

DUNGEON CRAWL CLASSICS[®]

DWELLER BETWEEN THE WORLDS

DCC #102: A LEVEL 1 ADVENTURE
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A LEVEL 1 ADVENTURE

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INTRODUCTION



Remember the good old days, when adventures were underground, NPCs were there to be killed, and the finale of every dungeon was the dragon on the 20th level? Those days are back. *Dungeon Crawl Classics* adventures don't waste your time with long-winded speeches, weird campaign settings, or NPCs who aren't meant to be killed. Each adventure is 100% good, solid dungeon crawl, with the monsters you know, the traps you remember, and the secret doors you know are there somewhere.

Dweller Between the Worlds is a *Dungeon Crawl Classics* RPG adventure intended for a group of five to six level-1 characters. While the characters can be of any class, parties without at least one warrior or dwarf may find themselves at a disadvantage without those character's martial abilities, particularly in the first encounter, which requires the PCs to organize and lead groups of troops into combat. Clerics may also find their special abilities useful against Talaat's host, whose extraplanar nature makes them susceptible to turn unholy checks.

This adventure can be deadly, and the climax could irrevocably alter the PCs fates. The adventure draws the characters into a conflict with an ancient extraplanar entity that exists outside their world, whose hosts have consumed countless planets for raw materials and slaves that – if left unchecked – would transform their home into a desolate waste. If the characters succeed, they can drive the host back into the realm between the worlds, even close the portal for a time, but there is a high likelihood that the PCs may have to seal themselves behind the reft to prevent the further invasion of their own plane. In this case, this adventure can also be used as a launching-off point for judges who wish to take their campaigns into the extradimensional planes, with the PCs choosing to use the portal to find passage to other worlds or even confront the ageless entity and the source of the host itself.

BACKGROUND

Long ages past, when the primordial entropy out of which order was born first sent echoes throughout the void, the wormspawn of Chaos known as Talaat was born. Created from the same boiling abyss that coalesced into stars and planets, Talaat was instead cast aside by the gods of Law and doomed to writhe at the edges of existence, a place that was both space and not space, a place between the worlds. There, Talaat has existed for immeasurable time, ever-hungry for the forms of creation that border its yawning extraplanar prison.

Despite the efforts of the forces of order, Talaat has managed to find means to reach our plane, creating small refts, or portals, into the physical realm, that, if left unchecked, can grow to consume entire worlds. By directing the raw stuff of chaos where the barrier between dimensions is weakest, Talaat has opened countless such tears in space, unleashing an extraplanar host to raid for raw materials to feed its insatiable hunger. Such lands touched by the host of Talaat are condemned to be transformed into barren wastes as each reft grows ever larger between Talaat's plane and ours.



Talaat has now opened one such reft on the character's world, allowing the raw stuff of chaos to leech into this plane and awaken ancient evils and long-slumbering dark gods, sending its inexorable host to plunder and enslave its inhabitants. Now it is up to the PCs to fight off the hosts of Talaat and seal the portal to Talaat's realm before their world is destroyed!

STARTING THE ADVENTURE

Dweller Between the Worlds is intended for characters early in their adventuring careers, after they have proven themselves able with weapon and staff to mark themselves as competent fighters; it can be introduced as a follow-on to a funnel or at the start of a longer campaign.

The adventure takes place in the Valley of Dalur, a land with no single ruler. Instead, Dalur is home to several different clans of peoples bound by kinship or fealty, pledged to lords known as thanes. When the adventure begins, the PCs are in the service of Lord Jannssen, thane of one of the largest western clans. The PCs may have begun their service as a result of a prior deed that brought them to Jannssen's attention, or they may simply belong to one of the many villages in the valley that have sworn themselves to Jannssen. However they arrived in his service, the PCs find themselves trusted, though minor members of Lord Jannssen's court.

A few weeks before the start of the adventure, an unseasonably early winter settled on the lands of the valley, and troubling rumors have spread of strange raiders emerging from the eastern forest with the woods themselves said to have grown dark and inhospitable to travelers. A great light has also become visible in the eastern skies at night, far away from any natural auroras that normally dance across the vault of the northern sky. Disturbed by these events, Lord Jannssen has traveled with his most trusted warriors, including the PCs, to meet with the thanes from each of the clans of the valley at the Fell, a place of council since ancient times, to debate what action to take. It is at this uncertain juncture that the adventure begins.

AREA A - THE FELL

The encampment sprawls across the low hills before you, a vast gathering of tents and campfires larger than you ever recall seeing. Thanes from a dozen clans and hundreds of warriors have answered the call to meet, and the air is filled with the ringing of blacksmith hammers and punctuated by the din of martial activity. What would normally be a festive atmosphere, though, feels oppressive, weighted down by the rumors of the strange raiders and the unnatural aurora that can be seen shining in the eastern sky at night, shimmering with a crimson glow that seems to grow with each passing day.

The adventure begins at the Fell, an area of weathered hills with exposed toothlike outcroppings of rock surrounded by a wide plain of grasslands; the site has been a traditional gathering point of the clans of the valley for hundreds of years. The encampment is both a mustering point and a festival, with stories, games, and food shared between the assembled clans as they await the deliberations of the thanes. Normally a festive time, the somber mood of the gathering is reflected in the overcast grey skies and bitter wind that steadily blows from the east. There are hundreds of warriors from across the land at the meeting, represented by well-recognizable banners, though notably as of yet none of the eastern clans have arrived, and those messengers sent with summons to their villages have not returned.

As the party waits along with the rest of the warriors, they are free to explore the encampment. Basic goods and equipment can be found for sale or trade at listed prices per the DCC rulebook, and the PCs can also find blacksmiths who can repair broken weapons and armor. The characters may also wish to gather information from the distant clans on what they have seen and heard about the recent strange events. Very little is known about the creatures said to be behind the raids, only that they suddenly appeared one month ago near the eastern forest, attacking nearby communities.

The following are rumors the PCs may hear regarding the strange creatures. Roll once per PC, rerolling any duplicates, and twice for warriors and dwarves who make a practice of enjoying the company of other martial types. It is up to the players to sort the truth from the more fantastical elements that may mislead the characters.

Table 1-1: Overheard Rumors

Roll (d12)	Rumor
1	"I saw a huge shadow swoop from the sky and clutch a whole cow in its claws before flying away."
2	"A woodsman from a village next to the forest was said to have fallen into a hole big enough to swallow an entire lodge-home."
3	"All the animals have left the eastern forest, and no light now falls beneath the canopy of trees."
4	"It is said a pale woman living in an ancient grove entraps travelers in the forest, consuming their minds as their bodies waste away for eternity."

- 5 "The river Lind has turned black where it touches the soil of the forest floor, and no creature will drink from it."
- 6 "Entire villages lay abandoned. The people disappeared so suddenly that they left forges lit and entire meals to rot on their tables."
- 7 "Haldura, the thane of the eastern clans, felled one of the creatures in battle before sickening and dying the next day."
- 8 "Riders on hellish mounts leave the forest after sunset to burn homes and crops on nightly raids."
- 9 "Worms the size of a person's forearm crawl through the earth, eating crops and even devouring small animals."
- 10 "The source of the shining glow comes from somewhere deep in the forest where a great comet fell to the earth and left a crater several miles wide."
- 11 "Wherever the creatures raid, it is said they covet anything made of iron or steel."
- 12 "The appearance of the creatures has awakened an ancient evil in the swamp that spans the central part of the valley."

The first two days of the gathering pass uneventfully as the clans await the decision of the thanes. On the morning of the third day, read or paraphrase the following:

On the third day of the assembly, you awaken to a blanket of snow that covers the encampment. The mutterings of your fellow clansmen and women voice what everyone knows: that this unseasonal advent of winter has not been heard of in the living memory of even the most elder members of the clan. The bitter cold bites at your skin, and you wish you had traded for some furs to keep you warm.

As the gloom-shrouded sun lifts above the horizon, cries sound out as several winged shapes – each the size of a longboat – descend from the clouds onto the camp. Lord Jannssen and the other thanes take up their arms with shouts to repel the attackers as scattered groups of warriors run to grab shields and weapons. Unless they are rallied, you realize that the disorganized fighters will be quickly overwhelmed by the creatures, slaughtering dozens of warriors.

The creatures are rakki, snakelike "children" of Talaat with large grotesque faces set between a pair of muscular arms extending below their wings. Rakki are large creatures, each roughly 30' long, that carry heavy curved blades the size of a full-grown human.

The scale of the conflict is vast – dozens of descending rakki engage groups of warriors from the different clans across the spread-out encampment, and the individual actions of the PCs have little effect on the outcome of the battle. Instead, during the ensuing conflict, each PC acts as the commander of a group of warriors, leading them in battle against the extraplanar raiders. During the conflict, combat follows additional rules as detailed in Appendix A. These rules represent a simplified approach to handling combat between large forces in DCC, allowing for larger-scale conflicts to play out while still keeping the basic concepts of DCC encounters.

