

THIS ADVENTURE MODULE IS 4E COMPATIBLE

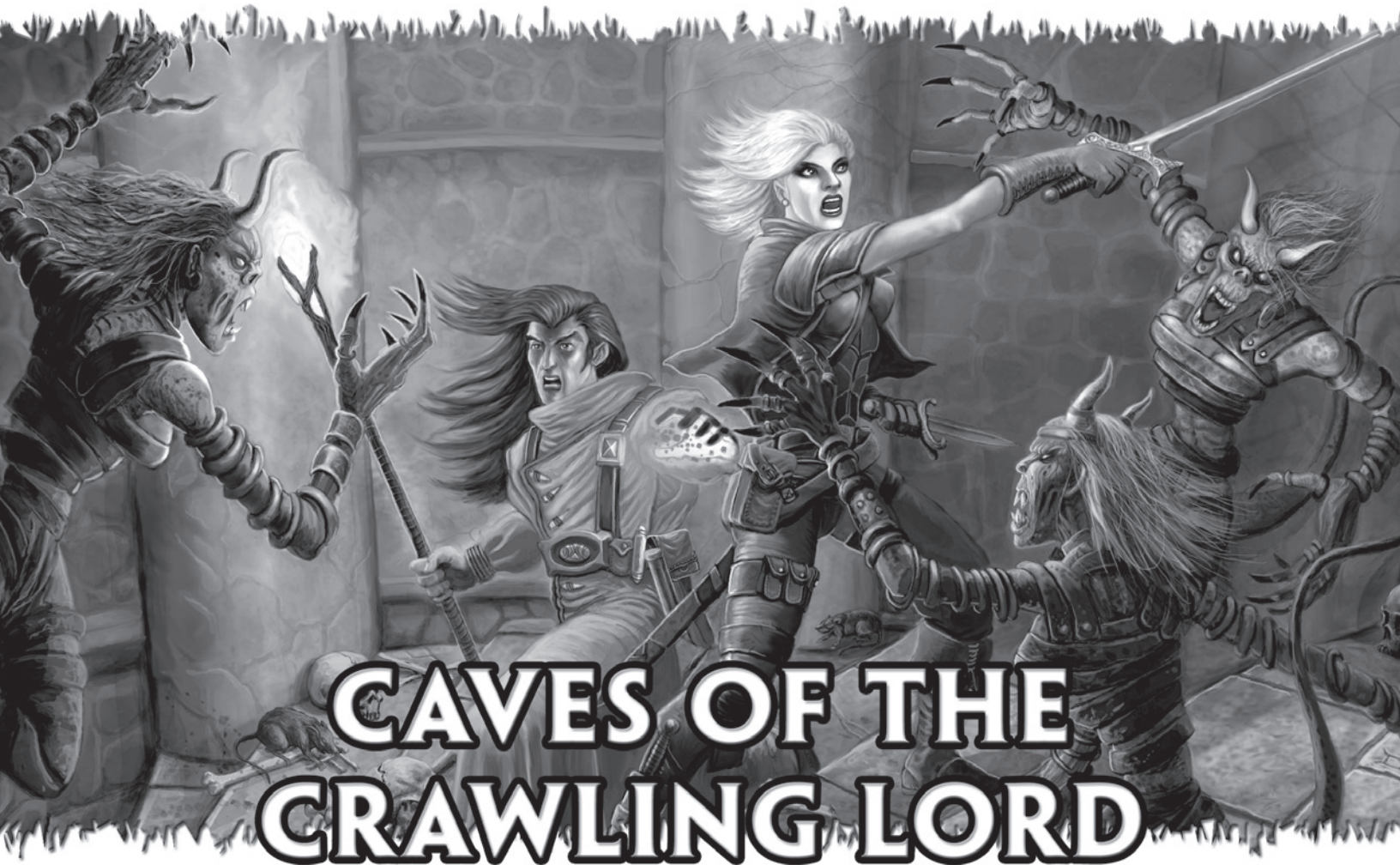
DUNGEON CRAWL CLASSICS



CAVES OF THE CRAWLING LORD

BY PATRICE CRESPIY
AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTER LEVELS 8-10





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BY PATRICE CRESPY

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INTRODUCTION

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

Caves of the Crawling Lord is a chaos-touched stand-alone adventure designed for five 8th-level characters. Spanning twenty-four combat and non-combat encounters, it takes the characters up to 10th level and requires two or three full game sessions before reaching its climactic ending. This adventure is a raw violent fantasy set in the maddening remnants of an eldritch burial site. It features whispering atrocities and the grotesque denizens of a demented court revolving about a wizard's forgotten artifact. The *Orb of Madness* gives every class its chance to shine and plunder, whether through brutal clashes or through subtler challenges. Good team balance and character cooperation are required in order to overcome the perils the party will face. The GM should refer to the scaling section below if the characters' party lacks one or more of the standard major roles.

Caves of the Crawling Lord begins in the distant town of Basmar, a trading community set at the foot of eroded mountains at the very edge of a searing desert. The region of Basmar is a generic setting peculiar to this adventure. It can be easily replaced with an appropriate town from another campaign setting. For flavor's sake, this adventure works best with a somewhat exotic location, if available.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

In a bygone tiefling empire the high sorcerer of an ancient religious order was buried with his slaves in a catacombs complex. Unfortunately, a roving carrion crawler was corrupted by the potent magic of the sorcerer's *Orb of Madness*. The orb bestowed intelligence and cursed powers to the aberration, *T'zgyzh'pha*, who spawned a small worm colony and took control of the late wizard's slaves.

A powerful storm breaches the stone slabs that once sealed the catacombs shut, sending swarms crawler hatchlings into Basmar's Crescent Lamp Bazaar. At this time, the PCs are wandering from stall to stall possibly in search of rare components, scrolls and trinkets. Fleeing the falling worms, traders and customers run away, leaving the PCs and local militia to deal with the vermin.

Emissaries of the merchants' council of Basmar ask the PCs to investigate the source of the vermin-ridden rain and to put a stop to whatever threat lies behind it. They offer rewards of gold and honorific titles in return. The heroes can engage in a skill challenge involving rituals, discovering secret knowledge and gathering information in order to trace the rain's source to the entrance of the newly uncovered catacombs. Their journey takes them to the mountains overlooking Basmar.

Finding windy caves crammed with carrion crawlers, the PCs must cautiously thread their way through the dark catacombs in search of the threat hidden within. Along the way, they uncover the burial site. The foul magic of the *Orb of Madness* has transformed the catacombs into a maze of warrens and distorted places defying logic. The carrion crawlers are under *T'zgyzh'pha's* command and have slowly carved their caves into the sacred halls and beyond. The PCs' exploration becomes nightmarish as they uncover the layers of colony intertwined in the catacombs own defenses and mummified guardians.

The PCs must defeat sickening aberrations, foulspawn servants and undead abominations, to find a way through the misdirecting halls, secret vaults and gibbering horrors. The maze unravels as the PCs get closer to the monster at its core, the great *T'zgyzh'pha*.

In the final assault, the heroes face *T'zgyzh'pha* and its weird viziers under the bewildering light and aura of the *Orb of Madness*. If successful, they must run for their lives, in order to reach the surface and return to Basmar as honored guests and triumphant paragons.

GAMEMASTER'S SECTION

ENCOUNTER TABLE

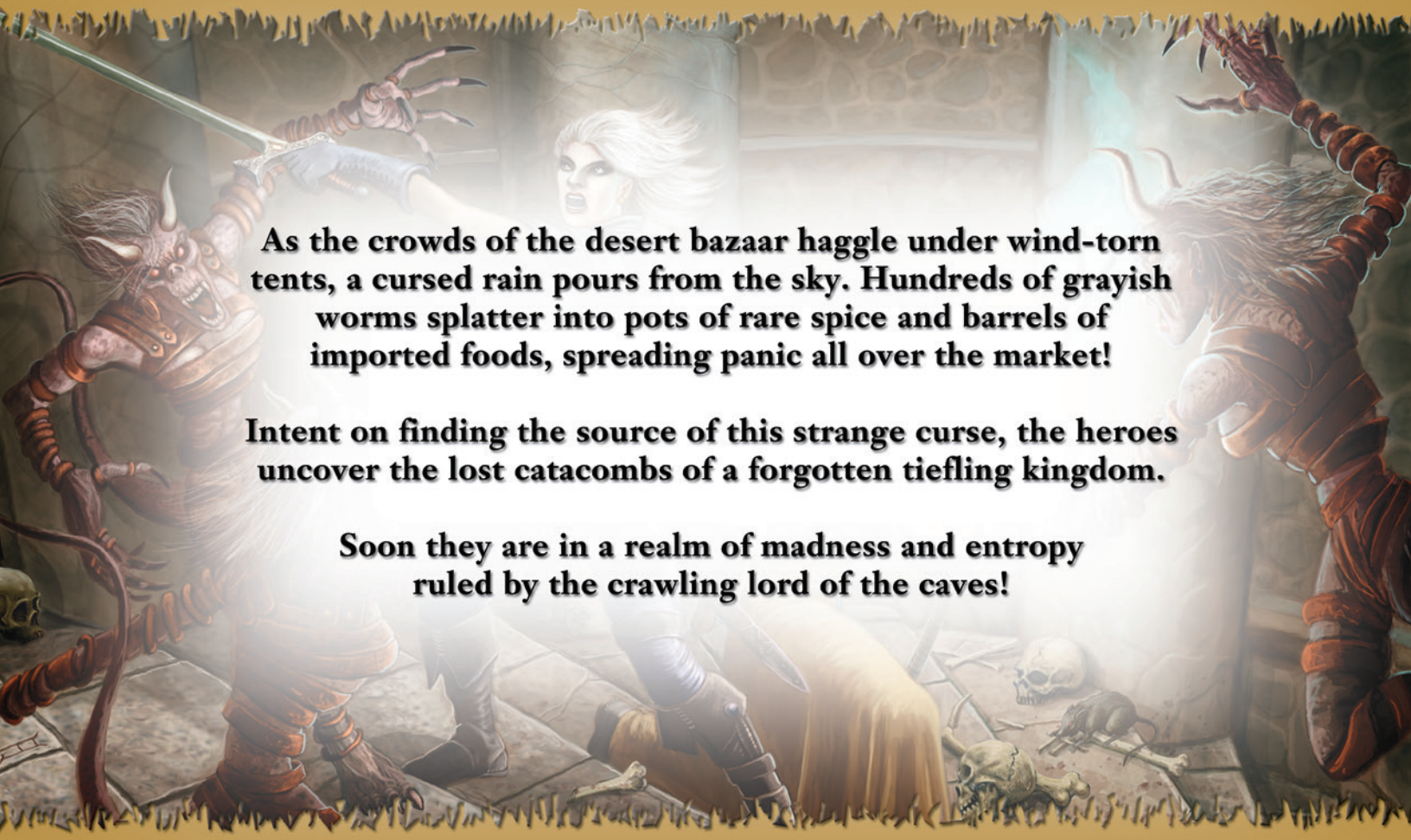
To help the GM prepare, we have included a quick reference table showing all encounters at a glance. **Loc** — the location number keyed to the map for the encounter. **Pg** — the module page number that the encounter can be found on. **Type** — this indicates if the encounter is a trap (T), puzzle (P), or combat (C). **Encounter** — the key monsters, traps, or NPCs that can be found in the encounter. Names in *italics* are classed NPCs. **EL** — the encounter level.

SCALING INFORMATION

Caves of the Crawling Lord is designed for 5 characters of 8th-level, but it can be modified easily for parties of different sizes, composition or levels. Consider adapting the adventure using any of the following suggestions:

Weaker parties (4 or fewer characters, no defender or leader, characters lower than 8th-level): Do not let combats spread into multiple rooms, do not have surprised monsters raise alarm or seek help and have all creatures fight to death. Reduce the number of carrion crawlers in Area 1–2 by 1. Reduce the number of carrion crawlers in Area 1–5 by 1. Reduce the number of carrion crawler rogues in Area 1–7 by 1. Remove the carrion crawler from Area 1–9 and reduce the number of foulspawn berserkers by 1. Reduce the number of firelasher elementals in Area 2–2 by 1. Reduce the number of foulspawn manglers in Area 2–3 by 1. Reduce the number of foulspawn grues in Area 2–4 by 1. Reduce the number of grue carrion crawlers in Area 3–2 by 1. Replace the grell specters in Area 4–3 with grells. Reduce the number of carrion crawler fighters in Area 5–2 by 1.

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As the crowds of the desert bazaar haggle under wind-torn tents, a cursed rain pours from the sky. Hundreds of grayish worms splatter into pots of rare spice and barrels of imported foods, spreading panic all over the market!

Intent on finding the source of this strange curse, the heroes uncover the lost catacombs of a forgotten tiefling kingdom.

Soon they are in a realm of madness and entropy ruled by the crawling lord of the caves!

This Adventure Module is 4E Compatible!

For use with the 4th Edition

**DUNGEONS
& DRAGONS**
ROLEPLAYING GAME

Requires the use of the D&D Player's Handbook, Monster Manual, and Dungeon Master's Guide, Player's Handbook 2, Monster Manual 2, Adventurer's Vault core rulebooks, available from Wizards of the Coast, LLC



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