

Journal:

Part 6, Heart of Nightfang Spire

Party Members

Brillock Stoneweaver, Male Human Fighter/Wizard/Spellswor
Darius Darkhammer, Male Dwarven Fighter/Cleric of Moradin
Dzindra (Dizzy) Daggersmith, Female Human Monk
Paks, Female Half-Elven Paladin of Yondalla
Merilath, Male Human Ranger/Ghostwalker

with

Artol Underhill, Male Halfling, Ranger of Yondalla/Rogue
Stony, Earth Elemental, Familiar to Brillock Stoneweaver

What has come before:

After freeing Twilight Hollow from the clutches of Andress, a Cleric of Loviatar, the party spent the next week in the village. Darius and Paks returned to the catacombs and hunted down and destroyed the wight that had escaped the party earlier. Darius also cast wall of stone spells to seal the House of Torment, the evil temple of Loviatar off from the rest of the catacombs.

Diz and Artol spent most of their time assisting the townsfolk in rebuilding the town. After finishing with the temple, Darius and Paks joined Diz and also aided in healing the villagers.

Brill spent much of his time enchanting magical items for the party. Brill enchanted Darius' and Paks' masterwork plate armor, crafted by the dwarf Shooma, to +2 *plate armor*; Darius and Paks paid Brill for his efforts (2400 gp per set of armor). Brill crafted a lens of detection for use by Artol; all party members contributed funds for its construction.

Darius purchased four *potions of cure light wounds* for 700 gp.

The party spent the remainder of their time preparing to go after Gulthias. The temple librarian, Paraster, tells the party that they can follow a trail of menhirs to Nightfang Spire, the rumored lair of Gulthias.

The day before setting out, Darius cast a series of divination spells to see if he could learn a little about what lay ahead. Darius asked the following questions and received the indicated answers:

- 1) How many spawn will we need to kill before we go after Gulthias? Answer: Time changes this fates seeing, but the current number is thirteen.
- 2) Where should we search for Gulthias true resting place? Answer: Home is where the heart is.
- 3) Should we search high or low for Gulthias' true resting place? Answer: High or low, up or down, all is relative.
- 4) How will we recognize Gulthias' true resting place? Answer: By following the previous advice.
- 5) How long will the journey to Night fang Spire take? Answer: Four days or more, ten days or less, the weather changes all.

Diz decides not to come with us at the current time. "Sometimes a break is good for the soul," Diz explains when asked why. "I think I want to make some friends here, just be a normal person for a while. Not too long mind you - if you guys run into any trouble come get me. Besides, somebody's got to keep an eye on Jot."

Diz writes letters to her parents (the equivalent of Darius' journal), and a more cordial one to Erkitz, giving a much briefer summary of how things are going with her. To her mother, Dzindratha, she mentions the task of going up against Gulthias, and asks that if she has any tips on how to defeat him or vampires in general, she would be most grateful. She also says in all three letters that they are welcome to come visit her at Twilight Hollow anytime.

Heart of Nightfang Spire, Day 1

Nineteenth Game Session

Village of Twilight Hollow & the Menhir Path

As the party finally prepares to depart, the villagers and Diz arrive to see them off. The cobbler's wife presents the party with ten stakes, suitable for slaying vampires.

The party sets out following the directions of Paraster. After approximately three hours of travel the party locates the first menhir. The menhir stands ten feet tall and is made of slate not native to this region; it is covered in old draconic runes. They say that the menhirs mark an old salt path and gives directions to the next menhir. The party follows the directions and locates a second menhir with directions to a third. The party continues on.

The directions take the party onto a narrow path along the side of a mountain. The party suddenly comes upon an opening in the mountain; the party investigates a finds a small 20-foot by 30-foot chamber with a small altar set against the back wall. The altar is covered in Dwarven runes. The chamber is a shrine to the Dwarven god Dugmaren Brightmantle, the errant explorer. The runes tell that the menhirs mark a path crafted by dwarves and that it leads to a dwarven city. This shrine is a rest stop on that path. Darius is aware of rumors of a great Dwarven city in this area that withdrew from the world over 200 years ago. It appears that dwarves were probably within the shrine within the last ten years. The altar radiates magic; Darius recognizes it as a magic that prevents the area from twisting. The party rests in the shrine for the night.

Heart of Nightfang Spire, Day 2

Nineteenth Game Session

The Menhir Path

The party continues on. It is snowing and dark unnatural clouds are gathering. Artol spots Gulthias' dwarven servant two miles in the distance, watching the party. The party passed another six menhirs before resting for the night.

Heart of Nightfang Spire, Day 3

Nineteenth Game Session

The Menhir Path

Although it has stopped snowing, dark clouds cover the sky. There is loud thunder and lightning strikes in the distance. Near the end of the day, the party reaches its destination – a ravine holding Nightfang Spire. The menhir path continues on towards another destination.

The ravine is deep and narrow; the tip of Nightfang spire doesn't even reach the lip of the ravine. It appears that very little direct sunlight would ever reach the bottom of the ravine.

The party decides to rest for the night before proceeding.

Heart of Nightfang Spire, Day 4

Nineteenth Game Session

The Ravine & The Spire

The party followed a trail as it descended into the rift. The sky over the rift was unnaturally stormy and dark. The party believes that sunlight only penetrates to the bottom of the rift around the noon hour.

The spire is 300 feet tall and 100 feet in diameter at its base. There is no visible opening, except at the very top. A small single story building sits on the ground next to the spire. There is a small opening in that structure. There is no sign of any life in the area.

As the party approached the spire, a lightning bolt suddenly strikes them. It appears to have been a natural, but unlucky occurrence. Darius was hurt the worst.

Brill approaches the opening in the smaller structure. Inside he sees several bodies lying facedown. Artol enters the chamber and collapses. Paks grabs his feet and drags him back outside. He says the wall look like an odd ropey structure and that he heard an odd tune before passing out.

Darius casts *silence* on a stone and tosses it into the chamber. He then enters the chamber – nothing unusual happens. The bodies are all dead and the walls are covered in vines; they seem to be feeding upon the bodies. Darius recovers ten +1 arrows, a *cloak of elvenkind*, 23 pp, 10 gp, and a folded parchment, which says "*Flee fool less the cuckoo slay him*".

While the party examined the base of the tower for a way in (the only obvious way in was at the very top), the party was struck by a second lightning bolt; Brill realized the party was being attacked with a *call lightning* spell - a spell usually used by druids.

The party decided to ascend the tower before they were struck again. Brill cast *invisibility* and *fly* and took off for the top of the tower, staying 30 feet away from the structure. Darius began walking up using his *slippers* and Artol and Paks began climbing with the *rope of climbing*. When Brill reached the top, he was surprised as two tentacles lashed out 30 feet at him, grabbed a hold, and pulled him in (out of the party's sight). The tentacles began to constrict and the creature bit Brill.

Darius raced for the top of the tower as fast as his *slippers* would carry him; Paks drank her *potion of spider climb* and also raced for the top. Artol climbed as best as he could. In the mean time, Brill struggled valiantly (although futilely) to escape.

Just as Darius reached the top the creature flew out of the top of the spire and hovered about 30-feet above Darius (330 feet above the ground). It was a large creature, with two long tentacles, two large wings and six smaller tentacles; Brill was in the creatures - Mooncalf's - grasp, unconscious and nearly dead. Darius called upon Moradin and cast *Flame Strike* upon the mooncalf. The spell struck some type of shield, but overcame it and injured Mooncalf.

Mooncalf responded by dropping Brill down the outside of the spire. As Brill fell, Paks (who was some distance below Darius) reached out and grabbed Brill, preventing his plummet to the ground. Paks was slightly injured in arresting Brill's fall. Paks *healed* Brill and brought him back to consciousness.

Meanwhile, Mooncalf caused the winds around the spire to howl at 50-75 mph causing everyone to struggle against the wind to prevent a fall.

Darius stood strong as did Paks, but Artol was swept from his perch,

although he managed to hang onto the *rope* (he started climbing back for the ground). Brill was ripped from Paks grasp, but now that he was conscious, he was able to *fly* (sort of) in the wind - it blew him back towards the ground, but not into it.

Mooncalf grappled Darius with one of his tentacles, but couldn't pull him free of the spire, thanks to his *slippers*. Mooncalf let go of Darius before he pulled himself down into Darius' reach. Darius struck Mooncalf with *searing light* (which seemed to harm him) and Brill struck with a *lightning bolt* (which fizzled against his shield). Paks reached the top of the tower and descended into Mooncalf's lair (since she couldn't engage mooncalf) where three wights confronted her. Paks said, "*In the name of Yondalla, I don't have time for this.*" She destroyed three wights.

Darius cast another *searing light* and Brill cast *magic missile*, both of which harmed Mooncalf. Brill began to circle the spire and *fly* back up (fighting the winds all the time). Mooncalf descended to attack Darius in melee and although Darius hit, he did little damage; Paks rushed back up and called upon Yondalla to *smite* the creature a horrific blow; Brill struck the creature with another *magic missile*. Mooncalf, seeing that Brill had returned (he was 150 feet away from the fight), flew over, grabbed Brill, and ripped him in two, flinging his body to the ground. Darius cast his last ranged attack spell - *spiritual hammer*, but missed with the first strike. Mooncalf flew off out of the party's range and did not return.

The party quickly descended the outside of the spire, gathered Brill's remains, and forced march through the night back to the Dwarven shrine.



Heart of Nightfang Spire, Days 5-8

Nineteenth Game Session

Dwarven Shrine

Once back at the Dwarven Shrine, the party rests for the night. The next morning Darius prays for *raise dead* and brings Brill back (Game Note: Brill loses one level. He is reduced to 10th level and his experience points are set at 50,000 XP).

After resting for another day, the party set out once again – better prepared for Mooncalf. Darius had prayed for two *flame strikes*, four *searing lights*, two *spiritual hammers*, two *spell immunities (call lightning)*, and *protections from elements (lightning)*. Brill also created four *spider climb* scrolls.

The party rests for the night about 1 hour's march from the ravine

Heart of Nightfang Spire, Day 9

Nineteenth Game Session

The Ravine & The Spire

In the morning, Darius cast his defensive magic's and the party set out right for the spire. Mooncalf tried his *call lightning*, but it had no effect upon the part. The party quickly ascended the tower but Mooncalf flew up above the cloud layer saying we were free to enter; he would meet us if we ever left.

In mooncalf's lair the party recovers 4234 sp, 450 gp, three 50 gp gems, a *potion of invisibility*, a *potion of neutralize poison*, and a *ring of water walking*.

At the entrance to the spire, the party finds a bone plaque that reads, "*The Vow: With my brothers and sisters I abide the centuries until such time as Gulthias awakens the relic at the core and we rise together into unlife.*"

The party entered the spire and began exploring. The party was attacked by three vampire spawn, which Darius turned before they could harm the party. In this chamber the party found a locked chest. The party recovered 50 pp, 2 50 gp gems, a *wand of mage armor* (23 charges, 3rd level).

Entering the next room, two more vampire spawn and Gulthias (at least the creature who met us in Twilight Hollow and introduced himself as Gulthias) waited. One spawn attacked Brill by surprise, but missed. Darius turned the two spawn and when they fled Gulthias followed them.

In the next room, the party found many dead – drained – humanoids and one nearly dead woman. As Artol approached her, she yelled, "*Stay away from me vampire.*" Artol replies, "*I'm not a vampire – who ever heard of a 3-foot tall vampire.*" The party healed her and then tried to decide what to do with her. She wanted the party's help to flee. If the party tried to flee with her, Mooncalf would attack and surely kill her. If she stayed with the party, the vampires would eventually kill her. The party decided they had to get her out of the spire - But how?

The party returned to the room that exited to the top of the spire. Brill cast *fly* and *invisibility* on her; Artol stayed with her to keep her calm. Paks, Darius, and Brill exited to the top of the tower to distract or kill Mooncalf. He again tried to strike us with *call lightning*, but it did nothing. He called the winds sweeping in towards the top of the tower trying to blow us back inside, but the *spider climb* spells were still in effect.

He refused to fight us. Brill began taunting him - he refused to fight. After waiting several minutes, the party reentered the spire. Brill cast *mirror image* upon himself - which he knew mooncalf would see through - to make mooncalf think we weren't as smart as we might be - and

he and Darius exited to the roof and continued to taunt Mooncalf; Paks joined the party shortly thereafter.

Darius readied himself to strike Mooncalf as soon as he appeared. When he finally moved to grapple Brill, Darius cast *flame strike*. Brill came up to Darius and cast *haste* upon him.

Meanwhile back in the spire Gulthias and five of his spawn moved to attack Artol. He called for Paks and prepared to fight. Artol threw his *bead of force* hitting two spawn and Gulthias; he captured one of the spawn in the force bubble and blocked that passage – keeping Gulthias and one spawn at bay. Artol also threw his *shock spear* striking a spawn coming from the other direction. Just as the spawn were about to close, Paks appeared from the roof and called upon Yondalla turn those three spawn back. Gulthias and one spawn disappeared from view.

Up on the roof, Darius cast *flame strike* and *searing light* (thanks to Brill's *haste* spell) upon Mooncalf, injuring him horribly. Enraged, Mooncalf descended to attack Darius physically. Brill rushed over to strike Mooncalf and killed the creature (Mooncalf had only 1 hit point left after Darius' spells).

Brill carried the woman we rescued down the outside of the spire (the winds were still very strong) and escorted her out of the windstorm so she could *fly* off. Artol kept an eye on Brill to make sure nothing happened to him. In the meantime, Darius and Paks, reentered the top room and kept an eye out for vampires while trying to decide what to do next.

The vampires reentered the room in mist form and Paks called upon Yondalla to turn them; not knowing if she succeeded in turning any or not, she grabbed Darius and headed for the roof. The vampires in mist form followed. As they tried to exit, the winds forced them back inside. Darius stepped up to the opening and cast *searing light* into the mist. Although Darius isn't sure that he could damage them in mist form, he thought he could; even if it didn't harm them, the spell did have the effect of driving them off.

Paks and Darius waited for the force bubble to end; Darius prepared to cast *searing light* upon the vampire (who was also in mist form) as soon as the *bubble* dropped. Darius is not sure whether or not he killed the spawn.

At this point the party retreated from the spire and ravine to rest and regroup.

So far the party has encountered five vampire spawn:

- 1) Lisa: a tall stately elf woman
- 2) Rope: A dwarf with grayish skin and black serpents tattooed on his arms
- 3) Fia: A young woman with fiery hair, little clothing, and multiple body piercings
- 4) Basqua: A dark looking foreigner with chains draped across his chest
- 5) Tamonelle: An old woman with thick black hair and a crazed expression

**Game Note: Brill, Darius, and Paks, are awarded 900 XP.
Artol is awarded 450 XP.**

Heart of Nightfang Spire, Day 10 - 17

Twentieth Game Session

The Menhir Path and Twilight Hollow

The party travels back along the menhir trail to Twilight Hollow. Once there they meet up with Diz and spend the next few days resting.

In the time that the party has been gone, Diz has made a number of friends. She introduces us to Uma the ranger; she is one of the ugliest woman anyone in the party has ever seen, but she is a good friend of Diz.

The young woman we freed from Nightfang spire made it back to the village ahead of us. Her name is Yesha Faulkin. She used to be a caravan driver. The party learns from her that Gulthias has recently returned and that most of the spawn are newly created by him. He is obsessed with the worship of Ashardalong; Gulthias wants to create a power base to entice Ashardalong back. Ashardalong was driven from Gheddon by the famous "Dyd". The party also learns that there is some kind of necromantic device at the center of the spire.

The party offers her opportunity to stay and work the Uhlstan farm. She is thrilled with the opportunity and agrees to work the farm for the party; the party says she can keep what she thinks fair, but asks that she keep the farm in good condition. The party tells her they still plan to live there.

Diz tells us the story of the adventure she had while we were away.

Diz's Adventure: The Three Jewels

Diz was approached by Uma the ranger and Dyrch the fawning priest to go see if they could track down a townsman who had gone to an abandoned fertility chapel outside of town. When they got there, they found that the *Twisting* had turned the chapel into a dungeon.

The townsman was trapped within an impenetrable block of ice! The ice had three little indentations in it. Diz soon found that the altar swiveled to reveal an icy pit below. The three companions soon realized that the only hope of rescuing the townsman lay in the dungeons below, possibly connected to those indentations.

That turned out to be the case, as we needed to recover three jewels.

The First Jewel:

The small group dropped down and found themselves in an icy passage. As they started along, Diz narrowly escaped a pit trap. But 20 feet down at the bottom of the pit was a jewel! In addition there were two holes, seemingly like drainage holes. She tied a rope around Dyrch and lowered him down. When he touched the floor, the floor immediately sank another 5 feet, and all these critters came out. In addition he found that the jewel was fastened to the floor. Diz pulled Dyrch up to safety before the critters could get him. As the floor rose back to its normal height, the critters went back behind the walls courtesy of the drainage holes. Diz used her *potion of levitation* to go down and grab the jewel and managed to pry it off the floor without putting her weight on it.

They continued on down the corridor where they came to a T intersection, as well as finding a well of water. Finding nothing interesting about the water, Diz decided to explore to the right.

The Second Jewel:

The passage went steeply down, and was icy smooth. You could slide down it. It turned a corner near the end, so Diz couldn't tell what was beyond. Above the passage were lots of stalactites. Diz, still *levitating*, opted to float up among the stalactites and head down. She was soon attacked by a cousin of the piercer, which flashed out a wicked tongue at her, and she backed off. After trying to make a few shots at the tongue as it whizzed by, she gave up and moved in. She dispatched the creature quickly. She then realized the danger of the situation.

Had the group slid down, one member may have been lifted off the ground by the tongue and the others wouldn't have been able to reach him or her.

Diz floated down around the corner, where she came upon a large chamber with a remorhaz, which attacked immediately. The remorhaz had a jewel in its skull. Diz was hit, but then she counterattacked. Upon landing her first blow with her fist, she burned her hand - the creature was very hot - and realized she wouldn't be able to strike this creature. She would have taken even more heat damage if she hadn't been wearing her new robe. Diz also realized her weapons would melt upon touching it. She turned (still in the air) and proceeded to make haste back up the corridor. But halfway back up the corridor, she saw to her chagrin Uma come sliding down.

Diz turned around and went back.

The creature was chasing Uma, who was running further into the chamber, away from it. Diz shot her sling at the remorhaz, and got its attention. After shooting her sling at the creature for a while, Diz switched to the two javelins she had - they would do a little more damage. Suddenly, the remorhaz struck and swallowed her whole. This turned out both good and bad. Good, because she could now use her fists on the creature's insides without taking the heat damage, bad because she was going being eaten alive. But she managed to pound her way out of the remorhaz - although she was barely alive! The *robe of fire resistance* totally saved her. As she emerged from the creature, she used her spare singhiam to give the creature a deathblow, which disintegrated the weapon.

Then she had to get the jewel out, and disintegrated her handaxe too in the process. Between her remaining *cure light wounds potions* and Dyrch's *healing spells* Diz decided she was ok to continue on.

The party went back up to the well (Diz *levitated* the party up and out of the chamber).

The Third Jewel

The last chamber featured an interesting mechanism. There were 2 levers and a hemisphere. When the 2 levers were pulled back, the hemisphere top opened and a floating platform revealed inside. Without a word, Diz got on the platform, which went plunging down 100 feet. She then emerged into what seemed to be the original altar room again, only upside down. Instead of the ice wall imprisoning the townsman, there was only a blinding light. She didn't get off the platform, and went up and down again. Then she got off.

She crawled into the area of the blinding light, and found a series of platforms she had to leap across blind. It took her a half hour to do so! She finally came to a room in which she could see again. The room had three columns, one of which contained the jewel. But out walked a faceless opponent with 2 scimitars. Diz found herself immediately locked into combat with this opponent, who at first was fighting defensively. She found that her opponent was not only getting stronger and quicker as time wore on, but started to look more and more like herself! At last, Diz seemed to be fighting her double, although it did not share her powers.

Diz decided to try tripping the creature, but only succeeded in bringing herself to the floor. In triumph, the creature abandoned its fighting defensive ways and bore into her, hitting for the first time. Diz got up with a big smirk crossed her face. Now that the creature wasn't fighting defensively, she pasted it all over the wall

with her attacks, including a successful critical hit and a successful stun attack. She retrieved the jewel and a few potions.

But now the final trial was before her, because she hadn't coordinated with Dyrch and Uma about when to pull the levers to make the platform go back up. The tunnel the platform had come down was far too slick to try climbing. Diz shouted up, "*Pull the levers*" to no avail. Not one to panic, Diz decided to throw stuff up the shaft in the hope that her friends, if they were still there, would hear the noises and pull the levers. But only real sling bullets would do, and she had only 10 left after her battle with the remorhaz. Since this was a 100 foot shot straight up, she needed to be very lucky. And she was – she managed to get their attention with her second shot. As she got back up, Dyrch and Uma said they had been just about ready to leave!

They fit the jewels into the ice wall back up top, and freed the townsman. Diz later got one of the potions identified as one of *flaming fists*. She's definitely going to save that for Gulthius.

After she purchased two *potions of cure light wounds*, a *potion of wisdom*, a *potion of levitate*, and a *potion of aid* for 1000 gp. She also traded in her two *potions of darkvision* for a *potion of cat's grace* and a *potion of bull strength*.

Game Note: Diz is awarded 900 XP for her adventure.

Brill decides not to journey back to Nightfang Spire with the party at the current time; he needs some additional time. The party sets out once again.

As the party nears the location of the ravine and is moving through a snow covered rock field there is a loud bang and a shattering of rock and ice near the party. Artol says, "*That wasn't natural.*" As the party looks for the source, Darius sees Rope standing in the shadows and pointing a strange metal cylinder at him when something – some type of projectile weapon – suddenly slams into and injures him. Artol hits Rope with an arrow. Paks advances upon him and calls upon the power of Yondalla, forcing Rope to drop his weapon and flee.

Unexpectedly, the rock struck by Rope's weapon shakes and cracks and a strange amorphous black creature with many eyes and tentacles breaks out of the rock and moves toward the party. After a difficult fight the party defeats the creature, which they later learned is called a 'sodatsu no oni'.

When the party finally reaches Rope's hiding spot, he is gone, fled through cracks in the ground. The party recovers Rope's strange weapon and Darius realizes it is of dwarven make.

The party camps and rest for the night. Since they will reach Nightfang Spire early tomorrow, Darius utilizes one of his two *blocks of incense of meditation*. Unbeknownst to everyone, the block Darius decides to use was actually a *block of incense of obsession*.

Heart of Nightfang Spire, Day 18

Session

Twentieth and Twenty First Game

The Spire, Top Level

The party reaches the spire and begins to climb without any interference. As they near the top, Artol hears something and gestures for quiet. In response, Darius casts a *silence* spell centered on himself. Darius walks onto the top lip of the spire, and seeing the wight Artol had heard, casts *searing light*, killing the wight. Darius then casts *bull's strength* upon himself and Paks.

The party continues with its exploration of the top level of Nightfang Spire. Artol finds a god ring in the shape of a dragon (100 gp) on the hall floor. Darius casts *detect magic* to determine if the ring was magical – it wasn't. In a nearby, nearly empty chamber, Darius does see the glow of magic coming from below the mist; Artol goes in and finds a +3 *ghost bane dagger* named pale Piercer. Diz decides that she would like the dagger and the party agrees.

The next chamber the party investigates has several sarcophagi; the lids are carved to look like elves with hints of reptilian features. As Artol investigates the first sarcophagi, a hand reaches out through the lid and attempts to grab Artol. Paks calls upon Yondalla and three shadows flee from her. The party recovers 130 pp and three 20 gp gems.

The party continues its exploration and finds a chamber whose floor is covered by some dark liquid; the party decides not to enter. Next the party finds another sarcophagi chamber; Diz rushes in and rips the lid off the sarcophagi, taking several hits from the shadows and feeling her strength drained in the process. Paks calls upon Yondalla and destroys five shadows.

Suddenly Rope, Lisa, Basqua, and Fia attack along with a shadow mastiff. Paks turns Rope and Lisa and then kills the shadow mastiff while Darius battles Fia. Darius misses with two *searing light* spells but hits with a third. Diz steps between Basqua and Darius and slays Basqua forcing him to mist and back to his coffin. The spawn Tamonelle arrives and attacks Diz. Paks steps up to help Darius and slays Fia; as she goes to mist, she "licks" Darius goodbye. Gulthias appears and attacks Paks. Diz finally slays Tamonelle and Gulthias flees. Many members of the party have had their life energy drained by these evil creatures.

The party heads back to the coffin chamber on the opposite side of the spire. The party finds Tamonelle, Basqua, and Fia in three of the coffins. Darius stakes each creature, then severs their head, douses the body in holy water, and burns the bodies – destroying these spawn for good. Suddenly Rope appears behind Darius, Gulthias appears and attacks Paks, and Lisa attacks Diz. Darius calls a *flame strike* down upon rope, and then a second *flame strike*, slaying Rope. After a short battle Diz slays Lisa and Paks slays Gulthias. All three of the spawn appear in their coffins and Darius destroys them permanently. As Darius staked Rope, he grabbed Darius and spoke to him, "Seek my city." The party recovered a +2 *ring of protection* from the fake Gulthias.

The party finishes exploring this level of Nightfang Spire and destroys three more shadows.

**Game Note: Brill, Darius, Diz, and Paks, are awarded an additional 3000 XP.
Artol is awarded 1500 XP.
Paks advances to 11th level**

The Spire, One Level Down

The party descends the stairs to the second level of Nightfang Spire. As the party explores this level they: 1) recover a tapestry (500 gp) and a silver goblet (245 gp) 2) find an altar to a dragon cult, that Darius smashes and 3) Artol narrowly avoids falling into a pit trap that leads to a razor lined chute and a 200 foot fall.

Brill arrives and joins the party; he decided the day after the party left Twilight Hollow that he couldn't let them go without him and he has been trying to catch up ever since.

Continuing to explore this level, the party locates a chamber with sixteen sarcophagi; all of the sarcophagi are different and are made of metal and stone. The party begins to explore the sarcophagi carefully but all they recover is a diamond bracelet (400 gp). Darius decides to go to the far end of the chamber and just start opening sarcophagi. Paks and Artol go with him. As soon as he opens the first sarcophagi, a mummy jumps out at Darius with a Diz-like spin kick and three ghostly figures appear and attack Artol, Diz, and Brill. The mummy – Aoket – is

wearing a jackal helm and wields a glowing kama. Aoket focuses on Darius while his ghostly friends continue to attack the rest of the party; these creatures easily hit the party and drain away much of their life force. Darius casts *sanctuary* on Paks so that the ghost creatures couldn't attack her. Diz finally slays all of these creatures using *Pale Piercer*, her +3 *ghost bane dagger*. Darius also casts several healing spells on Aoket, causing severe injury to the mummy. Paks yells, "Die you terrible undead not dead thing", as she channels divine energy and "lays hands" on the mummy, injuring it further. Brill strikes Aoket with several *magic missiles* and Artol strikes the creature with his sword, finally slaying it.

The party recovers a *helm of teleportation*, +2 *bracers of armor*, and a +2 *kama* from Aoket. The party finishes exploring the sarcophagi and finds a black pearl on a chain (350 gp), a jeweled scabbard (300 gp), a *potion of cure serious wounds*, a 200 gp sapphire, and a secret door. The secret door opens onto a secret chamber that holds a chest, which contained 425 gp, 45 pp, and a *wand of magic missile* (40 charges, 1st level caster).

The party heads for the tapestry room where they plan to rest. During Brill and Diz's watch, mist begins to flow into the room. They wake the party, but Darius and Paks don't even have to stand let alone put on their armor before four vampire spawn attack. One of the spawn is an anorexic man with a turban; another is a female priest of the dragon cult. The third spawn is a little boy with a teddy bear; the fourth is a little girl with a bow in her hair. Brill calls to Stoney for help; he has been following the party along the outside of the spire. After a short but vicious fight the party manages to slay the four spawn and drive them off. Brill and Diz chase after the retreating mist and follow to a long hall where it disappears under the second of four doors on the right side of the hall. Brill and Diz return for the party and lead them all back; Artol takes the lead at the hallway, and, again, narrowly avoids a pit trap leading to a chute and a long fall. The party decides they should finish resting and heal up before trying to go after the vampire spawn. They return to the tapestry room.

**Game Note: Brill, Darius, Diz, and Paks are awarded 2,000 XP.
Artol is awarded 1,000 XP.
Brill advances to 11th level
Artol advances to 10th level**

Heart of Nightfang Spire, Day 19 Session

Twenty Second Game

The Spire, One Level Down

During the night the party experienced odd dreams. Diz dreamed that her mother was very disappointed in. Darius dreamed that he stood across a battlefield from the half-ogre/half-demon responsible for his Great-Great-Uncle Muirack Darkhammer disappearance. Dead dwarves cover the battlefield; the demon approaches swinging a huge axe. Paks dreamed that she was in a place of utter darkness, and was getting colder and colder. Artol dreamed that something – an evil presence – is behind him, and before he can react, he feels something slipping between his ribs. Brillock dreams that he is being judged from on high; he is standing alone in a bright light as his judgment is read.

In the morning, Darius casts a number of *restoration* spells and restores the life force his fellow adventures had lost.

Artol returns to a chest he had found the previous day and had failed to open; inside the party finds 209 gp, four flasks of alchemical fire in ornately carved vials.

The party returns to the long hall and begins to investigate. The second door on the right, which the vampire spawn fled through, leads to a flight of stairs descending to the next level. The first door on the hall leads to a room with another cult altar; there is also a symbol on the floor that radiates divination magic. The symbol appears to be a stylized Gulthias tree.

The third door is different than the rest; it is intricately carved with skulls, faces of demons, and a variety of tentacles. Artol determines the door is trapped with some type of electrical ward. Darius casts a *protection from elements* spell on Artol, although it turns out he didn't need it – Artol successfully disarmed the trap. Inside there is a curious item. A 5-foot diameter pipe rises up a few feet out of the floor. The top of the pipe is capped with a lid. Darius walks over to the pipe, and after Artol declares it trap free, Darius pulls the lid off and looks in. Fifty feet down, at the bottom of the pipe, Darius sees a pair of gloves and several glittering items. Darius casts *detect magic* and determines that the gloves and possibly some other items are magical. The pipe also seems to have a fair amount of mist. As Darius and Brill look into the pipe, a strange creature with many eyes and a strange burbling noise – a gibbering moulder – solidifies out of the mist; suddenly, the creature reaches into Darius' mind and orders him to attack his companions. Darius draws his waraxe and attacks Brill; the party is shocked. They try to subdue Darius but fail; finally Brill casts *dispel magic* and lifts the compulsion from Darius' mind. Darius thanks Brill and asks for his *mask of silent casting*; Once Brill hands it over, Darius casts *silence* upon himself and begins to walk down the inside of the pipe using his *slippers*. The gibbering moulder appears in front of Darius and attacks; Darius counters with a *searing light* spell blowing a large hole through the creature. From the top of the shaft, Paks calls upon Yondalla and turns the undead creature. The gibbering moulder becomes gaseous and effectively disappears. Darius continues walking down the shaft and Paks climbs down behind him on her *rope of climbing*. Once Darius believes he and Paks have the gaseous gibbering moulder cornered, Darius casts another *searing light* spell into the mist; Darius can't tell if it had any effect.



Darius recovers a set of +2 *bracers of armor*, a pair of +2 *gloves of dexterity*, *dust of dryness*, four 100 gp gems, and 1233 gp from the bottom of the shaft. In the process, Darius locates the buried form of the gibbering moulder.

Darius slices the creature open and begins to stake its various internal organs until he believes he found the correct organ. The strange being sickens Darius and his exploration of the creature's insides invokes some sort of vision: "A tall foreboding man with dark spectacles and wild black hair points his bony hand at a bald headed priest of Ashardalong. The priest disintegrates into a pile of ash. The foreboding man takes the ashes and mixes them with the ashes of many other people and calls upon dark powers to create an unholy creature." Darius realizes that he has just seen the creation of the vampiric gibbering moulder he has slain.

The party returns to the stairs in the second room and descends to the next level.

The Spire, Two Levels Down

At the bottom of the stairs, the party finds a small foyer with three doors leading off of it. The party opens one of the doors and finds a room occupied by six large four-armed gorilla-like creatures – girallons. They ignored the party until Brill threw a *fireball* into the room; then the creatures charged Brill and Darius who were standing just outside the door. A serious fight ensued. During the battle, other girallons appeared behind the party and a skeleton-like creature with a long lashing tongue – a mohrg – appeared behind the original girallons. One of the girallons manages to catch Darius within its four arms and tore through his flesh. At the same time, the four vampire spawn the party fought the previous night appeared behind the party. The spawn seemed to have a grudge against Diz and focused on her. Although she managed to avoid the spawn, it cost her; a girallon caught her off guard and nearly killed her.



Darius couldn't bring himself to flee and leave the party in such desperate straights; he cast a *healing* spell on himself and held his ground to prevent Paks and Diz from being flanked. It wasn't enough; the girallons tore him apart and sent him into the afterlife. Paks turned the spawn. Diz grabbed the *helm of teleportation* from Darius' body and used it to *teleport* herself and, at some risk to herself, Darius' remains back to their farm in Twilight Hollow.

The rest of the party started a fighting retreat, but they managed to overcome and either drive off or slay their remaining foes. The party killed 8 girallons and 1 mohrg.

Just as the fight ended, Diz *teleported* back to the tower. In the girallon chamber, the party found a half-buried chest that contained 430 gp and eight blue quartz gems (10 gp each), a *potion of aid*, and a rust colored *bag of tricks*.

Diz *teleported* herself, Paks, and Artol back to the farm. Stoney carried Brill down the trapped chute to the outside of the spire where he *levitated* himself to the ground. Brill then traveled back to Twilight hollow to meet up with the party.

Diz, Paks, and Artol took Darius' body to the temple of Illmater.

Heart of Nightfang Spire, Day 20

Session

Twenty Second Game

Twilight Hollow

The next morning, Levetron cast *resurrection* and returned Darius to life. When Darius wakes in the Temple of Illmater, he looks around and spots Paks, Diz, and Artol. Darius says, "Paks, what happened?" After being filled in, he turns to Levetron and says, "Thank you my

friend and thanks to your lord Illmater. You have performed a great service for me. I shall not forget." He then turns to the party and says, "I offer you my sincere apologies for having failed you in our time of need. I made several serious tactical errors. I offer you my sincere and humble thanks for your sacrifice in bringing me back. I vow to you in Moradin's name to try and perform better in the future." Darius walks up to Diz and grasps her arm and hand with both of his hands, "Diz, to you I owe a great debt. You risked your life in taking my body from that spire of evil. In Moradin's name, thank you." As he releases Diz, she finds that Darius has pressed something into her hands - his +2 bracers of armor. When Dzindra realizes what Darius has put into her hands, her eyes begin to moisten. She nods in thanks, and gives him her lesser bracers of armor. As Darius steps back from Diz, he again speaks to the party, "I need some time to meditate on what has happened. I will speak with you again." Darius turns from the party and exits the temple, saying nothing more.

The party donates 4000 gp to the temple in thanks for resurrecting Darius.

Later, Dzindra takes Paks aside. "You told us when you were resurrected that your life is linked to one of us now. We know it is not Darius or Brilllock. That leaves only Artol and I. We also happen to know that some of those vampires went after me, not you, when given the chance. I came dangerously close to dying back there, mainly because I didn't guard the doors behind us. I promise you that I will be much more careful in the future. I take our possible link seriously."

When Darius leaves the temple, he heads for the forge. Once there, he tells Jothamus that he needs the forge and he begins to cast a *consecrate* spell centered on the forge.

Once the spell is completed, Darius spent the next two hours in prayer and meditation to Moradin pondering what did and did not happen when he died. He did not awaken in Moradin's home on Celestia to hear his Lord's judgment. The only thing that greeted Darius in death was depthless cold and darkness that froze him to the core of his being. When Paks died, she was met by Yondalla and restored to life with a new Holy Quest and her newfound faith. Was he judged and found lacking? Did he fail Moradin?

NO!

He did not encounter anything, because it was not his time. His companions had the ability to return him to life in Gheddon. Moradin did not appear because Darius did not need his direct intervention. Darius returned because he still had work to do.

Darius abruptly rises from in front of the forge and heads back to the Temple of Illmater where he seeks out Levetron. Once he finds Levetron, Darius tells him of Gulthias and the evil that threatens the village of Twilight Hollow and the surrounding area like a storm about to break. Darius recommends that Levetron cast a *hallow* spell on the temple and the statue of Illmater in the town square; he tells Levetron that he believes the spell would provide the villagers with some added protection if the vampires ever come to Twilight Hollow. He also recommends that Levetron warn the townsfolk about the vampires and recommend that they don't invite any strangers into their homes after sundown. Levetron tells Darius that the temple is once again *hallowed* ground and that the temple is a secure fortress, and that new guards have been hired.

Darius returns to the forge and immediately sets to work. First he creates five flasks of holy water. Next Darius crafts a set of five platinum rings. All of the rings bear inscriptions in dwarven. The first ring is for himself; the inside of the ring is inscribed with the names of his companions: Paks, Diz, Brill, and Artol. The second ring is for Paks; it is inscribed with her name and the saying, "*Faith in Yondalla.*" The third ring is for Diz; it is inscribed with her name and the saying, "*Defense through Enlightenment.*" The fourth ring is for Brill; it is inscribed with his name and the saying, "*Wisdom through Experience.*" The fifth and final ring is for Artol; it is inscribed with his name and the saying, "*Honor through Service.*"

Darius finishes his work and heads for the Uhlstan farm. On his way out of town, he purchases a small anvil and stops by the cobbler's house, where he commissions the cobbler's wife to fashion ten more stakes for the price of 10 gp.

That evening, Brill finally returns to town.

Much later that evening, as Diz practices her stealth abilities, she moves with such intent that she suddenly she finds she is 200 feet further along, right where she'd intended to end up. She nearly giggles as she realizes her newfound power of *abundant step*. She smirks as she realizes that now she can give Paks the *helm of teleportation*. As useful an item as it is, it certainly gave her one hell of a fashion statement!

Diz recommends to Paks as she hands her the *helm of teleportation*, "You may want to study *Levetron*'s chamber very, very carefully in case you ever need to teleport back there. Here you go, foxy lady."

Game Note: Darius loses one level. He is reduced to 10th level and his experience points are set at 50,000 XP

**Game Note: Brill, Darius, Diz, and Paks are awarded 1,600 XP.
Artol is awarded 800 XP.
Diz advances to 12th level**

Heart of Nightfang Spire, Day 21

Twenty Second Game

Session

Twilight Hollow

When Darius arrived at the farm, he headed for the tunnels below. There, he finds the old orc barracks (U11) and begins to clean the room. Once he has completed, his work truly begins. First he seals the room from the river with a *wall of stone* spell. He then uses a *stone shape* spells to create the Hammer and Anvil symbol of Moradin upon the room's southern wall. He uses another *stone shape* spell to create the symbol of his order, the Hammers of Moradin, on the room's western wall. The symbol is the image of a hammer upon a large circular field surrounded by four dwarven words, Faith, Wisdom, Honor, and Defense, placed at the cardinal points. The words are the precepts of his order. Darius uses two more *stone shape* spells to raise a small alter, upon which he places the anvil, and creates a small circular and shallow dry well – a forge. Darius then casts *continual flame* into the forge to represent its flame. Finally, Darius spends the next twenty-four hours casting *hallow* upon the area, sanctifying his shrine to Moradin.

After completing the *hallow* spell, Darius rests for eight hours.

Heart of Nightfang Spire, Day 22

Twenty Second Game

Session

Twilight Hollow

In the morning, Darius casts two *wall of stone* spells, doubling each of the walls back on themselves and sealing of the entrance to the room with an 8-inch thick stone wall. Darius then casts a *stone shape* creating a stone door through the wall with the symbol of Moradin on both sides of the door. Darius casts a *glyph of warding* on the outside of the door and on the floor

inside the door. Darius spends the next few hours in prayer (and studies the shrine in detail). He casts bless water and creates five more flasks of holy water. As Darius leaves, he casts another *stone shape* spell to seal the door shut.

Game Notes: **Shrine Spells Effects:**

- 1) **Hallow** (cast at 9th level, DC 19)
 - a) 90-foot radius covering an area 180 feet east from the ladder (to the barn) and 180 feet south from the river
 - b) Entire area protected by a magic circle against evil spell
 - c) +4 Sacred bonus to Charisma checks to turn undead
 - d) Any body interred within this area cannot be turned into an undead creature
- 2) **Glyph of Warding** (cast at 9th level, DC 17, Search & Disable Device DC 28)
 - a) Blast Glyph, Electricity, 4d8 damage, Reflex save for half, DC 17, affects all creatures within 5-feet of the creature who triggers the *glyph*
 - b) Located on door to shrine
 - c) The *glyph* will be triggered by any non-good creature who tries to enter the room without the pass phrase
- 3) **Glyph of Warding** (cast at 9th level, DC 17, Search & Disable Device DC 28)
 - a) Spell Glyph, Searing Light, 4d8 damage (Undead take 9d6 damage), No save, affects only the creature who triggers the *glyph*
 - b) Located on the floor inside the shrine, covers 45 square feet
 - c) The *glyph* will be triggered by any non-good creature who tries to enter the room without the pass phrase

Darius returns to the farm to speak with the party. When he sees them he presents each of them with the ring he created for them and asks that they wear it at all times. Darius is wearing his ring. He also tells them of the shrine he created below the farm and that, at least for now, he plans to use the shrine as his home.

He also suggest some plans for the farm and surrounding area their home. First he recommends that the party either build a floor above or below the existing farmhouse to create rooms for the rest of the party: Artol, Brill, Diz, and Paks. He tells Diz that the party could convert the front half of the barn to a training facility & meditation room for her and any villagers she wishes to train. Darius tells Brill, that if he desires it, the party could create a “wizard’s” laboratory either in the old silo or in one of the existing underground chambers (possibly U10 or U12 & U13). Brill could also make either of these spaces his room. To Paks and Artol, he suggests that a new structure could be built on the farm to house a shrine to Yondalla. Either that or convert the old silo to a shrine.

Darius also says that he would like to convert the old temple of Loviatar to a Temple to Moradin. He tells them that he would create a new set of stairs from the temple to the surface with a guardhouse on the surface. Darius also says he is not sure what to do with the forge. It could be moved to the farm, and a new structure built. It could be relocated to the temple if it is ever finished, or it could be located next to the temple’s new entrance. Darius would relocate the forge to the temple, except that he is not yet sure of Jothamus and would like to know what the rest of the party thinks.

Darius recommends the party plan on setting out early the next morning. Once the party agrees, Darius prepares to cast a *divination* spell. Before he does so, the party consults on what questions should be asked:

- 1) Is Gulthias still a threat? Answer: The paladin’s quest is yet unrequited.
- 2) How many spawn do we still need to kill before we go after Gulthias? Answer: Need and desire will argue different numbers, but seven spawn remain.

- 3) To fulfill Paks quest, is Nightfang Spire still the place to go? Answer: Gulthias is in the heart, and the heart is in Nightfang Spire.
- 4) Since Jot has become Jothamus, has he worked against the party's interest? Answer: The party seems interested in Gulthias, and Jot has worked against him.

The party divides up the remaining treasure and purchase additional equipment for their next foray into Nightfang Spire. Brillock, Darius, Diz, and Paks each receive 1010 gp, and 1 sp. Artol receives 505 gp.

While in town, Paks and Artol make inquires about Jothamus. What has he been doing? Have any strange occurrences happened in town? They learn that Jothamus and his companion, Sestra, have taken rooms at the inn and that he is very friendly with the innkeeper. The innkeeper treats Paks and Artol respectfully, but cool. Jothamus has not spoken out against any of the party; in fact he has touted that what the party is doing will improve life in town. Levetron tells them that the forge and Jothamus are doing very well; he is apparently doing a good business selling magic items. They also learn that Jothamus has disappeared from town for several days at a time.

Heart of Nightfang Spire, Day 23

Twenty Third Game

Session

The Menhir Path

The party set out first thing in the morning for the Dwarven Shrine along the menhir path. The party reaches the shrine near sundown. They discover that someone has been here very recently, but nor enough clues remain to discern who.

Heart of Nightfang Spire, Day 24 & 25

Twenty Third Game

Session

The Menhir Path

After two days of uneventful travel, the party reaches Nightfang Spire. As the party nears, they hear loud peals of thunder and see sharp streaks of lightning. Twisted maelstroms circle the valley at even intervals and whip the snow up into the red-tinged sky. The party will attempt the spire in the morning. It seems like the mountains are looming in and watching us.

Heart of Nightfang Spire, Day 26

Twenty Third Game

Session

The Spire, Three Levels Down

The party climbs to the top of the spire. Darius uses his *slippers* and Paks uses a *potion of spider climb*. Artol and Brill go up the *rope of climbing* with Stony's help. Six wights are within Mooncalf's lair at the top of the spire; Darius calls upon Moradin and destroys them easily.

As the party passes through the 1st level down, they discover that something has re-inhabited this level; the party does a little exploring and discovers that the sarcophagi have been re-inhabited by shadows. Paks calls upon Yondalla and turn three who try to attack us; the shadows fled. The party decides to bypass the shadows and continue on.

The party descends to the 3rd level down. In the room where the party previously found the girallons, the party locates two more. After a short discussion, the party decides to attack. Diz will hold the doorway, while Brill casts a *lightning bolt* once the girallons are lined up. Darius and Artol will watch the party's back and Paks is prepared to help wherever she is needed. Brill follows his *lightning bolt* up with an *ice storm* before the girallons manage to counter attack. The girallons charge Diz and she slays one. Artol tumbles past Diz and the remaining girallon, and stabs the creature through its heart from behind, killing it.

The party continues exploring and locates an embalming chamber; the room contains two large vats of a strange chemical and shelves holding a number of powders and liquids in various containers. Nothing detects as magical. Continuing on, the party finds a long hall with three doors; two of the doors lead to large chambers, essentially empty except for some old funeral wrappings. The last door leads to another apparently empty chamber, but Darius detects an aura of magic within the room – an aura of divination magic; Darius warns the party and they investigate. It turns out to be another magical symbol of the Gulthias tree. The party spends some time searching this room before moving on. The room has two other exits. One leads to a staircase that descends further into the spire; the other door leads to a short hall which in turn leads to a large chamber covering approximately half of this level. The large chamber contains a large number of stone blocks, some of which have been carved into headstones. The floor in this chamber is very rough and uneven.

The party decides to descend to the next level.

The Spire, Four Levels Down

After exiting the stairwell, the party finds itself in a chamber with a red-veined dragon statue. A door on the far side of the room leads to another chamber with five girallons inside. The party closes the door and spends a few moments coordinating their activities. Diz will open the door, the Darius will cast *flame strike* and Brill will cast *fireball* on the same area of the room. Diz will then close the door quickly, and brace it against a counter attack. The plan goes as expected and Diz and Paks are holding the door when the girallons try to break through. A moment later Diz opens the door and Brill cast *ice storm* into the room. One of the girallons attack Diz and she slays it. Brill kills another with *magic missile*. The party slays two more, but the fifth girallon flees through a door on the far side of the room.

As the party prepares to pursue, six wights arrive in the through the same door. Paks calls upon Yondalla and destroys them. The party recovers a sack with 110 pp and five gems worth 10 gp each.

The door leads to another hall with four doors and an archway leading to another hall. From down the hall they hear a voice – a non-human voice – calling for help. The party approaches the door the voice is coming from and Paks detects a moderate presence of evil. The party questions the voice and learns the creatures name is Rhunad. He offers the party his help and knowledge in defeating Gulthias in exchange for his freedom. He begs us to open his door. After continued questioning the party learns that Rhunad is a demon, specifically a vrock. The party finally agrees to return tomorrow and release him and send him home in exchange for his knowledge. Rhunad agrees and imparts his knowledge to the party. He says it all began with Ashardalong; Nightfang Spire was a temple devoted to Ashardalong. Dydd and a druidic circle confronted the creature and wounded him; no one knows exactly what happened to the great wyrm, but the cultists who worshipped him, placed his heart in the center of Nightfang Spire. The chief cultist was Gulthias. The cultists converted the temple to a mass tomb and committed suicide. In the process they supercharged the heart with negative energy. Sometime later, Gulthias arose as a vampire with a link to the heart; he began to raise the other cultists and

renew Ashardalong's cult. Sometime later, some distance from the spire, Gulthias was defeated and staked; not long ago he was released. The party realizes they are partly responsible for Gulthias' return – they slew the Gulthias tree, which had grown from the stake holding Gulthias in place.

Rhunad also tells us that the core of Nightfang Spire is only accessible by incorporeal creatures and is probably protected by other means; the creature tells us that the only way to access the central core is from the catacombs beneath the tower. But first we must find the key, which has been separated into four parts and hidden in the catacombs.

Finally Rhunad tells of how he came to be here. Gulthias summoned him and two other vrock. One of the vrock was a mutant, more powerful than his brethren - the Cuckoo. The Cuckoo slew the other vrock and Gulthias accepted him into his service. Rhunad was imprisoned by Gulthias and forgotten.

The party promises to come back and fee him tomorrow. In the mean time, they continue their exploration of this level.

The party finds a chamber with a number of coffin shaped vats; some sort of liquid seems to have spilled out of a few of them. Darius thinks the liquid is harmless. Inside the room is the girallon that fled from us earlier. Diz springs into the room, attacks the girallon, and then springs back to a point along the room's wall. Suddenly, a flesh golem enters the room from another door and moves toward Diz. Darius enters the chamber to keep the girallon and flesh golem from double-teaming Diz. The rest of the party enters the chamber to support Diz, and then two more flesh golems enter the room. One of the golems seems to be made partially from lizard or perhaps dragon flesh; the dragon-flesh golem – Stitches – breaths a cone of fire upon the party causing sever injuries to Paks and Darius. Diz continues to battle the first flesh golem and finally destroys it. Paks and Brill move to attack the dragon flesh golem. Paks is hit hard by Stitches and Artol is hurt severely by the girallon before he kills it. Diz has also been hit by Stitches. Darius casts *wall of stone* and imprisons Stitches inside a box of stone, giving the party a chance to stage an orderly retreat. As the party starts its withdrawal, four vampire spawn and the real Gulthias appear; Gulthias warns us that he is now aware of us and will be prepared to deal with us. Brill and Artol make their way to Darius; Brill takes the *helm of teleportation* from Darius and *teleports* the three of them back to the farm. Diz grabs Paks and uses her *dimension door* ability to exit to the valley floor. Darius takes the *helm* back from Brill and *teleports* back to the valley, and then *teleports* them back to his shrine under the farm.

Heart of Nightfang Spire, Day 27, 28, & 29

Twenty Third Game

Session

Twilight Hollow & The Menhir Path

The party rests and heals for the night and sets out again first thing in the morning. They reach the valley without incident.

The Spire

Once again, the party climbs to the top of the spire. They destroy another wight, and then enter the top level. They head for the chamber with the acidic liquid. Brill uses his *dust of dryness* to destroy the pool. The pool is destroyed, but the party finds nothing of interest.

The party then climbs back down the outside of the tower, to a point outside the third level down corresponding to the large chamber covered with carved stone blocks. Stony informs Brill, who informs Darius, that the walls of the tower are only four feet thick. Darius then casts a

stone shape spell creating a narrow tunnel through the wall; Darius immediately proceeds through the tunnel. Inside, Darius finds four surprised vampire spawn standing atop pile of the carved stones. Darius immediately casts *flame strike* on three of the spawn. The rest of the party has to wait until Paks gets through the tunnel before entering. Brill casts *haste* on Paks. Before the spawn can react to Darius first attack, Darius strikes the female spawn, Preevi, with a *searing light* spell, slaying her. The emaciated human male spawn, Quiss, moves to intercept Paks, but is too slow. Paks, due to the *haste* spell, is able to enter the chamber and attack him twice. She delivers two powerful strikes from her sword and slays him. Darius strikes the young boy, Tux, with another *searing light* spell and destroys him. The little girl, Pip, becomes gaseous and starts to flee. Paks rushes for the closest door to the room and calls upon Yondalla to hold the spawn at bay. Brill then casts a *fireball* in the area where the spawn may be hiding. Brill saw a wisp of flame after the fireball went off – he believes he destroyed the little girl.

Darius begins opening the crypts looking for the vampire spawn; as he opens each crypt, the spawn appears, and Darius destroys it permanently.

The party heads for one of the rooms in the center of the level where they rest for the night.

Game Note: Brill, Diz, and Paks are awarded 1,600 XP.

Darius is awarded 2,360 XP.

Artol is awarded 1,180 XP.

Heart of Nightfang Spire, Day 30

Twenty Fourth Game

Session

The Spire, Three Levels Down

In the morning, the party sets out to continue their exploration of the spire. As Paks steps out into the tower she sees a human standing just down the hall. He is 6-feet tall and weighs around 200 lbs. He is armed with a longsword, short sword, and bow and is wearing a pair of dark red glowing armbands. He draws his sword and advances towards Paks. She had no sense of him in the hallway before seeing him, and even then, it's almost as if he isn't there. Paks does not detect any sense of evil from him and she yells to the party, "*He's not evil.*" The party guesses that the bracers are probably controlling the stranger. After a short fight the party manages to subdue him. Artol examines the bracers and determines they are trapped; they are designed to blow the creatures arms off if tampered with. Artol manages to disarm the traps and unlock the bracers freeing the individual from their spell. Darius heals the stranger and restores him to consciousness.

The party learns his name is Merilath and that he is a ranger. He tells us that he had been captured by a half-ogre/half-demon and when he refused to join the creature, it placed the magical bracers on him; he remembers little since that time. He does know that the demon has been using him as a courier. When the party explains what they are doing and mentions Gulthias, Merilath remembers that he just delivered something to Gulthias. But he doesn't remember what he delivered or where he delivered it. He asks to join the party to repay them for their help. The party tells Merilath that he owes them nothing, but he is welcome to accompany them.

Darius asks Brill to have Stoney check the wall leading to the stairway. Darius explains that he wants to *stone shape* a passage into the stairway so that the party can pass Gulthias tree symbols. Brill, without consulting the party, instead decides to have Stoney move the tree

symbol outside the spire. Paks and Darius are fairly upset. They believe that this will tell Gulthias that the party has returned.

The Spire, Four Levels Down

The party descends once again to the fourth level and head towards the room where Rhunad, a Vrock, is imprisoned. Artol disables a trap on the door and unlocks it. Darius then opens the door and casts *dismissal* on the vrock, trying to send it home. The creature is able to resist the spell. Darius tries again, but that spell also fails. Having no more *dismissal* spells available, and having promised to free the vrock, Darius breaks the circle imprisoning the creature – knowing he will regret it later.

The party returns to the room where they fought – and retreated from – Stitches. There is no sign of him in the room. Brill has Stoney check what he thinks is the adjoining room; Stoney reports that there is a single large humanoid creature in the room. The party plans its actions and prepares to enter the room. Brill casts *blur* on Diz. Artol stays back and Merilath readies his bow. Diz enters the room, and using her *boots*, she strikes Stitches with a flurry of five blows. Darius and Paks move to support Diz, while trying to stay away from Stitches breath weapon. In the other room, Artol summons a cat from his *bag of tricks* and the two of them watch the other doorway for intruders. Suddenly, seven Rhunads appear and state, “*I forgot to do something before I left – kill you all.*” He then *summons* a number of dretches who move towards Brill, Merilath, and Artol. Darius moves to flank Stitches and attacks. Another flesh golem enters from an adjoining room and attacks Darius from behind. Brill casts *wall of fire* and prevents the dretches from reaching them; he then moves into the *wall of stone* enclosure Darius used to trap Stitches with in their last encounter. Merilath destroys a dretch that was caught on this side of the *wall of fire* and Diz destroys Stitches. Artol moves behind the flesh golem attacking Darius and attacks. Rhunad (and his *images*) *teleported* across the *wall of fire* and appeared next to the *wall of stone* enclosure where he released his spores – infecting both Brill and Merilath; Merilath, in his weakened state, was rendered unconscious by the spores. Darius and Paks rush to aid Brill and the others while Diz destroys the other flesh golem. Darius casts *flame strike* on the vrock while Paks attacks. Brill casts *magic missile* against Rhunad and splits his four *missiles* amongst four targets; three destroy images while the fourth strikes Rhunad. Brill then casts *electric orb* and sends one *orb* to destroy the final image and the other seven at the vrock. Paks strikes Rhunad a devastating blow – using her *smite evil* ability and the spell *divine sacrifice* – and slays him. Darius finds a magical tome – a *libram of flesh golems* – and gives it to Brill to look at while Paks cures Merilath and Brill of the vrock’s spores.

The Spire, Five Levels Down

After healing, the party descends to the fifth level down and continues their explorations. The party destroys eight zombies, a morgh, and a girallon.

The party finds a room with a pillar of flame and the floor covered with bones. There is a mosaic on the ceiling above the pillar of flame. Merilath enters the room and the pillar of flame – a fire elemental – lashes out at him and throws him back out of the room. The party tries to fight the elemental using several coordinated attacks, but finally they flee using Merilath’s shadow walk ability.

**Game Note: Brill, Darius, Diz, and Paks are awarded 2,300 XP.
Merilath is awarded 1,500 XP.
Darius advances to 11th level**

Heart of Nightfang Spire, Day 31

Twenty Fifth Game Session

The Spire, Three and Five Levels Down

The party fled several levels higher up the tower where they found a room to rest. Several members of the party were determined to return and destroy the fire elemental. The party made plans and decided they needed some additional equipment. It was decided that Diz, Artol, and Brill would use the *helm of teleportation* to teleport to Brindinford and see if they could purchase the necessary equipment.

During the planning Artol tells the party he has decided to leave them. He turns to Paks and says, "Lady Paks, I have learned much from you, but I feel the need to return to the forest. Your need here is great, so I would like you to have these – they are a family heirloom." Artol hands Paks a set of lock picks.

As Artol hands his gloves to Dzindra, she bows deeply to him. "I will always remember you, brave Artol. I really came to see you as one of the most important members of our party, and I'm not quite sure how we'll get along without you. If you ever want to come back, please don't hesitate! You'll always be welcome. Oh, and ... remember Paks' warning? It's either you or I Artol, so do try to stay out of trouble."

Diz, Artol, and Brill teleport to Brindinford where they sell the *libram of flesh* golems for 18,000 gp, the scroll of *dominate animal* for 375 gp, and the *cloak of elvenkind* for 2,000 gp. Artol takes his share of the treasure (1956 gp) and departs.

Then Diz and Brill purchase five arcane scrolls of *blur* (1500 gp), two *potions of false life* (1200 gp), one *ice storm* scroll (1400 gp), one *slow* scroll (750 gp), one *haste* scroll (750 gp), and one divine scroll of *greater magic weapon* (1400 gp). Diz also purchases a *headband of ferocity* (4000 gp) for herself.

The party divides up the remaining treasure. Each person gets 2503 gp, 8 sp.

After Diz and Brill return, the party returns to the fire elemental chamber. Darius casts *greater magic weapon* on the party's weapons and Brill casts *haste* on himself and Darius. Brill casts several spells at the elemental. Darius casts divine power on himself, grows to eight feet tall, and moves into the room to attack the elemental, to prevent it from closing with the rest of the party. After a short battle, Darius delivers the killing blow. The party recovers a *potion of charisma*, a +2 *large shield of light fortification*, 240 gp, and a 500-gp garnet.

Brill casts *rope trick* and the party rests in the extra-dimensional space.

Heart of Nightfang Spire, Day 32

Twenty Fifth Game Session

The Spire, Down the Shafts

After defeating the elemental the party continues their explorations of Nightfang Spire. The passage beyond the elemental chamber leads to two rooms with a large pit leading deep into the ground. The party descends 300 feet (150 feet below ground) into the first pit. Find cavern filled with undead. There is a tree in the room at the bottom of the pit. The party retreats back up and heads for the other pit. The room at the bottom of the other pit also has a tree. Brill has Stoney move both trees.

The party begins to explore and finds many rooms occupied with Girallons. They allow us to continue on to meet their leader, Thiff. She agrees to a deal with the party. We will kill Gulthias, not kill her clan, the Girallons will leave us alone, and she will send a warrior (Gnarr) to guide us.

The party trades 60 pp for 3 *potions of cure serious wounds*. The party trades five 10-gp gems for a +1 *icy burst battleaxe* and a 500-gp gem for a +2 *keen kukri*. Thiff also gives us the first part of the key.

The party continues exploring.

In one room, the party recovers 300 sp and 2 10-gp gems. In another location, the party recovers 1000 gp, a 150 gp gem, a +1 *ring of protection*, and an arcane scroll of *mirror image* (3rd level caster).

The party is attacked and Brill *hastes* himself and Darius; the party kills 4 girallons and 2 night hags. The party recovers a *ring of force shield*, a *ring of minor electrical resistance*, and an iron box hidden in the fire. The box contains 330 pp and nine star rubies (1000 gp each). Gnarr demands one star ruby.

The party detects teleport magic within the room. Paks and Darius investigate and find a two-way *teleport*.

On the other side, the party encounters and kills two mohrgs and 3 girallons. During the fight Brill tumbled and killed the last creature with *shocking grasp* delivered through his sword. The party recovered 2100 pp and 7 black opals (1000 gp each)

Game Note: *For continuing heroic exploits against uncertain odds, including but not limited to the vanquishing of an elder fire elemental, the arrival in the catacombs below Nightfang Spire, and the alliance with the girallon rebels, each party member is granted 6700 XP.*

Brill and Paks advance to 12th level

Heart of Nightfang Spire, Day 33

Twenty Sixth Game Session

The Spire, Down the Shafts

After resting, the party continues to explore. They recover 800 sp and three 10 gp gems from some sarcophaguses.

The party encounters a door with an amazing lock that covers a large portion of it. Inside the party finds a stone dragon (actually an improved gargoyle) that come to life. The party beats it into submission and recovers the second part of the key.

In another room near a cavern filled with undead, the party destroys 5 mohrgs and recovers 212 pp, a silver comb (550 gp), a brass mug with jade inlay (350 gp), a carved chest of mahogany (1400 gp), a crystal and emerald chalice (700 gp), *necklace of fireballs*, and a *ring of minor elemental fire resistance*. Brill took the ring.

The party continues on to the great chamber of the undead. Darius walks across the ceiling towards the pillar of stone to recover the key. Five dwarven specters appear and attack, landing 3 devastating blows and causing Darius to lose 10 levels. Darius first teleports to the shrine under the farm and from there he teleports to the town square where his sudden appearance scares the children. A temple guard calls for Levitron who heals Darius (*restoration*, 500 gp). In the mean time, Diz jumps to the pillar and grabs an electrical trap, and then jumps back to relative safety. Merilath flees into *shadow* and Paks and Diz combine their efforts to slay a specter. Paks turns one specter and Diz jumps to the island again where this time she grabs another segment of the key before jumping back.

The party retreats to a place of safety and rests. Darius returns to the party and casts *restoration* (100 gp).

Stoney moves another scrying *tree* outside.

Game Note: Each party member is granted 1500 XP.

Diz advances to 13th level

Heart of Nightfang Spire, Day 34

Twenty Sixth Game Session

The Spire, Catacombs

Darius *stoneshapes* through a wall and the party enters the catacombs. The party is attacked by five mohrgs and a tombstone golem. The party destroys the creatures but the Girallon warrior Gnarr is killed. The party recovers the gem Gnarr had earlier demanded. The party locates several crypts, narrowly avoids a falling block trap and a poison coated lid, and recovers 520 gp, 900 sp, seven 10 gp gems, two 20 gp gems, four 50 gp gems, an arcane scroll of *summon monster II* (2nd level) and *unseen servant* (1st level), and a *potion of enlarge* (5th level).

Paks unlocks a door and sees a dragon statue. When she enters the room she sets off an electrical floor trap, but manages to recover the fourth piece of the key.

The party returns to the great chamber of the undead to defeat the specters. Diz enters the chamber as bait. When the specters attack Darius calls down a *flame strike* and destroys one, Brill casts *lightning bolt* and slays two, Paks strikes one with an arrow sends it into the afterlife permanently.

The party rests and plans for their strike at Gulthias.

Game Note: Each party member is granted 2100 XP.

Darius and Merilath advance to 12th level

Heart of Nightfang Spire, Day 35

Twenty Sixth Game Session

The Spire, Catacombs

The party moves against Gulthias. Merilath destroys the half-orc spawn Ulweyn and Diz slays the spawn Serle, but Paks fails to turn the mummies. Gulthias is protected from the party's spells within a *globe of invulnerability*. Diz takes a simple approach to overcoming Gulthias. She *dimension doors* behind Gulthias and bull rushes him, pushing him out of the *globe* and to the floor below, smashing his chair while taunting him, "Gulthias, your such a push over." Darius hits Gulthias with a *searing light* spell and Brill casts *daylight*. Darius misses with a second *searing light*. Merilath in the meantime has slain one of the mummies. Brill and Gulthias trade *dispel magic* stripping away each other's defensive magic's.

Diz is attacked by an *invisible* opponent, Redbone the wight assassin, and Paks *lays hands* on Gulthias channeling positive energy into him. Brill throws a *fire orb* at Gulthias but misses. Brill casts *true strike* to aid his next attack. Gulthias reads a scroll and fades into *invisibility*. Brill casts *haste* and *daylight* while we hear Gulthias cast another spell. Darius casts *invisibility purge* and redbone becomes visible but fails to uncover Gulthias. Darius then casts *flame strike* on the evil dragon heart hanging from the ceiling.

Diz and Redbone continued to battle while Paks destroyed a half-orc spawn. Brill slays a pair of dire rats with an *electric orb* and throws a *magic missile* spell at Redbone to assist Diz. Gulthias throws a *lightning bolt* at Diz, but Diz survives and slays Redbone. Darius casts

another *flame strike* on the heart while Brill continues to kill off the dire rats. Gulthias casts *finger of death* on Diz in retaliation, but she manages to overcome the spell with her will. Darius and Merilath each slay a mummy. Darius slays another spawn.

Diz *levitates* up to the heart and spots Gulthias hiding on the heart. Diz pushes off the ceiling and "lands" on the heart where she is slimed by necromantic seepage from the heart. In the meantime Paks slays the last mummy. Brill casts *magic missile* on the heart and Gulthias casts *cone of cold* and *lightning bolt* at Brill. Paks stakes Erkitz, another spawn then Paks and Merilath begin shooting arrows at Gulthias. Diz begins to attack the heart with her dagger and calls out, "*Hey, Gulthias, the heart is kind of squishy when I stab it.*" Darius misses Gulthias with a searing light. Diz stakes the heart and it convulses and falls to the ground below, landing on Merilath who could not get out from beneath it in time. After the heart squishes all over Merilath Diz says, "*I don't think Ashardalong is going to come back now.*"

Brill sends two *magic missile* spells at Gulthias before he flies out of range of Darius' *invisibility purge* and disappears again. Gulthias casts *ice storm* on Brill and Diz, destroying one of Brill's images. Darius strikes Gulthias one final blow and destroys him.

As Gulthias's terrible essence disintegrated forever from the world, the black remains of the Heart of Nightfang Spire slowly oozed into a seeping pool of inert, common sludge. The mighty vampire's reign of terror had ended, and spells he had cast long past slid away like so much sodden earth before a cleansing flood. Hidden by illusions, various pieces of furniture and bookcases appeared along the walls surrounding the party. Wide tables containing all manner of glass vials, bottles and jars filled with a wide variety of substances. A flat table holding sinister-looking metal tools and needles strewn around a metal platter, on which a mostly dissected humanoid hand of great size, animated by the Heart, is just now making its final twitches as it loses its misbegotten life. Bookshelves overflow with centuries of magical lore covering a wide range of topics, including human anatomy, dragon anatomy, human torture, treatises on dead tissue, verse and prose celebrating death, obscure necromantic references, and travelogues by obscure beings from alternate planes.

The party recovers the following: *ring of protection +2*, *+3 leather armor*, *wand of lightning* (27 charges), *wand of magic missile* (43 charges), *goggles of day*, *ring of protection +4*, and Gulthias' Spellbook. Brillock finds a second, ancillary spellbook amongst the darker tomes, in which he finds a plethora of additional spells: *tenser's floating disk*, *summon monster I*, *detect thoughts*, *spectral hand*, *arcane lock*, *locate object*, *fireball*, *lightning bolt*, *tongues*, *clairaudience/clairvoyance*, *spectral hand*, *dimensional anchor*, *contagion*, *improved invisibility*, *minor globe of invulnerability*, *shadow conjuration*, *telekinesis*, *teleport*, *greater shadow evocation*, *stone to flesh*, *circle of death*, *ethereal jaunt*, *vanish*, *mass invisibility*, and *power word stun*. Also sitting on the tables are the potions *lesser restoration*, *cause serious wounds*, and *oil of slipperiness*. Finally, mixed into the remains of the Heart are 442 pp, a gold dragon comb with a fire opal eye (2500 gp), a jeweled gold crown (5000 gp), and a suit of *banded mail of luck*, and a *lion's shield*.

Diz casts aside all manners of implements left over in the ruins of Nightfang Spire, and curses, shaking her fist, "*Damn! Not an amulet of the mighty fists anywhere to be found!*" Then she looks up, noticing everyone is looking at her strangely, straightens herself up, and says calmly, "*Of course, I care not for material possessions.*"

After taking all that they desired, the party drew together, ready to teleport free of this evil place and return, victorious, to Twilight Hollow. The helm didn't work. It buzzed a second and then failed for the first time ever. Grumbling, Merilath invited the party to shadow walk with him back to town... but the shadows resisted their usual master, and this plan was also foiled. At this point it was clear there was something wrong, as even the rope trick spell refused to allow escape into a pocket plane. Something had tied the party to this position in the material plane,

and even their most powerful magics were failing to make a difference! A voice says “You are too late, my forces have found you.”

With increasing trepidation the party climbed free of the now decrepit Spire, only to find a snarling snowstorm more terrible than any they had previously faced gripping the mountains in a blinding near white-out. The exhausted adventurers struggled up out of the ravine, reaching the ancient dwarven path marker half buried in the icy snow. And from here they could see a sight that could freeze even Paks’ indomitable Paladin heart, for a legion of dark shapes were making their way nimbly through the snowdrifts towards them... savage well-trained orcs with the insignia of the Winter Mage.

Blocked off from any possible return to Twilight Hollow, the desperate heroes fled north, following the ancient dwarven menhir in hope that they may provide a path through the terrible frozen mountains. The orc army drew ever closer, clearly trained to hunt prey in the debilitating snowstorm environment. The heroes tried various tricks to hide and get some rest, using illusions and other magics to cover their trail, but the strange loping orcs would find them every time, and the chase would begin again.

It was three days later that the half-dead party stumbled down into a final mountain ravine, and the chilling calls of the orcs indicated that the time for a last stand had come. The party gathered what few remaining resources they had, and stood quivering in the cold as the first wave of ravening orcs descended upon them from the snow-blighted hills.

At that moment there was a single piercing sound, like the crack that precedes an avalanche that echoed off the uncaring cliffs. The sound came again and again, and orcs dropped lifeless in mid-charge, until the sounds came as a chorus and the orcs died quickly and often. Under icicle-caked eyebrows, the heroes watched with tired eyes as the humanoid forces were driven off, and a new kind of shape emerged from the stinging white.

They were dwarves, dressed in fantastic armor with rivulets of gold and mechanical insignia. They approached from all sides at once, bearing crafted brass guns like the one Darius had held onto until now. They said nothing, but parted to allow a mighty general clad in silver and his wiry academic companion to approach the surrounded party. The General looked down upon the heroes of Twilight Hollow, and looked most carefully into Darius Darkhammer’s unwavering eyes.

Finally he spoke, in a voice that commanded attention. *“I am Cord, War General of the Dwarven Redoubt of Tix. My companion is Endarion, of the Order of Mathematicians. We’ve spent these last few centuries withdrawing from the world of men, so we could prepare to fight the legions of madness when the final summer has ended. And here you few have undone the work of our ancestors, and led the Horde directly to our doorstep. We should kill you outright for that alone.”*

The wiry companion whispered something at that, and the General turned away in discussion to low to hear. Dwarven warriors watched the party’s every move, their guns pointing down, but ready to be used at a moment’s provocation. The general and the mathematician seemed to come to a resolution, and for the briefest moment the party could see Endarion’s eyes, made of liquid dripping gold, focus their unearthly gaze upon them. And then the companion had backed away, and the General had turned to make a final pronouncement to the helplessly outmatched heroes.

“We should kill you, but we will not. I have a better use for those who could rid us of the pestilence of Nightfang Spire.” And with that, he turned to Darius Darkhammer, and in a voice loud enough for all in the valley to hear he bellowed “Welcome back, oh Great and Mighty King of the Dwarves!” And with that he, and the hundred Dwarven warriors surrounding the party, dropped to their knees in praise of the returning king.

Game Note: For defeating Gulthias, each party member is granted 3100 XP.

Thus ended the Winter Saga Part I of IV: The Old Road

Adventures:

- The Sunless Citadel
- The Forge of Fury
- The Speaker In Dreams
- The Standing Stones
- Tears for Twilight Hollow
- The Heart of Nightfang Spire