

The Crucible of Freya™

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Product Update Password for The Crucible of Freya: Shandril.

This product requires the use of the Dungeons and Dragons® Player's Handbook, published by Wizards of the Coast®



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Introduction

A challenging introductory adventure for four to six characters of 1st or 2nd level, *The Crucible of Freya* is an excellent beginning to any new fantasy campaign. The adventure begins with the players' arrival in the village of Fairhill, but quickly involves them in a quest to recover a stolen holy item recently taken in an orc raid. In hot pursuit of the thieving orc band, the characters discover the orcs have taken up residence in a ruined keep nearby. Once there, the party learns that even more sinister forces are at work: the keep's original owner may still wield some influence over his now-ruined abode.

Adventure Background

The village of Fairhill has long been a peaceful town, located off the tradeway between two major cities—the merchant town of Bard's Gate to the east and the Grand Duchy's port city of Reme to the west. Fairhill's fields are fertile and its populace happy, due in large part to the blessings of Freya—the goddess of love and fertility—who is the patron deity of Fairhill. The temple to Freya is the focal point for the citizens of the village, and Shandril, the village priestess, is a devoted follower of her fair goddess. Under Shandril's inspired guidance, the village fields yield great quantities of grain, the cattle produce milk and calves in abundance and married couples live in joyous harmony with numerous children. As a result of its location, Fairhill has become a favorite layover on the tradeway between Reme and Bard's Gate.

In recent weeks, trouble has come to Fairhill. A small band of marauding orcs began raiding the outskirts of the village and the surrounding farmland at night. There is a darker force at work behind the orc raids. Tavik, an evil priest of the demon-lord Orcus, has been commanded to desecrate the temple of Freya in Fairhill. Tavik's plan (and the central motivating plot point for this adventure) hinges on his orc minions stealing the *Crucible of Freya*. The crucible is necessary to one of the most important rituals in the village—the blessing of the new wheat harvest, which is only a few days away. By stealing the crucible and interfering with the ritual, Tavik intends to blight the normally bountiful harvest.

However, Tavik and his evil creatures are not the only minions of Orcus near Fairhill. There is a presence that is darker still, if of less immediate threat. The keep in which Tavik and his orcs have taken up residence was once the retreat of Eralion, a reclusive mage of some local repute. Years ago, as the shadow of his death grew long and he began to sense his own mortality, Eralion's heart darkened. He turned his attention to lengthening his fading life. He heard the rumor of the fabled Mushroom of Youth in the dungeon of Rappan Athuk, the legendary Dungeon of Graves, but he lacked the courage to enter those deadly halls. He researched *wish* spells, but lacked the power to master such mighty sorceries, being only a wizard of modest power.

Finally, in his darkest hour, Eralion turned to Orcus, the demon-lord of the undead, and implored the dread demon for the secret of unlife—the secret of becoming a lich. Orcus knew that Eralion lacked the power to complete the necessary ritual to become a lich, as Eralion had barely managed the use of a *scroll* to contact him in the depths of the Abyss in his Palace of Bones. Orcus smiled cruelly as he promised the secret of lichdom to Eralion. But there was a price. Orcus required Eralion to surrender his shadow. "A trifling," Orcus whispered to Eralion from the Abyss. "Something you will not need after performing the ritual which I shall give to you. For the darkness will be your home as you live for untold ages."

In his desperation, Eralion believed the demon-lord. He learned the ritual Orcus provided to him. But as he uttered false words of power and consumed the transforming potion, he realized too late the demon's treachery. He felt his life essence slip away—transferring in part to his own shadow, which he had sold to the demon-lord. Eralion found himself Orcus' unwitting servant. Now, trapped in the prison built by his own pride, his mind long shattered by an all-consuming hate, Eralion hides from the light and curses his unlife.

Soon after the characters arrive at Fairhill, Tavik executes his plan. His orcs raid the village and steal the *Crucible of Freya*, killing several town guards in the process and setting fire to the temple. Shandril realizes that the characters are the only means of recovering the crucible, and she implores them to assist her and her deity. Their quest inevitably leads them to the ruined keep and to a showdown with the marauding orcs. The characters should be able to cleanse the keep of its infestation and, hopefully, uncover the evil designs of Tavik, who can be an ongoing antagonist for the characters. The characters may unearth Eralion's lair and encounter him in the foul form he now wears. At the conclusion of this adventure, the characters should have increased in level, made several friends as well as a powerful enemy in Tavik, liberated some gold, acquired a +1 sword and possibly even recovered Eralion's staff and spell books.

Module Overview

Though *The Crucible of Freya* can be used on its own, the plot in Part Two is a direct continuation of the story of Corian the Sorcerer, as told in *The Wizard's Amulet*, available as a free downloadable adventure from the **Necromancer Games** web site (www.necromancer-games.com). We strongly recommend you download that free adventure and use it as a lead-in to this adventure.

This module is presented in several parts. **Part One**, entitled "**Areas of Adventure**," details each relevant area in and around Fairhill—the village of Fairhill itself, the wilderness surrounding Fairhill, several monster lairs and the ruined keep, including the chambers beneath it where Eralion waits, imprisoned. **Part Two**, entitled "**The Crucible of Freya**," presents a specific story line: the theft of

the *Crucible of Freya* by the orcs and the players' quest to retrieve it—leading them to the ruined keep. This story is presented in Act and Scene format, similar to that of a play to make it easier for less-experienced Dungeon Masters (DMs) to run the adventure. **Part Three**, entitled “**Supplemental Information**,” includes additional story ideas, tips on how to continue the adventure and links to other **Necromancer Games** modules and supplements. At the end of the module is a **Monster Appendix**, which lists creatures that can be encountered as wandering monsters or added to the adventure by the DM. This appendix does not include monsters that are keyed to specific encounter locations.

Notes for the Dungeon Master

This module is designed for beginning players and DMs, and it requires the use of the **Dungeons and Dragons® Player's Handbook, Third Edition**, and the **Dungeons and Dragons® DUNGEON MASTER's Guide, Third Edition**, published by **Wizards of the Coast®**. Prior to play, you should familiarize yourself with the entirety of this module, in particular **Part One**, which details all of the areas of adventure. Spend some time getting to know Shandril, Arlen, Baran, Lauriel, and most of all Tavik—the evil priest of Orcus. The more familiarity you have with the main characters, the richer the adventure experience will be for both you and your players. If you are a new DM, study the chapters of the **DUNGEON MASTER's Guide** concerning running adventures for some useful advice.

This adventure is very difficult and may result in the death of a player character (PC) unless they are clever and play well. Due to this, a number of non-player characters (NPCs) are provided along the way to allow for PC replacement. The level of difficulty is reduced if you focus on running the primary adventure in Part Two and leave the optional material, such as the other monster lairs, for future adventuring. At **Necromancer Games**, we believe that the most fulfilling game experiences come from difficult adventures. They provide bragging rights and long-winded stories for years to come. Recovering the *crucible*, defeating Tavik and his minions and encountering Eralion should provide your players with just such opportunities.

Modifying the Adventure

As with all **Necromancer Games** products, this adventure is designed to be easily adapted to any campaign setting. Reme and Bard's Gate can be replaced with any two major cities in your campaign world that are joined by a road that travels through the wilderness. Fairhill can be placed as a village along this road, as long as there is a small forest nearby where the ruined keep can be located. You should also feel free to substitute the deities used in this adventure. Freya can be replaced with any good-aligned deity. However, the replacement deity should be a deity of lesser importance in your pantheon and should not be a deity to which any of the player

characters are devoted. Orcus can be replaced with any evil god—but the evil god you choose should be related to the undead to keep the feel of the adventure intact. You may modify encounters, but we encourage you not to reduce the difficulty of the encounters without much forethought. They are difficult on purpose. Some of these areas and encounters are places to which your players can return when they achieve higher levels.

How to Begin

If you have used *The Wizard's Amulet*, then this adventure begins as your brave heroes travel to the village of Fairhill to rest and lick their wounds following their fight with Vortigern. At the conclusion of *The Wizard's Amulet*, there were three possible outcomes, each of which affects this adventure:

If Vortigern was slain and the party still has Corian's amulet, you may ignore any reference to Vortigern in this module.

If Vortigern escaped but the party still has Corian's amulet, then Vortigern and his familiar, Talon, are in Fairhill, staying at the *Cask and Flagon* under the name “Feriblan.” Vortigern's two henchmen, if alive, are also with him, staying in the room at the inn, keeping out of sight.

If Vortigern escaped with Corian's amulet, he and his cohorts head directly to the ruined keep, where they befriend Tavik and the orcs. Vortigern and Tavik have not yet learned the use of the amulet since they have not yet discovered the hidden trap door in the floor of the southwest tower.

If you have not used *The Wizard's Amulet* as a lead-in to this adventure, you will need to invent a reason why your players' characters are headed to Fairhill. Maybe the characters are headed to the famous dungeon of Rappan Athuk to test their mettle and stopped at Fairhill along the way. They may be here because a cleric in the party wants to pay her respects at the temple of Freya. They may have a message to deliver to Arlen the magistrate from someone in Bard's Gate. They may have had a previous encounter with Lannet during which he stole something of value from them, and they have trailed him to Fairhill. Or, most likely, they heard the tale of Eralion and his now-ruined keep, and they wanted to seek it out. In particular, spellcasters in the party might view the keep as a possible treasure trove of spell books. If you use this last hook, you should allow the party to start with two of the rumors about Eralion's keep from the rumor section below. Also, you must provide one of the characters with a *scroll of knock* to enable them to open the portal to the lower portions of the keep. Without such a *scroll*, the party will have no way to bypass the *arcane locked* door leading to Eralion's sanctum. Of course, if you have not used *The Wizard's Amulet*, you should ignore any reference to Vortigern, Talon, Vortigern's henchmen Grenag and Slaaroc, Corian and Corian's amulet contained in this module.