

# Adventure Primer

## INTRODUCTION

This adventure is designed for **five 6<sup>th</sup> level characters**. It occurs in the Dessarin Valley, specifically the southern part of Sumber Hills, between the Dessarin River and the Dessarin Road, north of Womford and south of Beliard.

### ► Synopsis

No other person except Hubert Pierre Lorentz has made such a huge breakthrough in writing fictional horror story. His vivid, grotesque, and terrifying descriptions evoked the sense of fear to those who read it. But after years of tenure, he has somehow disappeared from the multiverse. Only his books are the reminder that this man once existed. Because of this, the adventurers have been hired (or took it upon themselves) to find H.P. Lorentz.

Lorentz's last known location is his mansion, somewhere in Dessarin Valley. With that, the adventurers will have to uncover not just the truth about Lorentz's disappearance, but also something dark and sinister that might invoke madness and destroy their sanity.

### ► Adventure Background

For around a decade, Hubert Pierre Lorentz has been an influential writer of horror fiction. Through his works such as *The Shadow over Innsburgh*, *At the Islands of Madness*, and *Whispers of the Darkness*, Lorentz is able to strike fear, terror, and dread upon the readers of his books. His surreal but vivid descriptions of these horrors have gained a following of devotees. Some of these enthusiasts even thought that the stories that have been told by Lorentz to be real.

The fact is that Lorentz are inspired by his dreams and nightmares that he sometimes has when he is sleeping. Those dreams and nightmares are the

call of Tharizdun, a long-forgotten deity darkness, destruction, entropy, trickery, and insanity.

Included among the people who read his stories is Arabella Hazred, a mad sage from Oerth, another planet in the Prime Material Plane. From reading those books, Hazred theorized that the writer is the Chosen of Tharizdun, and decided to bring her followers to Lorentz's mansion. There, she turned the mansion into a temple disguised as a guild house for sages, lore bards, and those who seek forbidden knowledge.

Officially, this organization is known as the Hermetic Order of the Dark Spiral. When in truth, it is the sub-sect of the Black Brotherhood, followers of Tharizdun on Oerth. While spreading their influence over Faerun, Hazred and her followers are commencing the ritual to summon the Chained God, with Lorentz as its conduit.

### ► Adventure Overview

The adventure comprises three parts, altogether taking approximately 5 hours. The first part should take 2 hours, followed by 2 hours for the second part and 1 hour for the third.

- **Part 1: Croft Vale.** Hubert Pierre Lorentz's mansion is located in Croft Vale, a village somewhere in the Dessarin Valley. In this part, the adventurers will see first-hand how the Hermetic Order of the Dark Spiral has influenced the area and find a way to get into the mansion.
- **Part 2: The Hermetic Order of the Dark Spiral.** Lorentz's mansion has been taken over by the Hermetic Order of the Dark Spiral. The adventurers will have to uncover the truth on Lorentz's whereabouts (and maybe what the Order is trying to do here).
- **Part 3: The Ritual.** Underneath the mansion, the Hermetic Order of the Dark Spiral has imprisoned Lorentz and prepare him for the ritual to summon Tharizdun. The adventurers may need to stop the ritual and/or save Lorentz.



## ► Adventure Hook

The following adventure hooks are suggested for this adventure.

- **Private Investigator.** The adventurer(s) are hired by Tym Waterdeep Limited, a publishing company for Hubert Pierre Lorentz's books, to find the fabled writer. He was supposed to send the latest draft of his new book, *The Call of the Great Old One*, around a month ago. Their task is to either find Lorentz or the draft.
- **Strange Dreams.** The adventurer(s) have been experiencing these bizarre dreams (or nightmares, depending on how they see it). The things that they see inside their dreams remind them of the descriptions from Hubert Pierre Lorentz's books. Therefore, they decide to look for the fabled author, hoping he can explain what is happening to them.
- **Missing Person.** Someone close to the adventurer(s) has been missing for some time. The only lead that they have is a pamphlet from the Hermetic Order of the Dark Spiral, which led them to the Croft Vale.



## Chapter 1 – The Village

In this chapter, the characters arrive at **Croft Vale** and look for information about **H.P. Lorentz**. The characters eventually learn about the mysterious happenings in the village and its relation to the **Hermetic Order of the Black Spiral**.

### ARRIVAL AT CROFT VALE

The characters begin this adventure as they exit the wagon which takes them to the village of Croft Vale.

The area has the following features:

**Terrains & Dimensions:** The village is filled with wood and stone buildings, mostly small and scattered on an uneven terrain. Winding muddy roads cut through the building patches. The largest one seems to be leading towards a trail heading into a forest at a foot of the hill behind the village.

**Lighting:** Dim light as the setting sun is shrouded by the western part of the Dessarin Valley.

**Smell & Sounds:** Almost silent, with only faint noises coming from a few buildings, especially the tavern. The smell of chicken broth looms in the air, coming from that tavern. Some croaking from ravens perched up on the rooftops.

**Sights:** A few villagers looking through the doors and windows of their homes, shrouded by shadows and blinders. A woman, holding some pamphlets. A sign that reads “**Croft’s Rest**” right outside the tavern.

When the characters arrive, read or paraphrase the following:



A “sploosh” sound can be heard as your feet hits the wet grounds of Croft Vale. The soil is muddy, with footprints and tracks which creates an uneven surface for those who walk on it. The village itself is as silent as the grave, with only few people walking around the main square. The only person who stands out is a woman, holding some sort of pamphlets in her right hand. Other than that, the tavern stands out from the rest of the buildings, bearing a sign that reads “Croft’s Rest”. Faint chattering can be heard from inside, as you perk your ears towards the building’s direction.

Right after the characters get off from the wagon (they are the only passengers), the teamster, **Lezra** (see **Appendix 1**), lets them know that she will be staying in the village for one day, because she believes no one other than the characters plan to leave this place. The characters can assume that the teamster has been here before. She is more than happy to share her knowledge about the village (see **What Lezra Knows**).



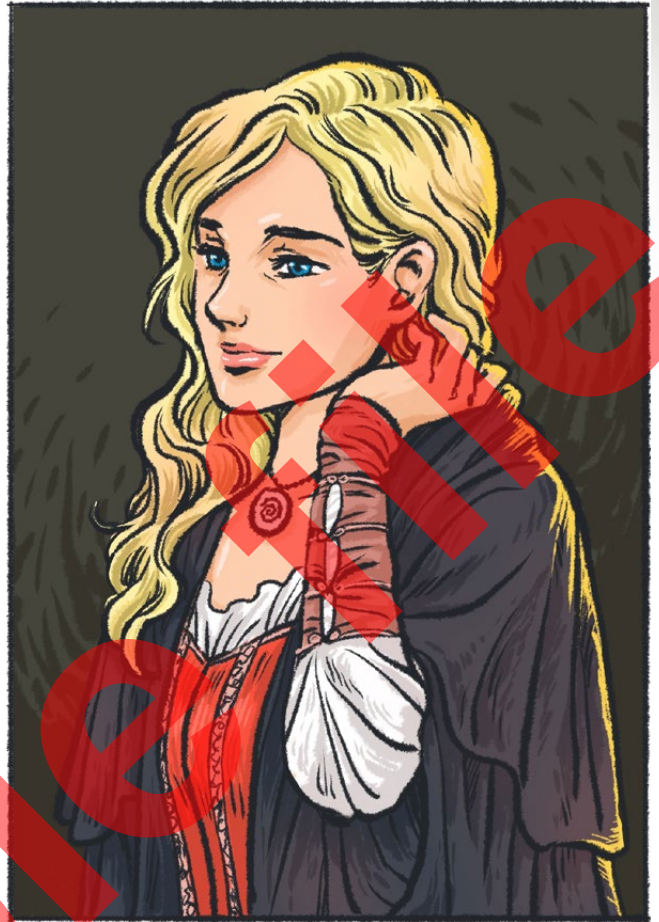


### What Lezra Knows

- The village used to be livelier, with the inhabitants being active. But now, not a lot of people go outside their homes. She's not sure why.
- A group of sages and lore masters known as The Hermetic Order of the Dark Spiral has taken residence in this village.
- Lezra used to have a regular passenger, an author who goes by the name of Lorentz. He always got off at Waterdeep.

If the characters decide to ask about where Lorentz live or about the The Hermetic Order, the teamster says that she doesn't have any clue. She always picked up Lorentz right where she dropped the characters. She suggests to talk to the woman since she seems to be the only person around (see **The Woman**), or go to the tavern (see **The Missing People**) and ask around for more information.

*It is possible that the characters split up and go different ways. Make Lezra advise them to stick together to not add the characters to the missing persons list.*



Whether the characters respond in a good way or not, Arabella gives them a pamphlet and ask if they would be interested to be a part of the Hermetic Order. Through her, the characters can find out that the Hermetic Order is a community of sages, lore masters, researchers, and adventurers who seek long-lost relics and scriptures that will provide them knowledge and wisdom to hopefully shape the future for the better.

Characters who are suspicious or want to find out her intention can roll a **DC 20 Wisdom (Insight) check**. If they succeed, they sense that Arabella is rather keen on interacting with them. Other than that, they can tell that Arabella is really choosing her words carefully to keep them interested on what she has to offer.

She eventually invites them to **the mansion** where the Hermetic Order currently resides, to talk and ask a series of questions as a part of the recruitment process (see **Arabella's Processing Questions**). The nature of these questions is

## THE WOMAN

A woman is standing nearby, holding some pamphlets. The human woman is **Arabella Hazred**, the leader of the Hermetic Order, but currently presents herself as a new member and recruiter. If the characters ask about her name, she only goes by the name of **Arabella**. She appears friendly, enthusiastic, and kind, asking the characters their name, where they come from, and what are their business here. The characters notice the dark spiral symbol on the amulet wrapped around her neck. A **DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana or Religion) check** reveals that it is a symbol of **Tharizdun**, a deity from **Oerth**, another planet in the Prime Material Plane. But because the characters are not from Oerth, they do not know the details about Tharizdun.

