

# CREDITS

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(pg 9) Belak the Druid: [Kagurachi](#)

(pg 16) Nightscale emerging from the lake: [Kagurachi](#)

(pg 25) Tloques-Popolocas (Room 7, pg 67) pulling his berserker axe out of the wall: [Vasiart](#)

(pg 40) Jumping in the geysers and chains room (Room 7, page 100): [Kagurachi](#)

(pg 45) Tarul Var: [Vasiart](#)

(pg 69) King Snurre wearing his white dragon cloak: [Vasiart](#)

(pg 89) Acererak: [Vasiart](#)

## NOTES

This material is based on articles from my blog, [Power Score RPG](#).

**Thank You!** I want to thank everybody who has either sent me a kind word, given me a like on twitter, or bought one of my other pdfs on the DMs Guild.

**Emirikol's Guide to Devils.** I am right now polishing up a gigantic DMs Guild pdf that I've been working on for 5 months. It is Emirikol's Guide to Devils, a devil guide that has stats for about 40 monsters, a chapter full of magic items converted from old editions, and of course my stab at statting out the Lords of the Nine, the archdevil rulers of hell.

**Being a Dungeon Master.** If you are reading this, you are probably at the very least considering being a Dungeon Master. Being a DM is hard! When a session doesn't go well, it feels terrible.

Remember, every single one of us goes through this. Often, the sessions you think weren't so great were loved by the players. Don't get discouraged, just keep an open mind and try not to be too critical of yourself!



# HOW TO RUN TALES FROM THE YAWNING PORTAL



In this guide, we are going to take a look at Tales From the Yawning Portal and do our best to prepare it.

We're going to start off with going over the basics, in case this is one of your first times DMing. Then, we'll go chapter by chapter and prepare this thing. There is a lot of work to be done as a DM, and I tried my best to do it for you.

At the end, I've included a sample outline of a campaign to show how you could connect all of these adventures together.

## ADVENTURE ANTHOLOGY

This book is a collection of 7 adventures that were originally made for previous editions (with different rules). These have all been updated to the 5th edition rules.

## LEGENDARY ADVENTURES

Some of these adventures are very famous in D&D circles. White Plume Mountain is known as a "fun-house" dungeon, a place full of weird and wacky rooms. The Tomb of Horrors is a dungeon full of traps (and almost no monsters at all) designed to kill almost anyone. Gary Gygax himself made this dungeon and it is meant to be the ultimate challenge.

## BEGIN WITH THE SUNLESS CITADEL

If you are going to start a group, you'll want to use the Sunless Citadel first. That's for brand new, 1st level characters. This adventure came out right when 3rd edition was released. 3rd edition was really popular at the time, and a lot of people played it.

It's a good dungeon for new players and DMs, because it was designed for them. It starts out a bit basic, and grows in complexity as you go on.

You begin by entering a dungeon that's inhabited by feuding kobolds and goblins. At the bottom of the place is a druid and a tree tainted by the blood of a vampire.

## PREPARING AN ADVENTURE

If this is the first adventure you've ever run, you should know that you need to read the whole chapter. The most important thing to keep in mind is that you need to look up monsters and stuff beforehand. If you look up everything at the table, everybody will get bored. It is important to be prepared. You want people have fun, not fall asleep or wander away.

### GREAT SHEET

You might want to get a piece of paper or something and write down stats for a kobold, goblin, and a twig blight. Also, write down what some spells that are in the adventure do. That way, when you're running the game, all you have to do is look at that sheet and you can just keep right on going with no break in the pacing.

### DON'T WORRY

Also remember that every DM makes mistakes every single session. It's no big deal. Just roll with it. It doesn't matter, all that matters is that everyone has fun.

### KEEPING THE GAME MOVING

If your players are new, certain things can slow the game down. Make sure everybody knows their plus to hit, how much damage they do, their spell attack bonus and the DC for their spells. It gets real old when the same player keeps having to figure out their bonus to hit and it drags the game down. Also, I think people running casters should, at the very least, write down the page number each of their spells is on.



## SETTING UP THE ADVENTURE

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Check out the hooks on page 10. You might want to talk with your players before the game to see if they have any ideas as far as their character's back-story. The missing adventurers could be relatives or mentors to a character. A character might need the magic apple to heal a sick loved one who is going to die soon without it.

### VAMPIRES

If there's a player that is into vampires, you could play up the story of Gulthias and work that in. What might be cool is to say that if you make a stake out of the wood of the Gulthias Tree, maybe it does special things to vampires. Normally a stake paralyzes them, maybe this obliterates them or turns them into petrified wood or something. Or maybe a character knew Gulthias and through the tree they can get something from Gulthias that they need, like a drop of blood or the answer to a riddle, or the location of a lost family heirloom/magic item.

### MEEPO

On page 16, there is an NPC named Meepo, who is something of a famous character. Most people who play this adventure have some weird or funny Meepo story to tell. Sometimes Meepo joins the group and goes on many future adventures with them.

**Your Style.** Meepo is an opportunity for you to showcase your style – your brand of D&D. Every DM does something different. Sometimes he's a traitor, sometimes he's a coward, sometimes he's a brave but weak ally. You might want to put some thought into how you want to run Meepo. That's the cool thing about being a DM, you're like a director of a movie. Tim Burton would portray Meepo very differently than Quentin Tarantino or Michael Bay. You get to do whatever you want.

### PACING

This is a big dungeon. It might get boring. Do not be afraid to junk rooms or move things along. If exploring a certain section is becoming a drag, make some of the rooms empty and get to the end of it. There's no "right" way to run a dungeon. The authors expect you to change it, so don't feel like you're doing it wrong. It's impossible to do it wrong. You can change it however you like.

## FORGE OF FURY

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Let's say you've been running your group through a bit of Phandelver from the boxed set, or maybe you've just been making stuff up on your own. The group is 3rd level and you want to run the Forge of Fury.

If you can, set it up a bit in advance. While you're running whatever you're running before forge, slip in some mentions of the legendary black dragon Nightscale, have someone find one of those ancient dwarven weapons crated by Durgeddin. Maybe you can have the group go to Oakhurst and fight some orc raiders who actually came from the forge.

It's always good to plant seeds ahead of time if possible. If the group has been hearing about Nightscale the dragon and how terrifying she is, they will be much more pumped up when they actually realize that they are going to have to fight her at the end.

### WARN THE PLAYERS

I also recommend telling your players before they start that the monsters in this place don't act like monsters in a video game. The whole dungeon will attack them at once if the group isn't careful. We are specifically telling them this because the very beginning part of this dungeon has a very involved encounter with the orcs, who have a detailed strategy on how they handle intruders. If the group is not careful, they are going to get their asses kicked.

That beginning part is not easy. They'll need to be quiet, cautious and smart. They probably won't survive if they just barge in. It's fair to give them a warning, especially if they are new and don't understand how the game works. The monsters can do whatever they want just like the characters can. The monsters aren't tethered to a room.

### PACING

This dungeon is really big and it is likely that it will start to drag and feel stale/boring. Do what you have to do to move past it. Get rid of boring encounters altogether if you think it's going to make the game suck. The point of the game is to have fun. Bottom line, the players aren't going to want to play anymore if it's really boring. Nothing in this book is written in stone, DMs change stuff all the time.

### RIVERS

The trickiest part of this adventure is the fast-flowing rivers. The explanation is spread out over a few pages and it can be a little difficult understanding how everything fits together. Make sure you get a good handle on that and jot down some notes beforehand if you need to. That river goes from bad to worse and it is very deadly. You want to make sure you run it right, because if a character dies, you don't want it to be because you forgot something or made a mistake.

## THE HIDDEN SHRINE OF TAMOACHAN

This one is hard to prepare. The details of the rooms are very intricate, you'll need to set some time aside to make sure you understand how some of the rooms work. It's very easy to forget that the whole bottom area is full of poison gas, so make sure you note it somewhere if you can. That gas is there in part to put pressure on the players. They can't just keep taking rests! They'll die. That's part of why it's there, to prevent groups from just taking a long rest after every room.

## WHITE PLUME MOUNTAIN

This is just an epic adventure. If you can, plant legends about the artifacts well ahead of time. Blackrazor in particular is just a ridiculously cool weapon. They're all extremely powerful. Maybe the ancestor of a character had Blackrazor and eventually got their own soul sucked out.

Maybe a character is the descendant of Keraptis, the bad guy who made this dungeon. Snarla the werewolf wizard has always stuck out as a memorable NPC. Maybe the group knew Snarla before she became a werewolf. You could work that into a prior adventure, where in the end she becomes a werewolf and runs off with Burket (page 101) to the mountain.

## DEAD IN THAY

There's actually an adventure that sets up Dead in Thay. It's Scourge of the Sword Coast for D&D Next, which is the playtest version of 5th edition. You might have to change a few things, but it had some cool stuff in it.

Dead in Thay is really big. You might want to streamline it a bit and have the glyph keys take the group to the areas you want to run.

## AGAINST THE GIANTS

This is really high level, so I would assume you don't need much advice on this. I think that part of the key to bringing this to life is to make sure you emphasize that the giants are "giant." Their footsteps shake everything, the door handles are way up in the air, just getting onto one of their chairs requires a climb check and maybe a rope and grappling hook. Even their loot is gigantic.

### KILLING A GIANT

Killing them means their massive body falls to the ground, causes a big tremor and kicks up dust. You could say that the group needs to make a DC 10 acrobatics check when a giant dies to see if they fall prone. Also, there's a chance the dead giant



falls on a hero, right?! That would do damage! Dex save DC 10. Fail: 7 damage and restrained? Need a DC 10 escape check to free themselves?

That could add a lot to the game, but make sure that you don't use it against the players. Keep it fair and random. This is meant to impress upon them the "giantness" of the giants, not a weapon to use against them. It's just something to add to the fun and danger. The uniqueness of battling a giant. The scale of what they're doing is enormous (ho, ho) and thus they are that much more heroic and impressive when they defeat the giants.

## TOMB OF HORRORS

Technically you could run this for characters of any level. But low level characters have absolutely no chance whatsoever of defeating Acererak. They could, however, get pretty far into the tomb just by being clever and cautious. The thing about this dungeon is that it's somewhat random and arbitrary. In some cases, you can't figure out the "rules" of the room because there are no rules. This is a cruel place that messes with your head.

### NOT FOR EVERYONE

Also.. I can't stress this enough. There are a lot of players who will not enjoy this adventure. There are plenty of D&D players who really hate the lethality and cruelty of this place. To some people, it feels like it's the DM vs. the players, which is never a fair battle because the DM can do whatever they want. Some players just do not handle it well when their character dies or they suffer some kind of horrid setback (like losing ALL OF YOUR ITEMS and appearing naked at the start of the dungeon).

Nobody wants to lose all their magic items, that does suck. So generally, sending characters who have clawed their way up to 12th level or whatever aren't a good choice to send here unless the player is cool with it. They need to know that their

beloved character is probably going to have horrible, horrible things happen to them.

**Be Clear.** Some players will love it. Some will hate it. Make sure you know before you decide to run this, because one unhappy player will ruin the entire session. Everybody has to know what they're getting into and they should definitely be allowed to make up a character to go in rather than use their normal one.

**Options.** You could have each player make 3 characters, so that way if one dies, they can bring in another one. Or, maybe you could have it where an NPC owes them a wish. That way, if something terrible happens to the group, they can use the wish to undo it and wash their hands of the tomb (or courageously decide to return without the safety net of the wish spell!).



## THE YAWNING PORTAL

Unlike the other adventure books, this one doesn't have a single, long story line. This is a collection of classic D&D adventures updated to 5th edition rules.

You could link them together. It might take a bit of work, but we can make that happen.

## UNDERMOUNTAIN

It might be fun to try to place these adventures in Undermountain, the mega-dungeon connected to the Yawning Portal. That way, your group can stay at the Yawning Portal and we can make a whole campaign out of this.

## DUNGEON CRAWLING

Just keep in mind that most of these adventures are dungeon crawls. There's not a lot of roleplaying

and social interaction. They're pretty linear. There is a lot of wackiness and puzzle-solving, which is a lot of fun.

## CHARACTER BACKGROUNDS

Linking characters to things in the adventures can get the players more into it.

### DOWNSHADOW (SUNLESS CITADEL)

The character lived or grew up in the poverty-stricken shanty town of Downshadow, a community of vagabonds actually located in Undermountain.

### FRIEND OF GERADIL (FORGE OF FURY)

In the Forge of Fury, there are two captives, Geradil and Courana on page 39-40. It says they're from a town near Blasingdell, but you could say they're from wherever you want if you want to link them to the group somehow.

### DWARVEN DESCENDANT (FORGE OF FURY)

A dwarf character might want to say they are a descendant of Durgeddin or another dwarf who lived in Khundrukar before the orc wiped them out. There are a few named dwarves:

Borgl the Old, Gharin Orc-Doom, Numik the Unlucky (pg 47)

**Arundil** (page 54) a mage who created a lot of animated objects. Arundil was Durgeddin's trusted adviser. The character won't know this part: When the orcs attacked, Arundil was a coward and teleported away. When he came back, everyone was dead. He went insane, animated some tables and skeletons, and he summoned a succubus that killed him.

### THE ANCESTOR (TAMOACHAN)

Late in the Hidden Shrine in room 52, page 91, there is a room where a character can have a vision of an ancestor. You could do a ton of things with