

DM David's Side Trek: To Steal a Primordial

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

Chapter 3 of the *Dungeons & Dragons* adventure *Storm King's Thunder* encourages characters to roam the **Savage Frontier**, completing quests and facing warring giants.

At the dwarven stronghold of a **Gauntlgrym**, a trapped primordial called **Maegera and Dawn Titan** fires the forges. In *Storm King's Thunder*, a party of drow raids the forges to steal the godling. If the player characters happen to visit Gauntlgrym, they gain a chance to foil the theft.

This side trek expands on the suggested encounter for Gauntlgrym (p.85). You can lure players to visit the stronghold by arranging a chance meeting with a dwarven friend.

For additional players' background on Gauntlgrym, see the *Sword Coast Adventurers Guide*. For dungeon masters' background, see the adventure *Out of the Abyss*.

Hook

Nottert Whitebeard

As the characters roam the streets of **Luskan**, **Port Last**, or **Neverwinter**, a old dwarf in a floppy hat calls to the group. If the party includes a dwarf, then **Nottert Whitebeard** remembers when the character stood "knee high to a mole." Otherwise, Nottert says that he recognizes old friends and asks if anyone can help him remember where they met.

Trouble in Gauntlgrym

Nottert asks if anyone has visited Gauntlgrym lately. Earlier in the day, Nottert heard that drow raided the stronghold through secret paths from the underdark. **Bruenor Battlehammer** chose to send dwarven warriors on punitive raids.

Nottert pines for his younger days when he could have joined the defense and crossed weapons with the dark elves. He wonders what the drow stood to gain from the raids, and whether they plan some treachery.

Fire giants' plan

Nottert asks if the characters have heard any news of giant trouble. He listens to whatever they share, and then fills any gaps with some alarming news: He sus-

pects the fire giants aim to retrieve the pieces of a colossus forged when giants warred with dragons. As a young smith, Nottert once saw scrap rumored to be part of the war machine. He figured that reforging the metal would require the fire of a primordial.

In the Dwarven stronghold of **Gauntlgrym**, a trapped primordial called **Maegera and Dawn Titan** fires the forges. Nottert gave the giants no chance of claiming a godling such as Maegera—they would have to battle every dwarf in the fortress. But now, Nottert wonders if the drow raids conceal some treachery. He asks the characters to bring a warning to Bruenor Battlehammer on the Great Throne of Moradin.

GAUNTLGRYM AND THE GREAT THRONE OF MORADIN

Bruenor Battlehammer

When the characters reach the gates to Gauntlgrym, guards escort them to the **Great Throne of Moradin**. **Bruenor Battlehammer** thanks the characters for their message. Drow raided the lower levels, but if they sought the primordial, they failed. His warriors have launched punitive assaults into the underdark. Soon, masons will seal the secret entries that the drow opened to attack.

As Bruenor speaks, the temperature in the throne room plunges until his breath fogs the air. He pales. The wards that trap Maegera also cooled the forges. The magic prevented the creature from turning Gauntlgrym into an oven.

This chill means something has captured the elemental inferno. The wards lack any fire to quench. Somehow the drow have Maegera. Bruenor asks if the characters can help thwart the drow.

Moving against the drow

Bruenor suspects the drow entered through an unknown entrance in the tombs at the lowest levels of Gauntlgrym. From there they found a way to the forge.

Bruenor summons his pages. Two dwarf youths arrive to serve. If the characters will go to the forge or the crypt, Bruenor asks the girl **Stronerd** to lead them. He asks the second page to seek any available guards and send them to the other location.

Stronerd

As Stronerd leads the characters, she says that some call her **Stronerd Driderslayer**. If pressed, she admits

she never fought a drider, but that she saw one once and hid. She resists telling that she saw the creature in the crypts. She fears getting in trouble for exploring the catacombs.

Tale of the drider

Sometime, when the characters need to narrow in on the drows' route to the underdark, Stronerd asks the characters to "promise not to tell." She confesses her tale of spotting a drider. "They come from the underdark, don't they? Maybe that's where the drow go." She can lead the characters to the spot.

Mine carts

To travel to the Iron Tabernacle or the Forge, Stronerd leads the group to a track where mine carts wheel by, propelled by magic. She runs alongside a cart, climbs aboard, and then urges the group to join her. At points, she leaves her cart to rush ahead and switch the tracks. When the carts near their destination, Stronerd tells everyone to jump off.

DROW PLAN

Raiding party

The fire giant chief **Duke Zalto** allied with the drow of **House Xorlarrin** to steal the Maegera the Dawn Titan from the forges. He gave them an Iron Flask to contain the godling. The cunning, never-say-die mage **Draac Xorlarrin** leads the mission. His younger cousin **Taal** accompanies him.

Draac's plan includes three groups:

- Draac's strike team of Draac and Taal, 2 **drow mages**, 2 **shadow demons** summoned by the mages, and 8 **drow elite warriors**
- a band of 5 **doppelgängers** posing as shield dwarves
- 2 driders who defend the route to the underdark

Meanwhile in the forges

As the PCs speak with Bruenor, Draac and his strike team murder the guards at the forge. They bottle Maegera in an iron flask. Then they make their way through the Tabernacle to the crypts below.

Draac and Taal both concentrate on giving two advanced scouts *Greater Invisibility*. Many routes lead through the **Tabernacle**. The invisible scouts seek a path free of guards. The drow communicate through Rary's *Telepathic Bond*.

Draac's team of doppelgängers have already diverted guards from the escape route. The shapechangers now gather for a final retreat to the underdark.

Two driders cling to the walls of a vertical shaft down to the underdark. They defend this choke point against a dwarves and a counter attack.

THE GREAT FORGE

Victims of attack

The great forge occupies a sprawling chamber, criss-crossed with walkways overlooking workspaces. Pipes and pulleys stretch between the walkways. Some workspaces rise on stone platforms; other sections lie in shallow pits. Ore buckets dangle over anvils, tool racks, and furnaces. Now, frost blankets everything. Ice floats atop the quenching pools.

The bodies of slain guards and smiths lie among dropped tools. Some corpses appear frozen, as if by a cone of cold. Others died from blades, while a few show no visible wounds.

The dwarves without visible injuries died from the psychic rending of shadow demons.

Escape path

If the characters attempt to track the drows' path from the forge, they find a trail of blood. If they seem unsure of where to go, Stronerd tells her tale. See [Tale of the drider](#).

Attack from the elemental plane of fire

Maegera's long presence in the forges narrowed the gap between it and the elemental plane of fire. Sometimes outsiders visit.

As the characters leave the forge, they come under attack.

Patches of stone around them crack. Fissures spew jets of fire and shards of stone. Within the flames, 2 firey creatures with the humanoid upper bodies and snake tails shimmer into existence alongside 5 burning snakes.

The visitors consist of 2 **salamanders** and 5 **fire snakes**.

The creatures sensed that something has taken Maegera from its prison. They assume the characters might somehow hold the primordial, so they attack to free it. The active wards in the forge prevent the salamanders from leaving the area.

CRYPTS

Iron Tabernacle

Endless crypts fill the lowest levels of Gauntlgrym, under a part of the city called the Iron Tabernacle.

The Iron Tabernacle stretches across a vast chamber in the center of Gauntlgrym. Walkways and grand stairs cross between cathedrals and statues honoring the gods. Now the stonework crumbles and decorations fade.

Escape route

The drows' route to the underdark passes through a place in the crypts, where two shafts lead down. In this area, the characters will confront the thieves.

UPPER LEVEL CRYPTS

Features

Everburning flames cast dim light through this old section of the crypts. The ceilings are 8-feet high. The sarcophagi and burial vaults bear sculpted images of the departed's face and a carved records of their lineage.

Three passages lead into this area of the crypts. Draac and his strike team know catacombs well enough to approach from any of the three passages.

A pit shaft and a collapsed floor both lead to a lower level and routes to the underdark. The drow can levitate down either descent. They prefer escaping through the shaft defended by driders.

Key

1 Doors

Stronerd brings the characters through these doors into the crypts.

2 Meeting place.

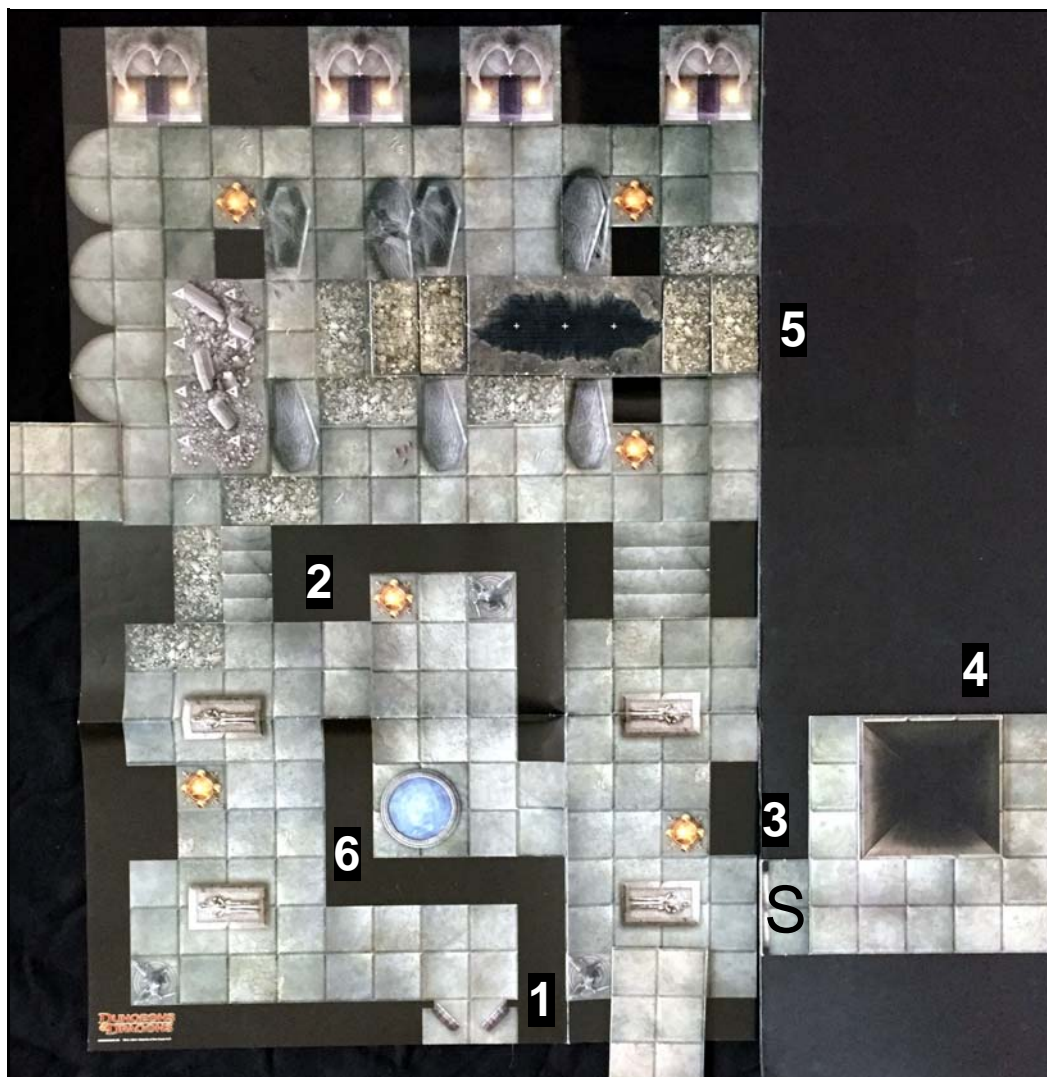
If the characters come to the crypts **after visiting the forges**, all the doppelgängers have escaped to the underdark.

If the characters come to the crypts without visiting the forges, 5 **doppelgängers** wait. Two stand near the top of the broken stair and three near the ceremonial pool.

The doppelgängers wear the form of shield dwarves.

One claims that this area shows no sign of passing drow. It asks the players to investigate a nearby crypt. As it speaks, a dwarven ghost appears at the foot of the broken stairs and sadly shakes her head. She does not speak. If asked where to find the drow, she will lead characters to the secret door at 2.

If the characters ignore the doppelgängers orders, the shapechangers attempt to flee through the secret door at 3 and down the rope ladder at 4. When the doppelgängers open the secret door, the driders attack the characters.



3 Secret door.

Finding this secret door requires a **DC 15 Wisdom (Perception)** check. The drow raiders and their dop-pelgänger allies came this way.

4 Pit shaft.

This pit drops 30 feet to the chambers below. A rope ladder hangs from spikes and down the shaft. 2 driders cling to the walls of the shaft. If the secret door opens, one drider climbs to the top to investigate.

5 Floor collapse.

The hole drops 30 feet to the chambers below. Near the rift, deep cracks radiate where the floor remains unstable.

Any medium or larger creature that steps on it causes the rock to fall away. The creature must make a **DC 15 Dexterity** save to jump aside. Failure results in a 30-foot fall for 3d6 damage.

The following map shows the collapse after all the unstable floor has fallen away.



The drow know that the hole leads to their escape route, but do not know of the fragile floor.

If they decide to flee this way, and they discover the weak floor, they will cast levitation before vaulting over the cracks and descending.

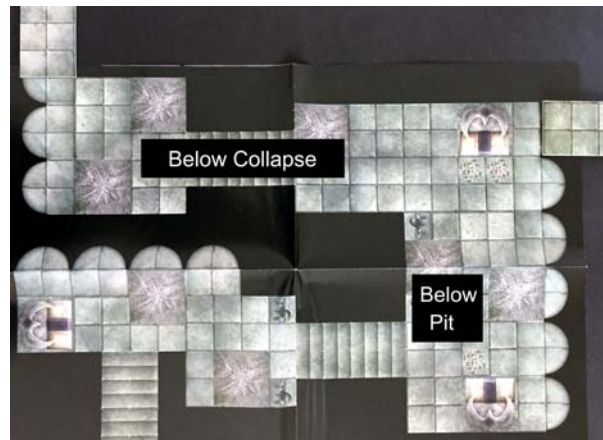
6 Ceremonial pool.

Only a puddle covers the bottom.

Lower Level passage to the underdark

Three passages lead from this level into the underdark. The drow know this area well enough to reach the underdark through any of the passages. If a chase reaches any of the passages, extend it into a cavern that goes as far as needed.

The following map shows which areas of the lower level correspond to the shaft and collapse on the upper level.



An unmarked, lower-level map appears on the next page.

DROW CONFRONTATION**Time of arrival**

Draac's strike team consists of Draac and Taal, 2 **drow mages**, 2 **shadow demons** summoned by the mages, and 8 **drow elite warriors**. Draac and Taal have each used their 5th-level spell slots and one of their 4th-level slots.

If the characters come to the crypts **after visiting the forges**, the drow arrive at the same time through another passage.

If the characters **skipped the forge**, they have a chance to position themselves for a drow arrival. When the drow do arrive, their invisible scouts will select a route that appears least defended.

Tactics

The 2 invisible drow elite warriors and 2 shadow demons enter the crypts first. The drow use invisibility and stealth. The demons use incorporeal movement and shadow stealth. Until one stealth roll falls below a nearby characters' passive perception, all four position themselves for an ambush.

When a character notices or the ambushers feel ready to attack, they strike. Draac and Taal lead the other 6 elite warriors in through the least defended passage. The group attempts to levitate down one of the shafts to the lower level, and then to find a safe passage to the underdark.

Treachery

If Draac sees right moment, he ducks out of sight and casts *Greater Invisibility* on himself. He attempts to escape alone through the collapsed floor. In his haste, Draac overlooks the unstable areas.

If Draac sees no hope of escape he throws the *Iron Flask* to the floor at his feet. "You have won the day, my friends. The flask is damaged. Now it will not hold creature as mighty as a primordial for long. You can fight me until we all die in an inferno, or you can go now and take the creature back to the great forge."

Draac lies, but he hopes to escape and gain another chance to steal the flask. A **DC30 Wisdom (Insight)** check discerns the lie—Draac lies very well. A character who makes a **DC 25 Intelligence (Arcana)** check knows that the flask is not so easily damaged.

Treasure

Draac carries the *Iron Flask* that traps **Maegera the Dawn Titan**. An obsidian, diamond-eyed spider tops his non-magical staff. The delicate web carvings line its haft. The staff is worth 1,500 gp. Taal wears a black cloak webbed with platinum thread with 750 gp. He carries a pouch containing four 100 gp gems.

