ENCOUNTER P1: ENTRANCE PIT

Encounter Level 7 (1,714 XP)

Setup

2 carrion crawlers (C)
Gurrak, ettin headtaker (G)
3 zombie rotters

Location 1: Every creature drawn into the Pyramid of Shadows arrives in the Entrance Pit. The adventurers arrive here when they complete Encounter A1 (see Adventure Book One, page 6). The pit is full of the bodies of those who died during—and specifically, because of—Karavakos’s failed attempt to conquer and settle his kingdom. As part of his ongoing punishment and imprisonment, this pit contains the fallen soldiers from both sides of the conflict, the innocent casualties of war, the victims of the oppressive reign of Karavakos, and the series of friends and advisers that Karavakos grew to increasingly distrust until he had them banished, imprisoned, or put to death for displeasing him.

Now they are all here, within the pit, rotating into and out of existence to maintain the exact depth of bodies that are present when the adventurers arrive. Occasionally, one or more of these bodies animates as a zombie to continue the fight in which it died or to work its way toward the Sanctuary of Light to remind Karavakos of the many sins of his past.

One creature that was trapped during the pyramid’s occasional appearance in the natural world is Gurrak, an ettin who has claimed the entrance pit as his own personal hunting ground. He collects heads from the corpses that he sees as he passes through the refuse beneath your feet. It might be a giant snake or a worm.

When the adventurers appear in the pit, show the players “View of the Entrance Pit” on page 23 of Adventure Book One, and read:

A stench of death and blood assails you as you appear suddenly atop a pile of bodies. Humans, dwarves, elves, halflings, and others, all apparently recently killed but all wearing clothing and armor of an earlier age. The pile of bodies seems to shift, as though something might be moving beneath it. Above you, at the top of the pit, you see a hideous, two-headed giant—he’s rubbing two blades together with an eager gleam in the eyes of both its horrifying heads.

Perception Check
DC 16: You see a flash of something large and green moving through the refuse beneath your feet. It might be a giant snake or worm.

Gurrak, Ettin Headtaker (G) Level 10 Elite Soldier
Large natural humanoid (giant)

Alignment Chaotic evil
Languages Giant

Str 28 (+14) Dex 12 (+6) Wis 15 (+7)
Con 23 (+11) Int 8 (+4) Cha 9 (+4)

Equipment hide armor, 2 cleavers

2 Carrion Crawlers (C) Level 7 Controller
Large aberrant beast

Alignment Unaligned
Languages –

Str 20 (+8) Dex 16 (+6) Wis 14 (+5)
Con 17 (+6) Int 2 (+1) Cha 16 (+6)

Tentacles (standard; at-will) ✦ Poison
Reach 2; +10 vs. Fortitude; 1d4 + 5 damage, and the target is pushed 1 square.

Bite (standard; at-will)
+12 vs. AC; 1d10 + 5 damage.

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3 Zombie Rotters Level 3 Minion
Medium natural animate (undead)

Alignment Unaligned
Languages –

Str 14 (+2) Dex 6 (+2) Wis 8 (+1)
Con 10 (+0) Int 1 (+5) Cha 3 (+4)

Slam (standard; at-will) ✦
+6 vs. AC; 5 damage.
**Tactics**

Gurrak fights from the top of the pit, using his push powers to keep characters in the pit for as long as possible. His reach allows him to easily reach the PCs. If he can manage to kill one of the adventurers, he immediately tries to carry that character over to the display wall so that he can begin preparing the character's head for display.

The carrion crawlers stay in the pit and focus their attacks on characters that to move out of the ettin's reach. If the characters climb out of the pit, the carrion crawlers follow. They flee into the pit if they are bloodied.

In the second round of combat, three of the bodies in the pit animate and attack the adventurers. These are former soldiers that once fought so bravely for Karavakos. Now, as zombies, they rise to resume the battle in which they fell—and they see the adventurers as the enemy. The zombies are not marked on the map; they rise from among the bodies in the pit on their turn in the initiative order.

**Roleplaying Gurrak**

Gurrak treats all new arrivals as objects to add to his collection. Specifically, he treats the adventurers as carriers for the heads he longs to remove and display in his collection. As such, he refers to each character as "thing" or "it," constantly repeating "its head is just what I've been missing," and "I need that," and "that's just what I need to complete my collection."

**Features of the Area**

**Illumination:** Dimly lit.

**Pit:** The pit is 10 feet deep to the top of the pile of bodies, and another 20 feet deep to the bottom, which is hidden beneath the bodies. Squares inside the pit are difficult terrain. Climbing the wall of the pit requires a DC 20 Athletics check.

A DC 22 History check reveals that the armor, weapons, and clothing that adorns most of the bodies in the pit dates back to the late Nerath era, circa 300 years ago.

Any armor or weapons taken from the pit disappear once they are carried beyond this area. They eventually return to the pit thanks to the magic of the pyramid.

**Alcove:** Four severed heads (H) hang on pegs in the northeastern alcove. These heads include a male shadar-kai, a male orc, a female human, and a male human. Each head looks as though it was freshly removed from its corpse only moments ago.

A sack hangs from the fifth peg. It's about the same size as the heads, and seems to hold some kind of sphere-shaped object. The object inside the sack is the Head of Vyrellis artifact, an orb that holds the lingering spirit of the eladrin princess Vyrellis.

**Conclusion**

When the adventurers defeat the ettin, the Head calls out to them from the alcove. Read: "You out there! We can help each other, I just know it," calls a female voice from the alcove to the left.

The voice of Vyrellis continues to call to the adventurers until one of them takes down the sack and reveals the obsidian orb for all to see. If there is an eladrin or elf in the party, Vyrellis directs her comments and pleas to that character, at least until one of the adventurers takes possession of the orb and becomes its owner.

“You have been drawn into this prison by its most celebrated inmate, Karavakos the would-be king and conqueror,” Vyrellis explains. “The only way to escape is to destroy that most-hated wizard. But to accomplish such a task, creatures the likes of you will need my help.”

Vyrellis explains the basics of the history of Karavakos. Vyrellis will not yet reveal that there are multiple versions of Karavakos running around the pyramid, nor will she fully explain her own situation just yet. But she will do everything else in her power to convince the adventurers to help her so that she can help them.

Once the Head’s concordance reaches 12, it offers the adventurers the quest to collect Vyrellis’ splinters of life force. This is a major quest that awards 2,000 XP upon completion.

See the description of the Head of Vyrellis (page 22 of Adventure Book One) for information.