The Battle for Ashwell

The Battle for Ashwell is an adventure module for use with Dungeons and Dragons 5th edition rules. The module is designed for a party of four to five 1st level characters, and can be played as a satisfying one-shot adventure, but is intended as the launching point for an ongoing campaign set in the world of Galled Thrane.

Notes on Play

The Battle for Ashwell is an epic campaign module that pits a party of lowly adventurers against a seemingly impossible enemy. The heroes of this campaign cannot possibly take on their adversaries – a whole army of goblins, supported by trolls, ogres and necromancers – in a direct confrontation unless they unlock the powerful ancient weaponry left behind centuries ago.

The module is arranged as a time-matrix, and features no linear elements. As Dungeon Master, you will need to keep track of the players' actions and depending on what they are, attempt to alter the course of later events to fit with the actions that the players have taken. The players are quite capable of failing in their task, though if they listen to the NPCs and pay attention to the clues offered to them – along with some creative thinking – it is possible for them to prevail against seemingly impossible odds.

In order to run this adventure, you will need to read the whole module and familiarise yourself with the timeline, locations and NPCs in order to run it effectively.

Play mode: Pushed or Sandbox

As Dungeon Master, before running this game consider whether you want to assist the players in succeeding, or whether you want their success or failure be purely at their own volition. This may be different depending on the age of your players, their experience of Dungeons and Dragons 5th edition, or other game systems, or just based on what you think that the players will find fun. There is no 'correct' way to play! Suggestions are made throughout the module for DMs who want to Push clues or developments on players. 'Pushing' players in this way is suitable for parties of younger or inexperienced players, whilst veterans are more likely to enjoy feeling that they aren't being led. The choice of this

is ultimately up to you, and most DMs will find that a little of both approaches together can give the most rewarding result.

Notes for Character Creation & playing with higher level characters

Classes: All classes from D&D sourcebooks are available at initial character creation.

Races: All character races from D&D sourcebooks are available at initial creation. All characters must originate from the Heron Song Empire, whether from a free province, or a now-conquered land.

Alignment: If you are using alignments, players are advised against choosing a Chaotic Evil alignment. If your players wish to play evil alignments, discuss with them how their characters will interact with the other characters in the party beforehand, and remind them that acting in a way that is problematic for other players (or doing morally reprehensible things) can result in other players turning on them and even killing their character!

Advise the players of the following when deciding on a character personality and backstory:

- Your character must wish to live life as a hero. This can take a variety of forms, but whether you long to earn a fortune, enjoy the thrill of killing monsters, believe in upholding right and goodness, wish to amass personal power to bring down the empire or just want to explore the world, your character must have a desire to go on adventures and to actively participate in the games.
- Galled Thrane is a heroic world. Heroes can be good, neutral or evil, but characters will be required to do daring and dangerous things. It's helpful if your character personality promotes this.
- A character will have a more enjoyable personalised story if they have something that they are keenly interested in, which should be specific rather than vague. The DM will be happy to agree specifics with you. Examples of good hooks might be:
    - My father murdered my whole family one night in a mad rage, leaving only the smell off sulphur in his wake. I must find him to either save him, or destroy him.
    - Reading late one night at the university, I uncovered a mysterious book bound in human skin. Whatever I do, I cannot get rid of it and it always reappears if destroyed.
    - I betrayed my own people to the enemy, and now they hunt me night and day
- Please try to indicate anything that would be of particular interest for your character to learn about. The DM will then try to weave them into the plot.
- Give an initial outline for what, at the start of the campaign, you would hope your character might ultimately achieve. These should be quite vague, e.g. "Malorn would one day like to have a castle and a force of soldiers at his command." This can help shape the story early on.

Higher level characters

Adapting this game for slightly higher level characters is very easy, but you will need to tweak the NPCs.

Level	Changes
3	Change all goblins to orcs. Increase the levels of the NPCs Gultyr, Sergeant Makala and Alduin Nacht to 5
4	Change all goblins to orcs, and add Orc Eye of Gruumsh to encounters. Increase the levels of the NPCs Gultyr, Sergeant Makala and Alduin Nacht to 6 Add Trolls to the final battle
5	Change all goblins to orcs, and add Orc Eye of Gruumsh to encounters. Increase the levels of the NPCs Gultyr, Sergeant Makala and Alduin Nacht to 8 Add Trolls to the final battle
6	Change all goblins to orcs, and add Orc Eye of Gruumsh to encounters. Increase the levels of the NPCs Gultyr, Sergeant Makala and Alduin Nacht to 10 Add Trolls and a Wyvern to the final battle

Deities

The world of Galled Thrane has its own deities, but your players may wish to use deities they are more familiar with (e.g. the gods of the Forgotten Realms setting) and if so, you will need to modify campaign content as you go along. If you wish to play a class that has special resonance with a deity or supernatural being (cleric, warlock, paladin etc) then you can help to shape the religion that surrounds that deity, its practices, and symbology. Your players may wish to discuss the deities with you and there is nothing wrong with allowing them to make certain changes to them that fits their desired history and ongoing story – this is your campaign and the source material should be used as a guide rather than as a series of absolutes.

There are three Elder Gods – Sunnovar, Duskanda and Daraklin, and nine demigods in Galled Thrane. It is the demigods that give power to the clerics and other divine wielders. Certain races may know the deities by different names and aspects, but these are the nine core powers and some of the concepts associated with them:

- Wise Garvin, the mentor: lawful good; learning, wisdom, knowledge.
- Omen, the seer: neutral good; divination, stars, folly.
- Pepestrel, the jester: chaotic good
- Merneth, the scales: true neutral; nature, balance, elements
- The Blind Jester: chaotic neutral; revelry, luck, pantomime
- Valass, the judge: lawful evil; order, persecution, revenge
- Sauvaign, the cold handed: neutral evil; war, mockery, disguise, order

- Oblivion: chaotic evil; nothingness
- Phoenix: Neutral good; renewal, energy, life

WORLD BACKGROUND

Read this section to your players, or ask them to read it prior to character creation in a 'Session Zero.'

You were born in the world of Galled Thrane. For many years the great cities of Galled Thrane lived in peace and harmony as part of the Heron Song Empire, until the invasion came.

The world is temperate, and the lands in which this campaign takes place are cooler to the north and warmer in the south.

It has been eighty years since the forces of Baelor appeared from the east. The people of the empire named the invading forces The Dreadhorde. Baelor led vast contingents of conquered peoples – elves, orcs, goblins, undead, demons, halflings and humans – against Heron Song's cities. The dwarves were the first to fall, defeated and driven from their mountain holds, becoming exiles among the cities of other races. Depending on whose tales you believe, Baelor is either a Lich, an elven king, a barbarian warlord or a demonic sorcerer. There are as many tales of Baelor as there are battles ensuing across the Whispering Plains and the

Drakkenspir mountains, where the majority of the fighting is taking place, but one thing that is agreed upon is that in order to bring his army together, Baelor unearthed a terrible Artifact – the Hammer of the East. None have been able to stand before his personal army in battle. Three years ago, Malthass, the Heron Song Empire's capital, fell to the Dreadhorde, and its ruling magic users – The Council of Night and Day – were forced to retreat.

Five cities remain free from the control of the Dreadhorde. Cities are generally of one race, but people of many races live side by side. They are Jagaal and Keslav (human), Dristnach (high elf), Torpaline (wood elf) and distant, peaceful Chumston (halfling). At present, the city of Keslav is under siege by a Dreadhorde army led by Vannar, one of seven great sorcerers – the Severed Lords – who lead Baelor's forces. Unless Keslav receives aid soon, it will surely fall.

There are heroes and villains on both sides of the conflict. When the Dreadhorde first came, many serfs and slaves whispered that a change in rulership would be good, and that the Age of Prosperity that had seen the bloom of the Heron Song Empire's culture and technology, had only served the wealthy. Many who once languished in the empire's silver mines were more than willing to join the Dreadhorde when their chains were broken. Some whole towns readily threw open their gates – though whether from fear of the encroaching armies or from a genuine wish to become part of Baelor's new empire is already lost in time, and blood.

Four years ago, a terrible magical conflict between the Council and the Dreadlordes twisted the world. The sky darkened, its blue replaced with a shadowed red, and the stars are always visible now. Occasionally the stars can be seen falling. Whatever terrible magics inflicted this new terror, the Council and the Dreadlordes have resisted all out conflict, for fear of ending the world in its entirety.

The war is entering its final years. If Baelor's forces are not stopped, there is little hope for Heron Song. But the Council of Night and Day will not go down without a fight, and will stop at nothing to see Baelor destroyed.

Whether Baelor and his Severed Lords will break the empire's last resistance, or whether the Council of Night and Day can turn the tide will be down to you, and the allegiances that you choose to make.

Campaign Play

The player characters are people of special skills. They have found themselves stuck in the middle of the fighting.

Despite their names, the Heron Song Empire is not inherently 'Good' and the Dreadhorde is not inherently 'Evil,' although you may surmise what you will from the actions of their rulers.

Players have total freedom to support either faction, or neither, and may find their own journeys and quests along the way. The campaign will be set against this backdrop of total war, but ultimately what events and battles they choose to participate in will be down to you.

- Make a name for yourself as a hero. Destroy whole towns as a villain.
- Save the peasantry, or bend them to your will.
- Solve the mystery of the Hammer of the East.
- Discover why the forest giants abandoned the Heron Song Empire in their hour of need.
- Challenge a member of the Council of Night and Day for their position, or go head to head against one of the Severed Lords.

The choices are entirely yours.

The world of Galled Thrane lives or dies by your hand.

Additional Homebrew House Rules:

Fate

This is an epic campaign, where heroic actions will make world-changing choices. Your decisions – to become heroes or villains – will also grant you the notice of the divine powers who may bestow Fate upon you.

Fate works like Inspiration, but is on a much grander scale. Whereas you might have a cool idea to slide down a rope and gain an Inspiration die, Fate is given for achieving your own goals or for undertaking incredible actions of heroism (or villainy). If you plant yourself in a doorway and defend villagers fleeing down a tunnel from a horde of approaching gnolls, then you could earn a Fate point for your heroism. Similarly, if you manage to manipulate a whole town into making you mayor and then throw open the gates to allow in the gnolls with whom you made an alliance, you may also gain Fate.

You may expend a Fate point during your turn to turn any D20 roll into a 20. If you expend Fate on an attack roll, it will always hit but will not be a critical hit.

You may choose to use Fate after having rolled the die.

Optional Fate: break the game

If you want your characters to be able to do things that are truly epic, Fate allows your characters to truly shine in the moment. This may allow them to do things that break the rules of the game, but must be plausible for your character, **and** the use of the Fate point must not contradict the action that granted it in the first place. If the Fate is spent for something that is out of character, it may be lost. For example:

- A ranger could use a Fate point to hit a target perfectly with her bow for maximum damage (but not critical) or to send an arrow through a distant arrow slit.
- A barbarian could use a Fate point to grab a buffalo and raise it above his head, then throw it at a menacing troll.
- A sorcerer could use a Fate point to cast an attacking spell after all of her spell slots are depleted.
- A cleric who earned Fate by saving villagers from a plague could use a Fate point to cause his Cure Wounds to radiate out and heal everyone within his line of sight, but the same Fate point could not be used to cast a radiating Cause Wounds.
- A druid who earned Fate by causing a village to be overrun may use a Fate point to commune with a dead tree and cause it to strangle an enemy.

Players may acquire a maximum of 2 Fate points, but even earning one is difficult. It is entirely possible that a character may never earn any Fate.

Each player begins their journey with one Fate point. If a character dies, the player's new character will not begin with Fate.

Gold: Advise all players that they should spend all of their starting money, and reduce all character gold down to a maximum of 3 gold pieces before the game begins. It is important that players are down on their luck and that earning money provides an initial springboard starting point.

Ashwell: background

Read the following to your players at the beginning of your first session:

On the war-torn frontier that lies between the forces of the Heron Song Empire and the invading Dreadhorde lie a series of hills known as the Whistlers. The hills are rugged moorland, studded with strange outcroppings of pale grey rock that seemed almost to have been drilled with dozens of holes, large and small. When the high winds blow through the valley, the stones there give off eerie sounds, from which the hills take their name.

The people of the Whistlers are a mixture of the common races, human, halfling, elves and dwarven refugees, but races of all types can be found in the towns and villages. Mostly the common folk make a living from agriculture, mining and forestry. The forests of the Whistlers are not particularly dense, but some of the larger woods harbour tribes of forest goblins, mountain goblins and small tribes of orcs are known to live a remote, savage existence in the higher passes.

Word has been coming from the north to say that one of the last great cities, Keslav, has been besieged by the Severed Lord known as Vannar. Her cruelty is legend, and the last time a town refused to open its gates for her, she crucified every second defender and blinded those she spared. Darker rumours suggest that when they finally cut those defenders down from the city walls, they rose up to join her, swelling her ranks even more.

The leaders of the Heron Song Empire have let it be known that they are planning a counter offensive, but need time to raise an army strong enough to face Vannar in the open field. Hellhold Pass and the Shrieking Pass are under constant attack from Lady Shiver and The Reaver, two of the Severed Lords, and the Council are unable to withdraw their forces to drive together to deal with Vannar. The only ray of hope for the defenders is that Keslav has long been preparing for a siege, her walls are high, her defenders stoic, and with just one month to go before winter, she may yet hold out.

The Whistlers lie to the south of all the fighting near Keslav, and north of Hellhold Pass. You are eighty miles away from the mountains, approaching the border of a larger forest, the Coldwood, and besides the occasional goblin trouble, the land seems peaceful enough for now. Whatever tale has brought you to the Whistlers, you have found yourself in a large village called Ashwell. Your wandering has brought you down to your last few gold pieces, but on the road you encountered a Heron Song message bearer who tells you that the garrison commander at Ashwell is offering the princely sum of ten gold pieces a week to warriors, soldiers and adventurers who are willing to sign up immediately.

Whatever your ultimate motivations may be, you have been drawn to the promise of easy money and a hot meal…

Time Matrix & Running the Game

This adventure runs on a time-matrix system. As the DM, you are responsible for instigating the events that are scheduled, and also to implement any other events that your players may cause to occur.

In the ASHWELL section, you will find the description of the village and some of its surrounding environs, and key NPC information. Following that you will find the timeline. Try to keep aware of what is likely to be coming up, and therefore what the party may encounter.

Some of the events in the time matrix will be missed if there is no PC in the right place to see them. If the PCs head off into the Coldwood on day 1, it's entirely possible to miss several events.

If the PCs try to flee Ashwell, abandoning the villagers to their fate, then there is a contingency plan in the form of "Kobold Ambush." This ambush encounter is not intended to be winnable for the PCs, and should result in them fleeing back to the village or possibly being wiped out completely. It may seem a shame to kill off the whole party, but the alternative is for you to ad-lib an entirely new adventure.

The key enemy, Skaal, must take the village of Ashwell so that Vannar's army can flood up to cut off the supply lines feeding the besieged city of Keslav. To do this however, he must take the bridge – a narrow expanse of stone that was once protected by a magical device. The PCs only hope of saving the village, and Keslav, is to discover how to activate the cannon and rain death on Skaal's forces as they attempt to cross.

PC Levels

Because the PCs are completely free to do whatever they wish, it is difficult to state when they will level up, however typically it might be expected that players would reach Level 2 at the end of the third day in the village, and after the climactic showdown on day 5 they should reach level 3.

An Optimal Adventure!

This adventure is designed so that the players can do anything at all. Not all paths will lead to victory, however, and slow moving or complacent PCs can very easily fail.

To give an indication of how the PCs might overcome seemingly impossible odds, their adventure might go as follows:

- The PCs question one of the drunk goblins and learn of the danger
- Tell Captain Calder, gain his assistance
- Look at the Aeterian, try to work out what it does
- Identify that Gultyr is up to something, follow him into the forest, see him laying a trail

- Confront Anduin Nacht about his desire to appease the invaders, remove him as leader
- Gain the support of the town
- Learn what the Aeterian does, and how it could be activated
- Visit the spider cave, gather guano to load the Aeterian
- Bribe Orgleborgle the Ettin to help them, and send him against the advance attack party
- Convince the villagers to raise a defensible wall across the bridge
- Deal with the zombies in the river before they become a problem
- Have a showdown against the enemy, defend the bridge using the Aeterian to annihilate most of the enemy.

Adventure Opening

DMs should note that this opening encounter is intended to teach new players the basics of combat, as well as the launching point for the adventure. It is therefore a very easy encounter to overcome. If your players are veterans and will enjoy a more tense challenge, then consider changing the wagon contents for something less alcoholic, thereby removing the drunkenness condition.

Home feels a long, long way off. Fortune has not been kind to you. The last of your coin weighs heavy in your pocket, and your boots are old, worn, and on their last legs. Looking around at your companions, you can't help but feel that they've seen as tough a time as you.

Give the players the opportunity to describe and introduce themselves.

A little rest can't be far off now. Overhead, the bloody sky growls restlessly. Storm clouds threaten from the east, over the vast expanse of forest known as the Coldwood. Rain will follow.

You are approaching the village of Ashwell along a muddy track. Wheel ruts, horseshoe tracks and boot prints have faded in the mud. Winter is only a month away and you'd expect to see farmer folk at work in the fields, but they seem empty. Further along the road, the village ahead looks quiet. A pair of unusual voices can be heard laughing off towards the centre of the village.

If the PCs progress into the village, they will find that the source of the silence is that a number of goblins have discovered a wagon of ale in the middle of the village.

> *Three short, warty creatures with greyish-green skin lounge against the side of a wagon laden with barrels, labelled as Bartite's Brewery. You recognise these creatures as goblins, which since they so often have allied with the Dreadhorde, are not welcome in the towns and cities of the Heron Song Empire. These three look the worse for wear, and more than one barrel has been opened, and much of its contents seems to have been spilled, poured down the goblins baggy grey tunics, but more of it has gone down their throats.*

The goblins are named Fik, Neg and Lop. They use the standard Goblin statistics from the Basic Rules and Monster Manual. However, these goblins have been drinking heavily and are therefore drunk.

The three goblins are Dreadhorde Scouts.

The villagers are fearful that it could either be a trap and more goblins are coming, or because of **Gultyr** spreading dissent, they hope that they will be spared when the Dreadhorde arrive.

They have become emboldened by the villagers hiding, so they have decided to tap the keg. They are belligerent, drunk, and will behave so. They speak the common tongue and are keen to big up that they're strong, and they're backed by the big-bad-boss. They suffer disadvantage on all of their rolls, as well as having to roll a D6 each time they move more than 15 feet. On a 5 or 6, they swerve to one side. If two goblins are killed, the remaining goblins will try to run for it.

If the players overcome the goblins, the townsfolk will thank them, but treat them warily. They fear that the goblins herald a larger force appropaching, and because of the governor's influence, want to be seen to be neutrals.

Upping the danger: It's possible that the PCs will defeat the goblins in a single round of combat, before the goblins even make a swing. If that is the case then have four additional goblins arrive a short distance away, and have them use their shortbows. In this event, they will target the largest, strongest threat rather than unarmoured spell casters.

If the Goblins are captured and persuaded to talk, or befriended:

DM's should note that torture or abuse of prisoners has been proven beyond doubt not to work. If the PCs take any of the goblins prisoner and treat them badly, the goblins will invent mad stories that they think will intimidate the PCs, or that the PCs want to believe.

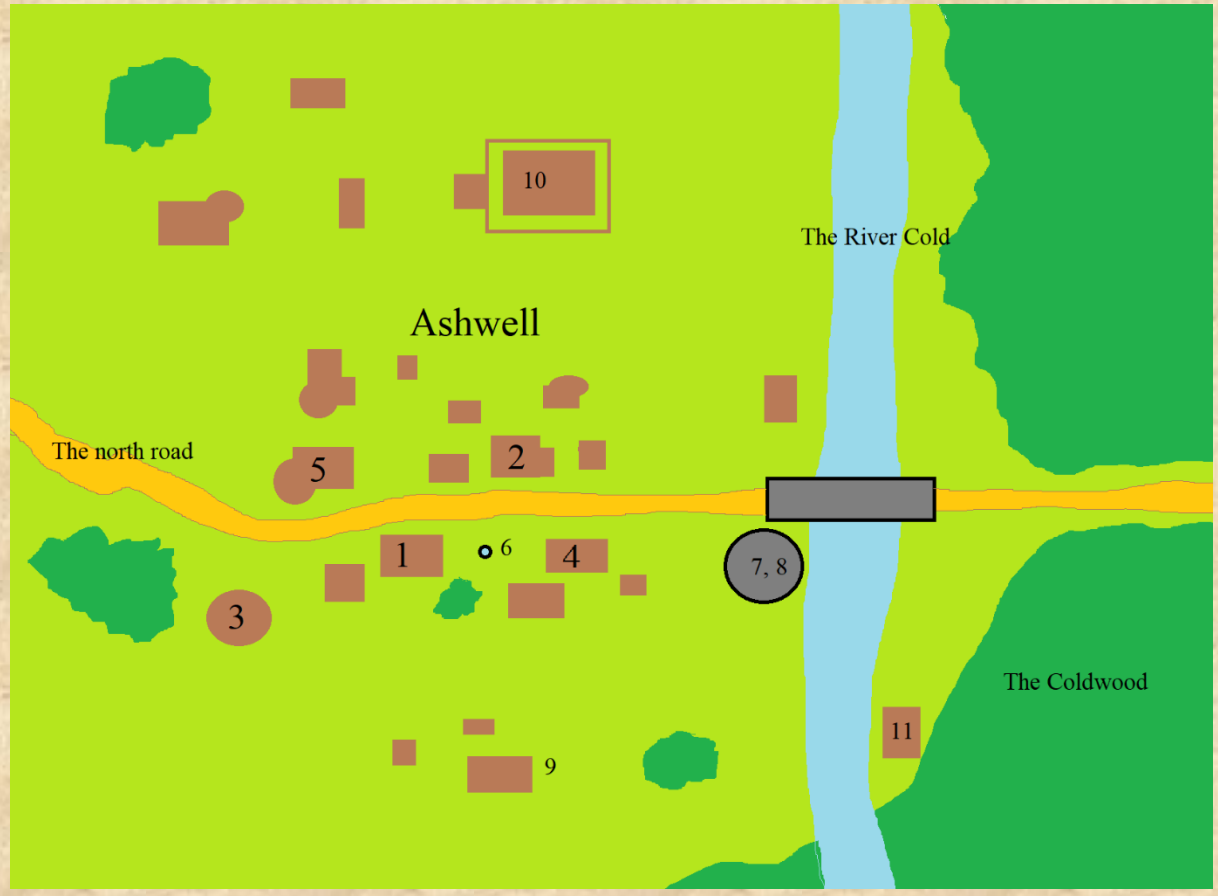
If the PCs capture a prisoner but do not resort to undue levels of unpleasantness, then the goblin will tell them:

- They were part of a larger expedition, but he cannot say how many. The goblins can't count past twelve.
- His tribe were absorbed into the Dreadhorde in the mountains to the east.
- The leader of the Dreadhorde force he was part of is an orc named Skaal
- The goblins in Ashwell were supposed to be foraging for food, but got lost in the Coldwood to the east.

Once the threat is dealt with:

The innkeeper from The Bushell, Jettek, will beckon the PCs to come inside.

PLACES IN ASHWELL



(*readers are asked not to be intimidated by the astounding quality of this map*)

Unless otherwise noted, the population are level 0 NPCs that use the basic statistics for Commoners.

1. The Bushell Inn

A large building with a thatched roof and a sign that shows a bushel of wheat. The ground floor has a large taproom with a balcony running around a second level above.

The inn is well kept and clean, but it appears to have seen better days. The tables are wonky, the door squeaks in its frame. Above each of the two wide fireplaces, crude paintings of agricultural scenes decorate the walls, and old blackened spits fill the hearths.

The innkeeper is a bald man called Jettek. He is helped by his three daughters, homely girls called Kitty, Kezzy and Kay. They have a total of six private rooms available as well as two communal dorms, and stabling for up to 8 horses.

There are currently no other travellers in the inn. The threat from the eastern mountain range, which Ashwell is only 3 days away from, have kept travellers away.

Information that Jettek is likely to be able to provide:

- Captain Calder headed out into the Coldwood a few days ago, after some children claimed to have spotted goblins nearby. He hasn't yet returned.
- There are four other members of the village militia, but they didn't come out to deal with the goblins – they barely have any training with their crossbows and are part-timers at best.
- The Coldwood is very dangerous once you travel deeper within it, but they creatures there typically don't come to Ashwell.
- Because of their demonic origins, Jettek and his daughters are very wary of any tieflings. However, there is another tiefling, Gultyr, in the village.
- The village Mayor, Alduin Nacht, keeps telling them that everything will be fine.

Goods	Price
Ale	4cp
Wine	2sp
Best wine	10gp
Liquor	12gp
Cold meal	3sp
Hot meal	8gp
Individual room for the night + meals	2gp
Bed in communal dorm (4 people)	1gp

2. Smithy

'Moody' Matthias is the smith in Ashwell, a middle aged halfling, assisted by his wife Poppy.

Matthias can conduct general smithing duties, alongside minor weapon and armour repairs. He is grouchy and always acts as though he has too much work to do, but actually he's pleased for the custom and generally willing to help.

Goods	Price
Martial fixing / bespoke items	2gp/day
Basic crafting	1gp/day

3. Dwarven League Wayhouse

Note: *In the world of Galled Thrane, the dwarven cities in the eastern mountains have been destroyed by the advancing Dreadhorde, leaving tens of thousands of dwarf refugees spilling across the Heron Song empire. If you are running this module in another setting, then the Dwarven League could be replaced by a Dwarven Adventurer's Guild or any other organisation of your choice that caters to dwarfs.*

The Wayhouse is a squat stone building with a ceiling too low for an adult human to stand comfortably. There are several further rooms underground, lined with bunk beds. The Wayhouse is generally clean, free from bed bugs and provides spartan accommodation.

The Wayhouse is run by **Defel Dankbarrow**, an old dwarf with a mean temper. Defel is a little taller than the average dwarf, and very keen on guinea fowl and pheasant.

Dwarfs may stay in the Wayhouse for 2sp per night. Other races can only barter their way in with a DC20 Persuasion check, reduced to DC12 if they can speak dwarven or if a dwarf vouches for them. They may find the beds somewhat shorter than they would like, though.

There are three other dwarfs staying in the Wayhouse's short beds. They are two sisters and a brother named **Harla, Belgie** and **Norfel**. Back home in one of the mountain villages they were stone masons. Whilst they have commoner stats, they also have high proficiency in Stone Masonry, and would be an excellent choice to help raise a wall across the bridge if the PCs think to do so. If the players enlist these dwarfs, they will be able to raise a strong, defensible rampart in just one day (although they'll need to tear down a house or two to gather stone!).

4. Gil's General Goods Store

Gil is only 16 years old, but he has inherited the store from his parents, who went on a trading mission east and never returned. They have been killed in the fighting, though he doesn't know that.

Gil is young, naïve and impressionable. He can usually be haggled down to 2/3 of standard prices, and Persuasion checks against him are made at DC 10.

However, Gil is also closely watched over by his half-brother, Captain Calder. If the PCs take advantage, then the captain should come down on them.

Mystic Candles

The sign beside the well directs people to buy mystical candles. The candles cost 2gp for 5. They are normal candles scented with jasmine, and give off no aura of magic, but a player

who believes that they are will have a lovely sleep if they use one as part of their bed time routine.

Healing Potions

Gil can sell the PCs healing potions for 50 gold pieces each (maximum of 5). It's unlikely that the PCs have the gold for this. If they can provide Gil with proof of impending doom, and make a successful Persuasion check, he may give them the potions for free.

5. The Temple of Wise Garvin, the Mentor

Note: if you are using other deities, the church can represent any Good aligned deity.

Temples like this one are common in the region. The walls are constructed of stone, with a slate roof and has a single steeple and bell tower. The roof is in desperate need of repair, many of the tiles lying where they have fallen in the overgrown weeds and thick grasses that hem the temple in on all sides.

The minister of the church is **Andros Kolt**. Kolt is a level 4 Cleric of around seventy years of age. He was once a soldier, but due to a number of physical illnesses has found his strength has left him and he winces in bright light. As such, Kolt will assist the PCs from the safety of his church, but will not accompany them on any adventures. Kolt lives at the temple with his husband, a dwarf named Tordil Kolt.

If the PCs are hostile towards Kolt, his old pride will rise and he will defend himself appropriately, but given the opportunity, he will slip away and enlist Captain Calder to his aid.

Captain Calder and Andros Kolt are firm friends, and the people of Ashwell rely on Kolt for spiritual guidance and healing. Making an enemy of him would be ill advised.

He will cast his spells for the following fees. Other spells he will cast if need demands them.

Cure Wounds	5gp
Lesser Restoration	10gp

Andros Kolt

Medium humanoid (human), lawful good

Armor Class 9 (Robes)
Hit Points 19 (4d8)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (-1)	8 (-1)	9 (-1)	16 (+3)	17 (+3)	14 (+2)

Skills Medicine +7, Persuasion +3, Religion +5
Senses Passive Perception 13
Languages common, halfling
Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Spellcasting. Andros Kolt is a 4th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). The priest has the following cleric spells prepared:

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

1st level (4 slots): *cure wounds*, *guiding bolt*, *bless*, *healing word*

2nd level (3 slots): *lesser restoration*, *spiritual weapon*, *gentle repose*

Actions

Mace. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +1 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d6-1) bludgeoning damage.

Channel Divinity: Preserve Life. Andros Kolt can Channel Divinity and present his holy symbol to restore up to 20 HP divided among any creatures within 30 ft. up to half a creature's HP max. He can't use this feature on an undead or a construct.

Kolt's Library:

The church contains a small study room with a number of books, none of them worth more than 5gp (20 books in all). One book, however, may be of use to the PCs. *A History of Ashwell* is a parish record, kept in an unbroken chain by the priests who look after the temple. It is a big book, easily three feet across when spread open. Kolt is happy for the PCs to look it over.

If a character spends two hours reading back in the book they will find, from an entry around one hundred years ago, the following information:

> *A visitor from distant Drystnach came today. Donated 5 gold pieces to the temple plumping fund. Donated 10 gold pieces for the priest. 5 gold pieces for the choir. Asked about the Aeterian atop the old disused guard tower. I realised there is no record of it, but this is what my grandfather told me so I record it here:*
>
> *Aeterian was a weapon forged by a wizard of Nausil, set to guard the bridge. Was used last eighty years past against a troll, but is impractical to keep operational as relies on unusual ammunition. Can be activated with a word - 'annihilate.' Was warned by grandfather that there is a crack running through the firing tube. May not be safe to use. In these peaceful times it is a thing best forgotten.*

A PC may make a DC9 History check to recall that Nausil was one of the two kingdoms, Nausil and Darr, that joined together to form the core of the Heron Song Empire.

6. The Well

A simple structure, with a bucket on an iron chain and a crank handle to raise it.

Beside the well there stands a notice board with the following notices, writing in Common:

A) WANTED: Strong men and women to join the town militia. For services rendered, payment of ten gold pieces a day will be made in full at the end of one month of completed service. See Captain Calder at the Guard Tower east of town.
B) Governor Alduin Nacht kindly requests that you do not allow your children to swim in the river, as two children nearly drowned. The river is deep and not for playing in.
C) The General Store now stocks mystical candles – guaranteed to give a dreamless sleep! 2sp each. Get them while stocks last!
D) DANGEROUS! The owlbear has been sighted again in the hills to the south. While it has not approached the town or the people, it has killed a horse and three sheep. DO NOT APPROACH IT under any circumstances.
E) Has anybody find my hat I left it near the southern ranch and it gone it a nice hat made by my mum I give you a gold piece if you find it and bring it back thanks Maelie

7. Guard Tower

The river bridge is guarded by a three-story tower of pale grey stone. Crenulations run around the top, and the door looks sturdy enough to hold back anything short of a cave troll.

The tower is the home of Captain Calder, the nineteen-year-old who has found himself in charge of protecting the village from misfortune. Calder is a half-elf ranger and is absent until the afternoon of the first day, as he has been ranging off in the forest.

The guard tower also houses the only four people (three women and one man) who are willing to sign up as militia. They have no special skills. All of the militia wear **Heron Song Medallions**.

Heron Song Medallion

DISABLE COMMENTS CREATE NEW VERSION

Wondrous Item, common

When you put on the medallion for the first time, you gain 8 temporary hit points. The temporary hit points last until the Heron Song Medallion is removed, or until 8 damage has been suffered, at which time the Medallion's power is lost until recharged. The Medallion can only be recharged by a member of the Council of Night and Day in the city of Keslav.

When the PCs arrive, one of the militia may inform them of Captain Calder's absence. They will not admit the PCs into the tower – only Captain Calder can do that.

Ashwell Militia

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

Armor Class 12 (Studded Leather)
Hit Points 5 (1d8 + 1)
Speed 30 ft.

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

Senses Passive Perception 10
Languages Common
Challenge 0 (10 XP)

Actions

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

Light Crossbow. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, range 80/320ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d8) piercing damage.

The lowest level of the tower holds Captain Calder's sleeping quarters and his office, combined into one room. A spiral stair leads upwards. Within a locked chest in the corner is Calder's money, which he uses to pay wages. The lock can be picked on a **DC15** Sleight of Hand check by a character proficient with thieves' tools. Inside are 133gp in various coinage.

The midlevel of the tower is cluttered with old broken weapons and armour that Calder is trying to prepare. There are a few longswords, crossbows and spears as well as a suit of rusted chainmail and two shields. The chainmail can be made usable by spending 4 hours rubbing it down with sand.

In the centre of the room a silver ball rests on a plinth, next to a jug of water. The light plays strangely over the ball, catching colours that shouldn't be there.

If the water is poured onto it, the ball becomes translucent and a powerful (level 20) wizard, Alric, is alerted that someone is trying to contact him. He will then cast **Scrying** on the PCs, automatically succeeding. Alric is hundreds of miles away at the siege of Keslav.

If PCs attempt to communicate with Alric, he is not automatically given over to helping them and does not wish to be disturbed. However, if they can get him to Scry on them, and are wearing a Heron Song Medallion, and then ask him questions, he will speak to them through the orb.

Alric speaks in a deep, terrible voice full of the gravitas of his position. He is one of the most feared members of the Council of Night and Day.

If asked directly he can give the PCs information about:

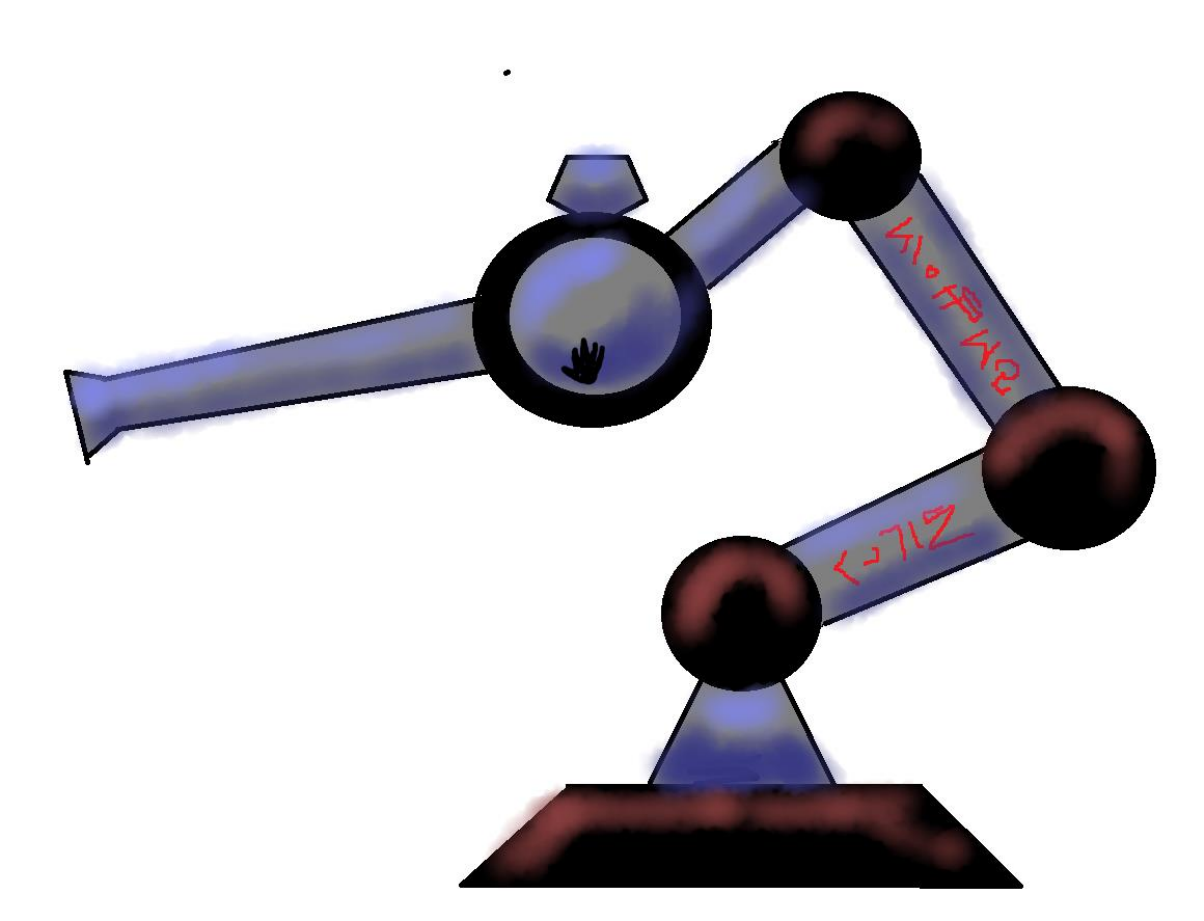
- What the Aeterian is
- How to arm it
- The Command Word to operate the cannon is 'Annihilate.'

The third level of the tower is largely empty. It has several arrow slits. A staircase leads up to the roof, where the Aeterian is located.

8. The Aeterian

Atop the tower there is an Aeterian, a terrible and powerful static defence weapon that was once used in a war against a powerful elven queen, Sazara. It is mounted on a swivelling, rusted iron pedestal to overlook the bridge.

A strange construct sits mounted on a swivelling, rusted iron pedestal to overlook the bridge. Mounted on a crane, long tube of bluish-grey iron and carved with old runes faces outwards. Despite being free to the weather, there is no sign of rust along its curves. Atop the barrel, a second bell like shape sits with its open end pointing upwards.



(yes, I am aware that I am no photoshop pro)

Further investigation will reveal the following:

- At the back of the barrel, there are two hand-shaped indents.
- Written in elvish just above the indents:
    - Load
    - Aim

    - Place hands to charge
    - Speak command word
- The inside of the hopper is filled with dirty looking material. A DC10 Nature check will reveal this as bat guano. If asked what it is, Captain Calder will automatically be able to identify it.

It is a relic, created by a member of the Council of Night and Day. The Cannon can be used to cast an 8th level Fireball Spell once per three rounds, with a range of 140 feet.

Unfortunately, the cannon is in a state of disrepair. It needs to be cleaned thoroughly and greased (total time: 2 hours for 1 person) and needs a huge amount of Bat Guano to be placed inside the hopper. Calder does not know where Bat Guano can be acquired, but either: **Andros Kalt, Alduin Nacht, Maelie or Defel Dankbarrow** will know of the spider cave to the west where a lot of bats gather.

To operate the Aeterian:

- Load. The Aeterian must be loaded with Bat Guano, which astute players may know is a composite element of the Fireball spell. The Aeterian requires 1 sack of Guano for each shot that it can fire. (note: players can gather up to 4 sacks of Guano in the spider cave)
- Aim. The Aeterian swivels easily on its pedestal.
- Place hands to charge – a player must place both their hands on the spaces indicated on the diagram and use their action to ready the weapon and speak the command word.
- Speak command word – "Annihilate"
- The Aeterian will consume the bat guano and cast an 8th level Fireball spell at a target within 140 feet.

Andros Kolt has a book on the history of Ashwell in his church library. Players can find the command word there, but if they do not, then they can also discover it through attempting to contact Alric via the sphere in the guard tower.

Giving the PC's a helping hand

Players should twig pretty quickly what exactly this does, but if they forget about it or are really struggling, then have the cleric, Andors Kalt, remember hearing something about it from an old history of the village he read and point them in the right direction.

9. The Horse Ranch

The woman who runs the ranch has six horses for sale, as well as six of her own that are not for sale. They are common nags and farm horses.

If players conduct a successful search near the horse ranch (DC 10) they will find a blue hat that belongs to **Maelie**. She will give them a gold piece if they bring it back to her. It has no magical properties.

10. Governor's Hall + Outbuildings

The town is run by Governor **Alduin Nacht**.

Alduin Nacht is terrified that his position is going to be lost in the war and has strong sympathies with the Dreadhorde, as he has been receiving their emissary, Gultyr. He has proven fairly useless thus far.

He is married to Layla Nacht, and his mother, Jacintha Nacht lives there too. They have four children aged between three and ten.

His estate is guarded by four **Guards**, who use the standard statistics from the Monster Manual. One of them will be at the door, whilst the others are commonly cutting wood, gardening and performing other odd jobs around the place.

11. Maelie's House

A rundown looking cottage, there are bunches of herbs and strings of animal bones strung up around it on the outside.

Maelie is the only occupant. She appears to be a witch of some kind and pretends to be one, but she has no magical capabilities. She will lie to pretend that she has, and can be quite persuasive.

> *You see a human woman who seems terribly old – at least eighty, maybe older – dressed in a vivid, multicoloured dress, with a string of small fox skulls around her neck. She leans on a gnarled wooden scarf and you get a strong smell of garlic from her.*

Maelie will be reluctant to leave her house, which is on the east side of the river. The PCs would do well to persuade her to cross.

12. The River Cold

The river is fifty feet wide, fast flowing. Any creature without a swim speed will immediately be swept 20 feet down river for every 5 feet they move, and will treat the river as difficult terrain. It is important that the rapid flow of the river and its extreme, mountain-fed cold make crossing this river impossible for mortals.

The Bridge over the river is 15 feet wide. It has walls on either side, and seems to be moulded from stone in some bygone age. There is nothing that the players would be able to do to shatter or destroy the bridge at low level, which is why it is imperative that they hold it.

13. The Coldwood

The Coldwood is a dense, dark forest of ancient trees. The locals do not venture into the Coldwood more than they can help it, and shy from cutting lumber there. The trees have already lost their leaves, but those that lie mouldering on the earth are dark and red.

The Coldwood has a number of events, and therefore what the players can find there shifts depending on the day. It is treated as difficult terrain for long-distance travel.

The North Road leads into the Coldwood but after quarter of a mile it becomes overgrown and disappears into foliage. People do not travel this way often.

If the PCs delve deep, they will need to roll for random encounters. The Coldwood is too dangerous for the PCs at low level – they should be well warned of this by the villagers!

Roaming close to the village of Ashwell is an **Owlbear**. The PCs are warned of this by a sign beside the well. The Owlbear is hungry but not mad with rage and if it kills a person, it will choose to run away with the body rather than battle on to the death for no reason.

14. Random Encounters in the Coldwood

There is only a 1% chance of a random encounter every 4 hours spent in the Coldwood within 2 miles of Ashwell. The chance increases to 5% between 3 and 5 miles, and to 10% thereafter. If the PCs will encounter a set group, e.g. the Dreadhorde Advance Party, then do not roll for random encounters.

If a random encounter is due, roll d12+d8 and use the following table.

D12 + D8	Encounter
2	1 Unicorn
3	1 Wraith. If they are on the move, players will see areas of blackened vegetation where the wraith's passage has decayed things. The wraith is haunting the place that it died. If somehow they avoid it they will find the skeleton of a humanoid, alongside a brass trumpet. The wraith was a musician in life and loved music. It will listen to any music played for d12 rounds before entering a hideous rage. It will bellow its out song out loud for 3 rounds before trying to kill everything around it.
4	1 Pegasus
5	Above the treetops, a Giant Eagle flies by. The Giant Eagle will not attack and will be gone before the PCs can interact with it.
6	A troop of 10 ghostly dwarf warriors passes through the trees. They are wearing tattered Heron Song Empire uniforms, but carry no weapons. They will not interact with any PCs unless the PCs try to interact with them. If a PC tries to interact, they will stop and stare at the PC for one minute. Once a PC stops trying to interact, they will trudge on.
7	1 Owlbear
8	If the PCs are roaming, they find a statue of an elven male wearing bulky, ornate armour. The statue is clearly many hundreds, maybe even thousands, of years old. An inscription in elvish reads *Carrius, Great King of*

	the World. If the statue is encountered at night, the statue's eyes have a 40% chance of flickering with unearthly light.
9	A pack of 2d4+1 wolves. The wolves can be distracted if there is sufficient meat for them all to eat.
10, 11	5 Dreadhorde Goblin Scouts
12	2d6 wild kobolds. If the kobolds outnumber the PCs they will act aggressively. If they don't, then they will try to lure the PCs to a pit trap. A DC 15 wisdom check can determine an absence of foot traffic. A DC 15 intelligence check can locate the pit. The pit is 10 foot deep. If a player stumbles onto it they take d6 (falling) + d4 (spikes) damage.
13	A band of 2d4+1 Chaotic Neutral deserters from the Heron Song armies. The deserters are not inherently bad, but will happily steal from the players. They have a rough camp with 1 tent for every 2 deserters. The deserters are level 1 soldiers with 8hp, +1 attack, AC 15, and armed with shortswords and shields. They have no money at all.
14	1 Owlbear
15	A powerful group of 4d6 Dreadhorde Scouts, led by a Goblin Boss. The scouts are making a lot of noise, whatever time of day it is. The Goblin Boss has a Spear +1. The spear has an ebony haft and elvish symbols on the broad, leaf shaped blade.
16	1 Giant Elk
17	The owlbear from the nearby goblin dungeon is roaming. It wants to eat and will stop and eat basically any reasonable food put down for it.
18	If the PCs are roaming, they come across a previously unknown World Knot. The knot looks like eight inward-arching pillars of pitted grey stone, but nothing grows within it. It is identifiable as being magical.
19	1 Forest Troll
20	1 Wyvern

Timeline and Events

Day	Time	Key Character	Event
1	10am	PCs	Arrive in Ashwell, encounter the drunk goblins.
1	11am	Captain Calder	Calder returns from scouting the Coldwood. He will seek the PCs out at the first opportunity.
1	7pm	Ted Beeron	Bardic Dance Battle
	8pm	Gultyr	Gultyr will seek out any lone PC and begin attempting to persuade them that leaving Ashwell would be best for them

1	11pm	Two goblin scouts	Two Dreadhorde Scouts appear along the eastern riverbank. They stay for an hour, perhaps looking for the drunk goblins who have not returned.
2	9am	Anduin Nacht	If the PCs have not made contact with Anduin Nacht yet, he will send a servant to ask them to take lunch with him at midday in his manor.
2	12pm	Sergeant Makala and Oddbin	Makala and Oddbin arrive, and attempt to frighten PCs into abandoning Ashwell
2	3pm	Zombies from the River	Two zombies stagger from the river, slightly north of the bridge. See encounter description.
2	4pm	Gultyr	Gultyr goes into the Coldwood, crossing the bridge, to tie yellow rags to the trees. These yellow rags act as markers to guide the army towards the village. He will be out in the Coldwood all night doing this.
3	7am	Gultyrr	Gultyr returns from the Coldwood, crossing the bridge from east to west.
3	11am	Two goblin scouts	Two Dreadhorde Scouts appear along the eastern riverbank. They stay for an hour, perhaps looking for the drunk goblins who have not returned.
3	2pm	Villagers	A number of villagers are fearful and approach the PCs to ask them what they should do. Some are ready to pack up and leave, others resolutely won't.
4	3am	Goblin Assassin	A goblin assassin attempts to take out the PCs. See encounter description
4	10am	Frightened villager Jana and Orgleborgle the Ettin	A terrified shepherd comes down from the north, near to the spider cave, where she has seen that her flock has been devoured by a ravenous Ettin named Orgleborgle. The Ettin let her live, but only because she promised it that she would go and find it more food. The Ettin has been forced away by the Dreadhorde but it's really hungry and will happily chew threw anything – but it can also be baited later to attack the Dreadhorde. When located, it is found to be sleeping.

4	2pm	Dreadhorde Advance Party	The Dreadhorde Advance Party approach from the east. They have brought the zombie corpses and are accompanied by Skaal, the necromancer. See below.
4	6pm	An Ultimatum	See the event details to see whether this will run.
4	Afternoon/Evening	Calder	Captain Calder gets drunk in the inn. He is very depressed and on the verge of giving up. Note: If the PCS have recruited at least 5 more militia he will not do this.
4	Late Evening	Gultyr	Gultyr meets with three farmer folk who have been susceptible to his whispering. Two are standard farmers (a brother and sister) and one is the village drunk. He meets them by a scarecrow in one of the fields to the north of town, bringing along several bottles of drink and three **Dreadhorde Medallions**.
4	Late Evening	Sergeant Makala	Makala and Oddbin return to Ashwell from the west. They will sneak in and take a look for any defences that have been erected and try to sabotage them. If there are no defences in situ, then they will instead attempt to set fire to a number of the houses and the tavern.
5	Dawn	The Feast of Sauvaign	The Feast of Sauvaign is a holy day, but not one widely celebrated as Sauvaign is a cruel and dark god. It is used as a time stamp here.
5	Early Evening	DREADHORDE ATTACK	An army of goblins arrives. See notes

Captain Calder Returns – 11am, Day 1

DM Note: Captain Calder is a key NPC who will guide/mentor the PCs through the Battle for Ashwell module and provide information and assistance. If you intend to continue the campaign into the forthcoming Coldwood and Dead City of Mourn modules, then it is imperative that Captain Calder survives the module.

As a 4th level NPC, Calder is more than capable of dominating any encounters that PCs end up in, especially at level 1. Try to keep Calder as a morose, but sympathetic figure who is overworked and has such responsibilities that he cannot drop them and simply team up with the players, who may quickly feel that he is stealing the limelight if, for example, he accompanies them to the Spider Cave.

If your players are new and make some suicidal decisions (attacking the Ettin, Orgleborgle, at level 1 for instance) then you can have Calder turn up and try to save them if you so wish.

Captain Calder

Medium humanoid (half-elf), lawful good

Armor Class 16 (Scale Mail)
Hit Points 46 (4d10 + 2)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	17 (+3)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws STR +3, DEX +5
Senses Darkvision 60ft, Passive Perception 13
Languages Common, Dwarvish, Elvish, Goblin
Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Captain Calder is a 1st level spellcaster. Wisdom is his spellcasting ability (Spell save DC 11, +3 to hit with spell attacks). He has the following spells prepared:

1st level: cure wounds, absorb elements, hunter's mark

Colossus Slayer: Once per turn, when Captain Calder hits a creature with a weapon attack, the creature takes an extra 1d8 damage if it's below its HP maximum.

Primeval Awareness: As an action, Captain Calder can expend one ranger spell slot (1 minute per level of spell slot) to sense whether any aberrations, celestials, dragons, elementals, fey, fiends, or undead are present within 1 mile of himself (or within up to 6 miles if you are in your favored terrain). This feature doesn't reveal the creatures' location or number.

Actions

Captain Calder makes one attack with his longbow, or attacks once with his scimitar and then once with his dagger.

Longbow. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage

Scimitar. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 3) slashing damage.

Dagger. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage.

Calder has a harrowed look to him, surprisingly young for a position of such responsibility. His cheeks are hollowed, his eyes sunken. A large wolfhound sits obediently at his feet, looking as mean as the scar that crosses his brow from left to right. He wears a medallion around his neck that shows a Heron standing on one leg. You have seen these before around the necks of Heron Song Empire soldiers.

Calder has been trying to recruit people for his militia, but usually when he finds someone, they soon change their mind. This is Gultyr's work. He is weary, and doesn't like his position in Ashwell. He aches to be there, ranging, but his responsibilities have kept him in town. But

something is wrong in the forest. He has seen tracks many times that indicate heavy boots, lots of them.

OBJECTIVE 1: Calder will ask the PCs if they will join his militia. He is able to pay them 5gp a week, plus they can take free bed and board in the guard tower's bunks if they do so. Note that this is less than the 10gp per week that the adventurous PCs have heard of.

OBJECTIVE 2: Calder will ask the PCs to try to find out why the townsfolk are not joining his militia. Can they ask around the town? He feels that they have become reluctant to talk to him of late. Can they join and wait and see what happens?
One of the foresters, Tomwen, agreed to join, but only a day later turned up and told him that she couldn't leave her log-chopping work.

If PCs wish to speak with Tomwen, then she is to be found in a small logging cottage to the north of the village. A plain spoken, simple woman wearing a bright purple silk scarf, Tomwen will at first just talk of being too busy, but a DC14 Persuasion or Intimidation check (accompanied by appropriate RP) will lead her to tell the party that she was persuaded by Gultyr, the tiefling monk, that there may be hard times ahead for those that ally with the captain.

Calder is friendly towards Andros Kolt and most of the people in Ashwell, but dislikes Alduin Nacht the governor, and is suspicious of Gultyr.

The Law

Captain Calder is responsible for justice and keeping the peace in the town, but if the PCs get up to criminal mischief (and are caught) then Calder and the militia will be the ones to try to deal with it.

Calder and Alric

Captain Calder is of course aware of the spherical orb on the plinth in the tower, and the strange old artifact atop the tower, but he does not know how to operate it. He has seen the grey-skinned old man's face stare back at him once before, and does not know what to make of it.

Calder's Boon

If the PCs are doing something that notably helps the town, then Calder will offer them some assistance by providing them each with a Heron Song Medallion.

> ***"This is the mark of allegiance to the Heron Song Empire. It has protective qualities and was made by Alric, an Arch Sorcerer on the Council of Night and Day. Keep it with you."***

Heron Song Medallion

DISABLE COMMENTS CREATE NEW VERSION

Wondrous Item, common

When you put on the medallion for the first time, you gain 8 temporary hit points. The temporary hit points last until the Heron Song Medallion is removed, or until 8 damage has been suffered, at which time the Medallion's power is lost until recharged. The Medallion can only be recharged by a member of the Council of Night and Day in the city of Keslav.

Finding Assistance:

Once the players are aware of the encroaching horde, they may attempt to rally support from the villagers.

To persuade villagers, players can either gather them together to speak communally, or address them individually.

Overall the villagers are reluctant to leave their homes. They have little by way of coin, and their wealth is tied up in crops and buildings that they cannot move. They know that if they surrender they are likely to be spared, as other villages and towns have been, but the price is that the Dreadhorde gain a new foothold over the River Cold.

Persuading village folks to help

Assuming that the player can give some solid reasoning, they may find some help.

- Villagers can be persuaded that they should help defend the village. Up to twenty stout farmhands are willing to take up arms to protect what is theirs, along with the four militia.
    - Villagers and farmhands use the commoner statistics, but can use a farm implement as a weapon, which functions as a spear.
- Ten villagers could be brought in act as medics and stretcher bearers
- When it comes to an actual invasion, Andros Kolt will come and be prepared to heal people as often as he is able to.
- Captain Calder will fight to the death. His responsibility to the village will not allow him to fail.
- Governor Alduin Nacht cannot be persuaded to help. He will flee rather than fight, if forced, but prefers to surrender the village.

Gultyr – Tiefling Monk NPC, and traitor

DM Note: Gultyr is an NPC who should provide the PCs with an indication that trouble is coming and that forces are at work against the village. He functions as a first clue, and his natural tendency towards fawning, insidious duplicity should indicate that he is not on the

side of good. Potentially, Gultyr could even divide the party or persuade some to join the Dreadhorde, but Skaal would take one look at these adventurers and disintegrate them with his more powerful spells.

Gultyr is a monk whose monastery was spared by Vannar, one of the invading Severed Lords. Gultyr is sly, and comes across more rogue than monk and has always resented being abandoned on the steps of the monastery.

The creature before you is a tiefling with a bluish tint to his skin. He is slender as a rake, with short black horns, a goatee beard and sharp, protruding fangs. He wears simple orange robes and appears to be completely unarmed. Around his neck he wears a cluster of charms that honour at least six different deities, and maybe more.

Gultyr

Medium humanoid (tiefling), neutral evil

Armor Class 14
Hit Points 21 (2d8 + 1)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	15 (+2)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws STR +3, DEX +4
Skills Medicine +4, Religion +2
Damage Resistances Fire
Senses Passive Perception 12
Languages Common, Infernal, Leonin
Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Actions

In the first, second and third rounds of combat, Gultyr makes three attacks with his Fists. Thereafter he may only make one attack with his Fists.

Fists. *Unarmed Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4+2) bludgeoning damage.

Reactions

Deflect Missiles: Gultyr can use his reaction to deflect or catch the missile when he is hit by a ranged weapon attack. When he does so, the damage he takes from the attack is reduced by 1d10 +5. If he reduce damage to 0 he can make a ranged attack (as with a monk weapon) with a range of 20/60.

Hellish Rebuke: Gultyr can cast the spell *Hellish Rebuke* at 1st level if he is hit by an attack.

Equipment: Gultyr is unarmoured and fights with his fists. He may have a bundle of yellow rags in a satchel with him (see below).

Gultyr is a Neutral Evil NPC and is working for the Dreadhorde. He reports directly to Commander Skaal, the orc necromancer who has been leading the army through the Coldwood.

Gultyr's mission is a simple one: Ensure that when the advance guard arrive, that the town is taken swiftly and easily.

Ways that Gultyr may approach a PC:

- Any PCs enjoying a drink at The Bushell may find Gyltyr buying them a drink. He may ask to trade stories of far off places.
- PCs engaging in activities around the town, talking to villagers, may find that they bump into him.

Gultyr's Persuasion:

At first, Gultyr won't outright try to persuade the heroes to defect to the Dreadhorde. Instead he will play on the futility of resistance. However, given encouragement, he may suggest that Commander Skaal – the leader of Vannar's vanguard – will offer great rewards. Since he does not have to go through with delivering on his promises, make them as outlandish as you wish.

If Gultyr is in danger from the party then he will attack them outright, but otherwise will try deception and trickery instead.

Gultyr knows of Sergeant Makala's mission, and if he is still around when she arrives, may try to persuade the PCs to join her.

Gultyr's lodgings:

Gultyr is staying with Alduin Nacht in the governor's manor and has been assigned a guest room. If the PCs search his rooms, they will find his bundle of yellow rags. These are markers, to help guide the Dreadhorde forces to arrive at the bridge directly.

Gultyr has the following letter (which is written in common) either in his possession, or stashed in his lodgings, depending how you wish to approach it:

> *SERVANT G,*
>
> *THE FOREST IS NOTORIOUSLY DENSE. FIND A WAY TO DEVISE A PATH. IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT I REACH AND TAKE THE RIVER CROSSING BEFORE THE COUNCIL OF NIGHT AND DAY LEARN OF OUR PLANS AND DIVERT FORCES TO STOP US. IF WE ARE SWIFT ENOUGH, WE WILL ARRIVE ON THE FEAST OF SAUVAIGN.*
>
> *YOUR BETTER,*
>
> *SKAAL*

Rag Tying

Gultyr attempts to guide the Dreadhorde forces to the bridge by tying markers. Each rag is tied to a tree in sight of two other rags – one to the east, and one to the west.

Players may:

- Encounter the rags quickly after entering the forest, after 4pm on Day 2.
- See Gultyr with one of these rags sticking out of his pocket after he has done this. A Passive Perception of 16 or more will spot it. They may or may not know what it means.
- Find the rag-bundle in his lodgings.

Alduin Nacht, dinner invitation

Alduin Nacht grew up in the slums of Keslav, working as a conman. Force to run, he found his way to Ashwell where he managed to persuade the peasantry that his fine city ways made him the optimum choice for Governor.

Nacht has taken money from the Dreadhorde. He has 400 gold pieces in dwarven coinage stashed in a chest in his rooms – plunder from the sacked dwarven cities in the Drakkenspir. If the PCs ever raid his mansion they will find them, and anyone who can speak Dwarvish (and all dwarfs) will recognise them as such. Those types of coins filter into common circulation but to have so many of one type is deeply suspicious.

Alduin Nacht

Medium humanoid (human), lawful evil

Armor Class 15 (Breastplate)
Hit Points 23 (4d8)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)

Skills Deception +5, Insight +4, Persuasion +5
Senses Passive Perception 12
Languages Common, Undercommon
Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Actions

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d8 + 1) slashing damage.

Reactions

Parry. Alduin Nacht adds 2 to his AC against one melee attack that would hit him. To do so, he must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

Nacht will invite the PCs to have dinner at his governor's manor.

Gultyr the tiefling may attend the dinner, if he has no other engagements on the timeline. This may be a good opportunity to have the PCs notice the yellow cloth sticking out of Gulty'rs pocket.

If they attend they will be led to a fine dining chamber where Nacht's wife will wait on them. Nacht will suggest the following:

- The presence of the adventurers is causing people to become alarmed, which is bad for businesses
- The goblins in the village were just wandering, and Captain Calder would have dealt with them on his return
- The captain is a fine man, more than capable of taking care of threats from the Coldwood (NB: Calder dislikes Nacht immensely)
- If the PCs are adamant that something is up, then Nacht may tell the PCs that he wants them to leave. He may resort to bribery (10gp a head) to try to see them off.

This is not an ambush, and Nacht will only resort to violence if the PCs do.

Dreadhorde Scouts

Four goblins, standard statistics as per the MM.

The Scouts all wear a **Dreadhorde Medallion**. The Medallion is a cheap piece of tin imprinted with a design that looks like a horned plate armour helmet (the symbol of Baelor).

The Medallions are inherently Evil items. A Good character wearing one suffers -2 on any CHA related checks.

The Dreadhorde Scouts will come to the edge of the forest and watch whatever is going on, using their *darkvision*.

Feel free to bump up the number of goblins to six to give the heroes a tougher encounter if they're in good shape.

Spider Cave

Two Giant Brown Widow spiders dwells in a cave to the north of the village, which can be reached by traversing a small wood.

Note: if the players reach this zone at level 1, or there are 3 or fewer PCs, subject them to just one Giant Brown Widow.

The cave is a fearful place, and rumour has it that a foolish adventurer went there to try to overcome the spider, whose name is Shelakh… only to find that there are two spiders and he got bitten. His body lies deep among the webbing where it fell.

Note: Use any suitable battle map for the spider cave. If you feel that your PCs are ready for some more hack and slash, then consider throwing in some additional critters for them to combat. If they are only level 1, the spiders will be a tough fight, but at level 2 the PCs might also encounter a couple of Darkmantles.

The cave is about 80 feet deep, thick with webs holding the carcasses of wild boards and other forest animals. It is entirely dark and players will need some form of artificial light. Assuming that they can see:

Thick strands of sticky looking thread crisscross the entirety of the cave. The bitter stench emanating from the cave is horrific, clawing at your nostrils and bringing tears to your eyes. To say that there must be some hefty spiders here would be an understatement. The cave roof is some ten feet high, so at the least, there's room to swing a blade if you need one. The bat guano lies thick across the floor, a dense black and white carpet.

Players venturing in may need to cut the webs, or else find themselves at Disadvantage or a -2 penalty to all attack and ability checks, unless they make a successful DEX or STR save (DC10). After first coming into contact with the webs, a character must re-make the saving throw for every 15 feet they move across the webs.

Giant Brown Widow

Large beast, unaligned

Armor Class 14 (Natural Armor)
Hit Points 26 (4d10 + 4)
Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	2 (-4)	11 (+0)	4 (-3)

Skills Stealth +7
Senses Blindsight 10 ft., Darkvision 60 ft., Passive Perception 10
Languages --
Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Spider Climb. The spider can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Web Sense. While in contact with a web, the spider knows the exact location of any other creature in contact with the same web.

Web Walker. The spider ignores movement restrictions caused by webbing.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 11 Constitution saving throw, or be poisoned for 1 hour. Whilst poisoned, the target makes all attack rolls and concentration checks at disadvantage.

Web (Recharge 5–6). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 30/60 ft., one creature. *Hit:* The target is restrained by webbing. As an action, the restrained target can make a DC 12 Strength check, bursting the webbing on a success. The webbing can also be attacked and destroyed (AC 10; hp 5; vulnerability to fire damage; immunity to bludgeoning, poison, and psychic damage).

Looting the cave:

Within the cave, a thorough search reveals:

- 7 chunks of amber worth 25gp each
- A **Potion of Superior Healing**
- A **Longsword of Vengeance**
- A suit of Scale Mail on the skeleton of the foolish adventurer.

Guano

The PCs can gather up to 4 sacks of guano once the spiders have been dealt with, taking one PC half an hour to fill a sack.

Each sack provides one charge for the Aeterian.

Sergeant Makala and Oddbin

Sergeant Makala is a servant of the Dreadhorde, and has been sent to try to lure away anyone trying to defend the village. The Dreadhorde have almost no information about Ashwell apart from knowing about the river and the bridge. Makala is not expecting a great deal of resistance there, and will be surprised at the PC's presence.

Sergeant Makala

Medium humanoid (human), lawful evil

Armor Class 16 (Chainmail)
Hit Points 26 (4d10 + 16)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	11 (+0)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws CON +4, WIS +2
Senses Passive Perception 10
Languages Common
Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Bound to dark masters. Makala has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.

Actions

Multiattack. Makala makes two melee attacks.

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d10 + 3) slashing damage.

Heavy Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, range 100/400 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d10) piercing damage.

Reactions

Parry. Makala adds 2 to her AC against one melee attack that would hit her. To do so, she must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

Makala is tough, war-bitten and tries to speak with a rallying, authoritative air of command.

Riding in from the west you see a tall woman, in her forties, with long brown hair riding a misused, patchy-furred old nag. She wears tattered chainmail beneath a well-worn uniform displaying the crest of the city of Keslav, and wears a pair of scimitars on her belt. Beside her comes a grizzled old dwarf with a huge ginger beard, threaded with white, in similar attire, riding a donkey.

Makala claims to be a sergeant serving under "Commander Kishtan." If any of your PCs have the Soldier background, then allow them a History check to see if they have heard of him. They won't have, as Makala has invented him.

"I've been sent to recruit soldiers to aid in the defence of Keslav. All able-bodied men and women need to head north. It's a week long march, but without aid, Keslav will undoubtedly fall. Drop whatever it is that you're doing and head there. These orders come from Kayodath, a member of the Council of Night and Day, who is holding the city. You must leave today: there is no time to lose!"

Oddbin has no tongue; it was cut out by the Dreadhorde. He uses Commoner stats and is too afraid to 'say' anything while she's around. After spending more than 10 minutes in his company, an Insight Check (DC 11) will indicate that he looks uncomfortable and nervous. His job is to cook for Makala and sort her life out as she can't take care of herself.

Captain Calder will be very much against the idea. If they go to him, he will ask to see written orders. If Makala is brought face to face with Calder, he will demand to see her Heron Song Medallion as well. Makala will say that she lost it.

If the PCs are persuaded to leave by Makala:

Makala will lead the PCs out to the north and then leave them there. If the PCs attempt to travel further to Keslav, they will be set upon by a group of Dreadhorde Scouts lying in wait. Run the encounter ***Kobold Ambush***.

If Oddbin is liberated, he can become a henchman to one of the PCs. At this stage in his life, he is not willing to fight, but can do cooking and cleaning chores.

Druidic Signage

If the players decide to enter the woods and spend at least 2 hours scouting, they may discover a clearing, in the centre of which is a single large tree with several strange symbols carved into it. These have been left by a passing druid.

A druid can decipher the Druid Sign. If there is no druid present, the symbols are unreadable.

The symbols read: *An owlbear crosses this path. Lonely and in heat. Be careful what Wild Shape you take… 12th Feb, Year of the Hawk*

Making use of the owlbear:

If the PCs wish to they can lure an owlbear along this path to coincide with the Dreadhorde advance party. The owlbear will follow trails of meat or other interesting smells, and will attack humanoids on sight. If the PCs seem likely to try to engage the owlbear (which would be a bad move at level 1) then give any druid, ranger or barbarian a DC8 Nature check to identify that an Owlbear would be a terrible threat.

Bardic Dance Battle!

Each night, there is a man who believes that he is a bard (but isn't) who plays in the inn. If a bard has already started playing, he will enter with his lute. Ted is a snarky, egotistical man, full of delusions of his own skills.

> *On a slightly raised area, you see a man with curly ginger hair, and a snub nose tuning up a lute. He notices you, and gives a nod towards his cap laid on the ground where you see a handful of copper pennies.*

His name is Ted Beeron. Ted will challenge any player who he sees with a musical battle where each participant plays 3 songs. Make a Performance competition check for each one – Ted only rolls a D20 and adds +2 for proficiency.

- If Ted loses the musical battle, he will then insist on a Dance Battle.
- Ted is a horrific dancer. He makes rolls without proficiency when dancing.
- If Ted loses the competition then he will storm out of the pub and the players will get a free round of beer.

Dreadhorde Advance Party

The Dreadhorde send an advance party to begin clearing the way, but even this would be an impossible task to attack directly. The advance party arrives at 2pm on Day 4. It consists of:

- Skaal, the half-orc necromancer. Skaal has ritual scars on his face, is incredibly proud of his position but is also a terrible coward.
- 2 Goblin Bosses
- 20 Goblins

The dreadhorde has brought with it 6 goblin corpses, dragged on sleds through the forest. The aim is to send them on ahead to secure the bridge.

Skaal, Dreadhorde Commander

The key villain in this adventure is Skaal, an orc necromancer, but the players are not intended to fight Skaal until they are level 5. As such, keep Skaal at a distance from the players. Note that Skaal is wary of putting himself at risk – he commands a large force and as such has no need to put himself at risk. At most he should be seen at a distance, or trade some threats and words. Remember that as a DM, you know that our heroes are only level 1 or 2 during this adventure, but there is no reason for Skaal to assume that they are much weaker than him. For all he knows they could be level 15! Play him as wary and happy to dispose of his minions as he sees fit.

Skaal, Dreadhorde Commander

Medium humanoid (orc), lawful evil

Armor Class 11
Hit Points 44 (7d6 + 14)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	13 (+1)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	9 (-1)

Saving Throws INT +6, WIS +4
Skills Medicine +4, Nature +3, Perception +4
Senses Darkvision 60ft, Passive Perception 11
Languages Common, Druidic, Orc Common, Abyssal, Infernal and Orc
Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Spellcasting. Skaal is a 7th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). He has the following Wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *acid splash*, *control flames*, *light*, *shocking grasp*

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

2nd level (3 slots): *darkness*, *mirror image*, *scorching ray*

3rd level (3 slots): *animate dead*, *counterspell*, *hypnotic pattern*, *melf's minute meteors*

4th level (1 slot): *greater invisibility*

Relentless Endurance. If Skaal drops to 0 hit points, he drops to 1 hit point instead. This ability only happens once per day.

Grim Harvest. Once per turn when Skaal kills one or more creatures with a spell of 1st level or higher, he regains HP equal to twice the spell's level, or three times its level if the spell belongs to the School of Necromancy. He doesn't gain this benefit for killing constructs or undead.

Actions

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

Potion of Healing, Greater. As a bonus action, Jurak may take a Superior Healing Potion, restoring 4d4+4 hit points. He may use this ability once per day.

Skaal carries two magic items: A Potion of Greater Healing (included in his stat block) and the **Wand of Rising Dark**.

Wand of the Rising Dark

EDIT SHARE WITH COMMUNITY DELETE

Wand, rare (requires attunement by a by a druid, sorcerer, warlock or wizard)

This wand has 5 charges. While holding it, you can expend 1 charge as an action to cast the *detect magic* spell from it. Alternatively, you can expend 3 charges to reroll all of the damage dice when you cast a spell, or when an ongoing spell effect that requires your Concentration takes effect.

Resistance is futile: Whilst attuned to the wand, your spell save DC is inceased by 1.

The wand regains 1d3 expended charges daily at dawn.

Notes: Bonus: Spell Save DC, by a druid, sorcerer, warlock or wizard, Detection

It is almost inconceivable for the players to defeat Skaal at this stage in the campaign, but his stats and loot are included just in case. If they survive long enough and continue into the Galled Thrane campaign, players may encounter him in both Mourn and Tynemear Castle. If

you continue with your own homebrew or a published module, feel free to reintroduce Skaal later on.

Skaal's forces will arrive and set up a camp about ½ a mile from the bridge (deeper into the Coldwood). Skaal will then cast Animate Dead repeatedly on the corpses.

Skaal has 3 level 3 spell slots, and 1 level 4 spell slots, allowing him to animate 6 zombies. They are then weighed down with rocks that are tied to them with ropes, and sent into the river to await commands at 7am, before it gets light. The corpses must be secured with ropes and rocks or the river current will wash them away. Weighed down, they can cling to the mud and not move.

The Zombies' Orders:

Skaal's orders are specific: "Wait in the river until just before light comes, then go and take your place on the bridge. Kill any that oppose you, but be unseen until then."

This means that the zombies will not attack or fight against PCs who discover them in the river unless either the PCs attack them, or it is past 7am. Smart PCs might realise that if they cut away the ropes holding the rocks, the zombies will be swept away down the river, uncaring since their orders are still fulfilled. By the tie it's 7am, they will be many miles away.

In the river

Players who have set villagers to watch the river, who investigate it themselves, who use Divine Sense around the area, or who urge Captain Calder to keep using his Primeval Awareness may come across the zombies and learn that they are in the river. They may be investigating after encountering the zombies on Day 2.

Zombies from the River – Day 2, 3pm

This event happens sequentially prior to the Dreadhorde Advance Party, but is listed here so that it makes sense. Run this encounter wherever the PCs are, provided that they are in or around Ashwell.

> *A frightened looking child runs shrieking towards you.*
>
> *"The dead are walking! The dead are walking!"*

Players who follow up will find that a pair of zombies are stood on the west bank of the river, about half a mile north of the bridge. The zombies are standing around, having no more orders – they were just a test for Skaal's plan to send underwater scouts across.

How the players deal with those zombies is then up to them.

Orgleborgle the Ettin

About 2 hours to the north of Ashwell, an Ettin called Orgleborgle (his heads being Orgle and Borgle) has eaten a flock of sheep.

Orgleborgle is a greedy, selfish brute. He has no desires or thoughts for anything other than pleasing himself and couldn't care less about the Dreadhorde. He does however love food and beer.

During a recent fight with a Dreadhorde Advance Party led by Skaal, with whom he is still very angry, he suffered a bad wound to his foot. His left foot is badly infected and reeks even worse than his stinking hide. It means that he's basically unable to walk very effectively.

Due to his injured leg, he currently has one point of Exhaustion and a maximum hit points of 70. Unless Orgleborgle is healed (magically) he only has a movement of 10 feet. This will allow the PCs to make a quick getaway if needed but it is possible for a group of level 2 players to defeat him if the dice favour them.

Orgleborgle

Large giant, chaotic evil

Armor Class 12 (Natural Armor)
Hit Points 70 (10d10 + 30)
Speed 10 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	8 (-1)	17 (+3)	6 (-2)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)

Skills Perception +4
Senses Darkvision 60 ft., Passive Perception 14
Languages Giant, Orc
Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Two Heads. The ettin has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks and on saving throws against being blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, stunned, and knocked unconscious.

Wakeful. When one of the ettin's heads is asleep, its other head is awake.

Actions

Multiattack. The ettin makes two attacks: one with its battleaxe and one with its morningstar.

Battleaxe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (2d8 + 5) slashing damage.

Morningstar. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (2d8 + 5) piercing damage.

Although he's a pretty terrifying opponent in battle, Orgleborgle knows his limitations right now and will not go near to a settlement as he's aware that he can be downed by arrows as he limps along.

Orgleborgle is an egotistical dickwad, but he's also a little afraid.

He can be persuaded to fight for the PC's against the Dreadhorde if they are able to offer it:

- A large supply of beer
- Sheep to eat
- Horses to eat
- Magical healing for his leg of at least 16 points of healing

He will not enter the village itself, but he will go in against the enemy in the forest. This time, he will be prepared to fight to the death.

Ettin

Large giant, chaotic evil

Armor Class 12 (Natural Armor)
Hit Points 85 (10d10+30)
Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	8 (-1)	17 (+3)	6 (-2)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)

Skills Perception +4
Senses Darkvision 60 Ft., passive Perception 14
Languages Giant, Orc
Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Two Heads. The ettin has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks and on saving throws against being blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, stunned, and knocked unconscious.

Wakeful. When one of the ettin's heads is asleep, its other head is awake.

Actions

Multiattack. The ettin makes two attacks: one with its battleaxe and one with its morningstar.

Battleaxe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* (2d8 + 5) slashing damage.

Morningstar. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* (2d8 + 5) piercing damage.

An Ultimatum

This event will only take place if the PCs have done something to slow the Dreadhorde down, such as diverting the Ettin into the Dreadhorde Advance Party, destroying the river zombies, making a show of force, barricading the bridge. If the PCs have achieved nothing that shows defiance, they will not get a warning.

Skaal will send Nugbin, his goblin messenger, with a metal loudspeaker and a flag of truce (a bloody shirt tied to a branch) to speak to the town.

He will hail them with the loudspeaker and declare the following:

"I wish to speak with Governor Aldruin Nacht! Where is our friend the governor?"

If they try to send him out, Nacht will beg not to be sent over. He will surely be killed. If he is sent over, then he will return as a zombie during the attack.

Assuming that the governor is not going to be brought forth…

"By order of Skaal, the most honoured captain of Severed Lord Vannar, this town is claimed for the forces of the east. Lady Vannar is great and benevolent, and your village will be spared, and your people honoured as citizens of the new empire. But it has come to Skaal's attention that you are harbouring killers and murderers who have tried to harm Commander Skaal. Should you present these evil doers to us, then we will pass through

your village peacefully. But if you do not present these wrong-doers, then all of the guilty must be punished. But if you have not presented the wrongdoers by the hour of five tomorrow, then all will suffer."

The goblin bears his backside to you all and stalks back to the forest.

Skaal will come to check whether they have been presented along with 20 goblins and one goblin boss. If he sees nothing, then he will proceed to the treeline and use the loudspeaker.

"It seems you are bound and set on destruction at my hands. So be it. Tomorrow, I will return. And may the gods have mercy upon your souls."

DREADHORDE ATTACK

Commander Skaal sends his minions to try to take the bridge ahead of the arrival of the main town.

At 5pm, Calder becomes aware of the approaching Dreadhorde forces: Two hundred goblins. Rather than use individual statistics for goblins, they are treated as the much more powerful swarms shown here. There are ten of them in total, but if five of them are defeated then the remaining five will flee into the forest. Goblins are not bold by nature!

The PCs are unlikely to be able to fight these head on unless they funnel them onto the bridge, and some will need to be dealt with by the Aeterian.

Dreadhorde Goblin Assault Team

Huge swarm of Small humanoids, neutral evil

Armor Class 15 (Leather Armor, Shield)
Hit Points 90 (13d6)
Speed 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)	8 (-1)

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., Passive Perception 9
Languages Common, Goblin

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Lacking Cohesion: *The only actions that the Dreadhorde Goblin Assault Team may take are to advance and attack. They cannot perform any other actions.*

Actions

Multiattack: The *Dreadhorde Goblin Assault Team makes eight attacks with its Spear. The Dreadhorde Goblin Assault Team may only attack an individual target up to three times in a single turn.*

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

Description

Goblins are small, black-hearted humanoids that lair in despoiled dungeons and other dismal settings. Individually weak, they gather in large numbers to torment other creatures. These goblins have been forced together to form a disorderly mass of spears and savage hearts.

The goblins are cowardly and cannot swim with their equipment. If they can be stopped from crossing the river, then they cannot get into the town. They are led by Commander Skaal, whose statistics are given earlier.

River Assault

Before the goblins arrive, any Zombie Goblins that have not been dealt with previously will swim up from the river and emerge from the water.

- The zombie goblins will try to attack the bridge from the west in the event that there are any barricades or good defences across the bridge. They will fight until they are destroyed.

The Bridge itself is wide enough for three people to fight side by side, if they have to. This means that only one Dreadhorde Goblin Assault Team can fight at one time, if they reach the PCs.

The full Dreadhorde Army:

- Ten Dreadhorde Goblin Assault Teams armed with spears
- 1 Goblin Champion
- 4 Goblin Bosses
- Skaal
- 6 Zombie Goblins – but only if they have not gone into the river

If your PCs are finding this all too easy, consider throwing in a Troll mercenary or some Ogres to liven things up!

The Battle Commences: Order of Attack

You seem them coming now, banners rising among the leafless trees of the Coldwood. This is it. This is the onslaught.

The earth drums to the sound of scores of hobnailed goblin boots. The warriors carry spears, shields to the fore, banded together in seemingly orderly units. Overhead, the sky bleeds red and black as the clouds scud by. Rain begins to fall. It's time to fight and win, or fight and die.

WAVE ONE

- Two Dreadhorde Goblin Assault Teams are sent forwards to attack the bridge, with a Goblin Boss to lead them. Half will shoot arrows at defenders on the wall. Militia will rain arrows on them from the tower.
- If the zombies are in the river, then they will attack with the first wave.
- The goblins will break and flee back if twenty of them are killed.

WAVE TWO

If this attack is somehow driven back, he will send in another wave (40+ a boss), along with the Goblin Champion.

The Goblin Champion will advance ahead of the goblins and challenge an adventurer to single combat, mocking the PCs for being feeble.

Goblin Champion

Small humanoid (goblinoid), neutral evil

Armor Class 14 (Studded Leather Armor)
Hit Points 22 (4d6)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)	8 (-1)

Skills Stealth +6
Senses Darkvision 60 ft., Passive Perception 9
Languages Common, Goblin
Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Nimble Escape. The goblin champion can take the Disengage or Hide action as a bonus action on each of its turns.

Actions

Multi attack: *The Goblin Champion attacks twice, once with its trident and once with its net.*

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

Net. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 10ft., one target. On a hit the target becomes entangled and suffers disadvantage on attack rolls in the following turn.

WAVE THREE

If this wave is somehow defeated, then Skaal will be furious. He will send in everything that he has left.

Skaal himself will stay at the back and will not attack.

If Skaal is somehow killed during combat, then the Goblin Champion – if he is alive – will simply command an all-out attack.

Victory

If the PCs can kill half of the Goblin Assault Teams (which should mostly be done using the Aeterian, with the PCs mopping up stragglers), then the remainder will flee into the forest, casting down their shields and running despite Skaal's threats. In this case, Skaal howls with fury and roars at the PCs through the Nugbin's loudspeaker.

Kobold Ambush

In the event that the PCs decide to leave Ashwell, either because they have been persuaded by Gultyr, Sergeant Makala, Alduin Nacht or simply decide to leave the village, then you can run this encounter.

This is a nearly unwinnable encounter, and the PCs are unlikely to be victorious. Everything that the PCs have seen should have indicated to them that all is not well in Ashwell and that, if they are being heroic, they should remain and try to resolve the issues there. They may end up forced to flee from the Kobolds, or may go down fighting.

Use any suitable map that features a road and some trees.

Ahead of you on the road you see the body of what appears to be a child, wrapped from head to toe in dirty rags. A straw doll lies nearby, and you see what looks like blood on the child's clothes.

The child is in fact a Kobold, waiting to attack. It has a pair of daggers rather than the usual equipment. A player with passive perception 15 or higher who approaches within 15 feet of the kobold will realise that this is not a human child, but the kobold still won't move until it has stabbing range.

Lying in wait are two kobolds for each PC, within the trees to the left of the path. The kobolds will begin to loose sling shots at anyone in range.

Before combat begins, the Kobolds should make a Stealth check (one for the group). Any PC with a lower Passive Perception is Surprised in the first round of combat.

Alric's Aftermath

If you wish to continue the campaign, then you can run this event.

In the aftermath of the battle, a vivid blue light emanates from the crystal sphere on level 2 of the guard tower. Players who look into it will see the robed figure of Alric again. This time, Alric will speak to the PCs through the sphere. The words resound in their heads rather than being audible.

"You have shown yourself to be valiant warriors in the fight to hold back the encroaching Dreadhorde legions. We are beset on all sides, and the Council of Night and Day cannot stand alone. We must have allies, champions against Baelor's forces. If you are those champions, we have a chance.

We cannot defeat our enemies in the present. They are too numerous, and by raising the Severed Lords, Baelor has brought forth powers beyond our ability to counter. We have never defeated one of the Severed Lords in battle. They are driven by his dark will, and every one is a magic user of terrible power. But, from the past, we may yet learn their secrets and through the past, undo them.

I believe that there are artefacts that may yet be used against them. I have located the resting place of one such artefact. If you are willing to pledge your allegiance to the Council of Night and Day, and are willing to head into peril to save this world, then I will give you my boon. Do not make this choice lightly, for if you choose to serve the Council, then you will serve. There is great power to be granted, but you will earn your power in blood."

Aftermath – Nacht is missing

In the aftermath off the attack, it can be discovered that Alduin Nacht is missing from his home. Has he gone to join the Dreadhorde? Only time will tell.

Level 3!

At the end of the adventure, all PCs should have earned enough experience points to reach level 3.