

MADNESS in the UNDERMARCH

By Chad Rose – Using the format found in “The Burrowing Dead” by Evan Franke.

The following scenario is meant to be used with 3rd level characters using the 13th Age role-playing game. This scenario itself means to be a somewhat open setting with adventure potential, allowing some flexible, collaborative, and non-linear play. You will need to “flesh out” some characters and places for your game. Please feel free to change anything to better suit your needs.

Battle Captain/Emperor + Dwarf: Thumbnail A



Undermarch, the great Underworld highway rolling along beneath the earth. Filled with fat merchant wagons, laden mules and travelers from afar all making their way between Underhome, the Dwarven city under the mountain called the Forge and the great Dwarven outpost of Anvil.

The longest and most renowned of the trade and security routes in all of the Dragon Empire, it is the pride of the Dwarves and the relief of many a traveler hoping to avoid entanglements with Orcs, the Hell Marsh residents, or gods forbid, a giant out of the Giantwalk.

Basic Plot/Hook

Recently merchants and caravans travelling the Undermarch have been waylaid. The merchants left dead and their goods stolen. The Undermarch Officers, appointed by the Dwarf King's military, have been unable to locate this new threat. The Dwarf King has decided to look for help from groups of adventurers and mercenaries to stifle this new threat, not wanting to allocate resources from elsewhere in the Dwarven empire that are needed to defend against the encroachment of the Orcs, the denizens of Hell Marsh, and the threats from the Giantwalk above the Undermarch or from the poisoned Drow residing deep below in the Underworld.

GM Info (What's really happening)

The Diabolist has decided to spread her chaotic influence to the Dwarven Empire. She feels that the Dwarves are "deserving" of some of her time for making it difficult for her devoted followers and their masses to move east out of the Hell Marsh.

The Diabolist has chosen several key devotees, and using the allure of her power and magic, has raised them up amongst her followers and ordered them to establish sects devoted to her all along the Undermarch. Their mission is to disrupt the flow of people and goods along the Undermarch, weaken the Dwarven defenses in the area, and then sit back and

watch as the Dwarves collapse under the weight of the Orcs, Demons, Giants and Drow pushing at them from every side already.

What nobody knows is that these sects are recruiting Derro into their ranks. The Derro are Dwarves who have dug too deep into the Underworld and have uncovered some great horror that has corrupted them. The Diabolist assumes that they have found a great demon of power that she hopes to someday sway to her cause.

What you as the GM want to do, as much as you can, is to throw off the party using the interaction with the NPC's and Investigation clues to almost convince them that the Undermarch Officers and Sergeant Vaak Darvak or the Drow are behind the attacks. Only when the party finally pursues the attackers of a caravan do they realize the true culprits are the Derro, and eventually behind them the Diabolist's devoted.

Icon Involvement

Icon Involvement offers some suggestions for a few of the Icons as to why the characters would have come to the Undermarch.



Elf Queen – *"The Drow? Again? Go and verify that they are the ones causing this madness and I will deal with them as necessary."*



Prince of Shadows – *“I can’t have someone else robbing the dwarves of their goods! Not when the dwarves go out of their way to bring their magnificent magical materials literally to my doorstep and to one of my favorite cities, Glitterhaegen.”*



Lich King – *“I surmise that a living dungeon may have surfaced near to the Undermarch and that its undead denizens are responsible for these attacks. I could use some fresh recruits... Get it? I said, “fresh recruits,” but they’re undead, ha ha ha haaa.”*



Dwarf Lord – *“Orcs, demons, Drow, giants and now this! There’s not enough time in the day! Find and snuff out this new threat!*



Emperor – *“Fear not my good folk of the Dragon Empire for I have some of my very best people on the job.”*



Archmage – *“Oh my, we simply CAN NOT allow the possibility of a powerful magical artifact enroute to me to be stolen!”*

The Setup Part I

(GM’s, read through the adventure so you can decide how to approach interaction with the NPC’s, what information the party might acquire, and when and if encounters should take place to move the story along.

See the NPC, Investigation and Encounters section.)

The first two paragraphs of the adventure as well as the paragraph under Basic Plot/Hook is a good place to layout the overall scenario to the players.

From there the adventure normally starts with the party’s reasons for traveling to Anvil. It could be as simple as just trying to help out the people of Anvil with the attacks in the Undermarch, or, one or more of the Icons have an influence on one or more of the characters in the party and the characters are traveling to Anvil for those reasons. (See Icon Involvement above.)

Now that you have the basic scenario described to the players and a basic idea about why the party is travelling to Anvil, open with a description of their arrival in Anvil. The party will most likely be staying at the Keg ‘n’ Casket Tavern in Anvil. You can use the following points to describe Anvil or you can create your own if it suits your campaign better.

Anvil

1. Anvil is found on the southern side of a large mountain at the northern end of the Giantwalk.
2. Anvil is mountainous and many Dwarven holdings have been excavated beneath.
3. The outpost of Anvil is mostly a town that has sprung up outside the

entrance to the Undermarch around the Dwarven holdings and grown down the side of the mountain.

4. The most popular stop for travelers in Anvil is the Keg 'n' Casket Tavern owned by Farvo Lorov. (A likely place for the characters to stay while investigating.)
5. The Undermarch Officers have a headquarters just outside the Undermarch exit in Anvil.

If/when the players decide to learn more or actually visit the Undermarch you can use the following points to describe the Undermarch or you can create your own if it suits your campaign better. NPC's can also provide this information as well as clues as to what's going on. (See NPC's and Investigation.)

The Undermarch

1. The Undermarch runs for about 150 miles underground between Forge and Anvil.
2. The Undermarch is wide, as wide as some of the most travelled roads in the Dragon Empire.
3. Passage from one end of the Undermarch to the other costs 1 gold piece.
4. Many side passages, crevices, and cracks are found in the walls of the Undermarch.
5. The Undermarch passes through caverns of glittering quartz, runs side-

by-side with underground rivers, and is bridged over long, Underworld lakes.

6. Some folk have set up shops in the Undermarch, providing goods and services.
7. There is a tour group that is lead by Ilda Armamak describing the construction of the Undermarch for a fee.

NPC's

Speaking with NPC's or locals will potentially lead to the Investigation section.

Stats for the following NPC's can be found at the end of the adventure.

1. Ilda Armamak (Female Dwarf) – Official Undermarch tour guide of the Anvil end.
“Work was completed on the Undermarch in the 11th Age, over here you can see..., etc., etc.”
2. Sergeant Vaak Darzak (Male Dwarf) – Sergeant of the Undermarch Officers of Anvil.
“Well of course I've been down there looking around! That's my job!”
(Vaak Darzak is feeling pressure from the Dwarf King to solve this problem. He has been searching the Undermarch on his own time to try and find the cause of the attacks. He finds it a great insult that the Dwarf King has called out to adventurers and mercenaries for aid. He will do

everything in his power to keep the party from solving the problem before him and his Undermarch Officers.)

3. Undermarch Officers (Male & Female Dwarves) – The Undermarch Officers of Anvil are responsible for the safety of travelers at the Anvil end of the Undermarch.

“You just stay out of the way, we’ve got this under control...What!? Another caravans been robbed!”

4. Merchants, travelers, folks travelling the Undermarch (all races) – Many different folks travel the Undermarch for many different reasons.

“It’s a lot darker down here than I thought it would be, though it is underground I suppose.”

5. The Keg ‘n’ Casket Tavern proprietor, Farvo Lorov (Male Moonwreck Dwarf) – Owner and barkeep of the Keg ‘n’ Casket Tavern, a favorite stop for travelers to Anvil.

“In the Moonwreck, drinkin’ was our business. In Anvil, coffins are our business. What can I get ya?”

6. Folks in the Keg ‘n’ Casket Tavern (Mostly Dwarves with a fair share of the other races) – Locals and travelers alike frequent the tavern.

“Strange tidings come from the Undermarch. Who’s to blame for the attacks? Well, a lot can be said for those above ground as much as those below.”

Investigation

Speaking with/Questioning Locals – DC 15 Skill Check

Speaking with any of the NPC’s or the people of Anvil will turn up some information. Success turns up one of the following each roll.

1. Screams have echoed throughout the Undermarch on the nights of an attack.
2. Dark creatures with hand crossbows have been seen disappearing into the darkness of the many cracks and crevices of the Undermarch.
3. Sergeant Vaak Darzak has been seen moving around the Undermarch, alone.
4. “Caravans robbed and merchants killed. Then, Undermarch Officers go missing... I hear they may have been part of it all.”
5. “Beware the Black Hand!” (Describe this to the party as being whispered to them as they pass through a crowd or as a group of people pass by.)

Failure also turns up one of the above, however, it also triggers a consequence.

1. The NPC or person(s) spoken to or questioned disappears! The Undermarch Officers become suspicious of the group and they are detained in cells at Undermarch

Officer's Headquarters until further notice. (Allow the players to role-play their way out or to attempt an escape. Undermarch Officer stats are found at the end of the adventure.)

2. The NPC or person(s) spoken to or questioned believe they are suspected, at least in part, of the attacks in the Undermarch and will no longer aid the party!
3. A mob of Anvillians, or Keg 'n' Casket patrons, or Undermarch travelers discover that the party is investigating the attacks and want to know why they haven't done anything about it yet! Use Skill Checks to have the party resolve the crisis peacefully, otherwise, NPC stats can be found in the back of the adventure.

The Setup Part II

At this point the players will have likely tried Speaking with/Questioning NPC's or locals, and/or visited the Undermarch. If not, you're still okay. Now it's time to get the ball rolling.

Encounters

The first encounter, Encounter 1, can take place anytime the party visits the Undermarch with or without prior information about the attack that took place on the merchant caravan. It's not really an encounter as much as a way to

make sure the party gets some misleading information that indicates Drow are the likely culprits behind the attacks.

Encounter 2 should take place after the party has done some investigating in the Undermarch, spoken with the Undermarch Officer's, and maybe even asked some questions of the locals. When you feel the time is right, or especially if things are getting slow, spring encounter 2. This encounter is the jumping-off point for a series of encounters leading the party on a chase to the real culprits of the attacks.

After Encounter 3 takes place you should determine how many combat encounters you think the party can handle before the final encounter, Encounter 7 – The Finale. Give the party a couple of exit choices from the cavern that Encounter 3 took place in. Tell the party that they hear echoing screams coming from all the exits. Then, no matter which direction the party chooses, mix and match combat encounters with non-combat encounters, making sure to let them decide which direction or exit they'll take after each encounter, until you feel it's time for the final encounter.

Creature stats can be found at the end of the adventure.

Encounter 1 – Caravan Wreckage!

The first encounter isn't a combat but the scene of a recent attack on a merchant caravan. This could take place any time the party speaks with the Undermarch Officers who will show them the location of the attack. The bodies of the merchants have been removed but the wagons have been left until mules can be brought in to remove them. An Undermarch Officer guards the area at all hours.

A DC 15 Skill Check (any type of investigation or perception background can be added) will turn up the following information;

1. Many crossbow bolts pepper the outside of the wagons. The bolts appear to be the kind shot from a hand-crossbow.
2. A few strands of shock-white hair dangle from the corner of a wagon where someone or something leaned up against the wagon and their hair got caught in a splinter of wood.

Encounter 2 – Drow Attack!?!

This encounter takes place in the Undermarch. If the party is in the Undermarch, they hear screams echoing from just a little further down the Undermarch. If the party is anywhere outside, people rush by shouting that

screams are coming from the entrance to the Undermarch again.

When the party follows the screams they come across another merchant caravan under attack. The attackers will spot the party's approach and flee through a large crevice in a nearby wall. All that the characters will see in the distance are some short, dark-skinned creatures fleeing through a large crevice. Following the attackers through the crevice leads to Encounter 3.

Encounter 3 – Leaping Leopard Spiders!

Stepping through a large, gaping crevice the party finds themselves making their way down irregular, natural passages, the echoes of the caravan attackers just ahead. Eventually the passage leads to a large cavern. In the cavern are several Leopard Spiders seemingly frozen in place. The spiders are recovering from the passing of the Derro who use their Screech of the Deep to upset the spider's sensitive hairs, leaving them in a state of paralysis. As the party enters the cavern the spiders will have just recovered from the Derro's screech.

# of PC's	Leopard Spiders
3	4
4	5
5	7
6	8
7	9

➔ Remember, for the rest of the Encounters you judge how many take place and in what order they should be played out. Always give the players a couple of exits from their last encounter room, with the sounds of the attackers they are pursuing coming from all directions, and let them choose which exit to take. This will make it seem like they're not actually being railroaded (even though they are :-).

Encounter 4 – You've got some Ochre Jelly on your Shoulder!

The passageway dumps the party out into another natural cavern with dripping stalactites and a viscous, yellow-orange pool that ripples with drops from above. There are Ochre Jellies in this room. At least one is in the pool of viscous liquid (since it is the viscous liquid!) and any others present are likely hanging down from stalactites, waiting to shoot a pseudopod at an unsuspecting party member.

# of PC's	Ochre Jelly
3	2
4	2
5	3
6	3
7	4

Encounter 5 – Montage!

Starting with the player on the left, ask;

- “The characters move up and down through natural passages that find them stepping out into enormous caverns full of stalactites, stalagmites, sparkling deposits, and natural bridges spanning deep rivers as they chase the sounds of the caravan attackers. What is something your character saw in the passages or caverns that they had never seen or experienced?”

After they answer, turn to the player on their left and ask;

- “Have you ever seen that before?”

Repeat this around the table until everyone has had a chance to answer. After each person answers, embellish on what they said.

- “So, you were startled by the beauty of the pools found in the largest caverns. Perhaps someday you will come back and explore the mysteries of these caverns further.”
- “You couldn't keep your eyes off of the natural deposits all around you? Maybe while everyone was catching their breath you used the butt of your weapon to extract a piece to carry out with you.”

Encounter 6 – Look Drow! Err, Derro!!!

As the party rounds a sharp corner they stumble out into another cavern. Several dark-skinned figures in the cavern turn at the party's abrupt entrance. It's the Derro,

the real culprits behind the attacks in the Undermarch. This group is the raiding party that was interrupted by the party.

# of PC's	Derro Screamer	Demented Derro
3	3	1
4	5	1
5	7	1
6	8	1
7	9	1

As the last Derro falls and its screeching fades into nothing the passages and caverns of the Underworld become eerily quiet.

Encounter 7 – Skill Check Crevasse!

Another large cavern yawns open before the party. Towards the middle of the cavern a crevasse appears at the party's feet, dropping away, way, way down to a stalagmite littered floor. Two posts wedged haphazardly into the cavern floor with large rocks at the edge of the crevasse once held a rope bridge that spanned the breath of openness but has been cut at the other end and now it lies limply against the crevasse wall on this side.

At its narrowest the crevasse is about 8 feet across, a DC 15 Skill Check to jump across. Any character with a Background having to do with athletics or an athletic pursuit may use it for the check. If the characters use a rope in some way, such as throwing it over one of the bridge posts on the other side, or lassoing a stalagmite on the far side, give them a +5 bonus. If a

character fails their check and falls, it's 3d6 damage.

Encounter 8 – The Finale!

Up ahead the party spots the end of the passage they are treading quietly down and an opening up ahead. A pulsating reddish glow illuminates the opening every few seconds and shadows can be seen moving in the glow.

However the party approaches the room, once there, they will find some Derro in the midst of some kind of devious ritual. You should definitely play up the intense, wide-eyes and wild look of the Derros. On a raised, red-stone dais, in the middle of the cavern sits an unbound, plump merchant in nothing more than a loincloth, sweating profusely. He looks panicked but also unable to collect himself for any attempt at escape. Several braziers pulse with a red glow in tune to the high-pitched chanting that the Derro Sage(s) are doing around the dais.

The Derro Sage(s) are all dressed in black robes with a dark red hem that is stitched with symbols of an upraised, long-nailed, black hand with a half-opened eye in the palm. This is the symbol of the Diabolist. You may allow the players a Skill Check to recognize the symbol. The Derro Maniac(s) are rushing around, bringing ritual implements from here and there to the Derro Sages.

# of PC's	Derro Maniac	Derro Sage
3	2	1
4	1	2
5	2	2
6	3	2
7	2	3

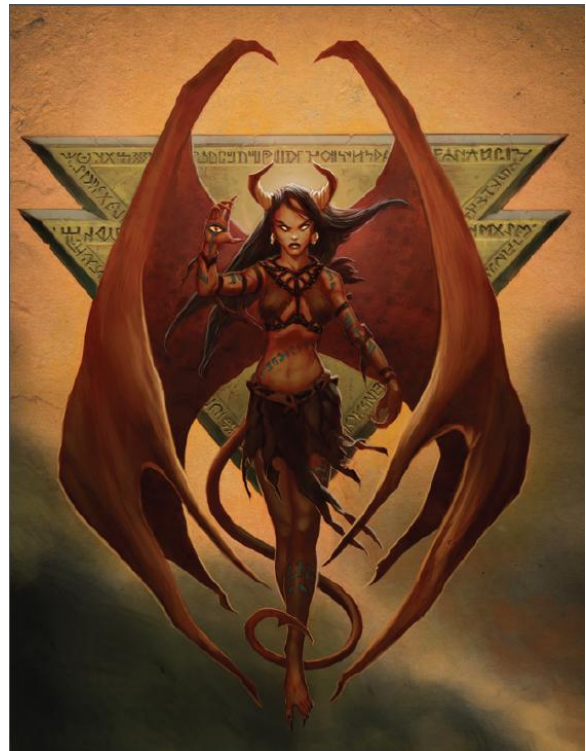
If you have more than one Derro Sage, choose one to be the “Master” and (s)he is carrying a *Wand of the Bloodless Mage* (+2 Implement): When you attack using this wand, you lose 1 HP (Champion: 3 HP, Epic: 6HP) Quirk: When wielding this wand the user’s nose bleeds profusely.

If the Party is faring well use the Derro *Group Gibbering Nastier Special*.



If the party survives the Finale they should figure out that the Diabolist and her Derro are behind this menacing of the Undermarch. If they report and bring proof, maybe the plump merchant, back to the Undermarch Officer’s headquarters they may be rewarded and will also receive great accolades and honor from the Dwarves. From here it’s up to you if, when and where the story continues!

(You may also include whatever other treasure you see fit to include in the adventure.)



NPC's

Ilda Armamak/ Merchants/ Travellers/ Tavern Patrons/ Commoners

0 level [Humanoids]

Initiative +0

Unarmed Attack -2 vs. AC – 1d3 damage

Blunt Weapon Attack +0 vs. AC – 1d4
damage

HP 4

AC 7

PD 10

MD 10

Sergeant Vaak Darzak

3rd level spoiler [Humanoid – Dwarf]

Initiative +5

War hammer +8 vs. AC – 10 damage

Natural 16+: Target dazed until start of
Vaak's next turn.

Throwing axe +8 vs. AC – 8 damage

Natural even hit: Target is hampered.

Grit Your Teeth: Vaak may take 6 damage to
remove one condition from himself.

Call for Backup: As a quick action Vaak can
call for 1d3 Undermarch Officers to aid him.
They will arrive on the next even escalation
die.

HP 45

AC 19

PD 17

MD 13

Undermarch Officer

1st level troop (Humanoid – Dwarf)

Initiative +3

Standard-issue war hammer +6 vs. AC – 5
damage

Standard-issue throwing axe +6 vs. AC – 5
damage

Defensive Formation: Each individual
Undermarch Officer gets a +2 AC while it
and similar ally engage the same enemy.

HP 27

AC 17

PD 15

MD 11

Farvo Lorov

4th level caster [Humanoid – Moonwreck
Dwarf]

Initiative +7

Bartender's Bat +9 vs. AC – 10 damage

**R: Tundra Thunder +7 vs. MD (1d3 enemies
in a group)** – 10 damage and target is
vulnerable (save ends).

Natural 16+: Target is also dazed (save
ends).

R: Heat Lightning +9 vs. PD – 18 damage,
chain spell

Limited use: Farvo can use *Heat Lightning* once per battle.

Chain Spell: Each time Farvo makes a natural even attack roll with *Heat Lightning*, he can attack a different target with the spell.

HP 54
AC 20
PD 14
MD 18

Creatures

Leopard Spider

2nd level wrecker [Beast]

Initiative +6

Bite +6 vs. AC – 8 damage

Natural 16+: The target also takes 1d8 ongoing poison damage.

Wall-crawler: A Leopard Spider can climb on ceilings and walls as easily as it moves on the ground.

Leaping Leopard: A Leopard Spider may use its standard and move actions to jump over an opponent and into engagement with anyone nearby or may jump into engagement with an opponent far away. When the spider leaps over other opponents the opponent may not intercept. It may not attack on a turn it leaps far away or over an enemy.

HP 22
AC 17
PD 14
MD 11

Ochre Jelly

Large 3rd level wrecker [Ooze]

Initiative +2

C: Acid-drenched pseudopod +8 vs. PD
(1d4 attacks, each against a different nearby enemy) – 6 acid damage

Natural even hit or miss: 3 ongoing acid damage.

Splitter: The first time an Ochre Jelly takes 20 or more damage from a single attack, it splits into two normal-size Ochre Jellies, each with half the originals hit points plus 2d6 HP for good luck. Treat the new jellies as undamaged jellies at their new hit point totals, but they don't have the *splitter* ability.

Flows where it likes: Oozes are immune to opportunity attacks.

Ooze: Oozes are immune to effects. When an attack applies a condition to an Ooze (dazed, hampered, weakened, ongoing damage, etc.), that condition doesn't affect it.

HP 90
AC 18
PD 17
MD 16

Derro Screamer

2nd level archer [Humanoid]

Initiative +5

Short Sword +7 vs. AC – 7 damage

Hand Crossbow +7 vs. AC – 7 damage

R: Screech of the Deep +7 vs. MD – 3 psychic damage and target dazed (save ends).

HP 36

AC 18

PD 12

MD 16

Demented Derro

3rd level caster [Humanoid]

Initiative +8

Short Staff +8 vs. AC – 10 damage

R: Brain Frenzy +8 vs. MD – 8 psychic damage and target dazed until end of Derro's next turn.

R: Delusory Deception +8 vs. MD (one nearby enemy) – 12 psychic damage, -2 to MD until end of Demented Derro's next turn.

Natural even hit: The Demented Derro chooses one of the targets non-magical item, limited-use powers and copies the power for his own use. (save ends)

Limited: Usable once per battle.

HP 35

AC 19

PD 13

MD 17

Derro Maniac

4th level troop [Humanoid]

Initiative +8

Shortsword +9 vs. AC – 12 damage

Natural 16+: The Derro can cast one of the following close-quarters spells as a quick action this turn.

Cloaking Dark: All nearby Derro gain a +1 bonus to attacks and defenses until the end of the Derro Maniac's next turn. (Cumulative)

Sonic Squeal: Two random nearby non-Derro creatures take 2d4 thunder damage.

R: Light Repeating Crossbow +9 vs. AC – 10 damage

Natural 16+: The target also takes 5 ongoing poison damage.

Natural 19+: As above, and the Derro Maniac can make another *light repeating crossbow* attack as a free action.

HP 52

AC 19

PD 16

MD 18

Derro Sage

4th level caster [Humanoid]

Initiative +7

Staff +7 vs. AC – 7 damage

Natural 16+: The Derro can cast one of the following close-quarters spells as a quick action this turn.

Cloaking Dark: All nearby Derro gain a +1 bonus to attacks and defenses until end of the Derro Sage's next turn. (Cumulative)

Sonic Squeal: Two random nearby non-Derro creatures take 2d8 thunder damage.

R: Mind Scream +9 vs. MD – 12 psychic damage, and the target is confused (*make a basic or at-will attack vs. ally*) until the end of the Derro Sage's next turn.

Natural 16+: The Derro Sage can make another *mind scream* attack against a different nearby target as a free action.

Nastier Specials

Group Gibbering: The Derro Sage starts a group of Derro gibbering as a quick action. It can maintain the gibber as a free action at the start of each turn by taking 1 damage. Each nearby non-Derro creature that hears the gibber must roll a d6 at the start of its turn and takes psychic damage equal to the die roll or to the number of gibbering Derro, whichever is lower.

HP 40

AC 18

PD 15

MD 18

This adventure uses trademarks and/or copyrights owned by Fire Opal Media, which are used under the Fire Opal Media, 13th Age Community Use Policy. We are expressly prohibited from charging you to use or access this content. This [website, character sheet, or whatever it is] is not published, endorsed, or specifically approved by Fire Opal Media. For more information about Fire Opal Media's 13th Age Community Use Policy, please visit www.fireopalmedia.com/communityuse. For more information about Fire Opal Media and 13th Age products, please visit www.fireopalmedia.com and www.pelgranepress.com.