

# All Fun & Games

**The dwarf underworld city of**

# **Chasm**

*by Clark Olson-Smith*

Four pages of adventure-inspiring fun!

*Inside you'll discover...*

- a description of the dwarf underworld city of Chasm
- reasons your player characters might go there
- a couple of icon-influenced adventure seeds
- a few NPC sketches
- a handful of tavern names
- options for travel scenes
- three magical items
- a wondrous item, and
- a unique potion.

The true nature of the Chasm adventure(s) is up to you, dear GM, and what suits your campaign. You also get to build your own battles!

The dwarf underworld city of Chasm is 13<sup>th</sup> Age compatible and is easily ported to any other fantasy RPG system.



## The City

Chasm is a city of the dwarf kingdom, north of the Fickle Sea and west of Highport, a city of the Radiant Empire.

In addition to its incredible mines, Chasm is known for its massive waterfall—Chasm Falls. Dwarves created the falls ages ago by diverting water underground from a major river on the surface.

Chasm Falls is a sheet of falling water a mile high and a mile wide. It and the chasm itself separate the city from the dwarf “Low Road,” a major route through the underworld. Those who turn from the Low Road toward the city pass through the falls at one of three huge stone arches. From the foot of the arches, three gilded stone bridges stretch thousands of feet across the natural rock rift that gives Chasm its name.

The city is carved into the face of the far cliff. Light from fires both natural and magical give the cliff wall a patchwork glow, to a depth of more than a dozen dozen stories. The wealthiest dwarves live closest to the lake below, secluded from the bustling commerce above.

Chasm Taverns	
Name	Clientele
Ale-Forged	forgeborn/dwarf-forged
<i>The King's Ransom</i>	nobility/wealthy
The Golden Vein	mine owners/managers
Pick & Shovel	miners
Seven Glittering Mugs	jewelers/gem-smiths
Treaty House	elves
The Works	metalsmiths

## King Hammerhelm's Treasury

Chasm also hosts a mysterious private treasury of King Hammerhelm. The vault entryway is deep in the chasm, underneath the Low Road, behind the roaring falls, just above the lake at its base.

Not much else is known. On certain dwarven festivals and King's days, the King's treasuries in other cities are open to the public, with ale freely flowing. But not this one. This treasury is shrouded in secrecy, and what the King has hidden here is a matter of eager speculation.

Every dwarf in Chasm has their pet theory. Some say the King is having a new throne constructed inside. Others insist the treasury contains spoils of the ancient war with the elves (all of it illegal, since the peace accord required seized treasure be returned). One mad dwarf—who daily prophesies the end of days in the bustling Chasm commercial district—claims the treasury houses a doomsday device: to be activated when orcs finally

overrun the kingdom. Outside observers suggest these theories reflect dwarves' anxieties about the future of the kingdom itself. (The truth, of course, is up to you, dear GM, and whatever fits your campaign.)

## The Invitation

The adventurers are invited to Chasm, at least ostensibly, to clear an outbreak of fungus and fungaloids. The outbreak is along the shore of the lake at the bottom of the Chasm Falls, near the entrance to the King's Treasury. Who invites them may depend on the adventurers' icon relationships.

### Icon option: King Hammerhelm

If King Hammerhelm is an important icon in this game, then Dwale, a royal messenger, invites the adventurers to Chasm to clear the fungaloid infestation and promises reward.

An adventurer's 5 with King Hammerhelm provides the perfect opportunity to introduce this adventure—a benefit (the reward) with a complication (the fungaloid quest).

An adventurer's 6 with King Hammerhelm works too. But give the additional benefit of the following potion (one per character), awarded by Kalar, chief of security at the King's Treasury:

**Potion of Fungicide:** for a single day, this potion reduces by 5 the DCs of fungus-related hazards. Also, in battle, the potion allows characters to deal 2d6 damage as a free action, after fungus monsters hit with attacks against AC or PD.

For extra GM-fun, make the potion an ointment—sticky and putrid—that the adventurers must slather on their skin, clothes, and armor. Consider blaming fumbles in battle to this foul and uncomfortable ointment.

### Icon option: Sister of Secrets

If the Sister of Secrets is an important icon in this game, then the adventurers meet a stranger who recruits them to investigate what King Hammerhelm has hidden in the Chasm treasury. Fighting fungaloids will be their cover.

An adventurer's 5 with the Sister gives a good opportunity for inviting them to Chasm, as above.

An adventurer's 6 deserves an additional bonus. This limited-use wondrous item, given by the Sister's agent will do the trick.

**Ring of Concealment:** The constantly-shifting pattern on this intricately carved wooden ring seems

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to conceal...a figure? a phrase? You can't make it out, if it's there at all.

When you whisper a secret while wearing this ring, it renders you utterly invisible for a single battle (until you use a standard action) or up to 5 minutes outside of combat.

To use it a second time, make a normal save. For a third use, a hard save. After the third use—or when you fail a save, whichever comes first—the ring's magic is spent. It becomes a normal, non-magical wooden ring...filled with your secrets.

For additional GM-fun, you might require the whispered secrets relate to the character's **One Unique Thing**. Also, after the ring becomes inert, let what was hidden in its pattern be revealed! Maybe that happens immediately. Maybe you wait for another 5 or 6 with the Sister of Secrets. Either way, you get to describe the image or message.

## The NPCs

### Dwale

Dwale is the only gnome Voice of the King. She is young with a floor-length white robe, and her speech has a regal, sing-song quality.

Dwale will make a public proclamation in the tavern or town square wherever the adventurers are before coming to Chasm, saying: "King Hammerhelm seeks champions!"

In response to questions, Dwale will always put the most positive (or evasive) spin on the nature of the challenge in Chasm. For example, she will credit the King for allowing the fungaloid threat to grow to increase the thrill and glory of "the games." If this is mere propaganda, Dwale truly believes it.

Other potential NPC champions may take an interest in winning gold and glory. Let this be the case, especially if no icon benefit with King Hammerhelm is in play. Dwale then must choose whom to hire. Let the adventurers suggest how they will win the job—for example, feats of strength, drinking games, or simple persuasion. Attempts to intimidate Dwale will fail, and she'll choose the adventurer's competitors. But even should they fail, the adventurers could always race the rival party to Chasm or ambush and fight them and try to steal their chance for glory.

Dwale will promise reward: gold, magical items, and a written commendation from King Hammerhelm

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## The Competition

The other party vying to be hired for the fungaloid quest work for an icon whose relationship with one or more of the adventurers is complicated. Feel free to make use of the icon options below, which pairs icons *and leaders' names and descriptions*.

### Bastard Prophet

Relov, a half elf with too many jeweled rings for an acolyte who vowed poverty

### Divine Empress

*La'morak*, a *condescending* great-niece of the Empress sent as emissary to an embarrassingly podunk place and now pique-ishly delaying the inevitable

### Lightning Witch

Elgort, a glad-handing human wizard with a sadistic sprite for a familiar

### the Stewardship

Four Winds, a flighty druid with feathers in her hair

### Valkyrie

Urgh, an unrelenting half-orc escaped slave turned commander wielding a battle-hammer as tall as he is

Let *the competition's iconic connection* be obvious. In fact, suggest that the adventurer(s) know the leader of the other party. Ask the players one or more of the following:

- When did you first learn to despise this person?
- How did they harm or insult you the last time you saw them?
- What does he/she have to do with your One Unique Thing?

## The stranger

The stranger is an androgynous half-elf, middle aged, with a light grey cloak, and a voice that's intentionally distorted by some concealed magic.

Wherever the adventurers are before coming to Chasm, the stranger will find a way to draw their attention. A barkeep may place free mugs of ale in front of them, nodding toward a dark, smoke-filled corner. Or a child in a marketplace may clumsily pick one of the hero's pockets and duck into an alley. There, the stranger will be, offering a job and reward.

The stranger will decline to share their name but if pressed will give three—Lark, Witt, and Starling—and let the adventurers choose. They will then describe the fungaloid outbreak in Chasm as a scandal the King wants

to keep secret. It's lasted months, not weeks as the dwarves insist. And more, the fungaloids broke into the treasury! (Or out of it, and something more sinister is going on!)

The stranger will tell the adventurers where to find Dwale, Voice of the King, and give the one with the strongest relationship with the Sister of Secrets a forged commendation from King Hammerhelm. "This," the stranger will say, "will get you hired."

The stranger will promise reward: magical items from the stranger's boss and gold from King Hammerhelm.

## Kalar

Kalar is the chief of security at the King's Treasury in Chasm, which is separate from the Chasm guard. Once in Chasm, the heroes will report to him.

Kalar is also tallest dwarf in the city with a deep booming voice. His armor is ages-old and has deep battle scars, but, well-polished, it gleams gold and silver. He laughs quickly and heartily, but there's grief in his eyes...and fear.

If the heroes inquire, Kalar insists the best fighters are recruited to defend the Low Road. He himself would've gone, but the King found him indispensable at the Treasury.

## The Journey

It will suffice to run a montage scene to describe the characters' travel to Chasm. On the other hand, adding the following optional details may set the scene, making it more plausible that King Hammerhelm would need outside help to defend his own most-favorite treasury vault. Moreover, they may offer an optional adventure path after the characters deal with the main threat.

### Travel details

There's no other way to Chasm except by the Low Road, traveling either from Hammer in the south or Firedeep in the north. All along the way, the characters see signs that the Low Road is under siege. The reality seems far beyond even the worst rumors circulating.

Specifically, they see (or hear about from other travelers):

- defense forces are haggard and poorly equipped
- recently, a handful of trade caravans have been decimated
- monster carcasses, burnt out wagons, and broken stonework remain uncleared in the aftermath of battles

## Travel hazard

Also, either in Hammer or Firedeep, the adventurers may be hired to provide Low Road defense while they travel. The going rate for these temporary arrangements is 10gp per monster head, redeemable in any dwarf city along the Low Road, including Chasm. The heroes could win heads through the following skill challenge.

Defend travelers from ghouls: DC 25. All adventurers roll. An adventurer who succeeds, kills two ghouls and collects their heads. If one adventurer fails, they kill two ghouls and collect their heads, but also make the first attack below.

When any additional adventurers fail, they also kill two ghouls and collect their heads, but a traveler is killed. Make both attacks below, the first against the adventurer(s) who missed, and the second against the whole party.

**Ghoulish bite +15 vs AC**—4d6 negative energy damage (single target)

**"If only we got here sooner..." +15 vs MD**—2d10 psychic damage (multiple targets)

### Icon option: Vampiress

If the Vampiress is an important icon in this game, then these ghouls have a critical weakness.

An adventurer with a 5 with the Vampiress can spend it to know and say the words of power that dispel them. Each adventurer collects two ghoul heads.

An adventurer with a 6 with the Vampiress can do the same. Also, in gratitude for saving their lives, the travelers give each adventurer an item of food that grants a free recovery, to be used now or saved for later in the adventure.

## Travel battle

An optional battle can also make clear the dire situation in the Low Road. It will be most effective if combined with the details and hazard above.

Within earshot of Chasm Falls, the heroes come upon a battle between the Hammers-in-the-Dark (dwarf Low Road defenders) and drow. The Hammers are losing badly; three of them have already fallen in battle.

Make it a very easy battle for the adventurers, belying the poor state of Low Road defenses.

### Icon option: Silver Master

If the Silver Master is an important villainous icon in this game, then these drow are his agents. Consider using the drow's nastier specials in this battle.

An adventurer's 6 with the Silver Master means the drow leader wields a magical weapon. After the battle, that adventurer may retrieve and attune to it.

With a 5, the weapon was stolen from the Silver Master's enemies, the elves of Evergreen. It urgently wants to return to its rightful owner. In the first roleplaying encounter with Chasm dwarves, its quirk flares, and the adventurer reflexively draws and brandishes the weapon. Play this for humor if you like, with no lasting consequences. But afterwards, the weapon speaks, promising more of the same, unless the adventurer vows to return it to Evergreen.

If the Silver Master is an important heroic force in this game, these drow have gone rogue. They fear being exposed to him. An adventurer with a 6 with the Silver Master can spend it to intimidate the drow into negotiating. In exchange for their life and freedom, the drow leader will surrender a magical item to that adventurer and promise to leave the Low Road.

A 5 may result in the following complication. After surrendering, the drow break their promise and return in greater numbers at an inopportune time to attack the heroes and retrieve the surrendered item.

#### Travelers' Names

##### Dirk Bellows

*Young dwarf con man, er...smith. I mean, a smith's striker. Yeah, a striker. Just out on a little walkabout. Claims he has nothing to offer but gratitude.*

##### Gilphrena

Magical researcher with plans to visit a little-known library in Chasm. Human woman. Gratefully offers a copper coin that dissolves on the tongue, leaving a sharp aftertaste.

##### "Lump" Spikedriver

Retired miner returning home from visiting cousins in Firedeep. Dwarf. Only uses his outside voice. Offers a swig of firewater. It burns.

##### Lady Lyra Silversong

High elf noblewoman traveling with her daughter, Kara, and two dark elf attendants. Offers elven bread, enough for the rest of the adventurers.

## The Reward

Well, gold of course. Plus these magical items. The adventurers may receive them several different ways.

- Kalar or the stranger gives one or more of them in advance to aid the adventurers
- the drow surrenders one of them
- the adventurers discover one as treasure during the adventure
- Kalar's reward after the adventurers defeat the fungaloids
- the stranger's reward after the adventurers deliver information about the contents of the Treasury

## Weapon of Escalation

Default bonus: +1/2/3 attack bonus

Add the escalation die to miss damage dealt with this weapon.

Also, once per battle, when scoring a critical hit with this weapon, immediately increase the escalation die by +1. For the rest of the battle, increase the escalation die after your turn, instead of at the start of each round.

**Quirk:** Always escalates quickly.

## Medallion of Truth

Default bonus: +1/2/3 bonus to death saves

This heavy medallion opens to reveal many clockwork hands and a face of inscrutable symbols.

With concentration, you can study it to discern whether what you're hearing is true or false. Gain a +4 bonus to such discernment skill checks.

At the GM's discretion, if you're both into improvisation, on a natural 20, you may describe a deeper or truer meaning suggested by the medallion. Or perhaps the GM may let the benefits or complications of icon relationships manifest through the medallion.

**Quirk:** Constantly fact-checks.

## Boots of Maneuverability

Default bonus: +1/2/3 bonus to disengage checks and other fancy footwork

Once per battle, subtract 1 from your natural attack roll.

**Quirk:** Can't stand still.

Stay tuned for the forthcoming

# Icons of the Radiant Empire

With new icons to level-up your next game!

- Bastard Prophet
- Divine Empress
- King Hammerhelm
- Lightning Witch
- Silver Master
- the Stewardship
- Valkyrie
- Vampiress
- and more!

Including for each icon: descriptions, locations, relationships with other icons, and true threats.

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The dwarf underworld city of Chasm

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