

HEROIC

1-10



# DEAD BY DAWN

An adventure for 2nd-level characters

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“Dead by Dawn” is a short adventure for five 2nd-level characters. It takes place in a small forest near the King’s Wall, in a long-abandoned temple dedicated to the worship of the demon prince Orcus. The temple has been given a new and dire purpose by a Chaos Shard from the great meteor. This shard radiates dark energy capable of reanimating the dead, and its power has been strengthened by the lingering evil of the demon prince’s temple. Each night, the

shard fills the surrounding forest with the siren call of dark power, causing the many corpses in the Chaos Scar to stir. So far, only a few of the restless dead have risen from their graves, but now a group of brave adventurers have discovered the abandoned temple, just as the shard’s call grows to a new peak, and the dead across this corner of the scar are about to walk the world once more.

## BACKGROUND

Long ago, a misguided cleric of Erathis named Tyrik Gerithson built a small temple to his deity in the wilds of the Chaos Scar. Foolishly, Tyrik believed he could bring civilization and order to the savage land beyond the King’s Wall. Unfortunately, Erathis does not suffer fools lightly, and the goddess did not intervene when a band of cultists devoted to the demon

lord Orcus swooped down and slaughtered Tyrik Gerithson and his followers.

After annihilating the followers of Erathis, the cult of Orcus claimed the temple and rededicated it to the worship of the demon prince of undeath. The cult was led by a grizzled priest named Garvus Harbane who maintained his position through the power of a meteor shard he had discovered. The shard radiated strong necrotic energy, and Garvus called his prized possession the “necroshard.”

After leading the cult for many years, Garvus sought to prolong his life through a dangerous necromantic ritual a few years ago. However, he foolishly used the necroshard as the ritual’s focus and unleashed a wave of raw energy that killed him and every living creature in the temple. Although a catastrophic and lethal failure for Garvus, his ritual increased the potential power of the necroshard tenfold. Each night since, the shard has slowly been growing in power. The necroshard’s power is at its strongest at night, when it saturates the surrounding area with the power of death. This necromantic energy has been slowly building, feeding on the many deaths in the Scar over the years. Tonight, the corpses of the Scar will rise as an army of zombies.

## GETTING THE CHARACTERS INVOLVED

“Dead by Dawn” takes place in the Chaos Scar. You can use one of the hooks below to get the characters into the valley and the temple of Orcus.

### HOOK 1: FARIAN’S FEE

Farian Blackhand, a mercenary and scoundrel, asks the characters to enter the Chaos Scar and locate a group of mercenary adventurers called Doran’s Daggers. Farian fears that Doran and his group have met a bad end, and since Farian has not been paid for his last job with the Daggers, he asks the characters to find Doran Underhelm, dead or alive, and collect the 100 gp owed to him. Farian tells the characters that Doran often carries large sums of coin and gems on his person, and since the mercenary leader is likely dead, the characters can keep whatever they find on his corpse, less what is owed to Farian. However, if Doran is alive and the characters can collect Farian’s fee, he agrees to split it with them. Doran can be identified by a tattoo of crossed axes on his left forearm.

Farian believes Doran’s Daggers set out to explore an abandoned temple they discovered on a previous excursion into the Chaos Scar. If the characters agree to help him, Farian can tell them exactly where it is.

**Quest XP:** 250 XP for finding Doran dead or alive and returning with Farian’s fee.

### HOOK 2: PIT STOP

Use this hook after the characters finish an adventure within the Chaos Scar. While traveling through a small forest on their way out of the Chaos Scar, the characters stumble upon the temple of Orcus late in

the day. Should they decide to explore the temple, they quickly lose track of time, and before they know it, the sun is setting and ominous moaning and shuffling noises fill the forest beyond the temple walls...

## TREASURE PREPARATION

The following treasure parcels are available in *Dead by Dawn*. Since the encounter area remains the same throughout the adventure, two of the four treasure parcels can be found on the bodies of attacking zombies.

|                                  |                                 |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>Parcel 1: Temple Interior</b> | Level 3 magic item              |
| <b>Parcel 2: The Rectory</b>     | 100 gp, two 100-gp gems         |
| <b>Parcel 3: Zombie Siege:</b>   | Two <i>potions of healing</i> , |
| <b>First Wave</b>                | one 100-gp gem, 60 gp           |
| <b>Parcel 4: Zombie Siege:</b>   | Level 4 magic item              |
| <b>Second Wave</b>               |                                 |

## PLAYER INTRODUCTION

Read or paraphrase the following when the characters reach the temple of Orcus:

*The trees of the forest suddenly give way to a large, bare clearing dominated by a weed-choked temple. Its peaked roof, festooned with demonic gargoyles, is largely intact, although its windowless walls are cracked and crumbling. The main entrance to the temple, two mammoth, ironbound doors, yawn open, exposing nothing but darkness beyond. Although obviously abandoned and in disrepair, the structure exudes a quiet malevolence made all the more haunting by the waning light of the setting sun.*

## AREA 1: TEMPLE INTERIOR

When the characters enter the temple, it is late in the day and the sun is setting. Allow the characters to explore the temple interior and the rectory beneath it during the last few minutes of daylight.

**When the characters enter the temple interior, read:**

*You step from the fading sunshine into the surprisingly cold darkness of the temple interior, gloomy and shrouded in shadow. The temple's floor is smooth, polished stone. The ceiling has collapsed in some areas and littered the ground with fallen debris, and in one section, the floor has collapsed, leaving an open pit. The interior walls feature fading murals depicting scenes of butchery, cannibalism, and other profane acts. The temple is divided into two sections by a row of tall, ornate bookshelves filled with crumbling scrolls and tomes. In addition, you notice a number of egresses beyond the main door, and two sets of smaller doors along the eastern and western walls.*

The murals depict scenes of the Abyss. In addition to the demons in the murals, various types of undead are prominently depicted. Characters studying the mural closely see hints of an older, even more faded mural beneath the existing one. This older mural depicts scenes of vibrant cities; robed, stern-faced clerics preaching to a rapt audience of half-naked savages; diplomatic negotiations presided over by more robed clerics; and in the center of it all, a tall, statuesque woman in blue and silver. Characters who make a DC 10 Religion check correctly identify these images as iconography of the church of Erathis, goddess of civilization.

The older mural is more than a simple depiction of events and images important to the faithful of Erathis. The mural contains clues to the location of an old treasure cache containing items that could prove immensely helpful to the characters later in the adventure. Finding this cache requires two successful DC 15 Perception or Religion checks by a character or characters who seek a deeper meaning in the faded mural devoted to Erathis. If the characters are successful, they discover the location of the hidden cache behind the statue of Orcus at the northern end of the temple (see Features of the Area).

**When the characters reach the northern end of the temple interior, read the following:**

*This end of the temple is similar to the other, save it is dominated by a massive statue of a horrid demon. The floor around the statue is stained with the rust-colored patina of old blood. The statue is flanked by a pair of huge braziers, each standing five feet high.*

It should be obvious to the characters the statue is a representation of Orcus, Demon Lord of Undeath. A DC 15 Perception check reveals that the statue is a more recent addition to the temple. The crumbling base of another statue is barely visible beneath the current one.

### FEATURES OF THE AREA

**Illumination:** The temple interior is unlit, although sunlight from the doorway filters through and fills the main chamber with dim light.

**Ceiling:** The ceiling in this area is 30 feet high.

**Book Shelves:** Each bookshelf is 10 feet high, constructed of thick hardwood, and holds scrolls and books on the subjects of demonology, undeath, and

other unsavory subjects. A character can climb on top of a bookshelf with a DC 15 Athletics check.

**Braziers:** If lit, the two large braziers provide bright illumination out to 8 squares. The two smaller ones provide bright illumination out to 4 squares.

**Debris:** Squares with debris are considered difficult terrain.

**Doors:** Including the main doors, there are two sets of doors along the east and west wall, for a total of five doors in all. All the doors are jammed except the main doors, swelled and rusted with age. Opening one of these doors requires a DC 15 Strength check.

**Pit:** The pit is 10 feet deep. Climbing into and out of the pit requires a DC 10 Athletics check.

**Smaller Statues:** The two smaller statues along the east and west walls depict a male and female demon, winged and horrible. Creatures adjacent to a statue have cover. A character making a DC 10 Perception check notices that the statues have been repurposed, and were once depictions of the goddess Erathis and what was likely a cleric or paladin in her service.

**Sarcophagi:** A sarcophagus is difficult terrain that provides cover. Both sarcophagi are empty, having long ago been plundered.

**Trapdoor:** The trapdoor opens easily and leads to the temple rectory.

**Treasure:** Behind the great statue of Orcus, hidden in a hollow beneath a loose stone in the floor, lies a cache of holy items secreted by the faithful of Erathis long ago. If the characters succeeded at the Perception or Religion checks from examining the mural of Erathis, they learn the exact location of the cache. If they failed the skill checks, they might still find the cache of items after *The Siege Begins* encounter (page 19). The cache contains four vials of holy water (level 1) and two *potions of healing*.

## AREA 2: RECTORY

### Encounter Level 1 (XP 550)

**Garvus** (G)

**3 zombie adventurers** (Z)

### SETUP

The trapdoor in the northern end of the temple interior leads to a small rectory that once served as the personal quarters of the temple's high priests. It was here Garvus Harbane performed the ritual that claimed his life and the lives of his followers so many years ago. His corpse, withered and all but mummified, is still here, the necroshard hanging from its shriveled neck.

Although the corpses in the forest will animate tonight for the first time, the corpse of Garvus Harbane, due to its close proximity to the necroshard, has been animating each night for the past few weeks as a deathlock wight. Garvus, however, is not alone in the rectory. Doran Underhelm and his mercenary group Doran's Daggers decided to spend the night in the temple rectory after a fruitless exploration of the temple. When night fell, the necroshard's power was unleashed and Garvus' animated corpse slew them all.

**When the characters enter the temple rectory, read:**

*The trapdoor opens easily with a gentle tug, unleashing a blast of violent purple light followed by the charnel stench of death. A short spiral staircase leads down 10 feet into a small rectory. The room below contains two sets of tables and chairs, a moth-eaten bearskin rug, two unlit braziers similar to those in the temple above, and two small beds with footlockers in an alcove. A small altar sits against the northern wall, and a pair of double doors stands in the center of the west wall.*

*Three rotting corpses lay in a heap near the two beds in the southern end of the room. Each is dressed in leather armor, now tattered and crusted with dried gore, and they all appear to have been half-devoured. A fourth corpse sits before the altar, legs curled beneath it, head bowed as if in prayer. This corpse is little more than a mummified husk, and its moth-eaten clerical robes bear the dire skull symbol of Orcus. Around its neck hangs a large, black gem on a crude leather thong. The gem glows brightly with a dire purple light that fills you with queasy dread.*

As the characters begin to examine the room, the sun sets and the power of the necroshard is unleashed. The first clue that the characters are in real trouble is the animation of the corpses of Garvus and Doran's Daggers.

**When the corpses animate, read:**

*The rectory is suddenly filled with a low, guttural moaning. To your horror, the four corpses, no longer simply inert flesh, climb unsteadily to their feet. The gem around the neck of mummified cleric pulses brightly as the four undead horrors lurch to the attack.*

### TACTICS

The zombie adventurers attack the nearest character with *zombie grab*. At first, Garvus stays clear of melee and attacks the characters with *grave bolt* or *horrific visage* when it can avoid catching the zombie adventurers in the blast. When two of the zombie adventurers have fallen, Garvus uses *reanimate* and then enters melee. The undead in the rectory fight to their destruction.

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>3 Zombie Adventurers (Z)</b>  | <b>Level 2 Brute</b>                    |
| Medium natural animate   | XP 125                                  |
| <b>Initiative</b> -1   | <b>Senses</b> Perception +0; darkvision |
| <b>HP</b> 40; <b>Bloodied</b> 20   |   |
| <b>AC</b> 13; <b>Fortitude</b> 13; <b>Reflex</b> 9; <b>Will</b> 10   |   |
| <b>Immune</b> disease; poison; <b>Resist</b> 10 necrotic; <b>Vulnerable</b> 5 radiant                                    |   |
| <b>Speed</b> 4   |   |
| ⊕ <b>Slam</b> (standard; at-will)  |   |
| +6 vs. AC; 2d6 + 2 damage  |   |
| ⊖ <b>Zombie Grab</b> (standard; at-will)   |   |
| +4 vs. Reflex; the target is grabbed (until escape). Checks made to escape the zombie's grab are made with a -5 penalty. |   |
| <b>Zombie Weakness</b>   |   |
| Any critical hit to the zombie reduces it to 0 hit points instantly.   |   |
| <b>Alignment</b> Unaligned   | <b>Languages</b> –                      |
| <b>Str</b> 14 (+3)   | <b>Dex</b> 6 (-1)                       |
| <b>Con</b> 10 (+1)   | <b>Int</b> 1 (-4)                       |
|  | <b>Wis</b> 8 (+0)                       |
|  | <b>Cha</b> 3 (-3)                       |

The characters should recognize the black gem around Garvus' neck as a meteor fragment. They can learn more about its function and purpose with a DC 15 Arcana or Religion check. For each successful skill check the characters make, give them one of the following pieces of information.

- ◆ This shard radiates staggering amounts of necromantic energy, easily enough to animate the dead within the rectory.
- ◆ The shard's power is likely strengthened by the lingering energy in the temple of Orcus.
- ◆ The shard's power, like many evil items and creatures, is stronger at night.
- ◆ Undead may be drawn to the energy produced by the shard.

Now that the characters have the necroshard and likely understand its dire potential, what they do with it based on this knowledge could have serious consequences during the zombie siege. Below is a list

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Garvus Harbane (G)</b>  | <b>Level 4 Controller</b>               |
| (Deathlock Wight)  |   |
| Medium natural humanoid  | XP 175                                  |
| <b>Initiative</b> +4   | <b>Senses</b> Perception +1; darkvision |
| <b>HP</b> 54; <b>Bloodied</b> 27   |   |
| <b>AC</b> 18; <b>Fortitude</b> 15; <b>Reflex</b> 16; <b>Will</b> 17  |   |
| <b>Immune</b> disease; poison; <b>Resist</b> 10 necrotic; <b>Vulnerable</b> 5 radiant  |   |
| <b>Speed</b> 6   |   |
| ⊕ <b>Claw</b> (standard; at-will) ◆ <b>Necrotic</b>  |   |
| +9 vs. AC; 1d6 necrotic damage, and the target cannot spend healing surges until the end of its next turn.   |   |
| ☞ <b>Grave Bolt</b> (standard; at-will) ◆ <b>Necrotic</b>  |   |
| Ranged 20; +6 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 4 necrotic damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends).  |   |
| ☞ <b>Reanimate</b> (minor; encounter) ◆ <b>Healing, Necrotic</b>   |   |
| Ranged 10; affects a destroyed undead creature of a level no higher than the deathlock wight's level + 2; the target stands as a free action with a number of hit points equal to one-half its bloodied value. This power cannot affect minions. |   |
| ⚡ <b>Horrific Visage</b> (standard; recharge Ⓜ Ⓜ Ⓜ) ◆ <b>Fear</b>  |   |
| Close blast 5; +7 vs. Will; 1d6 damage, and the target is pushed 3 squares.  |   |
| <b>Alignment</b> Evil  | <b>Languages</b> Common                 |
| <b>Skills</b> Arcana +10, Religion +10   |   |
| <b>Str</b> 10 (+2)   | <b>Dex</b> 14 (+4)                      |
| <b>Con</b> 14 (+4)   | <b>Int</b> 16 (+5)                      |
|  | <b>Wis</b> 9 (+1)                       |
|  | <b>Cha</b> 18 (+6)                      |

of possible actions the characters might take and the consequences of those actions.

- ◆ **Bring it Along:** If the characters take the necroshard from the rectory, the character carrying the necroshard on his or her person becomes the center of attention during the ensuing zombie siege. Whenever the character carrying the necroshard fails a primary skill check in the Zombie-Proofing the Temple and Shoring Up the Defenses skill challenges, add an additional zombie rotter to the number of zombies breaching the defenses.
- ◆ **Destroy It:** If the characters decide to destroy the necroshard, they can do so, as detailed

in the Destroying the Necroshard section at the end of the adventure. However, if the necroshard is destroyed at night, at the height of its power, it unleashes one final, mammoth burst of necromantic energy. This massive infusion of power keeps the zombies animated until sunrise and sends the undead horde into a berserk frenzy. Whenever the characters fail a primary skill check during the Zombie-Proofing the Temple and Shoring Up the Defenses skill challenges add an additional zombie rotter to the number of zombies breaching the defenses.

- ◆ **Leave it Alone:** If the characters simply leave the necroshard in the rectory, events proceed as normal in the adventure. In this scenario, there are no significant changes to the adventure as written.
- ◆ **Let Them Have It:** At some point, knowing the zombies are drawn to the necroshard, the characters might decide that letting the zombies have the damnable thing is the best course of action. Tossing the necroshard out an open door, however, does little to dissuade the hungry undead from their secondary goal: eating the characters. In addition, the zombie that ends up with the necroshard is instantly transformed into a shard zombie (see Zombie Siege: Second Wave) and is added to the number of zombies breaching the characters defenses the next time they fail a primary skill check in the Zombie-Proofing the Temple or Shoring Up the Defenses skill challenges.

## FEATURES OF THE AREA

**Illumination:** The necroshard provides dim illumination.

**Ceiling:** The ceiling in this area is 10 feet high.

**Altar:** The small altar here is dedicated to Orcus. However, a DC 15 Perception check reveals that it was once dedicated to Erathis and later desecrated.

**Beds:** The beds are difficult terrain that provides cover.

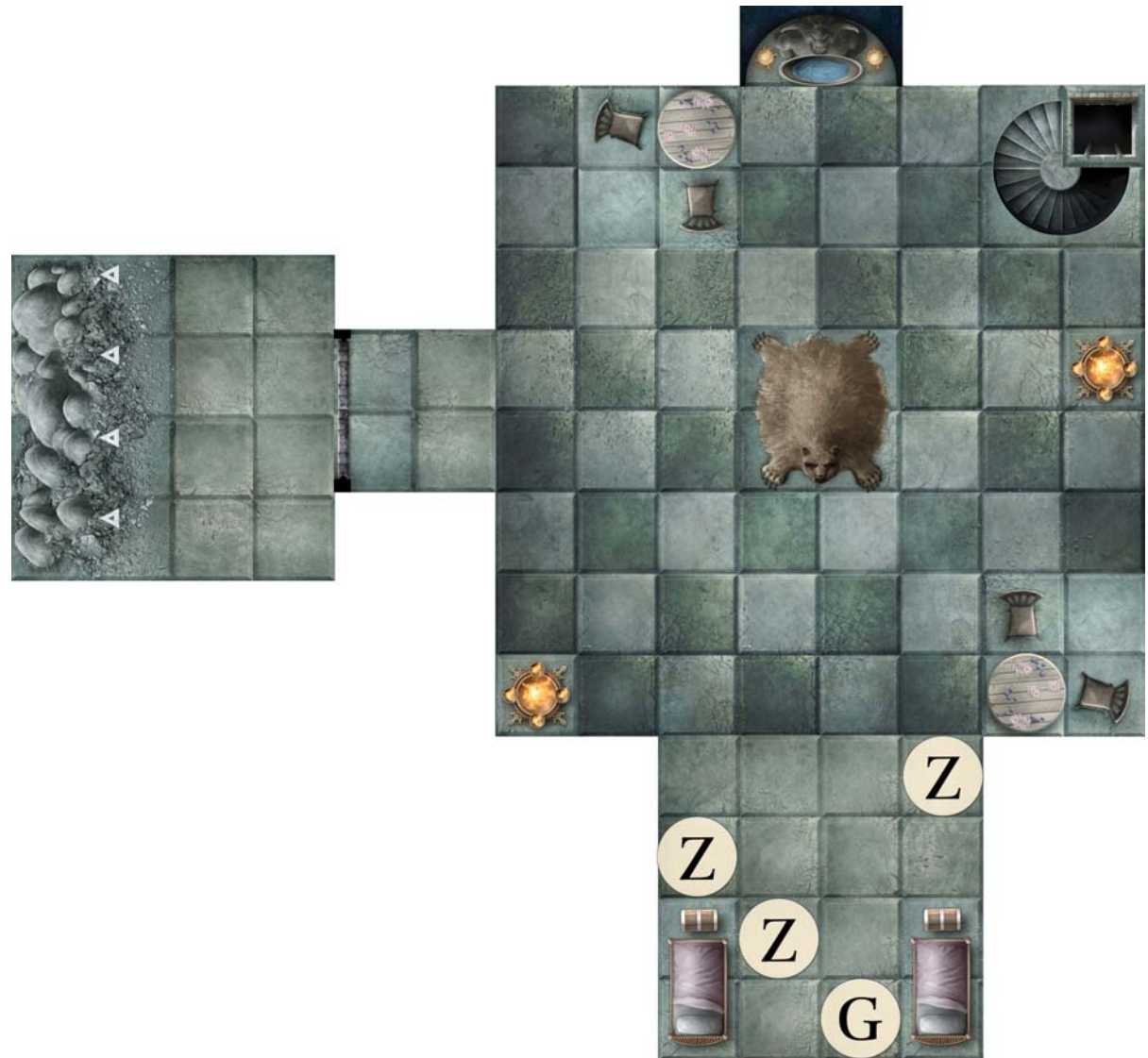
**Braziers:** If lit, the two braziers provide bright illumination out to 4 squares.

**Doors:** The doors along the east wall are jammed, swelled and rusted with age. Opening these doors requires a DC 15 Strength check. Beyond the doors is an impassable, rubble choked passageway that may lead to other parts of the temple.

**Footlockers:** The footlockers are locked, but can be opened with a DC 10 Thievery check. They contain rotting clerical vestments and objects used in the worship of Orcus.

**Tables and Chairs:** The tables and chairs are difficult terrain.

**Treasure:** If the characters search the adventurers' corpses, they can identify Doran Underhelm by a tattoo of two crossed axes on his left forearm. As Farian promised, Doran has the rogue's 100-gp payment and a pair of small diamonds (worth 100 gp each) in a large pouch on his belt.



## ZOMBIE SIEGE: THE SIEGE BEGINS

Encounter Level 2+ (XP 614+)

### Zombie-Proofing the Temple

3+ zombie rotters

1+ zombie soldiers

### SETUP

The sun has set and darkness has fallen over the temple. Now that the characters have dealt with the zombies in the temple and identified the necroshard, the real fun begins. Right after the Identifying the Necroshard skill challenge, the characters hear a terrific commotion above them and outside the temple interior. At this point, they should race up the stairs to investigate.

### When the characters reach the temple interior, read:

*Outside the temple, the forest is filled with a cacophony of agonized moaning and screaming that turns your blood to ice. Through the main entrance of the temple, you see a truly horrific sight. The forest, lit by shafts of pale moonlight, is alive with rotting corpses clawing their way free from shallow graves. You try to count their numbers, but soon realize there is little point. The undead horde appears to approach several hundred, if not several thousand, members. There is nowhere to run; stiff, shambling forms fill the landscape as far as you can see in every direction. The dubious safety of the temple is now your only hope of survival.*

### ZOMBIE-PROOFING THE TEMPLE

The zombies and other undead animated by the necroshard are sluggish at first, and many of them

must claw their way free from the earth. This gives the characters a few precious minutes to barricade the doors and set up their defenses. Use this skill challenge to represent fortifying the temple.

**Level:** 2 (XP 375).

**Complexity:** 3 (requires 8 successes before 3 failures).

**Primary Skills:** Athletics, Dungeoneering, Religion, Theivery.

**Athletics** (DC 15, standard action, 1 success, no maximum): The character realizes finesse is no trade for quick and effective physical labor. The character pounds nails, carries heavy objects, and uses brute strength shove invading zombies back through the doors.

**Dungeoneering** (DC 15, standard action, 1 success, no maximum): The character's knowledge of stone and underground construction lets him or her see how the temple might best be fortified using the meager supplies available.

**Religion** (DC 15, standard action, 1 success, no maximum): The character offers a prayer to Erathis, asking her to lend her strength to the characters' endeavor and slow the tide of undead seeking to further desecrate her temple.

**Theivery** (DC 15, standard action, 1 success, no maximum): The character has spent a lifetime getting into places he or she is not wanted. It's not terribly difficult to turn that concept on its head and use those skills to craft sturdy barricades.

**Secondary Skills:** Perception.

**Perception** (DC 5, minor action, no successes): The character's keen eyes help more skilled companions find the best materials to aid in fortifying the temple. A successful check grants a +2 bonus to one ally's next Dungeoneering or Theivery check made as part of this skill challenge.

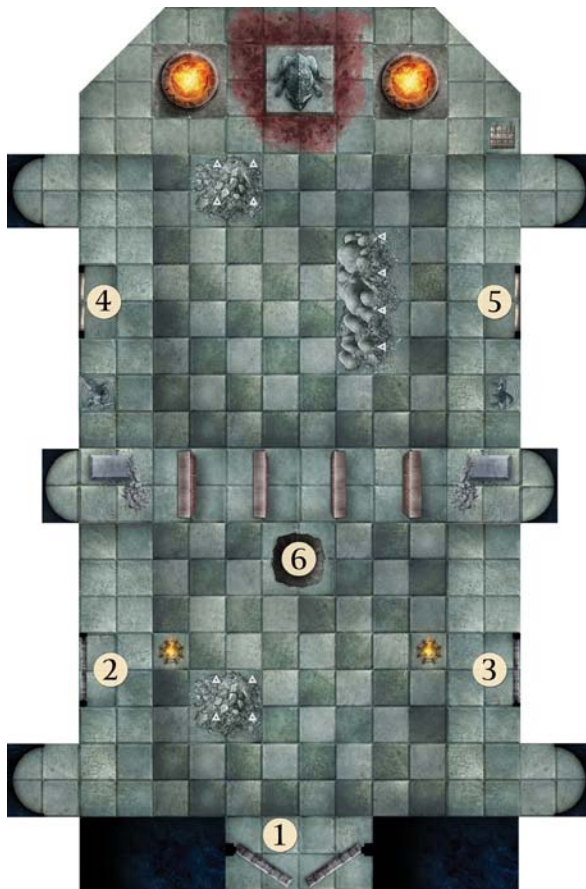
### WE CAN MAKE IT!

At some point, the players might think fighting their way through the zombie horde is a better option than remaining in the temple and enduring an undead siege. If this option comes up, let the players get a good look at what they're facing.

*You look out upon a nightmarish scene. Hundreds of animated corpses crowd around the temple, three and four rows deep. Humans, dwarves, elves, and every conceivable race, both civilized and savage, are represented among the shambling horde. Worse yet, the corpses of dinosaurs, dire animals, and even more fantastic beasts add their mass and strength to the zombie assault.*

*Despite the zombies' numbers, there are still gaps in their ranks; gaps the fleet and nimble among you might use to escape the multitudes of undead. However, as if the gods were reading your thoughts, a stag suddenly bursts from cover and runs a bounding course through the advancing zombies. Hope soars within you as the stag easily dodges the clumsy blows of the first few undead it encounters ... before the great, animated corpse of a tyrannosaurus rex surges from the mass of undead bodies surrounding the temple and snaps the stag up in its colossal jaws. The stag utters a single bleat of pain and surprise before the zombie T-rex's jaws slam down, stifling the stag's cries in a gout of blood. A wriggling pile of smaller zombies quickly forms around the undead dinosaur, eager for the gobbits of flesh falling from its mouth.*

*The stag provides only a momentary distraction for the zombie horde. In seconds, there is little left of the poor beast beyond a crimson smear on the ground. But there is fresher fare still to be had, and the masses of undead press in, clawing at your hastily erected defenses and creating an impassable wall of rotting flesh.*



**Success:** The characters succeed in fortifying the temple and buy themselves some time before the next wave of zombies.

**Failure:** Each time the characters fail a primary skill check, a group of three zombie rotters and a single zombie soldier breaks through the characters' hastily erected defenses. This encounter uses only the six visible entry points in the temple (numbered 1 through 6): the main door, the two sets of doors along the east and west walls, and the pit in the floor. Roll 1d6 to determine which entry point the zombies break through.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Zombie Soldier</b><br>Medium natural animate   | <b>Level 2 Soldier</b><br>XP 125        |
| <b>Initiative</b> +2  | <b>Senses</b> Perception +2; darkvision |
| <b>HP</b> 38; <b>Bloodied</b> 19  |   |
| <b>AC</b> 18; <b>Fortitude</b> 15; <b>Reflex</b> 13; <b>Will</b> 13   |   |
| <b>Immune</b> disease; poison; <b>Resist</b> 10 necrotic; <b>Vulnerable</b> 5 radiant   |   |
| <b>Speed</b> 6  |   |
| ⊕ <b>Longsword</b> (standard; at-will)<br>+8 vs. AC; 1d8 + 3 damage.  |   |
| ⊕ <b>Protective Strike</b> (immediate interrupt, when an adjacent foe attacks a zombie rotter; at-will)<br>+9 vs. AC; 1d8 + 3 damage, and the target takes a -4 penalty to the triggering attack. |   |
| <b>Alignment</b> Unaligned  | <b>Languages</b> –                      |
| <b>Str</b> 16 (+4)  | <b>Dex</b> 12 (+2) <b>Wis</b> 13 (+2)   |
| <b>Con</b> 14 (+3)  | <b>Int</b> 10 (+1) <b>Cha</b> 10 (+1)   |

The characters can't really fail here; otherwise, they would be overrun by zombies and massacred. Instead, a failure represents bad timing and sloppy execution. They still erect the defenses; they just have to fight off more zombies while doing so. See the "Man the Defenses" sidebar for more details on this skill challenge.

**Special:** The skill challenge simulates the characters fighting off zombies while fortifying the temple's defenses. Note that these two events happen simultaneously. On any round that the characters do not attempt at least one primary skill check, it counts as a failure and more zombies breach the characters' defenses.

### TACTICS

The zombie soldier remains close to a zombie rotter during combat, using *protective strike* to hamper the characters attacks against the zombie minions. The zombie rotters simply attack the closest character, flailing away with slam attacks.

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>3 Zombie Rotters</b><br>Medium natural animate                  | <b>Level 3 Minion</b><br>XP 38          |
| <b>Initiative</b> -1   | <b>Senses</b> Perception -1; darkvision |
| <b>HP</b> 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.               |   |
| <b>AC</b> 13; <b>Fortitude</b> 13; <b>Reflex</b> 9; <b>Will</b> 10 |   |
| <b>Immune</b> disease; poison                                      |   |
| <b>Speed</b> 4   |   |
| ⊕ <b>Slam</b> (standard; at-will)<br>+6 vs. AC; 5 damage.          |   |
| <b>Alignment</b> Unaligned   | <b>Languages</b> –                      |
| <b>Str</b> 14 (+3)   | <b>Dex</b> 6 (-1) <b>Wis</b> 8 (+0)     |
| <b>Con</b> 10 (+1)   | <b>Int</b> 1 (-4) <b>Cha</b> 3 (-3)     |

### MAN THE DEFENSES!

The Zombie-Proofing the Temple and Shoring Up the Defenses skill challenges are only peripherally concerned with the manual labor of fortifying the temple or repairing barricades. They're mostly concerned with getting the temple barricaded or getting the defenses repaired before the zombies overwhelm the heroes. A primary skill check failure does not mean the character didn't use the proper materials or flawless construction techniques. Rather, it represents bad timing: A zombie manages to squirm through a hole in the wall before the character can nail a board over it; a zombie slams through a door before the character can throw his weight against it. In addition, failing the skill challenge doesn't mean the zombies overwhelm the heroes; it means the characters were less efficient than they could have been, and they had to fight more zombies as a result.

## ZOMBIE SIEGE: FIRST WAVE

Encounter Level 3+ (XP 702+)

2 gravehounds  
4 zombie rotters  
2 zombie soldiers

### SETUP

Not long after the characters erect their defenses, the zombie horde, now at full strength, makes a serious push to gain entrance into the temple. When this encounter begins, 2 grave hounds, 4 zombie rotters, and 2 zombie soldiers have managed to break into the temple. The characters need to fight off the zombies that make it inside while repairing their breached defenses.

When the attack begins, read:

*The temple is filled with a cacophony of thick, horrid moaning and the staccato rhythm of hundreds of undead fists beating against the temple doors. Suddenly, a sharp cracking noise echoes through the temple, and you realize your defenses have been breached!*

For this encounter and the next one, there are eight numbered entry points into the temple, although only six are visible to the characters: the main door, the two sets of doors along the east and west walls, and the pit in the floor. The remaining two entrances are tunnels dug by the zombies that open up in the floor of the temple, creating a pit just like the one currently visible. If one of the tunnel entrances is rolled, replace the rubble square with a pit, which remains visible for the rest of the encounter.

When the encounter begins, split the initial group of zombies into two groups of 1 grave hound, 2 zombie rotters, and 1 zombie soldier, and then roll a d8 twice (reroll duplicate rolls) to determine which two entry points the first wave of zombies breaches.

### SHORING UP THE DEFENSES

During the battle, the characters need to repair their defenses to prevent more zombies from breaking into the temple.

**Level:** 2 (XP 125)

**Complexity:** 1 (requires 4 successes before 3 failures).

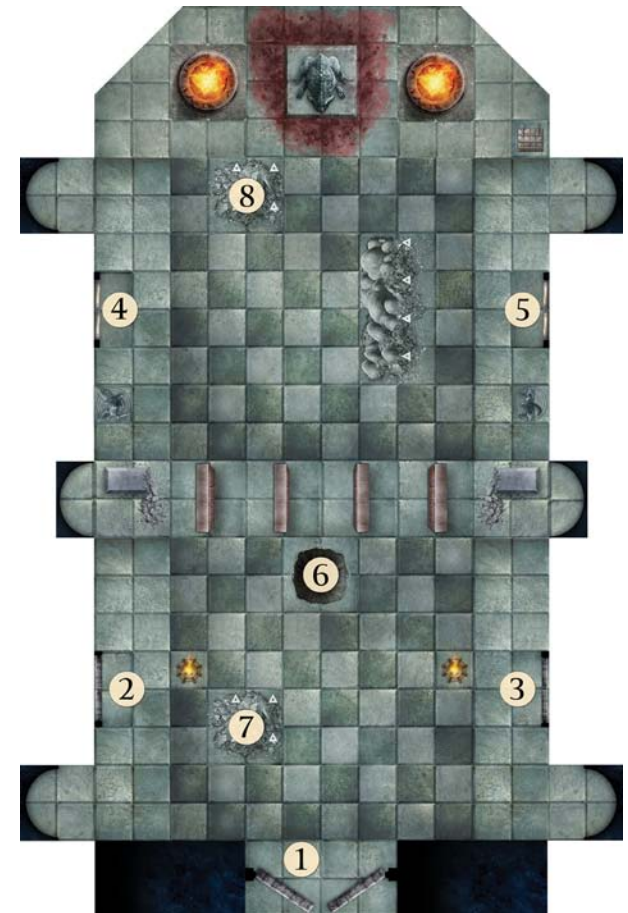
**Primary Skills:** Athletics, Dungeoneering, Religion, Thievery.

**Athletics** (DC 15, standard action, 1 success, no maximum): The character realizes finesse is no trade for quick and effective physical labor. The character pounds nails, carries heavy objects, and uses brute strength shove invading zombies back through the doors.

**Dungeoneering** (DC 15, standard action, 1 success, no maximum): The character's knowledge of stone and underground construction lets him or her see how the temple might best be fortified using the meager supplies available.

**Religion** (DC 15, standard action, 1 success, no maximum): The character offers a prayer to Erathis, asking her to lend her strength to the characters' endeavor and slow the tide of undead seeking to further desecrate her temple.

**Thievery** (DC 15, standard action, 1 success, no maximum): The character has spent a lifetime getting into places he or she is not wanted. It's not terribly difficult to turn that concept on its head and use those skills to craft sturdy barricades.



**Secondary Skills:** Perception.

**Perception** (DC 5, minor action, no successes): The character's keen eyes help more skilled companions find the best materials to aid in fortifying the temple. A successful check grants a +2 bonus to one ally's next Dungeoneering or Thievery check made as part of this skill challenge.

**Success:** The characters succeed in repairing their defenses, and only face the initial number of zombies.

**Failure:** Each time the characters fail a primary skill check, two more zombie rotters enter the combat (roll 1d8 to determine which entry point they breach). If the characters score three failures (a complete failure), an additional zombie soldier enters the fray from one of the breached entry points (roll randomly). The characters cannot accrue failures by failing skill checks. Instead, a failure represents bad timing and sloppy execution by the characters. They still repair the defenses; they just have to fight off more zombies while doing it. See the “Man the Defenses” sidebar on page 20 for more details.

**Special:** The skill challenge simulates the characters fighting off zombies while fortifying the temple’s defenses. Note that these two events happen simultaneously. On any round that the characters do not attempt at least one primary skill check, it counts as a failure and more zombies breach the characters’ defenses.

|  |                                |
|--|--------------------------------|
| <b>2 Gravehounds</b><br>Medium natural animate   | <b>Level 3 Brute</b><br>XP 150 |
| <b>Initiative</b> +2 <b>Senses</b> Perception +1; low-light vision<br><b>HP</b> 54; <b>Bloodied</b> 27<br><b>AC</b> 14; <b>Fortitude</b> 14; <b>Reflex</b> 12; <b>Will</b> 11<br><b>Immune</b> disease; poison; <b>Resist</b> 10 necrotic; <b>Vulnerable</b> 5 radiant<br><b>Speed</b> 8 |                                |
| ⊕ <b>Bite</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Necrotic</b><br>+7 vs. AC; 1d6 + 3 damage, and the target takes ongoing 5 necrotic damage (save ends) and is knocked prone.   |                                |
| ⊕ <b>Death Jaws</b> (when reduced to 0 hit points) ♦ <b>Necrotic</b><br>The gravehound makes a bite attack against a target within its reach.  |                                |
| <b>Zombie Weakness</b><br>Any critical hit to the zombie reduces it to 0 hit points instantly.   |                                |
| <b>Alignment</b> Unaligned <b>Languages</b> –<br><b>Str</b> 16 (+4) <b>Dex</b> 13 (+2) <b>Wis</b> 10 (+1)<br><b>Con</b> 14 (+3) <b>Int</b> 1 (-4) <b>Cha</b> 3 (-3)  |                                |

|   |                                |
|---|--------------------------------|
| <b>4+ Zombie Rotters</b><br>Medium natural animate  | <b>Level 3 Minion</b><br>XP 38 |
| <b>Initiative</b> -1 <b>Senses</b> Perception -1; darkvision<br><b>HP</b> 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.<br><b>AC</b> 13; <b>Fortitude</b> 13; <b>Reflex</b> 9; <b>Will</b> 10<br><b>Immune</b> disease; poison<br><b>Speed</b> 4 |                                |
| ⊕ <b>Slam</b> (standard; at-will)<br>+6 vs. AC; 5 damage.   |                                |
| <b>Alignment</b> Unaligned <b>Languages</b> –<br><b>Str</b> 14 (+3) <b>Dex</b> 6 (-1) <b>Wis</b> 8 (+0)<br><b>Con</b> 10 (+1) <b>Int</b> 1 (-4) <b>Cha</b> 3 (-3)   |                                |

|  |                                  |
|--|----------------------------------|
| <b>2+ Zombie Soldier</b><br>Medium natural animate   | <b>Level 2 Soldier</b><br>XP 125 |
| <b>Initiative</b> +2 <b>Senses</b> Perception +2; darkvision<br><b>HP</b> 38; <b>Bloodied</b> 19<br><b>AC</b> 18; <b>Fortitude</b> 15; <b>Reflex</b> 13; <b>Will</b> 13<br><b>Immune</b> disease; poison; <b>Resist</b> 10 necrotic; <b>Vulnerable</b> 5 radiant<br><b>Speed</b> 6 |                                  |
| ⊕ <b>Longsword</b> (standard; at-will)<br>+8 vs. AC; 1d8 + 3 damage.   |                                  |
| ⊕ <b>Protective Strike</b> (immediate interrupt, when an adjacent foe attacks a zombie rotter; at-will)<br>+9 vs. AC; 1d8 + 3 damage, and the target takes a -4 penalty to the triggering attack.  |                                  |
| <b>Alignment</b> Unaligned <b>Languages</b> –<br><b>Str</b> 16 (+4) <b>Dex</b> 12 (+2) <b>Wis</b> 13 (+2)<br><b>Con</b> 14 (+3) <b>Int</b> 10 (+1) <b>Cha</b> 10 (+1)  |                                  |

### TACTICS

The zombie rotters attack the closest living creature with slam attacks, while the zombie soldier remains close to the rotters, granting them the benefits of its *protective strike*. The grave hounds also attack the nearest living target, bearing characters to the ground with their bite attacks.

### DEVELOPMENT

If the characters fight off the zombies and complete the skill challenge, they buy themselves another few hours of reprieve. However, the zombie horde is not done with the characters yet, and another, stronger push is on the way.

### HEY, I KNOW THAT ZOMBIE!

If your players have played through other Chaos Scar adventures, you might want to have a villain from the past show up as a zombie. Zombified versions of The Hand of Torog from *Den of the Slavetakers*, the halflings from the *Brothers Grey*, or bullywugs from *Stick in the Mud* all work well. In addition to serving as a fun Easter egg for your players, the appearance of these villains clearly demonstrates the far-reaching power of the necroshard.

## ZOMBIE SIEGE: SECOND WAVE

Encounter Level 4+ (XP 927+)

- 2 corruption corpses
- 2 hobgoblin zombies
- 1 shard zombie
- 6 zombie rotters

### SETUP

After a short reprieve, the zombie horde makes a stronger push to overrun the characters. This encounter is handled much like the previous one and uses the Shoring up the Defenses skill challenge while the characters battle zombies. However, the second wave encounter includes a few significant changes:

- ◆ The initial group of breaching zombies includes a new type of zombie unique to the necromantic energies of the necroshard. The shard zombie is both intelligent and powerful, and would be an ideal candidate to insert a familiar face, as mentioned in the “Hey, I Know That Zombie” sidebar. In addition to the shard zombie, 2 corruption corpses, 2 hobgoblin zombies, and 6 zombie rotters comprise the initial group of zombies the character face in this encounter. Like the first encounter, divide the zombies into two groups, and then roll 1d8 twice to determine the two entry points the undead breach.

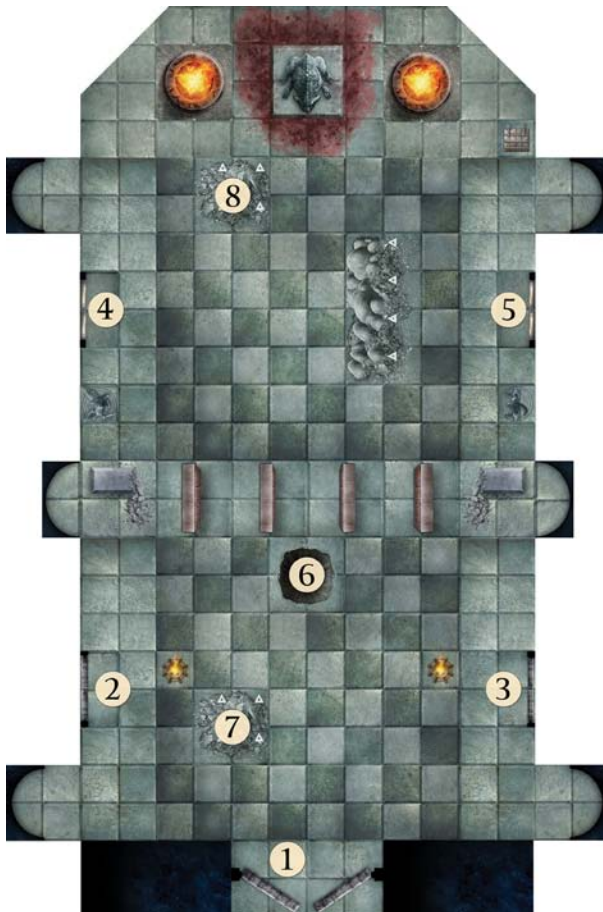
| 2 Corruption Corpses  | Level 4 Artillery                     |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| Medium natural animate  | XP 175                                |
| <b>Initiative</b> +3 <b>Senses</b> Perception +3; darkvision  |                                       |
| <b>Grave Stench</b> aura 1; living enemies in the aura take a -5 penalty to attack rolls.   |                                       |
| <b>HP</b> 46; <b>Bloodied</b> 23  |                                       |
| <b>Regeneration</b> 5 (if the corruption corpse takes radiant damage, regeneration doesn't function on its next turn)   |                                       |
| <b>AC</b> 17; <b>Fortitude</b> 16; <b>Reflex</b> 14; <b>Will</b> 14   |                                       |
| <b>Immune</b> disease; poison; <b>Resist</b> 10 necrotic; <b>Vulnerable</b> 5 radiant   |                                       |
| <b>Speed</b> 4  |                                       |
| ⊕ <b>Slam</b> (standard; at-will)<br>+8 vs. AC; 1d6 + 3 damage.   |                                       |
| ✂ <b>Mote of Corruption</b> (standard; at-will) ◆ <b>Necrotic</b><br>The corruption corpse hurls a black glob of necrotic filth: ranged 10; +7 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 3 necrotic damage, and the target is weakened (save ends). |                                       |
| ⚡ <b>Death Burst</b> (when reduced to 0 hit points) ◆ <b>Necrotic</b><br>The corruption corpse explodes: close burst 1; +7 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 3 necrotic damage.  |                                       |
| <b>Alignment</b> Unaligned  | <b>Languages</b> –                    |
| <b>Str</b> 16 (+5)  | <b>Dex</b> 13 (+3) <b>Wis</b> 12 (+3) |
| <b>Con</b> 16 (+5)  | <b>Int</b> 4 (-1) <b>Cha</b> 3 (-2)   |

- ◆ Run the Shoring up the Defenses skill challenge again. However, this time, when the characters fail a primary skill check, three zombie rotters break through and join the combat. If the characters completely fail the skill challenge (earn three failures), an additional corruption corpse breaks through and joins the combat. Remember, even if the characters fail the skill challenge completely, they still manage to repair their defenses and hold off the zombie horde. They just have to fight a lot more zombies to accomplish the same goal.

| 2 Hobgoblin Zombies  | Level 2 Brute                       |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| Medium natural animate   | XP 125                              |
| <b>Initiative</b> -1 <b>Senses</b> Perception +0; darkvision   |                                     |
| <b>HP</b> 40; <b>Bloodied</b> 20   |                                     |
| <b>AC</b> 25; <b>Fortitude</b> 25; <b>Reflex</b> 21; <b>Will</b> 22  |                                     |
| <b>Immune</b> disease; poison; <b>Resist</b> 10 necrotic; <b>Vulnerable</b> 5 radiant  |                                     |
| <b>Speed</b> 4   |                                     |
| ⊕ <b>Slam</b> (standard; at-will)<br>+6 vs. AC; 2d6 + 2 damage.  |                                     |
| ⊕ <b>Zombie Grab</b> (standard; requires a free hand; at-will)<br>+4 vs. Reflex; the target is grabbed (until escape). Checks made to escape the zombie's grab are made with a -5 penalty. |                                     |
| <b>Zombie Weakness</b><br>A critical hit to a hobgoblin zombie reduces it to 0 hit points instantly.   |                                     |
| <b>Alignment</b> Unaligned   | <b>Languages</b> –                  |
| <b>Str</b> 17 (+4)   | <b>Dex</b> 6 (-1) <b>Wis</b> 8 (+0) |
| <b>Con</b> 10 (+1)   | <b>Int</b> 1 (-4) <b>Cha</b> 3 (-3) |

| Shard Zombie  | Level 4 Controller (Leader)           |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| Medium natural humanoid   | XP 175                                |
| <b>Initiative</b> +2 <b>Senses</b> Perception +10; darkvision   |                                       |
| <b>HP</b> 57; <b>Bloodied</b> 28  |                                       |
| <b>AC</b> 18; <b>Fortitude</b> 15; <b>Reflex</b> 15; <b>Will</b> 15   |                                       |
| <b>Resist</b> 10 necrotic; <b>Vulnerable</b> 5 radiant  |                                       |
| <b>Speed</b> 6  |                                       |
| ⊕ <b>Slam</b> (standard; at-will)<br>+9 vs. AC; 1d8 + 3 damage.   |                                       |
| ✂ <b>Claw of Doom</b> (standard; at-will)<br>Ranged 10; +9 vs. Fortitude; a shadowy claw slides the target 3 squares, and one zombie ally adjacent to the target after the slide makes a melee basic attack against the target. |                                       |
| ⚡ <b>Speed of the Damned</b> (standard; at-will)<br>Close burst 10; up to four zombie rotters; targets make a melee basic attack.   |                                       |
| <b>Arise, Corpse</b> (standard; encounter)<br>Four zombie rotters appear in unoccupied squares adjacent to the shard zombie.  |                                       |
| <b>Undead Tenacity</b><br>When a zombie rotter within 2 squares of the shard zombie hits a creature, it grabs that creature.  |                                       |
| <b>Alignment</b> Evil   | <b>Languages</b> Common               |
| <b>Str</b> 15 (+4)  | <b>Dex</b> 11 (+2) <b>Wis</b> 16 (+5) |
| <b>Con</b> 17 (+5)  | <b>Int</b> 17 (+5) <b>Cha</b> 11 (+2) |

|   |                                  |                       |
|---|----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>6+ Zombie Rotters</b>                      |                                  | <b>Level 3 Minion</b> |
| Medium natural animate                        |                                  | XP 38                 |
| Initiative -1                                 | Senses Perception -1; darkvision |                       |
| HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. |                                  |                       |
| AC 13; Fortitude 13; Reflex 9; Will 10        |                                  |                       |
| Immune disease; poison                        |                                  |                       |
| Speed 4                                       |                                  |                       |
| ⊕ Slam (standard; at-will)                    |                                  |                       |
| +6 vs. AC; 5 damage.                          |                                  |                       |
| Alignment Unaligned                           | Languages –                      |                       |
| Str 14 (+3)                                   | Dex 6 (-1)                       | Wis 8 (+0)            |
| Con 10 (+1)                                   | Int 1 (-4)                       | Cha 3 (-3)            |



## TACTICS

The hobgoblin zombies and zombie rotters attack the closest characters with *slam* attacks. The corruption corpses begin combat at range, hurling *motes of corruption* at characters until the heroes engage them in melee. The shard zombie remains within 2 squares of the zombie rotters so they can benefit from *undead tenacity*. It uses *claw of doom* to drag characters using ranged attacks or spells into melee and *speed of the damned* when three or more zombie rotters surround a single hero. The shard zombie uses *arise, corpse* when half the initial zombie rotters have been destroyed.

## DEVELOPMENT

If the characters can survive this last assault, they are witness to a glorious sight after the last zombie falls.

**When the characters defeat the last zombie in this encounter, read:**

*The zombie shudders and collapses as the energy animating its rotting body dissipates from your attack. You turn toward the main doors, expecting another wave of fiendish undead. Instead, the temple interior is suddenly filled with shafts of pale, morning sunshine, bursting through the cracks and holes in the doors and walls. You then realize the forest outside the temple walls has become still and quiet.*

Dawn has come, and the power of the necroshard fades in the light of the morning sun. The characters have survived the night. However, when they finally exit the temple, one more horror awaits.

## IS THAT ALL YOU GOT?

If the characters have had an easy time of it, and the zombie assaults have not proved sufficiently challenging, simply throw another Zombie Siege encounter at them before dawn's arrival. However, each time you run a Zombie Siege beyond the two presented in the adventure, use progressively tougher zombies, or even other types of corporeal undead, such as ghouls and wights.

**When the characters exit the temple, read:**

*The clearing around the temple is littered with hundreds of bodies, from tiny, shrunk goblin corpses to the behemoth carcass of what appears to be a dragon. Corpses are stacked up against each of the temple doors ten and twenty high, and the stench of rot and death fills the air in a nauseating miasma*

## CONCLUSION: WHAT TO DO WITH THE NECROSHARD?

The characters could simply leave the necroshard in the temple, but its power would continue to grow, and eventually an unstoppable horde of zombies would sweep out of the Chaos Scar and into civilized lands. This is certainly reason enough to destroy it. However, if certain precautions are taken, the power of the necroshard can be harnessed and used by the characters.

### DESTROYING THE SHARD

If the characters decide to destroy the necroshard, they find it is almost impervious to attacks. However, surviving the zombie horde earns them the favor of Erathis, especially if one or more characters managed to beseech aid from the goddess during the zombie siege. A simple DC 10 Religion check grants the characters divine insight on how the necroshard can be destroyed.

### DESTROYING THE NECROSHARD

The altar in the temple rectory can be reconsecrated, and once the altar is again a divine conduit for the power of Erathis, the necroshard can be destroyed by placing it on the altar and performing a ritual, represented by this skill challenge.

**Level:** 2 (XP 250).

**Complexity:** 2 (requires 6 successes before 3 failures).

**Primary Skill:** Religion.

*Religion (DC 10, 1 success, no maximum):* You call upon the power of Erathis to destroy the necroshard.

You gain a +2 bonus to this check if you received divine aid from Erathis during the Zombie-Proofing the Temple and Shoring Up the Defenses skill challenges.

**Other Skills:** Diplomacy, Dungeoneering.

*Diplomacy (DC 10, no successes):* Erathis is the goddess of civilization and community, and is known to be both diplomatic and reasonable. You're no cleric, but your silver tongue might sway the goddess to aid you in your endeavor. You grant a +2 bonus to one ally's next Religion check made as part of this skill challenge.

*Dungeoneering (DC 15, no successes):* You use your knowledge of stonework to remove all traces of evil iconography from the altar. On a success, all Religion checks made as part of this skill challenge gain a +2 bonus.

**Success:** Erathis lends her divine power to the characters, the altar is reconsecrated, and the necroshard is destroyed in a blast of white light. The characters gain an additional 250 XP for destroying the necroshard. In addition, Erathis's followers hear of the characters' deed, and their favorable opinion of the heroes could take the form of a number of future benefits.

**Failure:** If the characters fail the skill challenge, allow them try again with a -2 penalty to all checks. However, if they fail the skill challenge a second time, they fail to destroy the necroshard, and in the process, they offend Erathis. Until they can divine some way to destroy the necroshard—perhaps by beseeching aid from a high priest of a good-aligned deity—they receive a -1 penalty to all Diplomacy checks.

## KEEPING THE SHARD

If the characters decide to keep the necroshard, they can harness its power by placing it in the hilt of a weapon. Encasing the shard in metal is the only safe way for it to be handled; however, even if the characters take this precaution, the necroshard can still be dangerous to its owner and his or her allies.

### Necroshard Weapon Level 5+

*This large black gem can be placed in the hilt of a melee weapon imbuing the weapon with necrotic power.*

|        |    |           |        |    |              |
|--------|----|-----------|--------|----|--------------|
| Lvl 5  | +1 | 1,000 gp  | Lvl 20 | +4 | 125,000 gp   |
| Lvl 10 | +2 | 5,000 gp  | Lvl 25 | +5 | 625,000 gp   |
| Lvl 15 | +3 | 25,000 gp | Lvl 30 | +6 | 3,125,000 gp |

**Weapon (Any One-Handed or Two-Handed Melee Weapon)**

**Enhancement:** Attack rolls and damage rolls

**Critical:** +1d10 necrotic damage per plus.

**Property:** Weapon attacks made with the weapon against living creatures gain a +1 bonus on attack rolls vs. Fortitude.

**Power (Daily ♦ Necrotic):** Free Action: Use this power when you hit with the weapon. The target takes an extra 1d8 necrotic damage and is weakened until the end of your next turn.

*Level 15 or 20:* 2d8 necrotic damage.

*Level 25 or 30:* 3d8 necrotic damage. ☹

### About the Author

Aeryn "Blackdirge" Rudel is a staff writer and editor for Goodman Games, a freelance writer and RPG designer, and the editor-in-chief of the 4E magazine *Level Up*. He has been a professional game designer since 2005, and his recent author credits include *Blackdirge's Dungeon Denizens*, *Critter Cache: Daemons*, and *Hero's Handbook: Tiefling*. Aeryn currently lives in Modesto, California with his wife Melissa, a nongamer whose tolerance for her husband's geekery borders on the supernatural.