

Stone Trembles, Horns Sound

Narrative Summary

Following the corruption unleashed by the discovery of Nhalvyr En'Zorai, instability in the **Thal'Arin Core** has begun to ripple through the arcane latticework of buried city. Unstable pulses of wild magical energy now radiate from the city's eastern quadrant, distorting planar boundaries and agitating lingering spirits. Earth Genasi scouts have encountered disoriented undead near the civic arena, their minds fractured and whispering of “horned kings” and “the maze without end.”

An ancient evil stirs—older than even the Netherese occupation. When a scouting party vanishes, the adventurers are summoned to investigate.

Unknown to the surface world, a fragment of the Abyss has seeped through a compromised planar rift exposed by the Thal'Arin Core's disruption and instability. At its heart festers a **desecrated Labyrinth Totem**, bound to **Korthuun**, a demon god of mazes and madness. The totem draws power from the unstable core, animating the dead and warping spirits into unintended wardens of chaos and destruction.

Setup

Location: *Weeping Hollow*, eastern civic district of Nhalvyr En'Zorai

Date: 7th of Mirtul, 1495 DR

Weather: Cool subterranean air (53°F), stagnant with thin fog and fungal spores

Tone: Foreboding, ethereal, and unnervingly quiet

Prologue Scene: Stone Beneath the Surface

Setting

Location: *Veilstone Hall*, a stone-carved meeting chamber beneath the Cobblecrest Town Hall, illuminated by glowstone sconces and lined with basalt benches.

Time: Late morning, 7th of Mirtul, 1495 DR

DM Read-Aloud Introduction

Veilstone Hall is cool and quiet, a stark contrast to the tension thick in the air. Stone dust floats lazily in the golden light that filters through enchanted skylights above. Across the carved table stands a broad-shouldered Earth Genasi, his granite-toned skin cracked with glowing amber veins. His expression is grim, eyes distant.

"We lost them. Three scouts. I should've pulled them back sooner."

NPC: Commander Corin Greystone

Race: Earth Genasi

Role: Lead scout and coordinator for the Genasi restoration effort in Nhalvyr En'Zorai

Voice: Low, gravelly, like shifting stones

Personality: Steady, but visibly disturbed; commands respect and empathy

Appearance: Square-jawed, armored in rough-forged glassteel, dirt-streaked and weary

Scripted Dialogue (Emotional Beat)

Corin Greystone (gravelly):

"They were tracking an anomaly in the eastern civic ward. What we thought were residual pulses from the Core turned out... worse. Spirits twisted. Whispers in the fog. One of the scouts—before she vanished—sent a sending back: 'The maze has opened. Horns in the mist.'"

He takes a breath, as if steadying the weight in his chest.

"I don't have soldiers to spare. And no one left who hasn't been touched by what's out there. That's why I asked for you."

He places a scorched torque on the stone table—a black iron collar etched with spirals. It pulses once, faintly.

"This is what they found. One of the dead was... wearing it."

Skill Interactions

Check	DC	Result
Arcana	14	You detect warped enchantment—part planar anchor, part curse.
Religion	15	Symbols match ancient scripts tied to <i>Korthuun</i> , a demon lord of mazes and madness.

Insight	12	Corin is scared—more than he’s letting on. He’s lost people before, but this time... it feels personal.
History	13	Stories tell of forbidden rituals that bound planar fragments into Netherese defense systems; this could be such a relic.

A failed Arcana or Religion check still reveals that the torque is connected to the recent instability in the Thal’Arin Core.

Player Objectives from This Scene

- Accept the mission to descend into Nhalvyr En’Zorai and locate the missing scouts.
 - Investigate the cause of the disruptive pulses and neutralize the threat if possible.
 - Report on any signs of deep planar rift activity or relic contamination.
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Optional Dialogue Hook (Character-Specific Prompts)

- If a player is religious or divine:
Corin: *“They were muttering prayers when we found them. But not to any god I’ve ever heard of.”*
 - If a player has past history with the Earth Genasi or the restoration effort:
Corin: *“I wouldn’t have asked if I didn’t trust you. We need you more than ever.”*
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Scene Transition

Corin unrolls a cracked leather map showing the ruins’ layout.

“Start at the Hollow—place they call the Weeping Garden now. Fog’s thickest there. If the echoes are true, you’ll find the maze soon enough.”

The players are then escorted to the **eastern descent path**, which leads to **Act I: Echoes in the Weeping Hollow**.

Act I: Echoes in the Weeping Hollow (30–35 minutes)

Once a bustling civic plaza, this area has collapsed into a flooded basin choked with overgrowth. Stone walkways ring a dark pool where bioluminescent mushrooms cluster thickly, their spores casting ghostly light through the fog. The air is still and metallic.

Disoriented undead have been seen here—drawn to the Thal’Arin Core’s pulses and the warped planar energy seeping up from below.

Context:

- A Genasi scouting party sent to investigate the psychic tremors has not returned.
- This is the party’s entry point into the disturbed zone of Nhalvyr En’Zorai.
- The area is a place of mystery, not immediate combat, but teeming with clues and tension.

Scripting

Introduction (DM Read-Aloud):

You descend into the Hollow through a shattered stone arch, your boots scraping against damp, moss-coated brick. Before you, a once-beautiful plaza lies broken and sunken—a flooded grove rimmed with collapsed pillars and ringed by glowing mushroom stalks. Fog swirls low to the ground, parting reluctantly as you step forward. The air is thick with spores and silence. Only the slow drip of water and the occasional whisper—not from any mouth, but from the air itself—accompany you.

Environmental Detail Prompt:

- Characters with **Passive Perception 15+** or an **active Perception (DC 13)** hear faint, discordant whispers echoing through the mist.
- **Arcana (DC 14)** or **Religion (DC 15)** reveals that these whispers aren’t ambient—they are psychic echoes from the Thal’Arin Core, warped by planar instability.

Skill Checks and Interactions

Check Type	DC	Outcome
Survival	13	Track partial Genasi footprints to the water’s edge, indicating they stopped abruptly.
Investigation	14	Discover a broken elemental compass, still faintly humming and pointing toward a submerged direction.

Arcana	14	Detect that the pond surface is laced with latent psionic energy—touching it causes a brief psychic image (see below).
Religion	15	Recognize symbols etched into a submerged plinth as belonging to <i>Korthuun</i> , demon god of mazes and madness.
Insight	13	Noticing one another's expressions subtly shift when hearing the whispers—proof that they're not hallucinating.

If the players don't engage in active investigation, provide **passive clues**: a **half-sunken satchel**, a **faint glow beneath the water**, or **muffled sobbing that stops when approached**.

Psychic Echo Vision (Triggered if a PC touches the pond or succeeds on Arcana 14+)

DM Narration:

The moment your hand breaks the pond's surface, a jolt of freezing pain lances through your mind. You are no longer in your body. Instead, you see—no, feel—the panic of the Genasi scouts as something massive and horned looms in the fog. A shriek. A crushing sound. Then darkness... and the image of a spiraling maze carved into flesh.

Effect: PC must make an **INT Saving Throw (DC 13)**. On a failure, they are **disoriented for 1 minute** (disadvantage on the next skill check). On a success, they shake off the vision but retain the mental imprint: a **symbol of the maze**, linked to Korthuun.

Optional Haunt – Residual Spirit

After 10–15 minutes in the Hollow, the party may trigger a minor supernatural event.

- **Trigger:** Investigating a broken crystal focus or torch.
- **Effect:** A translucent outline of a Genasi scout flickers into view, repeating a final warning:

“It follows the echoes... don't listen to the horns... the maze never ends...”

Insight (DC 12) confirms the figure doesn't seem aware of the party. **Religion (DC 13)** or **Arcana (DC 15)** can stabilize the spirit briefly, allowing the party to ask 1–2 questions before it fades.

Treasure and Clues

- **War Pick:** Common weapon used by the Earth Genasi of Navhal En'Zorai but not as common among the surface world.
 - **Elemental Focus (shattered):** Can be repurposed later for tuning planar frequency at the Thal'Arin Core.
 - **Belt Insignia:** Proves the scouts belonged to **Corin Greystone's exploration division**—an Earth Genasi officer known to the party (can be introduced later as an NPC ally or mission-giver).
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Outcome

By the end of Act I, the party should:

- Learn of a **demonic influence** tied to **Korthuun**.
- Feel the psychic instability escalating as they move deeper into the ruins.
- Establish emotional stakes (lost scouts) and tension about what awaits in the maze ahead.

This scene transitions smoothly into **Act II: The Shattered Gauntlet**, where combat breaks out in the ruined civic arena as the corrupted dead close in.

Act II: The Shattered Gauntlet (40 minutes)

Setup

Location: Eastern civic arena of Nhalvyr En'Zorai – now a fragmented, partially collapsed training ground

Tone: Claustrophobic, disorienting, hostile

Purpose: Transition from investigation into high-stakes combat. Introduce maze motif through architecture and reinforce the danger posed by the planar corruption.

Environmental Description:

You arrive at what remains of the civic arena—an ancient training complex partially buried under collapsed stonework. Massive archways lean at broken angles, and shattered glassteel domes glint in the darkness like cracked eyes. Abyssal glyphs, etched in dried blood and glowing faint red, have overwritten the original arcane wards carved into the floor. The geometry here seems... wrong. Corridors bend subtly in unnatural ways, and even short walks feel longer than they should.

Context:

- The party's trail has led here directly from the Weeping Hollow.
 - The arena once trained civic defenders and mages, but is now desecrated.
 - The Thal'Arin Core's unstable pulses warp this zone's spatial integrity.
 - The scouts the party seeks were last seen entering this area.
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Scripting

DM Read-Aloud:

As you step beneath a cracked arch, the temperature drops. A shifting red glow pulses along the floor's edge, matching the thrum in your chest. Hallways curve in unnatural ways—some too narrow, others yawning wider than they should. Strange runes smear the stone like molten veins. And then... the first howl cuts through the silence, bone-deep and furious.

Maze Effect: Warped Arena Exploration

Scene Context:

The party has entered the **Eastern Civic Arena of Nhalvyr En'Zorai**, a once-proud training ground now fractured by planar instability and Abyssal influence. The Thal'Arin Core's pulses have subtly **warped space and time** here, making geometry unreliable and navigation

disorienting. Corridors lead nowhere. Sounds echo from impossible directions. The arena itself seems... alive.

Expanded Environmental Description

The arena sprawls roughly **110 feet by 90 feet** (22×18 hexes), its once-orderly structure now crumbled into an **ovoid labyrinth of shattered stone**.

- **Cracked floor tiles** radiate outward from a defiled central rune-circle, some pulsing with **blood-red Abyssal glyphs**.
- **Massive archways** on all four sides (north, east, south, west) lean at odd angles—**some cracked, others looped, or collapsed inward** entirely.
- **Ceiling fragments** hang overhead, catching dim light from broken **glassteel domes**, casting prismatic shadows that slither like watching eyes.
- The air stinks of **metal, mildew, and sulfur**, and the **soundscape stutters**—horn-blasts and footfalls seem to arrive too late or too soon.
- Faint **red pulses** throb in time with your heartbeat. Your boots crunch over debris, echoing like you're not the only ones walking here.

This arena is not merely broken—it is corrupted, twisting itself around the party's presence.

Group Skill Challenge: Surviving the Maze

Purpose: Simulate the warped traversal and psychic disorientation before combat erupts.

Duration: 5–10 minutes in-game time (1–2 minutes at the table)

Mechanics:

- Group **Survival Check (DC 13)**
 - Optional: Individual **Perception Check (DC 14)** to spot lurking threats or hidden terrain advantages
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If the Party Succeeds (They Stay Together)

DM Read-Aloud:

You press on through the warped halls, boots crunching on debris and half-sunken tiles. The walls pulse once—like a breath—and the red glow flickers. Instinct or fate guides you. Together, you find a narrow break in the chaos—a path not yet

swallowed by collapse. As one, you emerge through a fractured archway into the arena. Shadows slide along the walls like oil, and something howls beneath your feet.

Ahead, the training floor opens wide. Shattered glassteel domes weep condensation. Ruined pillars lean like teeth in a broken jaw. You are together—and just in time to face what's coming.

Mechanics & Effects:

- All PCs enter via the **North Entry**
- May place themselves **within a 15-foot radius cluster** (3 hexes from center)
- **Gain advantage on initiative**
- May spot **tactical terrain**: rubble cover, elevated footing, loose pillars to collapse

Arena Setup for Group Entry:

- Arena is revealed gradually from a shared vantage point
- Enemies must **break the party's line**
- Thematically emphasizes **coordination and forewarning**

If the Party Fails (They Are Separated)

DM Read-Aloud:

The corridor bends—and bends again. You turn right, and suddenly, the floor tilts. The hallway loops. Walls squeeze. Something whispers behind your ear. Then—snap. It's gone.

You each stumble through **a different archway** into the fractured arena. The light is dim, the stone groans, and you can hear your allies—but not see them. A distant **howl rises like a war cry**, and movement slinks between the walls.

Mechanics & Effects:

- Each PC rolls **1d4** to determine entry point (1=North, 2=East, 3=South, 4=West)
- Begin at least **20 feet apart** (4 hexes minimum)
- **No initiative advantage**
- Specters may **ambush casters or light bearers**
- Minotaur skeletons may **burst through nearby walls** to engage isolated PCs

Arena Setup for Separation:

- PCs each emerge **alone** through different gaps or archways

- Sightlines are blocked by **broken pillars, bent walkways, and spectral fog**
 - Visual contact is obscured or distorted—some see **reflections of themselves... bleeding**
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Perception Check (DC 14)

Any PC who succeeds:

- Spots **shifting shadows** (Specters)
 - May **warn the group**, allowing **one ally** to gain advantage on their first attack or saving throw
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Optional Maze Effects (Flavor and Light Mechanics)

Use these intermittently or per player action:

- **Echo Loop:** Player walks in a circle. **Investigation DC 12** reveals spatial anomaly.
 - **Mirror Split:** Fragmented mirror shows twisted self. **Wisdom Save DC 12** or become disoriented (place PC 10 ft farther from group).
 - **Phase Flicker:** Wall nearly collapses—**Dex Save DC 13** or lose line of sight for one round.
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Purpose in Encounter Design

- **Tension Builder:** A combat that emerges from confusion, not a sudden ambush
- **Narrative Foreshadowing:** Spatial warping = Korthuun's creeping domain
- **Player Agency:** Allows skills (Survival, Perception, Investigation) to shape combat setup
- **Strategic Depth:** Promotes creative thinking and tactical movement at onset

Perception (DC 14) reveals moving shadows behind walls or through cracks.

Combat Encounter: Arena of the Lost

Enemies:

- **2 × Minotaur Skeletons** (CR 2 each) – brutal frontline brutes
- **3 × Specters** (CR 1 each) – phase through walls, cause disorientation

Enemy Tactics:

- **Minotaur Skeletons:**
 - Burst through weak walls, targeting players who've separated.
 - Use **Charge** for max damage and to break formation.
 - One wears a cracked iron torque with Abyssal etchings pulsing faintly.
- **Specters:**
 - Phase through walls and ambush from behind or above.
 - Prioritize casters or anyone holding light sources.
 - Emit keening wails before attacking; players within 10 ft must succeed a **Wisdom Saving Throw (DC 12)** or be **frightened** until the end of their next turn.

Terrain Features:

- **Collapsed Floor Tiles** – Areas of unstable terrain; stepping here requires a **Dexterity Saving Throw (DC 13)** or the player falls prone.
 - **Pillars of Broken Glassteel** – Can be pushed or shattered; successful **Athletics (DC 15)** collapses a pillar onto enemies for 2d10 bludgeoning (Dex save DC 13 half).
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Treasure & Clues

- **Cracked Iron Torque:**
 - Upon examination, reveals the same **spiral-maze sigil** from the vision in Act I.
 - **Arcana or Religion (DC 15)** reveals it's keyed to a shrine—coordinates etched into the torque point to the **Ruined Shrine of Korthuun**.
 - **Scout Remnants:**
 - In a ruined hallway: 1 Genasi scout's body, badly mauled, clutches a half-burned map with a marked "X" where the totem lies.
 - **Investigation (DC 12)** finds a sealed **scroll tube** with an effect: "Scroll of True Thought" in which the effect clarifies direction in a maze-like (or unknown) environment to help find what is being sought.
 - **Optional Item:**
 - **Warding Dust Pouch** – 3 charges. As a bonus action, a charge can be thrown to create a 10-ft. aura that specters cannot enter for 1 round.
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Outcome

By the end of this act, players:

- Face direct combat with the warped dead
- Learn the direction of the corrupted totem
- See firsthand the spatial madness beginning to take hold
- Have a tangible reason to investigate further: the **Shrine of Korthuun**



Act III: The Totem's Lure (35 minutes)



Battlemat Setup (Hex-Based)

Scale: 1 hex = 5 feet

Recommended Play Area: 18 hexes across × 16 hexes deep (90 ft × 80 ft)

Shape: Rough oval or rounded rectangle to reflect a collapsed natural hollow

Key Landmarks:

- **Central Totem Altar:** Place in the center (hex 9x8), marked by black spirals or runes
- **Broken Ritual Slabs:** 6–8 scattered around center in a rough circle, 2–3 hexes apart
- **Twisted Stone Arches:** Place 2–3 near edges (northwest, northeast, south), each 2 hexes wide
- **Fungal Vines:** Scatter 4–6 patches across terrain; moving through costs 2 hexes per 1
- **Optional Entry Points:** One on each side—north, east, south—players choose entry or are scattered



Scene Description (DM Read-Aloud)

As you descend through a jagged tunnel of collapsed masonry, the air thickens—warmer, more humid, laced with the scent of mold and burning copper. You emerge into a broken ritual circle carved into a natural stone hollow.

Around you, cracked marble slabs form a ring, some sunken or shattered, each etched with spiraling runes. At the center, a jagged obsidian altar rises like a fang from the earth. Its scorched surface pulses with sickly red light.

The stone arches here bow as if under unseen weight. Fungal vines curl like veins across the walls, some twitching gently. The whispers... they're not just in your ears—they crawl through the floor.



Narrative Context

- This was once a meditative Netherese shrine—now warped by **Abyssal planar bleed**
- **Korthuun's Labyrinth Totem** anchors planar corruption, connecting the Core to the Abyss
- The PCs must solve a ritual challenge or face **planar backlash and hostile emergence**



Ritual Circle Obstacle Challenge

Objective: Disable the Totem Before It Surges

Player Motivation and Narrative Clarity

As the players step into the shrine, they immediately feel psychic pressure emanating from the **Labyrinth Totem** at the center of the room. Vines shudder, red light pulses, and the sound of a distant horn begins to rise in volume and intensity. The **floor itself trembles**, and cracks begin to widen subtly with each passing moment.

 *DM Read-Aloud (to kick off the challenge):*
The obsidian altar hums with violent potential. You sense—deeply, instinctively—that something is about to break through. The blood runes are fresh. The stone arches strain. If the totem is not disabled, something terrible will manifest—soon.

A successful **Arcana, Religion, or Insight check (DC 12)** before the challenge can confirm:

"This totem acts like a planar conduit. If you don't stop it, it will pulse again—and open the way wider for something... worse."

Mechanics Summary

The players must complete **three distinct tasks**, each linked to a physical battlefield feature, before the totem surges (in 3 rounds). Success on all three prevents a surge. Two successes mitigate it. One or fewer causes **Psychic Backlash** and summons **Shadow Hounds**.

Battlefield Tasks and Their Locations

Task	DC	Description	Battlefield Element	Placement (Hex Map Guidance)
Athletics	15	Collapse a destabilized arch before it channels planar energy. Fungal vines near the base lash out if disturbed.	Twisted Stone Arch + Vines	NW corner, approx. hex 4x12
Arcana	14	Dispel the illusion shrouding the totem's true shape. This reveals binding glyphs beneath the outer runes.	Labyrinth Totem (Altar)	Center hex, 9x8
Religion	13	Sanctify the altar and cleanse its blood-sigils using holy water, radiant energy, or a divine channeling focus.	Marble Ritual Slabs	SE corner, approx. hex 14x4

 **Time Limit:** Players have 3 rounds (18 seconds) to complete all tasks. More than 3 rounds triggers a **backlash** and combat.

Shadow Hounds – Ritual Guardians

When They Appear

The **Shadow Hounds** enter the scene if **any of the following conditions are met:**

- The players fail **2 or more** of the 3 skill challenges.
- The players take **longer than 3 rounds** to complete the ritual.
- A player **physically damages** the totem without completing Arcana first (e.g., someone attacks it impulsively).
- The party triggers the **Psychic Backlash** event.

 *DM Read-Aloud (when triggered):*

The totem shrieks—psychically, not physically—and the shadows beneath the altar congeal into shape. From the base of the altar and cracks in the stone, two monstrous hounds emerge, their forms stitched together from writhing black fog and glistening eyes. Their howls cut straight through your mind.

Environmental Interactions

- **Fungal Vines** near the **NW Arch**:
Moving into or interacting with the vines causes a **Dexterity Save (DC 13)** or **1d6 slashing damage**.
 - **Broken Slabs** in SE:
Offer **partial cover** and double as the site of the blood-rune cleansing ritual.
 - **Cracks** slowly widen in the **central floor**. This is flavor only unless combat begins, in which case they become difficult terrain (2 hexes = 5 ft).
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Suggested Player Flow

1. **Initial Arcana/Insight/Religion** gives them knowledge: “Disable the totem or suffer a planar surge.”
2. They choose roles:
 - **Melee-oriented PC** → go to **NW Arch** for Athletics.
 - **Caster or Rogue** → head to center altar for Arcana.
 - **Cleric, Paladin, or Divine spellcaster** → move to SE slabs for Religion check.
3. Players act in **initiative order** or as a **timed puzzle**, depending on tone.
4. Track rounds carefully—**round 4 = surge**.

Visual Cue for Surge Risk

At the end of **each round**, describe a building sensation:

- *Round 1*: “A low hum begins underfoot. Dust trickles from the cracks.”
 - *Round 2*: “Red light pulses stronger. Vines writhe. The runes begin to throb.”
 - *Round 3*: “The totem screams in your mind. Something beyond it... stirs.”
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Psychic Backlash (If Totem Is Not Cleansed)

INT Save DC 14 for all creatures within **6 hexes (30 ft)** of the totem

- **Success**: Receive a disturbing psychic vision—foreshadowing the Labyrinth Herald
 - **Failure**: 2d6 psychic damage and **disadvantage** on *Insight* and *Perception* checks for 1 hour
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Clues and Rewards (Place on the Mat)

- **Etched Totem Core** → *Lodged into the altar itself*
 - **Corrupted Maze-Focus** → *Buried under broken slab near the SE quadrant*
 - **Mossbound Scroll** → *Tucked beneath collapsed marble stone NW corner*
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Battlemat Terrain Features

Feature	Hex Coverage	Effect
Totem Altar	Center 1 hex	Needed for Arcana/Religion checks
Ritual Slabs	1 hex each (6–8)	Provide cover or sacred ground for RP interactions
Twisted Arches	2-hex length each	Collapse targets for Athletics check
Fungal Vines	1 hex each (4–6)	Difficult terrain (2 hexes = 5 ft movement)
Shadow Entry Zones	2 hex areas at edges	Shadow Hounds emerge here on backlash/surge

Outcome

Success on all 3 checks:

- Totem is disabled before surge
- No combat required
- Undead tied to the totem go dormant

Partial Success (2 checks):

- Psychic backlash occurs
- Shadow Hounds may appear

Failure (1 or fewer):

- Surge triggers
- Immediate combat against Shadow Hounds
- Follow-up consequences may ripple into Act IV

This transitions directly into Act IV, as the **Labyrinth Herald** awakens and the final confrontation nears.



Act IV: The Horned Reckoning (45–55 minutes)

Setup

- **Location:** The Mazeheart — a spiraling, ceremonial chamber beneath the Ruined Shrine of Korthuun
 - **Tone:** Apocalyptic, distorted, urgent
 - **Purpose:** Deliver a challenging, climactic combat encounter with layered spatial threats and thematic resonance.
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Hex Battlemat Design (Recommended Dimensions)

- **Arena Diameter:** 70 ft (14 hexes across at widest point)
 - **Central Spiral Platform:** 20 ft radius (approx. 4 hexes from center in all directions)
 - **Chasms:** 10–15 ft wide (2–3 hexes); surround spiral path irregularly
 - **Cracked Mirrors:** Placed intermittently along outer walls every 4–6 hexes
 - **Entry Hexes:** 2–3 curved tunnel entries placed on NE, W, and S edges (for narrative flexibility)
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DM Read-Aloud

Descending through the cracked floor beneath the shrine, you emerge into a vast, circular chamber bathed in blood-red light. Stone pathways spiral inward like a maze, broken at intervals by deep fissures and jagged obsidian spires. Bone totems hang from ceiling chains, spinning slowly in the stagnant air. Around the outer wall, cracked mirrors reflect your twisted, horned likeness.

At the center, a towering figure waits—scarred, ablaze from within, crowned in obsidian. It raises a cruel glaive, and space itself seems to ripple as the creature turns toward you. The Labyrinth Herald has awakened.



Combat Encounter: Labyrinth Herald and Minotaur Guard

Enemies:

- 1 × **Labyrinth Herald** (CR 5 custom boss, see below)
 - 2 × **Minotaurs** (CR 3 each, use SRD stat block)
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Labyrinth Herald – Custom Boss (CR 5)

Type: Large aberration (Chaotic Evil)

Size: Occupies 2 hexes

AC: 16 | **HP:** 127 | **Speed:** 40 ft (8 hexes)

Resistances: Psychic, Fire

Condition Immunities: Frightened, Charmed

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft, Tremorsense 20 ft (4 hexes)

Traits

- **Abyssal Warping:** Ranged attacks beyond 3 hexes (15 ft) have disadvantage.
- **Maze Aura (10 ft radius / 2 hexes):** DC 14 WIS save at start of turn. Fail = disadvantage on movement & melee attacks until end of turn.
- **Bloodthirsty Charge:** If Herald moves 4+ hexes in a line and hits, target must make DC 15 STR save or be **knocked prone and stunned** until end of their next turn.

Actions

- **Multiattack:** 1 glaive + 1 gore
- **Glaive of Spiraling Grief:** +7 to hit, 10-ft reach (2 hexes), 2d10+5 slashing + 1d6 psychic. On crit: DC 13 INT save or suffer **Confusion** until end of next turn.
- **Goring Rush (Recharge 5–6):** Dash and gore. If hit, target is flung 2 hexes and must make DC 14 DEX save or fall into a fissure.

Legendary Actions

- **Maze Echo (1/round):** If hit, force attacker to make DC 13 WIS save or teleport 2 hexes in a random direction.
- **Reckless Gore (2 actions):** Move 3 hexes and make a gore attack with advantage.

Battlefield Terrain (Hex-Compatible)

- **Broken Spiral Walkway (center zone):** Difficult terrain (1 extra hex per move). Players can fall prone or be shoved into adjacent fissures.
- **Chasms:** Span 2–3 hexes wide. Falling = 3d6 bludgeoning + DC 13 Athletics to climb out.
- **Cracked Mirrors (outer ring):** Each is 1 hex wide. If struck with radiant or force damage, **suppresses Maze Aura** until initiative 20 of next round. Mirrors can be targeted from within 2 hexes.
- **Obsidian Spires:** Impassable terrain. Provide cover if adjacent. Roll randomly for a few hexes on the board where line of sight may be blocked.

Optional Treasure

- **Maze Warden's Token** (crafted from the Herald's cracked torque):
Wondrous item, uncommon, attunement required
 - Advantage on saves vs. *Confusion*, *Maze*, and similar effects
 - Once/day reroll a failed WIS save
 - **Ancient Teleportation Circle**: Found among the items on the Herald's corpse. Requires Arcana DC 15 to decipher that the destination is on the Prime Material Plane. Use for follow-up session hook.
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Combat Outcomes

- **Victory**: The Herald falls, glaive shattering into obsidian shards. Maze Aura vanishes. The planar breach stabilizes—temporarily.
- **Foreshadowing**: A final whisper echoes from the stone:
"He waits... deeper still... beyond the mirror gates..."
- **Hook**: The revealed teleportation circle hints at deeper Netherese ruins, still untouched—and perhaps corrupted.

Epilogue Scene: Stone and Silence

Location: Council Hall of Cobblecrest, a vaulted chamber of old dwarven stonework within the Town Hall. Moss grows in the seams, and lanternlight flickers against a mural of the Maerthwatch Mountains. A broad central table displays a topographical relief map of Nhalvyr En’Zorai, now marred by cracks and fresh carvings showing the newly discovered depths.

Time: Early evening, 7th of Mirtul, 1495 DR. The sun sets through high lattice windows, casting amber light across the stone floor.

DM Read-Aloud Introduction

The doors of Cobblecrest’s council chamber groan open as you step inside, weary and road-worn. The air smells faintly of parchment, stone, and beeswax polish. At the head of the table, a small cluster of town leaders look up—eyes wide with concern and unspoken hope.

Commander **Corin Greystone** rises to greet you, his basalt-toned skin smeared with dust, jaw tight with unspoken weight. He nods in greeting, but says nothing.

To his right, **Mayor Thomas Greenfield**, looking older than you remember, adjusts his spectacles and leans forward over the map with furrowed brows. Beside him stands **Elara Dawntracker**, arms crossed, her silver hair catching the fading light like moonlight on frost. Her expression is unreadable. At the far end, seated with the aid of a polished oak cane, **Eddred the Elder** gently clears his throat, his voice rasped with age but alert with wisdom.

Key NPCs Present

- **Corin Greystone** – Earth Genasi Commander, representing the restoration expedition
 - **Mayor Thomas Greenfield** – Civic leader of Cobblecrest, struggling to balance hope and fear in these shifting times
 - **Elara Dawntracker** – Former ranger of the Western Reach, now a trusted advisor on threats from beyond Cobblecrest
 - **Eddred the Elder** – Respected lorekeeper and spiritual voice on the council
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Scripted Dialogue and Response Hooks

Mayor Thomas Greenfield (measured, but hopeful):

“You were gone longer than we expected. And the Core... we saw its glow flicker from the ridge. What happened down there?”

Elara Dawntracker (quietly, with concern):

“Two nights ago, we heard strange echoes—horns, perhaps, or something older. Even the hounds wouldn’t sleep.”

She looks directly at the party.

“Did you find the source?”

Eddred the Elder (gently):

“We’ve seen lights in the sky, dreams shifting like sand. These things don’t happen without reason. Tell us, children... what truth did you wake beneath our feet?”

[Encourage the players to recount their journey—how they overcame the Labyrinth Herald, what they learned of the totem, and whether they recovered any ancient knowledge, runes, or artifacts. This is a space for reflection, weight, and earned pride.]

Corin Greystone (after the tale, with quiet finality):

“Then it’s true. Korthuun’s voice wasn’t a ghost—it was a gate. And you’ve sealed it shut.”

He looks to the party.

“You’ve done more than we could have asked. The city owes you a debt... and we may need to call on you again.”

Optional Reward Scene

If the party recovered the Maze Warden’s Token or a teleportation circle rune, one or more of the following may be offered:

Official Recognition

Mayor Greenfield offers formal acknowledgment:

“You shall be named *Stoneguard of Nhalvyr*, honorary stewards of the restoration. You’ll have access to our protected excavation zones—and our gratitude.”

(Effect: Advantage on interactions with Earth Genasi, future access to city districts and relic research zones.)

Material Reward

Elara presents a lockbox:

“Recovered from the vaults near the cavern’s edge. You’ve earned this.”

(Each PC may choose a rare gem worth 250 gp or a minor custom magic item tailored to their class.)

Story Hook

Eddred leans forward, peering at the rune or token.

“This symbol... it predates even the Netherese markings. If you’re willing, I would study it. Perhaps together we can decipher what still lies buried.”

(Potential hook for future sessions involving extraplanar glyphs, lost archives, or reawakening enchantments.)



Monster Manual

Adventure Title: *Stone Trembles, Horns Sound*

Date: 7th of Mirtul, 1495 DR

Location: Nhalvyr En'Zorai

Act I – Echoes in the Weeping Hollow



Residual Spirit (Haunt)

- **Description:** A translucent echo of a fallen Earth Genasi scout, flickering and repeating fragmented warnings.
 - **Tactics/Behavior:** Passive haunt. Phrases include: “Don’t listen to the horns... the maze never ends...”
 - **Game Mechanics:**
 - No combat stats.
 - Can be stabilized temporarily with a successful **Arcana (DC 15)** or **Religion (DC 13)** check.
 - If stabilized, can answer 1–2 questions before fading.
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Act II – The Shattered Gauntlet

Minotaur Skeletons (2)

- **CR:** 2
- **AC:** 12 | **HP:** 67
- **Traits:**
 - **Charge Attack:** Gains extra damage if it moves 10+ ft in a straight line before hitting.
 - **Wears Abyssal Torque:** Glows faintly and hints at connection to Korthuun.
 - **Resistances:** Necrotic, Poison



 Specters (3)

- **CR:** 1
 - **AC:** 12 | **HP:** 22
 - **Traits:**
 - **Incorporeal Movement:** Move through objects and walls.
 - **Keening Wail:** Any creature within 10 ft must make a **Wisdom Save (DC 12)** or be frightened until end of next turn.
 - **Tactics:** Target casters and light sources. Ambush from behind or above.
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Act III – The Totem's Lure



Shadow Hounds (2)

- **CR:** ~2 (Custom/Reskinned Shadow Mastiff)
 - **Traits:**
 - **Fear Howl:** Wisdom Save (DC 13) or frightened for 1 round.
 - **Radiant Immunity:** Immune to radiant damage for 1 round after emerging.
 - **Behavior:** Prioritize divine casters and metal-armored PCs. Emerge during a planar backlash or shrine disruption.
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Act IV – The Horned Reckoning

Minotaurs (2)

- **CR:** 3
 - **AC:** 14 | **HP:** 76
 - **Traits:**
 - **Charge:** On 10+ ft move before a gore attack, deal extra damage and potentially knock target prone.
 - **Tactics:** Support the Labyrinth Herald and isolate PCs.
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Labyrinth Herald (Boss Monster)

- **Type:** Large Aberration (Chaotic Evil)
- **CR:** 5
- **AC:** 16 | **HP:** 127
- **Speed:** 40 ft
- **STR:** 21 | **DEX:** 12 | **CON:** 18 | **INT:** 6 | **WIS:** 14 | **CHA:** 10
- **Resistances:** Psychic, Fire
- **Condition Immunities:** Frightened, Charmed
- **Senses:** Darkvision 60 ft, Tremorsense 20 ft, Passive Perception 12
- **Languages:** Abyssal, understands Deep Speech

Special Traits:

- **Abyssal Warping:** Disadvantage on ranged attacks against Herald if beyond 15 ft.
- **Maze Aura:** Creatures within 10 ft must make a **WIS Save (DC 14)** or have disadvantage on movement/melee attacks for 1 round.
- **Bloodthirsty Charge:** Move 20+ ft and hit → target makes **STR Save (DC 15)** or is **knocked prone and stunned** for 1 round.

Actions:

- **Multiattack:** One Glaive + One Gore attack.
- **Glaive of Spiraling Grief:**
 - +7 to hit | Reach 10 ft | 2d10+5 slashing + 1d6 psychic
 - On crit, target must make **INT Save (DC 13)** or suffer **Confusion** until end of next turn.
- **Goring Rush (Recharge 5–6):** Dash and gore. If hit, target is thrown 10 ft and must make **DEX Save (DC 14)** or fall into a fissure.

Legendary Actions:

- **Maze Echo (1/round):** On being hit, force attacker to make **WIS Save (DC 13)** or teleport 10 ft in random direction.
- **Reckless Gore (Costs 2):** Move 15 ft and make a gore attack with advantage.

Battlefield Notes:

- **Chasms & Fissures:** Falling = 3d6 bludgeoning + Athletics (DC 13) to climb out.
- **Cracked Mirrors:** Can be shattered with force/radiant damage to temporarily suppress Maze Aura.

