a 5\textsuperscript{th} Edition D&D campaign

\textbf{SESSION \#3}

Tomb of the Delvers
Last Session...

The heroes are trying to find out the cause of some kidnappings in Red Larch, particularly two little blond girls, and the only clues they’ve really found led to the an underground complex beneath Berthunder’s warehouse. They are definitely onto something because a half-orc guard tried dropping cages on them, and the last thing that happened was the paladin Hadrian cut the half-orc down and the group is left staring at a young 8 or 9 year old boy trapped under a pile of rocks at the base of a pylon.

He’s not under the pylon itself but rather a jumble of deliberately placed stones in front of the pylon. Nor is he nearly dead or bleeding or crushed, but rather helplessly pinned. His face is dirty and gaunt and he’s staring the group but not saying a word, but his breath is quickening.

The half-orc that Hadrian stabbed starts moaning...he’s not quite dead, and curls into a painful ball.

In the other room the PCs hear the door they jammed shut shake in its frame and they hear an old man say – “Grund! What the heck’s goin’ on in there? You alone?”
The paladin heals Grund the half-orc for 1 hp of damage and scoots him against the wall where Grund nurses his ample wounds. The PCs then start questioning both Grund and the boy in the rubble, whose name they learn is Mickey.

“Why are you there? What will happen if we remove the stones?”

“No! Don’t move them!” he squeals desperately. “I’m being punished! I deserve this, and I accept my punishment!”

The PCs keep questioning both the boy and Grund and they learn several things:
1) The boy’s father is Berthunder of the Warehouse, the same guy that clashed with Hadrian earlier. Mickey was supposed to take a message from someone named Wally Waelvur and deliver it to Bert, but Mickey didn’t do it and this is the punishment of The Believers.

2) The Believers are some townsfolk who follow the signs of the Delvers in the Tomb of Moving Stones. They’ve been around long before Mickey was born, and the PCs suspect far longer than that.

3) The Delvers are long dead miners who reside in the tomb, all bones now, and that sounds like an undead problem. They can’t confirm this though.

4) Who else are Believers? Well, there’s Baeri Mellhiko, the old smoking woman of the Quarry, and Wally Waelvur, Ulbro Luroth the Tanner, and Doren Finestone. He says there might be more but he’s not sure. Hadrian asks specifically if CONSTABLE HARBUCK is a Believer, and Mickey says no, he doesn’t think so, not to his knowledge.

5) Just who are these Believers? They are townsfolk who follow the messages of the Delvers, the spirits of dead miners who reside nearby, in a room where stones move sometimes and when they move it is a terrible omen!

6) A priest of the Black Earth named Larrahk has come recently and he speaks the language of stones and he has been telling the Believers the messages.

7) Grund says more than once that the Bringers of Woe are going to come down on their heads like a rock, the Woebringers will kill them for sure if they don’t leave.
So at this point the PCs are suspecting that this little underground area is very old, probably of dwarven origin, and the townsfolk found something here a long, long time ago and kept it secret. Recently, this fella **Larrakh of the Black Earth**, some kind of priest, has showed up and is...well, they’re not sure what his goal is, but it has to do with interpreting stones.

Now Mickey still insists that no one is to remove the rocks from him because his punishment later might be even worse! He’s a Believer himself and was raised to trust the stonespeak and he doesn’t to jeopardize that.

So they tie the half-orc up and leave the boy and open the door to the next room where an old man stares befuddled at them. “Who---who are you? You ain’t supposed to be here. Oh, gods, don’t kill me!”

“Are you Larrakh?” asks the paladin, pointing a sword at him.

“No, no, I’m **Barnabas**. That Larakh fellow is back there in the Delver Tomb somewhere. Mean ol’ fella....”

Barnabas sitting on a stool and whittling a stick by lantern light and he continues begging for his life and doesn’t seem to a threat, just a scared old man, so they lock him into the room with Grund and Mickey.

“I beg you, don’t provoke the wrath of the Delvers!” the old man shouts as the door closes.
So the PCs know that at least 3 more people are in the chamber beyond, the so-called Tomb of the Delvers. The worst of the lot is a guy named Larrakh, but no one has ever seen his face because he wears a mask. There’s definitely something weird about this place, from the jumble of rocks and dead birds to the floating stone to the sacrificed victims to all this talk about spirits and moving stones and ancient rites.

Oh, yeah, that reminds me, they did question Grund and Mickey about the dead birds, and apparently the Earth priests hate anything to do with the air and flight and cause it all as much painful, slow death as possible. Serena the air genasi doesn’t like the sound of that.

So the three heroes steel their resolve and let the elf Brey creep forward and scout the next chamber which opens into a wide, high natural cavern filled with multiple lintels and toppled structures jumbled in the interior. A single lantern casts wan, wobbly light on the floor but they see and near no one else.

Along the sides of the chamber are six stone slabs, each holding moldering bones and tattered clothing or armor – The DELVERS.
The PCs don’t know if anyone is aware of their presence or not. Nothing moves in the darkness, which permeates the end of the natural cavern, so they toss a lighted stone into the far reaches and don’t see any other exit from this chamber.

Serena the sorcerer conjures another illusion of an elf to enter the room and crouch behind a pillar, but as soon as that happens, a cloaked figure in a mask wheels from cover, screaming “DIE!!!!!!”

Some sort of magic explodes the stone beside the illusory elf, but no one else is close enough to be hit by the fragments.
Two more men are here as well, but they’re not wearing masks like this guy, who the PCs assume is Larrakh.

And what ensues next is one HELL of a hard, hard fight....

Three 3rd level PCs against unknown aggressors.
Two Bringers of Woe converge on the party at close range, but not until after Larrakh SLOWS everyone with magic. This is the first time we’d seen Slow used in 5e and it was devastating.

To make matters worse, barely two rounds into the fight a secret door opens and THREE more Woebringers run inside, and the heroes are now outnumbered 6 to 3.
Brey the elf and Hadrian the paladin advance to take the fight to the cultists while Serena the wild sorcerer hangs back and starts casting magic. She’s hit a couple more times by *shatter* spells, and she fails to make her save vs. *slow* for a long, long while.

Things get dangerous very quickly as the PCs realize that all six *Bringers of Woe* are *spellcasters*, and even if they’re not casting magic they are fanatically deadly with daggers and clubs, trying to stab or beat them to death with wicked glee.

Even when Hadrian and Brey make the saves vs. *slow* they’re immediately hammered by *Hold Person* spells and frozen again.

Fortunately, at the entrance to the room, Serena the sorcerer goes nova and pulls out ALL HER GUNS at once. She twin spells a chromatic orb and dissolves a cultist, but the most important “turn the tide of battle” moment is when she critically hits Larrakh with a chromatic orb. The Black Earth priest
is knocked to 4 hit points and is forced to retreat down the secret chamber the others appeared, screaming “KILL THEM ALL!”

And by the demigods of evil, these guys really, really, really tried.

Due to some unlucky and lucky rolls, Hadrian the paladin is the first to drop to zero hit points. He starts making Death saves and after three rounds is able to stabilize, but he’s unconscious. Still, this was bad for the party as he never got a chance to unleash any of his smiting, instead playing it conservatively and not realizing that their foes were so difficult.
Brey the elf is still in the thick of it, fighting on two fronts and several of the bad guys are down and dead, but a critical hit while he is paralyzed by Hold Person takes a huge chunk of his hit points, and then BOTH priests run screaming at him, their hands outstretched and glowing green with *inflict wounds*.... 6d10 damage.

Brey is dropped immediately and crumples from necrotic putrescence bubbling his skin away.

This leaves only Serena the air genasi sorcerer to fight off two remaining cultists, who ARE injured, but they’re far from dead. Larrakh the leader fled when she nearly killed him, and actually Serena has done most of the damage this entire fight, burning through nearly every single spell she has.

But Hadrian is down and Brey is down, and then Brey rolls a ONE on a death save, and then Brey fails ANOTHER death save...
...and Brey the elven druid/ranger/rogue is **dead**.

Serena is outraged and crying and screaming, her features swirling and changing as the anger boils within her and her heritage shows. She had known the elf for months and they were friends. And she doesn’t know what else to do, she’s down to one spell slot and cantrips and a crossbow and these guys will mutilate her at close range, she’s not built for hand to hand combat.

But Serena is not abandoning the others so she leaps into the room with its high ceiling and uses an ability to levitate straight up out of melee range.

“Get Larrakh!” screams a Woebringer to the other, and the second man runs toward the secret passage. Serena tries to peg him with a crossbow but misses, so now it’s down to one on one, with the other guys possibly coming back any minute.

But floating out of melee range doesn’t mean she’s out of spell range, and the cultist enchants her with a *command* spell.

**“Approach.”**

Compelled against her will, she floats down and walks right up to the man. Enjoying his power, he casts another *command*: **“Grovel,”** he says.

Again she fails her save and is forced to kiss the dirt at his feet in humiliation.

And then we get into some fun grappling rules! So the party is on the very brink of a TPK, with one guy dead and the other not getting up anytime soon, and the last PC injured and out of spells except for cantrips and no other healing options. But this Bringer of Woe really, really wants to sacrifice this air genasi bitch and he wants to do it while she’s alive, so he tries tying a cord around her wrists to restrain her.

He very, very nearly succeeds, and this was probably one roll from Serena being hogtied and dragged off, but she kicks and squirms and resists and is able to finally plunge her daggers into the cultist’s throat!

Gurgling on blood, he collapses, and she is alone in the Tomb of the Delvers. Sobbing, she knows there’s nothing she can do for Brey, and she can’t wake
Hadrian but he has a pulse, so she drags his heavy armored body back into the tunnel and slowly, slowly, maneuvers through the complex back the way they’d come, hoping and praying that Larrakh and the other guy don’t return because she’ll have to fight them both alone.

She gets back a room where there’s a stone door she can close and brace and jam, and here she waits with the paladin because there’s no way she can drag him up the ladder to the concealed whiskey keg and escape through the warehouse.

Eventually after some time has passed Hadrian the paladin eventually recovers, groggily stands and then calls upon the might of Bahamut to heal both himself and Serena.

Then they head straight back to get Brey the elf.

A good long while has passed since they left the battle but as far as they can tell no one else has returned; there are still four dead cultists and Brey the elf on the floor.

They search the room and inspect the secret door that led out, and eventually they drag Brey’s body down here and try to follow Larrakh and the other guy and finish this fight now that they’re healed up, but so much time has passed and Larrakh and the other Woebringer are long gone. Larrakh himself is hideously damaged by acid that probably ate away a good chunk of his flesh and robes. There are bloodstains in the passage and red fingerprints from the wounded man, and the tunnel finally ends at a pivoting stone door and they find a concealed entrance/exit that leads to the rock quarry of Mellhiko where the men in stone masks were said to have originally scared off the night workers.

It is currently about 3am.
They search the vicinity for evidence of someone leaving the concealed door in the quarry, and are able to find some blood splotches, but lose the trail soon after. Carrying their friend Brey with them, they return listlessly to the Allfaiths Shrine where Sir Rel of Tempus and Lady Ghaele of Tymora reside.
“Our friend is slain,” growls Hadrian the paladin. “Dark, cruel men beneath this town of Red Larch. Two of them escaped, including their leader.”

This was near the end of the session and I don’t think anything was mentioned about the Believers or Delvers. The main gist of this ending scenario was to get a scroll of Raise Dead from Sir Rel, which is DOES have, and he’s willing use it on Brey if Hadrian of Bahamut will willfully join the Order of the Gauntlet and help find out what happened to the missing delegation, in particular the knight from Icewind Dale who was to be buried. Hadrian agrees.

So Brey is returned to life and he jolts us, sucking in a deep breath. He’s weak and wobbly and will be for many days, but this was a VERY dramatic capstone to this part of the campaign arc. What began as an innocent jaunt to deliver ore has unveiled a secret society of Black Earth priests who mingle with some of the townsfolk of Red Larch.

How far this corruption has spread, they just don’t know. And now they’re personally invested to find out.