worms. The bulette will pause momentarily here, before deciding on a route.

If the PC tries to steer toward one of the holes, have them make a Handle Animal check at disadvantage as the bulette already has in its mind what direction its taking the PC.

The holes

1 & 2_ The two smaller holes on the left side of the wall will take the rider away from the main purple worm cave and into a side cave. The smaller hole on top goes to the No. 1 area described on the map below and the smaller hole on the bottom goes to the No. 2 area on the map.

3 & 4 _ The middle hole and the one on the right actually intersect about 20 feet forward and become one tunnel, ultimately bringing the rider to the main purple worm cavern, to the No. 3 area on the map.



PART FIVE: The Egg Cavern

There are two parts to the egg cavern, the main area where the eggs are kept and a side tunnel

*****GM Note:** At this point, the PCs begin feeling a change in temperature as it gets warmer and warmer as they descend, eventually getting hot enough to make them sweat as they reach the pyramid area (discussed below).

THE MAPS

There are three different areas the bulette riders can be taken in the map:

- 1) The top left of the map, actually off the screen. This would be where halflings and gnomes are taken.
- 2) The bottom left side of the map. This is where humans and other races not otherwise named would be taken.
- 3) The bottom center of the map, in the cavern leading to the purple worm and the eggs.

Of note, the passage leading north – in the main purple worm cavern area - continues downward, leading to the orc priest's pyramid.

created as part of what appears to be some type of ancient underground structure,

constructed centuries ago by something other than the orcs.

Dwarves, elves and half-elves will be taken to the main cavern. Gnomes and halflings will be taken to the side tunnel, at the top left, and all other races will be brought to the side tunnel, toward the bottom.

Those entering the main cavern, where the eggs are located, will go through a tunnel located in the middle, lower part of the map.

THE MAIN CAVERN

The PCs trekked here to escape the initial massive orc cavern and hopefully get closer to the orc priest they seek. Here they'll see no temple or worshipping area that a priest might inhabit, although they will – when they get to the main egg cavern - see a tunnel leading further down into the underground (this tunnel is in the top area of the map). Here the PCs can simply try to sneak past the main cavern's only resident, a slumbering, massive purple worm. This adult worm has tremorsense (60 ft) so if it senses anything below a DC10 Stealth check, it will seek the sound of movement.

Or, if the PCs are after an incredibly rich reward, they can try to seize a purple worm egg and carry it off.

There are three different areas that house eggs in the cavern. The first one is the one in the center, which is guarded by the adult, slumbering purple worm. The second area with eggs is on the bottom right side of the map. If a PC nears this area, they will hear a slight crunching noise happening underneath the eggs. If they approach closer, they will see two umber hulks that have burrowed under the eggs and are eating them from the bottom. The umber hulks won't immediately charge but will keep a watchful eye out if the PCs get too close.

The third area with the eggs is the top left corner. These eggs have spiderwebs all around them. There are, however, no spiders here at the moment and the PCs can grab one of the heavy eggs.

(GM note: This could be a random encounter area where the spiders are present, although at first unseen.)

To retrieve any of the purple worm eggs, the PCs will have to deal with the saliva around the eggs. The saliva is long and sticky within a foot or two of the eggs, but turns thick and dense – a goo-like substance – around the base of the eggs. This goo-like substance is anywhere from a foot to 2-feet deep at the base of the eggs. The saliva instantly attaches to anything it touches and is highly flammable. This could impact the PCs in the next area if they don't get the saliva off their clothes. PCs at higher tiers would be vulnerable to fire if they have this saliva on them or simply catch fire at lower tiers.

SIDE TUNNEL

The main feature in this side tunnel is an old storage room. This room has two swinging, wooden doors. Much like the taverns in the Wild West days, these swinging doors do not completely cover the doorway. The stout, wooden doors start about a foot off the ground and then rise some 9 feet. The doorway itself is about 15 feet tall and easily 10 feet wide.

Inside the doorway is an ogre in charge of food storage for the orc encampment. The ogre has taught the bulettes to bring riders other than orcs – mostly Duergar - here to the side tunnel.

When the bulette arrives, it carries the rider to near the storage room and then attempts to buck it off. Once the rider is off, the bulette makes a noisy, deep grunt and moments later

an animal carcass appears, being held above the swinging, wooden doors by the ogre. The bulette then leaps forward and grabs the carcass, dragging it off to the side tunnel area to consume it.

Moments later, the ogre takes a second animal carcass and swings it over the swinging doors with its left hand and then starts preparing a giant net to throw when – or if - the rider tries to grab the newly offered animal carcass. After all, in the ogre’s mind, if the plan works for a bulette, why wouldn’t it work for a humanoid? Why couldn’t it catch its dinner with such a clever trick?

As this is happening, the ogre is remaining behind the wooden doors, and in its mind at least, invisible from the rider.

The only problem in the ogre’s plan is its incredibly large feet, which stick out in plain sight at the bottom of the swinging, wooden doors.

Inside the storage area there are enough healing potions for all PCs as well as enough food for a feast! (GM note: For lower tiers, this feast could act like a short rest.)

For riders who are gnomes or halflings, the bulettes take these riders to this side tunnel area, although not directly in front of the storage room. (On the map, they are taken to

the side tunnel northwest of the storage room.) Gnomes and halflings are a favorite meal for bulettes, which have to make the terribly difficult decision of whether to try to eat the gnome or halfling in the tunnel, or try to get the gnome or halfling to stay in the tunnel so it can go retrieve an animal carcass from the ogre and then return and consume both the carcass and the PC. Most bulettes will try to do the latter, creating an opportunity for the gnome or halfling to flee. The bulette, however, will not make flight easy as it will watch the PC carefully, even making charges – like an enraged bull! – at it to keep it in the tunnel.

** Special GM note: There are TWO secret doors in this side tunnel area. One of them is in the room to the south of the storage room. This secret door leads to the main cavern room, where the other PCs enter the room. The second secret door is located on the far east side of the side tunnel to the north of the storage room. This secret door ends up opening up into the egg area located nearest to the storage room. A gnome or halfling will have to walk through the egg saliva that is at the base and all around the purple worm eggs. This goopy saliva is so deep it probably reaches a halfling’s belt-level.



PART SIX: The pyramid

The PCs gain access to this final area by a tunnel from the egg cavern room. The tunnel continues downhill (still underground) for 100-plus feet. As the PCs make this trek, the heat continues to intensify.

Eventually the passageway ends in a massive cavern, its ceiling easily 80 feet above the ground level.

The cavern's main features include:

- * an ancient pyramid, with magical, softly glowing lights on every level of this structure. The pyramid is located on the opposite end of where the PCs enter;
- * In the middle of the cavern are four massive rocks, each about 15 feet tall. Three of the rocks have been sculpted to appear like a face, although clearly not with the expertise of a dwarf or master stonemason. Each of the rock faces has one common feature – a massive eye placed in the middle of the face. The fourth rock has writing on it (See below).
- * Toward the back of the cavern, where the PCs enter, are three cave openings. The caves are

filled with large rock formations and somebody looking into the openings from the main cavern will not be able to see the entire, internal area of these caves.

When the PCs arrive, there will be no orcs or enemies in plain sight. There is one orc priest that watches them but he is hidden on the third floor of the pyramid.

Likely not seeing or sensing this hidden orc priest, the PCs could investigate the sculpted rocks, including the one that has orc writing on it. The writing says:

For the Dwellers of the Deep,
the price of life is steep;
So let your blood seep,
And One-Eye will remain asleep.

The ground near the writing is discolored and littered with discarded, rusting daggers, each of which is covered in blood. (A couple of the daggers have relatively fresh blood on them – not more than a couple of hours old.)

The orc writing is not a threat but a promise. Orc priests have been given visions by their

diety, Gruumsh, that only those who give their blood first may be allowed entry to this sacred pyramid. Thus the ground around the writing on the rock is awash in orc blood. If a PC touches the pyramid without first sacrificing their blood, the promise of the diety will come true. In his dire warning to the orc priests, the diety said fire would consume the souls of those who offended him.

So once a PC touches the pyramid without sacrificing its blood, the entire cavern will begin shaking, parts of the ground will cave in and lava will start flowing into the room from underground, closest to the pyramid. Fiery creatures will emerge with the intent of slaying those who have offended Gruumsh.

The reason for the PCs to be here in the first place – to find the orc priest with the map – is actually the priest watching them on the third floor. This is KesK, a high priest of Gruumsh and one that was given a series of visions from his diety that started with the killing of elves and the seizing of a magical item - a map of Vesta filled with elven runes and secrets. The series of visions KesK received from Gruumsh ended with this - a meeting, and then a battle.

KesK wants desperately to kill the adventurers – unwelcomed foreigners to this sacred orc site! - but first he must do his diety's bidding, to uncover the secrets of the elvish map.

So when a PC draws close to the pyramid without first sacrificing its blood, KesK will cast an Illusion spell that mirrors himself perfectly. This perfect mirror of KesK will walk out upon the pyramid's third-level ledge and call down – in Common - “Why, brother, would you upset One-Eye?” This is assuming the offending PC is still dressed as an orc priest.

The PC's actions will have an impact on what KesK ultimately does. He could act in one of two

ways ...

* If the PC – and its allies – act respectfully, KesK would attempt to do his diety's bidding – asking the PCs to translate the elvish writings on the map and then ask them to complete the magic that he detects on the elvish map. In return, KesK will promise the PCs their lives. (A promise that he does not intend to fulfill.) The PCs could – if they know the Elvish language – translate the writings but they can not complete the magical runes as the Vesta elves purposely left this incomplete – not trusting others to this information.

The elvish writings say this: “Upon the knowledge of my fathers, I vow this: What will one day threaten Vesta with death and destruction shall also bring salvation.”

Once KesK believes he has received as much information as the PCs are willing to give, he will take a dagger from his belt, slice his arm and allow droplets of blood to fall upon the pyramid. He will then utter an orcish phrase, “Dam ul dam!” (blood for blood!), and the power of Gruumsh will begin. The cavern will begin shaking, the ground near the pyramid will collapse and lava will begin flowing into the room. Fiery creatures will then emerge from this lava and attack the PCs.

And finally, KesK will mount his huge worg, call upon his deity and wage war on the PCs!

* If the PC – or its allies – do not act respectfully, KesK will merely smile. One of the visions Gruumsh gave him was the Protector and her band of dwarves entering the orc's cave. Although KesK has yet to see the dwarves, he is convinced the PCs are somehow allied with them. And in preparing for this confrontation, KesK hatched a plan. He found an old Belt of Dwarvenkind – exactly like the one Krum wears – and will use it to try to

convince the PCs that he has captured the “female dwarf and her band of warriors.” Kesk will then tell the PCs that they must translate the writings and the elvish map or he will begin slaying the dwarves – something his kin relishes the thought of.

At any point Kesk believes this plan isn't working, he will call upon Gruumsh's power, as mentioned above.

CONCLUSION

There are different possible conclusions to this likely encounter with Kesk, including:

- * The orc priest could have a mass of orc warriors and priests waiting within the pyramid ready to attack the PCs. If this happens, the PCs could use the warhorn to hopefully attract the attention of the Protector and her warband, and the two could once again defy the odds and defeat an overwhelming number of opponents.

- * Kesk could be confident of his battle skills, which are formidable, and his god's power and

not have asked other orcs to join this likely battle. If this is the case, Kesk and his worg mount should be given a higher level and more hit points to give the PCs a considerable battle. Lair effects also could come into play, including the god using its foretelling abilities to aid his fiery creatures as well as turning the fresh orc blood spilled near the rock into a sort of acrid, black smoke that would act like a moving cloudkill spell.

After the encounter, the Protector and her band of dwarves – quite injured by their own difficulties – will find the PCs. They will make good on their promises of gold and magical items in return for the map – much to Krum's chagrin. Further, the Protector - and eventually each one of the dwarves - will present the PCs with a +1 Ring of Protection and say, “On this day, friends, you have shown the courage and valor of a Vesta dwarf!”



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