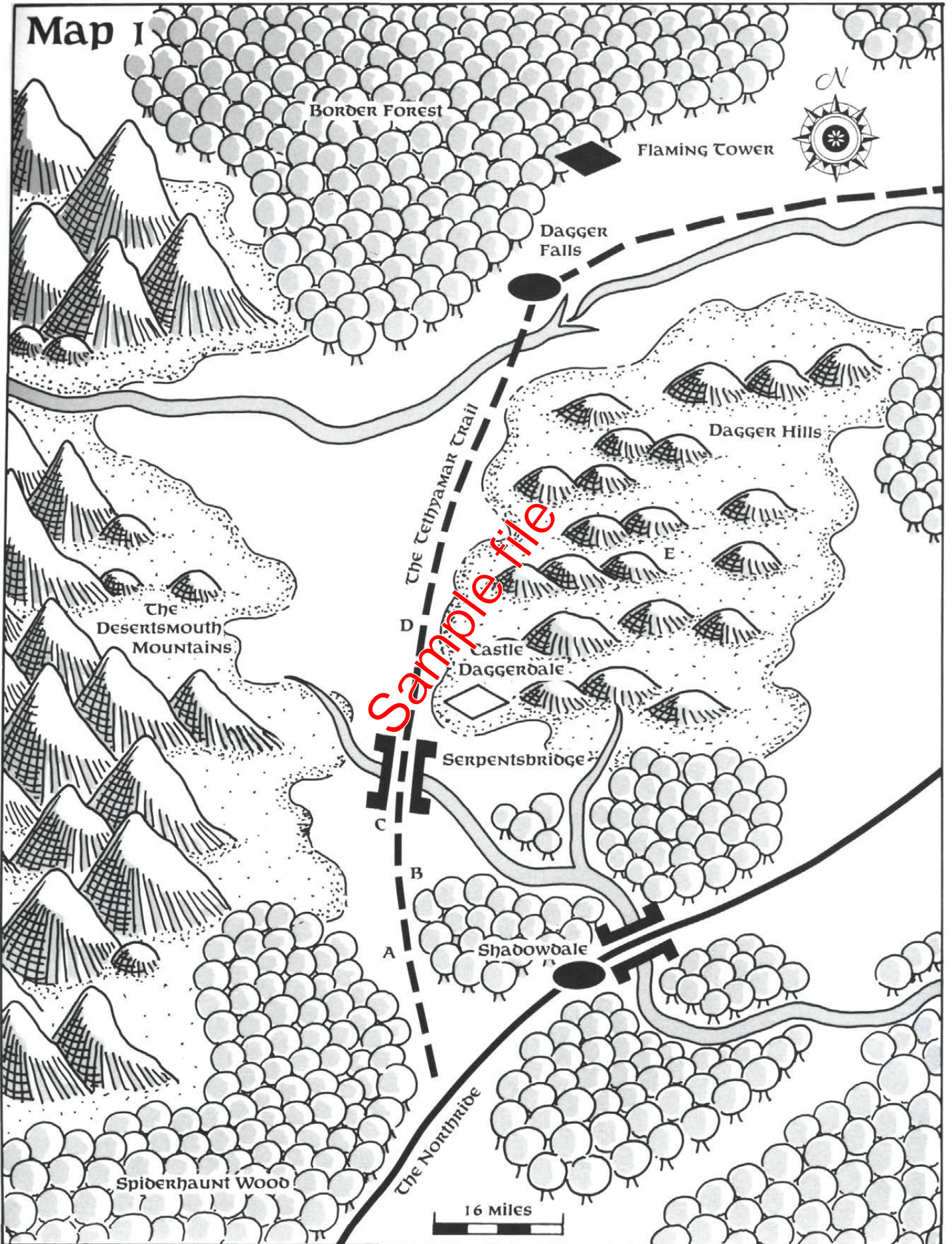


Map I



Sample file

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons®



The Return of Randal Morn

by Jim Butler

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Welcome to Dagger Falls!

*Fierce winds rise and dark shadows fall/Unbearable burdens grind us down.
Into dust we are bound, the circle comes around/Without sound.*

—Excerpt from Storm Silverhand's Legacy of the Chosen.

The Return of Randal Morn is a FORGOTTEN REALMS® Campaign Setting adventure for four to six characters of 2nd through 4th levels. While 1st-level adventurers might be able to survive the rigors of this adventure, it is strongly recommended that a party include at least one 4th-level character. Nonplayer character (NPC) numbers and levels may need to be adjusted upward for more powerful parties.

This is the last module in the Dales trilogy of adventures, which began with *The Sword of the Dales* and continued with *The Secret of Spiderhaunt*. In this installment, the heroes finally rescue Randal Morn and discover the secrets introduced in *The Sword of the Dales*.

The Dungeon Master should be thoroughly familiar with the module before play begins. Specific information concerning the arch-shadow Gothyl and the unique magical items found within this adventure can be found at the end of the module.

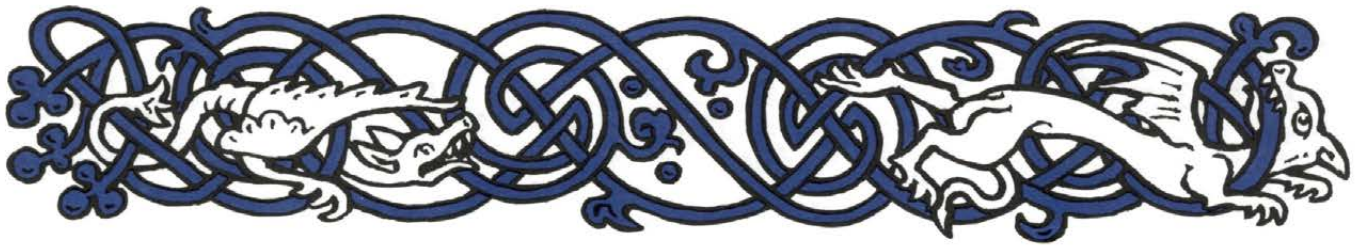
The Action So Far

The heroes began their odyssey in Shadowdale. There they were hired by Lhaeo, scribe to Elminster of Shadowdale, to find and rescue Randal Morn.

According to legend, Shraevyn—a powerful wizard from times past—created a mighty sword known as the *Sword of the Dales*. The *Sword* was to serve as a symbol of authority for the ruler of the Dales, but knowledge of the blade—along with the location of Shraevyn's tomb—disappeared when the wizard died. Recently the tomb was uncovered in the area of the Giant's Craw, and word of its discovery reached Randal and his Freedom Riders. Randal raced to the tomb with the hope of recovering the *Sword* and using it to regain control of Daggerdale.

Once he and his companions found the *Sword* and left the tomb, they were attacked by Zhentarim forces. Randal and his group easily dispatched this enemy, but another one appeared: a horde of undead. This ghoulish group poured from the tomb and destroyed the rebels. During this onslaught, Gothyl, an arch-shadow (detailed on page 30–31), emerged from the *Sword*, trapped Randal, and disappeared. Gothyl was once a wizardess of tremendous power who sought to achieve lichdom many years ago. The process failed, and she was transformed into an arch-shadow. Since then, she has been seeking to change into a *demi-shade*.





Ariton, the only Freedom Rider to survive, escaped to Shadowdale and sought the aid of Elminster. The wizard's scribe, Lhaeo, tended the man's wounds and listened to his story. The scribe then went in search of adventurers willing to take on the job of rescuing Randal.

The PCs accepted the assignment and immediately ran headlong into danger. The tomb of the wizard Shraevyn was anything but empty; undead lurked around every corner and cryptic magical wards slowed the party's progress. When the PCs finally arrived at the burial chamber, they found the *Sword of the Dales*—but no Randal. The only sign that he had been there was a note telling the party to search for him in Spiderhaunt Wood.

As *The Secret of Spiderhaunt* unfolded, Gothyl sent the heroes dream images filled with cries of torment and anguish. She used them to disorient the PCs and to draw them closer to her tower in Spiderhaunt. The archshadow's scheme worked: The PCs headed for the tower.

Once the PCs were deep within the fortress, Gothyl disguised herself as Hedistrin, a beneficent spirit bound to the *Sword*, and appeared to them when they discovered

Randal Morn trapped within a *dreamglobe* spell. She told them what they needed to do to release Randal Morn, but her instructions were a trap. The heroes who did as they were told were attacked by the spirits of Gothyl's apprentices, which were trapped within the skulls of lifeless skeletons.

Unfortunately for Gothyl, the Zhentarim entered her tower on the heels of the party. Led by Ilthond (the Zhent wizard who was nearly burned to death by Shandrill in the novel *Spellfire*), they took possession of some of the skulls and released Randal Morn. Ilthond teleported to Dagger Falls with both Randal and the skulls.

Gothyl was furious. Not only did she lose her apprentices, but she also lost her chance to drain Randal of his life force and become a demi-shade. She assumed the form of the friendly spirit again and begged the PCs to go to Dagger Falls and rescue Randal Morn. She has plans of her own for Ilthond.

Gothyl cast a *shadowshield* spell on each of the PCs (refer to page 29). This spell should be in effect on the PCs when the adventure begins.





What Now?

At the opening of this adventure, the heroes find themselves on their way to the city of Dagger Falls. The overland trek to the city is fraught with danger. Ilthond expects the PCs to make some kind of daring rescue attempt, so he has increased patrol activity in the area.

On their way to Dagger Falls, the PCs meet a band of Freedom Riders led by Ariton, the lone survivor of Randal's quest. Ariton has heard that Randal is held in Dagger Falls and knows his friend is scheduled to be executed. Ariton asks the PCs to go into the city and report on the strength of the Zhent militia. He stresses that this information is vital to a successful Freedom Rider attack.

The guards at the Dagger Falls gate harass the PCs but allow them in. The PCs complete the reconnaissance and deliver their report to the Freedom Rider contact. As the heroes leave, they are ambushed by 20 guards. The Zhents order the PCs to surrender, then the heroes are hit with arrows coated with *sleep* poison.

The characters awaken to discover they are chained to a wall in a dingy room. A self-important officer by the name of Guthbert Golthammer enters the room, leaving the *Sword of the Dales* as he speaks. Guthbert isn't the most intelligent man around, and the PCs easily trick him into saying the word *merrydale*—the command that opens their manacles.

When this happens, Ilthond immediately teleports into the room and orders Guthbert to kill the PCs. Gothyl, in her arch-shadow form, hisses from the *Sword* and attacks Ilthond. Finally, Gothyl kills the wizard and disappears. She has achieved her demi-shade status.

The PCs see Zhent guards spirit Randal away and load him onto a wagon. A wild chase through the chaotic, battle-filled streets ensues, and the PCs are attacked by rooftop archers as they pursue the fleeing wagon. The wagon crashes and Randal is thrown to safety.

The characters at long last meet Randal as the Freedom Riders overwhelm the Zhent occupation forces. The party is taken to the Freedom Rider headquarters and given food and a few hours' sleep.

Finally, the PCs are pounded awake by the sound of war drums. A troop of orcs hired by the Zhents to level Dagger Falls floods into the city, and the characters quickly dispatch the enemy leader.

The adventure closes when Randal gives the PCs land grants within Daggerdale and the heroes are given the opportunity to talk with Elminster and Khelben.

Gothyl is far from finished. Refer to the **Gothyl's Plans** section at the end of the module (page 27).

Other Things To Know

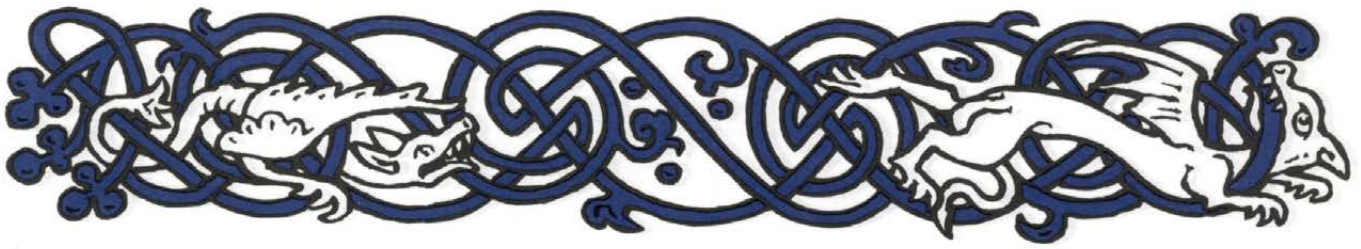
Characters who completed *The Secret of Spiderhaunt* begin this adventure by traveling to the eastern border of Spiderhaunt from Gothyl's tower. It should take characters three to four days of travel to get out of Spiderhaunt. Chances are good that Madarn, the gnome spiderhunter guide, is still with them.

It is highly recommended that an adventuring party go through at least one of the prior adventures before beginning *The Return of Randal Morn*. If this is not possible, the DM should paraphrase the information contained in the **What Happened Before** section.

The PCs should know only that Hedistrin (Gothyl) is a spirit bound to the *Sword of the Dales* and that she wants Randal Morn to wield the powerful blade. These are all lies, of course, but adventurers have no way of knowing this, due to the *non-detection* spell she always casts before speaking to the group.

The DM should give new characters a reason to travel to Dagger Falls. A few scenarios include:

- The PCs encounter a Zhent warrior who is trying to get the *Sword* back to Dagger Falls. Once he is defeated, the heroes find clues that lead them to Dagger Falls.
- Gothyl emerges from the *Sword* and gives a convincing speech about how the Dales need them to rescue Randal Morn. She explains the powers of the weapon and Randal Morn's kidnapping. Her plea ends with a dire warning about the power of the skulls Ilthond took with him from the tower.
- Lhaeo, scribe to Elminster of Shadowdale, approaches the party and explains the quest. He tells them that the last party to attempt the rescue was destroyed, and he needs replacements. He gives them the *Sword*, one *potion of extra-healing*, a *long sword +1*, and the promise of a land grant in Shadowdale if they succeed.



The Journey

"I'm often asked the surest way to defeat a monster or destroy a magical ward, but it would be better to ask the safest trail or best-patrolled roadway. It does little good to arrive strong in knowledge, yet weak from travel!"

—Elminster of Shadowdale

All characters begin the adventure a few miles north of the Northride along the Tethyamar Trail. Random encounters should be checked either once every four hours or when the party takes actions that advertise its presence (bonfires, fireballs into the air, etc.). Consult the **Encounters Appendix** on page 32 for specific scenarios. If the heroes devise an especially creative way to avoid an encounter, they should be rewarded. Innovative, intelligent role-playing should be rewarded as well.

As characters begin their journey toward Dagger Falls, read the following:

The Tethyamar trail continues north through this land. Lines of scrub brush and outcroppings of rock slowly turn into deep grass further ahead.

To the west, the dark Spiderhaunt Wood is a reminder of past journeys. Its dark branches undoubtedly hold more secrets than merely one wizard's tower.

The Dagger Hills, rising upon the western horizon, cut through the landscape like a jagged scar.

The following key corresponds to Map 1 on the inside front cover.

A. Zhent Welcoming

As soon as the PCs turn into a gully, they find themselves face-to-face with a squad of Zhent warriors. Roll for surprise normally.

The trail twists and turns as it comes out of a dry riverbed. Suddenly, thundering hooves and a resounding order of "Charge!" echo across the bleak landscape.

Glancing around quickly, you see a group of 12 mounted men—wearing the livery of the Zhentilar—galloping forward, lances gleaming. Behind the soldiers you see a familiar form: Illthond, the wizard from the tower in Spiderhaunt.

Illthond has been watching the PCs, confident that they plan to rescue Randal Morn. He ordered these men to meet the PCs outside of the woods and slay them.

Even if the PCs set weapons for a charge, the Zhents continue forward. The soldiers first attack with lances, then switch to swords.

If the PCs are not mounted, the Zhents gain a +1 on their attacks (attacking

