

DEVILISH INFLUENCES

A conspiracy by the Powers of Hell for Rise of Tiamat

Introduction: The attempts of Tiamat to reform on Faerun face the opposition from her competitors in the Nine Hells. Agents placed on the world aim to thwart and block her efforts.

A set of side-quest missions for Rise of Tiamat

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INTRODUCTION

All the cunning of the devil is exercised in trying to tear us away from the word.

— Martin Luther

The works of Hell

Tiamat is using the Cult of the Dragon to enter Faerun in a bid to consolidate and grow her power. After mortal ages striving and scrambling in the Nine Hells, her recent upsets have convinced her that her efforts elsewhere have cost her too much power. And rather than waste it trying to regain her throne against the very forces that deposed her, leaving her in the weakened state, she needs to regain her power elsewhere.

She has concealed this information behind a number of facades. Her outermost facade, Tiamat pretends that this is nothing more than a whim, or a distraction for her other infernal schemes against her competitors and oppressors. On her next layer within, she leads her opponents to believe that this is an effort to gain resources unopposed by the forces of the Nine Hells. Below that, she pretends that all her efforts are merely masking a permanent and full retreat away from Avernus and the other Hells.

The truth is hidden behind all of this - Tiamat is indeed planning to fully leave the Nine Hells, where she is both a prisoner and a Power, to take up permanent residence in the Realms, and once again rule. Furthermore, she plans on using her time in the Realms to break the bonds that tie her to Avernus, and become a fully embodied and incarnate deity whose home plane is the Realms.

Her efforts have had dividends. Her competitors in the Nine Hells have placed agents here in response to her machinations. They do not have a unified response however. The first faction is led by the Pit Fiend Bel. Once a ruler of Avernus, though primarily as a proxy for the Archduke, he never managed to consolidate his power. He wants Tiamat to

stay in the Nine Hells, both to deny her resources, and to give him a chance to claim her power for himself. To that end, he has sent Lord Volmer a bone devil 11th level Wizard (enchanter) to aid the party and the Alliance. The next faction is led by the Archdevil Zariel, Duchess of Avernus. Having defeated both Bel and Tiamat, Zariel intends to keep her supremacy. Having Tiamat absent from Avernus gives Zariel time to root out Tiamat's agents and places of power in Avernus unopposed. More, she's convinced that Tiamat's retreat will reduce the dragon's power even more. To help achieve those goals, she has sent one of her best agents, the succubus Merisal, a 14th level Bard, to work against the efforts of the party and the Alliance.

The Archdevil Asmodeus, Archduke of the Nine Hells, however, knows the potential of Tiamat's maneuvers. In fact, the goal he suspects she is trying to achieve (and which is her goal in reality) is one of the reasons why the deities and other planar powers have negotiated the Prime Material Plane as a neutral no-man's land. His best outcome is achieved by not just stopping Tiamat, but punishing her for breaking the Treaty before any other planar powers notice. He also wants to prevent the other devils from gaining the same knowledge, so he is using two of his more covert agents to achieve his goals. Lord Volmer and Merisel are ultimately agents for the Archduke, despite their ostensible loyalty to Duchess Zariel and Lord Bel.

Merisel's schemes are a little less subtle than they could be, and the "allies" she pits against her opponents are overgeared, intending to increase her opponent's effectiveness against Tiamat. Lord Volmer's schemes are more straightforward; he directly grants the party favors and information to overcome Tiamat. In both cases, the agent's schemes are designed to corrupt or weaken the forces of good as well.

The Schemes of Lord Volmer

Lord Volmer has two main schemes that will involve the characters

Reading Is Good For You - the players have to break into a Lost Library and retrieve a key and map. The Library (or Lord Volmer) will reward the characters with a stat-boosting book. Obtaining the item requires freeing/"killing" an extremely powerful devil who has otherwise been trapped in the Library. The Library also happens to be in a temple filled with xenophobic elementalists monks who are also in service to an obscure good god.

The Wyrms Wyrd - Lord Volmer sends the characters after The Wyrms Wyrd, the original dragon-slaying sword. (Or Merisal lures/tricks them into it.) It is an artifact. It is also stored in a vault protected from infernal influences (along with a number of other items and weapons). Breaking into the vault using Volmer's aid will break that protection; and breaking in without his aid will severely weaken it.

Devilish Demands

Shortly before the Alliance calls the First Council, but after the characters have arrived in Waterdeep, they are approached by someone who is obviously a noble's servant. The man greets the character and informs the following.

I am Daethun, servant of Lord Volmer, Baron of the Dauntless Hills. He has heard stories of your prowess, and wishes to speak to you about the troubles threatening the North. If you agree, he would welcome you to a dinner at the Elfstone Tavern, at a time of your choosing.

If the characters push for more information, Daethun says

I know only that my Lord believes that he can aid you in your efforts. He has not told me how.

Daethun, is actually a **Cult Fanatic**, attached not to the Cult of the Dragon, but to a minor devil-worshipping sect. Lord Volmer, is a Bone Devil in service to the Pit Fiend Bel, who once ruled the First Layer of the Nine Hells, Avernus.

The Dauntless Hills are a region of Avernus, though knowing this is a DC 30 Arcana check. Determining that there is no region known as the Dauntless Hills is a DC 20 Intelligence check. Characters with proficiency in Cartographer's Tools receive advantage on this check, as well as their proficiency bonus.

If the characters do not agree, Daethun will meet with the characters again on a following day. This time, he is able to inform them that his Lord has information about the Cult's power structure and the location of key items for the Cult's purpose. If the characters still do not agree, Daethun presents them with a *Runestick of Heal* as a gift, and implores them to meet with his employer.

Runestick of Heal

A one-use item, usable by anyone, no attunement required. Casts Heal (100 hp).

If after, three tries, the characters decline Lord Volmer's invitation, proceed with the main adventure. The follow-on interlude of Reading Is Good For You will not be available, and the interlude of The Wyrms Wyrd will not feature Lord Volmer's forces.

Dinner with Lord Volmer

Daethun leads the characters to the Elfstone Tavern, where he accompanies them as they are lead by the host to an opulent private dining room.

Daethun leads you to a three-story tall-building whose corners appear to be anchored by massive oak trees that tower above the roof. It's sign is a pane of clear blue glass in the shape of a oval gemstone. Blue dancing lights orbit about and through the glass. You can see the leafy tops and trunks of other trees over the roof.

As you enter the inn, you are struck by the earthy smell of an old forest. The interior is dimly lit by silver-flamed torches along the walls and in chandeliers hanging from the branches of trees that are growing up through the center of the tap room. You are greeted by an elven lady who introduces herself as Yaereene, of House Ilbaereth. She leads you up some stairs to the top floor and a pair of large doors with two large half-elves standing guard to either side. After Deathun introduces you as Lord Volmer's guests, the guards open the doors, and Lady Yaereene leaves you.

The largest half-elf you have ever seen rises from his seat as you enter the room. He must easily stand 9 feet tall. Behind him, are two more half-elf guards, with a large, white, hooked polearm leaning against the wall between them. You are vaguely aware of a pair of elven serving maids as the giant elf approaches you.

The gigantic elf is, apparently, Lord Volmer, who greets the characters

Greetings! I am Volmer, Baron of the Dauntless Hills. I am glad to meet the Heroes of Greenrest. Hopefully, we can aid each other against the forces arrayed against the North. But first, dinner!

Lord Volmer's questions

- **Why are you so big?** It is the result of a spell a fiend cast upon me. Though it does cause me some pain, it is better than many of the curses I have heard inflicted on other less fortunate souls, and I fear what might occur if it was removed. So I leave it be.

- **What is the polearm made of?** Bone harvested from a fiendish predator that plagued the Dauntless Hills.

- **Where did you get the polearm?** From the hands of the bone devil who cast this spell on me.

- **Where are the Dauntless Hills?** Far, far, from here. I have traveled a journey that cannot be measured in miles, days, weeks, or months to be here, so I can aid the fight against the Hell-dragon.

But let us save talk of that unsavory task until after we have finished this wonderful dinner. Would you like some more of this elverquisst?

- **Why do you register as a fiend?** I suspect the fiendish energies involved in this spell cast upon me.

- **Who is the Hell-dragon?** I do not like to use her name, as it attracts her attention. Here, I believe you know her as the Queen of Dragons. She has also been called the Five-Headed Dragon, the Chromatic Mother, Takthesis, and Tiamat.

Lord Volmer has mastered the art of telling lies with truth, so trying to discern any lies in his responses is much harder than normal (Insight DC 17 at disadvantage). After dinner has concluded, Lord Volmer will begin to actually discuss business.

Let me more formally introduce myself - I am Lord Volmer, Baron of the Dauntless Hills, Warden of the Northwestern Pass, and vassal to the Lord Bel D'avern. I have traveled here, far from my homeland, on behalf of my lord, to aid you and your allies in your struggle against the Hell-dragon and dupes and minions. Unhappily, my homeland is distant enough that there is little direct material aid I can provide, and my delegation is small enough that I fear attracting the attention of the Hell-dragon's forces. Thus I am reduced, against my desires, to only providing aid covertly. First and foremost, what I can provide is information. How much do you know of the Hell-dragon?

Lord Volmer is probing to see if the characters know Tiamat's basic history (A DC 15 Arcana or Religion check that can only be made by characters with proficiency in those skills.) If they cannot, he provides it to them. They might also suspect (Arcana DC 22, proficient only) that Lord Bel D'Avern is the Pit Fiend Bel, a Lord of Avernus.

From her domain in the First Hell, Tiamat, strives against the Duchess Zariel, the ruler of the First Hell appointed by the Archduke Asmodeus, and the Pit Fiend Lord who overthrew Tiamat when the Archduke found her incompetent. Zariel works to see the Hell-dragon gone, so she may consolidate her power. The Pit Fiend Lord seeks to prevent the Hell-dragon from escaping his watch and power. The Helldragon must defend herself and her plans from these as well as you and your allies, diverting her attention from those small details that could fully ensure her victory.

For instance, this is not the first time she has tried to invade the Prime Material plane. My homeland suffered the last time she tried, so I seek to ensure her failure now, as she failed then. The details of her last attempt can be found in a tome known as "The Avatar's Tools: A History of Relics and Artifacts", and while normally I am sure she'd work to remove these works into her hoard, I am also sure that her attention has been diverted enough to forget this small detail.

I am here in Waterdeep as its status as a trading and magical metropolis makes it an ideal place to discover leads on obscure lore. It is also an ideal place for my secondary mission - expanding what little trade there is between my homeland and your land.

To that end, I need your help. I came prepared with a number of gifts and valuables for trade. However, our information about Waterdeep was a little outdated and a number of our more expensive trade items are less valuable than we thought.

However, I know of an obscure trove in the upper levels of Hallister's Maze that has not yet been plundered and is reputed to have some very worthwhile replacements. Would you be willing to retrieve those items for me, in exchange for the items they will replace?

Refusing Lord Volmer's Offer

If the player's refuse Volmer's offer, he lets them go peacefully. Other adventurers will be glad to raid the hoard for him. He will not, however, involve the characters again. The follow-on interlude of "Reading Is Good For You" will not be available, and the interlude of "The Wyrms Wyrd" will not feature Lord Volmer's forces.

Attacking Lord Volmer

Through any number of means, the characters may discover both that Lord Volmer is a bone devil, and decide to attack him. While he doesn't fear death, as he knows he will reform at full strength in the Nine Hells upon his demise, Lord Volmer and his cultist allies will retaliate.

Enc: Lord Volmer's Delegation CR: 14, XP: 10500

- **Lord Volmer, as above; CR: 11, XP 7200**
Daethun, a Cult Fanatic
4 Bodyguards (Veterans)
2 Servants (Cultists with a Cha 19)

Accepting Lord Volmer's Offer

The trove Volmer is revealing is a real one. It is also one that the Celestials were intending for a later use. It is a relatively minor cache, and Lord Volmer intends to distribute the items to good-aligned people, so none of the normal celestial responses will be triggered. It will, however, deprive the intended users of easily accessed resources. It also establishes Lord Volmer as a reliable source of information for the greedy adventurers that might seek him out.

Getting to the trove will be easy for the characters. The high levels of Undermountain have been cleared enough that there are few monsters left, and the ones that are are wise enough to leave adventures of the characters' level alone.

Without Lord Volmer's instructions, finding the trove would be impossible. As it is, the characters can locate the trove, but Lord Volmer is careful to inform them that he does not know how it is defended, beyond "probably very well". He also tells them that there is a particular gemstone, art object, and magic item he is interested in, and that he must have.

The Outer Door to the trove is trapped. Lord Volmer doesn't know this, or how to open it. The door is set in a 5 feet wide, 5 feet deep, and 10 feet high alcove.

Outer Trove Door CR 3, XP 700

The outer door emerges into a room with three doors and a riddle.

The past is closed, the future hidden, the end unforgiving and merciless. When the three are open, the seeker's sign shall find the way.

The leftmost door is made of finely crafted wood, reinforced with iron bars. The center door is made of marble, carved to show a mountain lake. The right door is made of polished, untarnished, featureless bronze. All three doors have obvious key holes. The expected heroes would have keys, the characters will have to pick the locks. All three doors are also trapped.

The Outer Door

Medium Trap (Mechanical)

AC: 17

HP: 50

Damage Resistances: bludgeoning, slashing, piercing

Damage Immunities: fire, cold, lightning, thunder, necrotic, radiant, poison, psychic

CR 3; XP 700

Detection

This door is guarded by a well-crafted trap. With a DC 18 Investigation check (or a DC 22 Perception check), a character may notice the slightly miscolored line of plaster covering the thin, blade-wide gap that separates the door from the corridor. Or perhaps the fact that the irregular flagstones in the floor form an actual single piece. Or may be that the cracks in the wall actually form a straight line, despite their apparent meanderings.

Disabling

This Disabling the trap is exceedingly difficult. If the characters had the key, they could stand on the pressure-plate and open the door safely. But

they don't, and without a great deal of work, it's impossible to avoid the pressure plate. Using skills to figure this some method to do this is a DC 15 check for any appropriate skill, followed by another DC 15 ability check to employ the method.

Opening the door takes a DC 18 Dexterity check with Thieves' Tools. Failure triggers the trap. This trap can be triggered repeatedly. Failing by more than 10 raises the DC of the check to open the door by one for each such failure.

Actions

The Trap triggers with someone standing on the pressure plate

- Melee Weapon Attack. +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 24 slashing damage. If the trap rolls a 20 on the attack roll, the target takes an extra 6d6 slashing damage. Roll another d20. If the trap rolls another 20, the target loses their hand above the wrist.

The Trap triggers without someone standing on the pressure plate

Traps: Inner Trove Doors; CR 5, XP 1800

Each door opens into a hallway. Each hallway is lined with wood panels along the walls, floors, and ceiling. Starting and stopping 5 feet from each end of the hallway are intricate carvings, depicting scenes from various scriptures, myths, and legends. Each hallway ends in another door. That door cannot be opened while the other door is open, is made identically, and is nothing more than an unavoidable trap.

The Inner Doors

Arranged as (1)Left, wood; (2)Center, stone; (3)Right, metal

Medium Trap (Mechanical, Magical)

AC: (1)15;(2)17;(3)19

HP: 40

Damage Vulnerabilities (1) fire; (2) thunder; (3) lightning

Damage Resistances: bludgeoning, slashing, (1)lightning, thunder; (2) piercing, fire, cold; (3) piercing, fire, cold

Damage Immunities: necrotic, radiant, poison, psychic; (1) cold, piercing; (2) lightning; (3) thunder

CR 5; XP 1800necrotic, radiant, poison, psychic

Detection

Observant characters can spot the strange bits of inlaid (1)ironwood; (2)stone; (3)bronze right in front of the door, right in line with where the door's locking bars would be if the door was swung open. Investigation DC 13, Perception DC 16. Any one with Arcana may recognize the inlays as ancient dialect of Netherese (DC 17). If they have the Netheril language, they can read them as a folk invocation of protection.

Disabling

The keyhole is the disarming mechanism for the trap; if the key is inserted, turned to unlock the door, then pressed in farther and turned the other way, the locking bars fully retract into the door. Otherwise, they protrude just enough to contact those inlays. Unlocking the door is a DC 16 Dexterity check with Thieves' Tools. Disarming the trap can be done with the same roll, but requires a DC 21 check. Characters who unlock the door, but fail to disarm the trap may make a DC 13 Perception check to determine the locking bars have not fully retracted. Anyone watching the locking bars spots this automatically. The lock can be attempted more than once, and if the characters have successfully disarmed any of the other Inner Trove Doors, they make the disarm attempt at advantage.

Opening the door without disarming the trap triggers the trap. So does rolling a 10 or less on the attempt to disarm the trap.

Actions

The Trap triggers

- The trap (1)exhales fire; (2)emits sound; (3)shoots a web of small electrical bolts in a 20-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw, taking 55 (10d10) (1)fire; (2)thunder; (3)lightning; damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Reactions

Rearm

- The trap rearms once the door is closed. Once the trap is disarmed all subsequent attempts to disarm it have advantage.

Traps: Trove Hallway Doors (see below); CR 10, XP 5900

The actual entrance to the trove is hidden in the first five feet of the hallway. An

Investigation check (DC 23) will reveal that there is a square patch of slightly miscolored wood on the right wall of each hallway.

Knocking three times on each of these panels will cause the first five feet of the left walls to sink into the floor, revealing a short passage that leads to the trove itself.

The Hallway Doors

Arranged as (1)Left, wood; (2)Center, stone; (3)Right, metal

Medium Trap (Magical)

AC: (1)15;(2)17;(3)19

HP: 80

Damage Vulnerabilities (1) fire; (2) thunder; (3) lightning

Damage Resistances: bludgeoning, slashing, (1)lightning, thunder; (2) piercing, fire, cold; (3) piercing, fire, cold

Damage Immunities: necrotic, radiant, poison, psychic; (1) cold, piercing; (2) lightning; (3) thunder
CR 5; XP 1800

Detection

Observant characters can spot the strange bits of inlaid (1)ironwood; (2)stone; (3)bronze right in front of the door, right in line with where the door's locking bars would be if the door was swung open. Investigation DC 13, Perception DC 16. Anyone with Arcana may recognize the inlays as ancient dialect of Netherese (DC 17). If they have the Netheril language, they can read them as a folk invocation of protection. A Perception check DC 13, or any ability to detect magic, reveals that the inlays glow with a blend of arcane and holy power.

Disabling

This trap cannot be disabled, though it seems to respond to the same techniques as the inner doors.

Actions

The Trap Triggers (Recharge 4-6)

- The hallway fills with holy (1)fire; (2)noise; (3)lightning. Each creature in the hallway must make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw, taking 55 (10d10) (1)fire; (2)thunder; (3)lightning damage plus 55 (10d10) radiant damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. Fiends and undead receive double damage.

Reactions

(1)Extinguished; (2)Silence; (3)Grounded

- The trap immediately stops making attacks if the door is closed, the (1)Left; (2)Center; (3)Right Inner Trove Door is closed, and there are no creatures in the hallway. If not all of those conditions hold true, after one minute the (1)Left; (2)Center; (3)Right Inner Trove Door closes, then after another minute, this door closes, then after one more minute, the attacks stop. At that point the trap resets.

Determine the contents of the trove by rolling once on the Treasure Hoard table equal to the party's level, then rolling once each on the 5000 gp Gemstone, 7500 gp Art Objects, and Magic Item Table I. The last three are the items Lord Volmer cares about.

Lord Volmer is willing to give all the coins and other gems to the party. He will negotiate for any art object worth at least 2500 gp, and for any rare or better magic item. He is will to trade the art objects for an equivalent value of gems and art objects worth 750 gp or less. As for magic items, he'll trade the players for the few he has. Of course, you should ensure that at least one of these items is a character's dream item.

That dream item should have two Minor Properties - Wicked and one random one (reroll any 3, 18, and 20). Any quirks it has should be slightly warped, to reflect Lord Volmer's intended corrupting influence. So a Confident item would make the user Overconfident, a Repulsive item makes the wearer want to clean themselves, a Hungry item's blood must be given unwillingly, etc.