

INTRODUCTION

WELCOME TO *TALES FROM THE YAWNING PORTAL*. Within this book you will find seven of the deadliest dungeons from the history of D&D, updated for the current edition of the game. Some are classics that have hosted an untold number of adventurers, while others are newer creations boldly staking their place in the pantheon of notable D&D adventures.

Just as these dungeons have made an impression on D&D players, so too have tales of their dangers spread across the D&D multiverse. When the night grows long in Waterdeep, City of Splendors, and the fireplace in the taproom of the Yawning Portal dims to a deep crimson, adventurers from across the Sword Coast—and even some visiting from other D&D worlds—spin tales and rumors of lost treasures.

- A wanderer from the distant Shou Empire speaks of strange, leering devil faces carved in dungeon walls that can devour an explorer in an instant, leaving behind not a single trace of the poor soul's passing.
- A bald, stern wizard clad in blue robes and speaking with a strange accent tells of a wizard who claimed three powerful weapons from a city on the shores of a lake of unknown depths, who spirited them away to a slumbering volcano and dared adventurers to enter his lair and recover them.
- A one-eyed dwarf spins tales of a castle that fell into the earth, and whose ruins stand above a subterranean grove dominated by a tree that spawns evil.

These are only a few of the tales that have spread across the Sword Coast from the furthest reaches of Faerûn and beyond. The minor details change with the telling. The dread tomb of Acererak shifts its location from a dismal swamp, to a searing desert, to some other forbidding clime in each telling. The key elements remain the same in each version of the tales, lending a thread of truth to the tale.

The seeds of those stories now rest in your hand. D&D's deadliest dungeons are now part of your arsenal of adventures. Enjoy, and remember to keep a few spare character sheets handy.

USING THIS BOOK

Tales from the Yawning Portal contains seven adventures taken from across D&D's history.

The introduction of each adventure provides ideas on adapting it to a variety of D&D settings. Use that information to place it in your campaign or to give you an idea of how to adapt it.

These adventures provide the perfect side quest away from your current campaign. If you run published D&D campaigns, such as *Storm King's Thunder*, the higher level adventures presented here are an ideal way to extend the campaign beyond.

ABOUT THE ADVENTURES

THE SUNLESS CITADEL

The Sunless Citadel, written by Bruce R. Cordell, was the first published adventure for the third edition of the D&D game. It is designed for a party of four or five 1st-level player characters.

Ever since its publication in 2000, *The Sunless Citadel* has been widely regarded as an excellent way to introduce new players to the game. It's also a great starting experience for someone looking to be a Dungeon Master for the first time.

THE FORGE OF FURY

The Forge of Fury, written by Richard Baker, was published in 2000 shortly after *The Sunless Citadel*. Characters who succeeded in that mission and advanced to 3rd level were now ready to take on the challenges of a ruined dwarven fortress.

Like its predecessor, *The Forge of Fury* is tailored to provide increasingly tougher threats as the characters make their way through the fortress. Those who survive the experience can expect to advance to 5th level—seasoned adventurers ready to strive for greater glory and renown.

THE HIDDEN SHRINE OF TAMOACHAN

The Hidden Shrine of Tamoachan, written by Harold Johnson and Jeff R. Leason, made its debut under the title *Lost Tamoachan* at the Origins game convention in 1979, where it was used in the official D&D competition. The first published version of the adventure was produced in 1980.

The updated version of the adventure presented herein is designed for a group of four or five 5th-level player characters.

WHITE PLUME MOUNTAIN

Lawrence Schick, the author of *White Plume Mountain*, related in the 2013 compilation *Dungeons of Dread* that he wrote the adventure as a way of persuading Gary Gygax to hire him as a game designer. Not only did he get the job, but *White Plume* became an instant favorite when it was first published in 1979.

The version of the adventure in this book is tailored to a group of characters of 8th level.

DEAD IN THAY

Dead in Thay, written by Scott Fitzgerald Gray, was created when the fifth edition D&D game was in the testing stages. In its original form, it was used as the story of the D&D Encounters season in the spring of 2014. Featuring an immense and lethal dungeon known as the Doomvault, the adventure serves as a tribute to *Tomb of Horrors*, *Ruins of Undermountain*, and other “killer dungeons” throughout the history of the game.

The version of *Dead in Thay* presented here is modified for use in home campaigns. It is designed for characters of 9th to 11th level.

AGAINST THE GIANTS

The three linked adventures that make up *Against the Giants* were created and originally released in 1978, during the time when Gary Gygax was still writing the *Player's Handbook* for the original AD&D game. Despite being (in a sense) older than the game itself, these adventures continue to hold a special place in the hearts and memories of D&D players of all ages.

The compilation of *Steading of the Hill Giant Chief*, *Glacial Rift of the Frost Giant Jarl*, and *Hall of the Fire Giant King* was published in 1981 as *Against the Giants*. The version presented here is designed to be undertaken by characters of 11th level.

TOMB OF HORRORS

Before there was much of anything else in the world of the D&D game, there was the Tomb of Horrors.

The first version of the adventure was crafted for Gary Gygax's personal campaign in the early 1970s and went on to be featured as the official DUNGEONS & DRAGONS event at the original Origins gaming convention in 1975. The first publication of *Tomb of Horrors*, as a part of the Advanced D&D game, came in 1978.

As a proving ground for characters and players alike, fabricated by the devious mind of the game's cocreator, *Tomb of Horrors* has no equal in the annals of D&D's greatest adventures. Only high-level characters stand a chance of coming back alive, but every player who braves the Tomb will have the experience of a lifetime.

RUNNING THE ADVENTURES

To run each of these adventures, you need the fifth edition *Player's Handbook*, *Dungeon Master's Guide*, and *Monster Manual*. Before you sit down with your players, read the text of the adventure all the way through and familiarize yourself with the maps as well, perhaps making notes about complex areas or places where the characters are certain to go, so you're well prepared before the action starts.

Text that appears in a box like this is meant to be read aloud or paraphrased for the players when their characters first arrive at a location or under a specific circumstance, as described in the text.

The *Monster Manual* contains stat blocks for most of the monsters and NPCs found in this book. When a monster's name appears in **bold type**, that's a visual cue pointing you to the creature's stat block in the *Monster Manual*. Descriptions and stat blocks for new monsters appear in appendix B. If a stat block is in that appendix, an adventure's text tells you so.

Spells and nonmagical objects or equipment mentioned in the book are described in the *Player's Handbook*. Magic items are described in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, unless the adventure's text directs you to an item's description in appendix A.

CREATING A CAMPAIGN

While these adventures were never meant to be combined into a full campaign—over 30 years separates the newest from the oldest—they have been selected to provide play across a broad range of levels. With a little work, you can run a complete campaign using only this book.

Starting with *The Sunless Citadel*, guide your players through the adventures in the order that they are presented in this book. Each one provides enough XP that, upon completing the adventure, the characters should be high enough level to advance to the next one.

The Yawning Portal, or some other tavern of your own invention or drawn from another D&D setting, provides the perfect framing device for the campaign. The characters hear rumors of each dungeon, with just enough information available to lead them to the next adventure. Perhaps a friendly NPC drawn from the upcoming adventure visits the tavern in search of help, or some element of a character's background pushes the group down the proper road. In any case, these dungeons are designed to be easily portable to any campaign setting.

THE YAWNING PORTAL

Amid the bustle of Waterdeep, within the Castle Ward where barristers, nobles, and emissaries battle with word and contract, stands an inn not quite like any other. Before there was a Castle Ward or even what could be recognized as an ancestor of the City of Splendors, there was a dungeon, and in that dungeon begins the tale of the Yawning Portal.

In ages past, the mighty wizard Halaster built his tower at the foot of Mount Waterdeep and delved deep into tunnels first built by dwarves and drow in search of ever greater magical power. Halaster and his apprentices expanded the tunnels they found, worming out new lairs under the surface for reasons of their own. In time, their excavations grew into the vast labyrinth known today as Undermountain, the largest dungeon in all of the Forgotten Realms. Halaster eventually disappeared, as have all his apprentices, but the massive complex he built remains to this day.

For untold years, the secrets of Undermountain remained hidden from the surface world. Everyone who entered its halls failed to return. Its reputation as a death trap grew to the point that criminals in Waterdeep

THE GREEN DRAGON INN

The Yawning Portal is not the only renowned tavern in D&D lore. In the Free City of Greyhawk stands the Green Dragon Inn, which has been the starting point for some of the most successful expeditions to Castle Greyhawk and beyond. The place is crowded and smoke-filled. Patrons talk in low voices, and anyone attempting to strike up a conversation without making a clear intent to pay can expect a cold reception. Paranoia and suspicion run rampant here, as befits a free city that stands at the nexus between a devil-haunted empire, a vast domain locked in the iron-tight grip of a demigod of evil, and a splintered, bickering host of kingdoms nominally committed to justice and weal. In the battered, weary world of Greyhawk, profit and power take precedence over heroics.

who were sentenced to die were forcibly escorted into the dungeon and left to fend for themselves.

All of that changed with the arrival of two men, a warrior named Durnan and a ne'er-do-well named Mirt. The duo were the first adventurers to return from Undermountain, laden with riches and magic treasures. While Mirt used his wealth to buy a mansion, Durnan had different plans. Durnan retired from adventuring and purchased the land on which sat the deep, broad well that was the only known entrance to the dungeon. Around this well he built a tavern and inn that caters to adventurers and those who seek their services, and he called it the Yawning Portal.

Some of the magic Durnan looted on his successful foray into Undermountain granted him a life span that exceeds even that of an elf. And for decades Durnan left delving into Undermountain to younger folk. Yet one day, something drew him back. Days of waiting for his triumphant return from the dungeon turned to months and then years. For nearly a century, citizens of Waterdeep thought him dead. But one night, a voice called up from the well. Few at first believed it could be Durnan, but folk as long-lived as he vouched it so. The Yawning Portal had passed into the hands of his ancestors, but Durnan returned with enough riches for them to quietly retire. Durnan took his customary place behind the bar, raised a toast to his own safe return, and then began serving customers as if he'd never left.

Adventurers from across Faerûn, and even from elsewhere in the great span of the multiverse, visit the Yawning Portal to exchange knowledge about Undermountain and other dungeons. Most visitors are content to swap stories by the hearth, but sometimes a group driven by greed, ambition, or desperation pays the toll for entry and descends the well. Most don't survive to make the return trip, but enough come back with riches and tales of adventure to tempt other groups into trying their luck.

FEATURES OF THE YAWNING PORTAL

The Yawning Portal's taproom fills the first floor of the building. The 40-foot-diameter well that provides access to Undermountain dominates the space. The "well" is all that remains of Halaster's tower, and now, devoid of the stairways and floors that formed subterranean levels, it drops as an open shaft for 140 feet. Stirges, spiders, and worse have been known to invade the Yawning Portal from below.

Balconies on the tavern's second and third floors overlook the well, with those floors accessed by way of wooden stairs that rise up from the taproom. Guests sitting at the tables on the balconies have an excellent view of the well and the action below.

Entering the Well. Those who wish to enter Undermountain for adventure (or the daring tourists who just want to "ride the rope") must pay a gold piece to be lowered down. The return trip also costs a piece of gold, sent up in a bucket in advance. Once the initial payment is made, a few stairs takes one to the top of the waist-high lip of the well. The rope that hangs in the center of the well is levered over to the lip by a beam in the rafters, and when those who have paid are ready, they mount the rope and take the long ride down.

Oddities on Display. A staggering variety of curios and oddities adorn the taproom. Traditionally, adventurers who recover a strange relic from Undermountain present it to Durnan as a trophy of their success. Other adventurers leave such curios to mark their visits to the tavern, or relinquish them after losing a bet with Durnan, who likes to wager on the fate of adventuring bands that enter the dungeon. Occasionally, something that strikes Durnan's fancy can be used to pay a bar tab.

YAWNING PORTAL TAPROOM CURIOS

d20	Item
1	A key carved from bone
2	A small box with no apparent way to open it
3	A mummified troglodyte's hand
4	Half of an iron symbol of Bane
5	A small burlap pouch filled with various teeth
6	Burnt fragments of a scroll
7	A lute missing its strings
8	A bloodstained map
9	An iron gauntlet that is hot to the touch
10	A gold coin stamped with a worn, hawk-wing helm crest
11	A troll finger, still wriggling
12	A silver coin that makes no noise when dropped
13	An empty jar; when opened, a wolf howl sounds from it and continues until it is closed
14	A clockwork owl; when wound, its head turns and it hoots softly for a minute
15	A blue, glowing crystal shard
16	A statuette of a panther, wooden and painted black
17	A piece of parchment, listing fourteen magical pools and their effects when touched
18	A vial filled with a dark, fizzy liquid that is sealed and cannot be opened
19	A feeler taken from a slain rust monster
20	A wooden pipe marked with Elminster's sigil

A TYPICAL EVENING

On quiet nights, guests in the Yawning Portal gather around a large fireplace in the taproom and swap tales of distant places, strange monsters, and valuable treasures. On busier nights, the place is loud and crowded. The balconies overflow with merchants and nobles, while the tables on the ground floor are filled with adventurers and their associates. Invariably, the combination of a few drinks and the crowd's encouragement induces some folk to pay for a brief trip down into Undermountain. Most folk pay in advance for a ride down and immediately back up, though a few ambitious souls might launch impromptu expeditions into the dungeon. Few such ill-prepared parties ever return.

Groups seeking to enter Undermountain for a specific reason generally come to the tavern during its quiet hours. Even at such times, there are still a few prying eyes in the taproom, lurkers who carry news of the comings and goings from Undermountain to the Zhentarim, dark cults, criminal gangs, and other interested parties.