“Storm Tower” is a Dungeons & Dragons® adventure designed for five 3rd-level characters. It begins in the town of Fallcrest, described in Chapter 11 of the Dungeon Master’s Guide. The player characters have been in Fallcrest for a short while, just long enough for rumors of their heroism to begin circulating among the locals.

BACKGROUND

The fortified town of Fallcrest faces many threats, among them encroaching monsters from the borderlands, where civilization meets the harsh, untamed wilderness. Goblins and giants are of particular concern. To hold them back, the Lord Warden of Fallcrest ordered the reconstruction of a damaged tower that once kept watch over the Witchlight Fens to the south and the Ogrefist Hills to the west. He hired a team of dwarf stonemasons from the stronghold of Hammerfast and sent them to the tower. Nathan Faringray, a captain in the town militia, was assigned to protect them. Faringray and a dozen warriors accompanied the dwarves to the tower, where they set up camp.

While Faringray and his retinue were away, the Fallcrest Guard suffered significant losses defending the King’s Road from monstrous brigands. A week ago, Faringray was summoned back to Fallcrest to help train new recruits for the town guard. He left his retinue at the tower and rode back to town, believing that the stonemasons were adequately protected. But he was wrong.

Yesterday, while training raw recruits in the cold, muddy fields west of Fallcrest, Nathan Faringray was surprised to see Sorik Orvash, one of the dwarf stonemasons, staggering along the road toward town. The captain confronted Sorik and learned that brigands had attacked the ruined tower the previous morning. Sorik described the gang of brigands as a mixture of armored humans and walking skeletons. The humans looked haggard, their faces painted to resemble yellow skulls. This evil force overcame the guards at the tower, yet Sorik escaped. Taking advantage of the fog and rain, he fled unseen.

The Lord Warden has instructed Captain Faringray to dispatch another force to reclaim the tower. Rather than risk more of the town’s militia, Faringray has decided to hire a party of adventurers. He has heard reports that such a party currently resides in Fallcrest, and that these adventurers can be trusted with such an important task.

ADVENTURE SYNOPTOSIS

When the PCs take the task, they must first venture to Vanamere’s Tower, where they find Yellowskull bandits. After the combat with this group, the watching spirit of Vanamere allows them into the tower. Once inside, the PCs encounter more bandits and several traps. If all goes well, they also free the dwarf survivors. Eventually, they have to figure out how to get into the vault. Once they do that, they can find the skull that the bandits sought.

BEHIND THE CURTAIN: THE YELLowskull BANDITS

Chapter 11 of the Dungeon Master’s Guide describes the town of Fallcrest in detail and provides an overview of the surrounding Nentir Vale. The one-paragraph description of the Temple of Yellow Skulls (on page 208) provided the inspiration for the Yellowskull bandits.

In the podcast, I made the bandit leader, Jeras Falck, a servant of Kalarel, the main villain from Keep on the Shadowfell. This worked for the podcast because the players had already crossed paths with Kalarel and hated his guts. (They called him “Karl.”) Falck and Kalarel both hung around with undead creatures, so it wasn’t much of a stretch. However, I was more intrigued by the notion that Falck was a pawn of darker powers lurking in the Temple of Yellow Skulls.

—Chris Perkins
The adventure begins in Fallcrest. The heroes are relaxing inside one of the local inns, such as the Nentir Inn or the Silver Unicorn Inn.

Begin the adventure by reading the following:

Thick curtains of rain fall outside, turning the streets to mud, and peals of thunder resound in the distance. Your evening’s rest comes to an abrupt end when a figure enters the inn and slams the door behind him. His shoddy cloak is drenched, and when he pulls back the cowl, you see that he’s a young tiefling boy. He nods to the innkeeper sheepishly, then slinks toward you. From within the folds of his cloak, he produces a dry, unsealed letter and hands it to you. This 12-year-old tiefling ne’er-do-well is named Tirion Blackhorn. He lives with a family of human farmers in Fallcrest. The letter is from Captain Nathan Faringray of the Fallcrest Guard. Tirion hands the letter to one of the heroes, having already taken the time to read it himself. He sticks around long enough to see if the heroes offer him a token payment, then darts back outside and slips away into the rain.

If the heroes accept Faringray’s invitation, read or paraphrase the following text:

The next morning, you head west through the rain and fog. A short ferry ride brings you to the western shore of the river. You march along a muddy road past farmers’

Captain Faringray’s letter reads as follows:

Good folk,

I have heard tales of your heroism and want to employ your services. Adventure awaits in the borderlands! The Lord Warden of Fallcrest has authorized me to pay well for your time and effort.

If this offer intrigues you, look for me in the fields west of Fallcrest tomorrow morning. Simply take the western ferry across the river and walk to the outskirts of town. You will find me there.

With respect and regards,

Captain Nathan Faringray of the Fallcrest Guard

In early 2008, Wizards of the Coast teamed up with the mad geniuses of Penny Arcade to create a very special D&D 4th Edition podcast. James Wyatt and I ran a group of upstarts through an abbreviated version of Keep on the Shadowfell, the first 4th Edition adventure. Our players included Mike “Gabe” Krahulik and Jerry “Tycho” Holkins of Penny Arcade (www.penny-arcade.com) and special guest Scott Kurtz of PVP (www.pvponline.com). Together, they formed Acquisitions Incorporated, a party of adventurers in search of fame and fortune—more fortune than fame, actually. Split into eight hilarious segments, the podcast proved a resounding success, with almost half a million hits on the Internet. The members of Acquisitions Incorporated—Jim Darkmagic, Omin, and Binwin Bronzebottom—became instant legends in the real world.

In December of 2008, Penny Arcade teamed up with Wizards once again for a sequel. Mike, Jerry, and Scott needed another fix. This time, however, we added actor Wil Wheaton to the mix, playing the party intern. Wil’s character was an elf avenger named Aeofel, and as it turns out, the very survival of Acquisitions Incorporated would rest on his slender shoulders.

The adventure, which had the working title “Penny Arcade and the Tower of Storms,” wasn’t written to be humorous. Quite the contrary. I always knew the humor would come from the players, not the set-up... and certainly not the DM. The adventure took 8 hours to complete, at which point we had to cut the game short. (Turns out I had another D&D game across town that evening.) We probably could’ve finished the adventure sooner, but as happens when you run a game for cartoonists and actors, expeditious play often takes a back seat to wacky hijinks.

If you want to know how Acquisitions Incorporated fared, listen to the podcasts. Look for the podcasts on our website, in the “News & Resources” section of the Article Archive (http://www.wizards.com/dnd/Archive.aspx). I’m not going to tell you which characters died, if any. You’ll have to do your research! I will say that Jim Darkmagic and the gang had a tough go this time ’round, and Mike’s temper tantrum in the eighth hour is true magic and should be remembered in song.

In closing, I’d like to add that the adventure you’re reading isn’t exactly the same as the adventure I ran for Mike, Jerry, Scott, and Wil. As a DM, I make impromptu changes to an adventure while running it, usually to heighten the tension or surprise the players. I encourage you to exercise similar license and not be bound by what’s written here. I also made a couple of alterations to surprise players who listen to the podcast and think they know everything. You can thank me later.

—Chris Perkins

AUTHOR’S NOTE
dwellings until you see an open field of tilled earth and thicker mud. In the middle of the field scream a dozen militia recruits. They attack one another with wild abandon, swinging wooden swords and shields. Watching them with dismay is a cloaked man on horseback. Near him, standing in a puddle by the road, is a dour dwarf smoking a pipe. Rain pours off his wide-brimmed hat.

The figure on horseback is Captain Nathan Faringray, a handsome 40-year-old man. The captain introduces the dwarf as Sorik Orvash, a stonemason from distant Hammerfast, a dwarven hold in the eastern Dawnforge Mountains.

**WHAT FARINGRAY KNOWS**

When questioned, Captain Faringray imparts the following information:

✦ Some months ago, Faren Markelhay, the Lord Warden of Fallcrest, hired a group of six dwarf stonemasons to rebuild a ruined tower to the west. Faringray was assigned to protect them.

✦ Faringray and his retinue of six well-trained guards accompanied the dwarves to the tower. Reconstruction efforts were underway and events were moving apace until Faringray was summoned back to Fallcrest to train new warriors for the town guard. He thought he was leaving the tower in capable hands, however.

✦ The day before yesterday, a group of brigands attacked the tower and overwhelmed the guards and masons. Only Sorik escaped. Some of the brigands were humans clad in leather armor, their faces painted to resemble yellow skulls. The rest were clearly undead skeletons.

✦ In generations past, the tower was key to the town’s defense, watching over the Cloak Wood to the north, the Witchlight Fens to the south, and the Ogrefist Hills farther west. Thirty-odd years ago, a legion of goblins and hill giants advanced from the Ogrefist Hills and attacked the tower, which had but one defender: a powerful elf wizard named Vanamere. No one knows exactly what happened, but when the battle was over, the giants were dead, the goblins were driven off, and Vanamere’s tower was destroyed.

✦ For years, Fallcrest lacked the funds and the incentive to rebuild the tower. However, the growing threat of monsters prompted its reconstruction.

✦ Although he’s not a skilled combatant, Sorik knows the fastest way to the tower and is willing to escort the characters there, provided they keep him out of harm’s way.

Faringray would prefer to return to the tower and clean up his own mess, but his orders are clear: He must remain in Fallcrest to complete the training of the new recruits. Therefore, he asks the characters to investigate the tower, look for survivors, and deal with the mysterious brigands.

**Major Quest:** The PCs gain a 1,000 XP award for dealing with the brigands and rescuing the prisoners.

**TREASURE**

This adventure can take a party of 3rd-level characters most of the way to 4th level. If you add an encounter or two, it certainly will. Distribute nine (or ten, if you add encounters) level 3 parcels in this adventure. A couple of locations—area 1, area 2, and area 5—have suggested treasure. The bandits should have money and valuables, which can be multiple monetary parcels split up among them, but most of the significant treasure is in the hands of the named NPCs. If the PCs demand it, Faringray assures them that the Lord Warden will award them a monetary award that you devise from the parcels. For example, each brigand captured alive and returned to Fallcrest might garner the party 50 gp.
Sorik Orvash is the stereotypical “dour dwarf” and can barely contain his anger toward the brigands. He doesn’t talk much during the return trip to the tower.

**Sorik Orvash**  
Level 3 Minion Skirmisher  
Medium natural humanoid, dwarf  
XP ~

| Initiative | +1 | Senses | Perception +2; low-light vision  
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.  
AC 14; Fortitude 14, Reflex 12, Will 12  
Saving Throws | +5 against poison effects  
Speed | 5  

**Pick** (standard; at-will)  
+6 vs. AC; 4 damage, and Sorik shifts 1 square.

**Roll With It** (immediate interrupt, when hit by an attack; encounter)  
Sorik can roll a saving throw to avoid damage from the attack. If he succeeds, he can also shift 2 squares.

**Stand Your Ground**  
When an effect pulls, pushes, or slides Sorik, Sorik moves 1 square less than the effect specifies. When an attack could knock Sorik prone, a successful save negates that effect.

**Alignment** Good  
**Languages** Common, Dwarven  
**Skills** Dungeoneering +9, Endurance +10  
**Str** 14 (+3)  
**Dex** 10 (+1)  
**Wis** 13 (+2)  
**Con** 16 (+4)  
**Int** 12 (+2)  
**Cha** 11 (+1)  
**Equipment** leather armor, pick, hat, pipe

**WEATHER**

This adventure takes place during whichever season works best for your campaign, but regardless of the time of year, it rains constantly, and light fog shrouds every location to which the characters go. Ill weather is an important theme: rain and fog persist until the adventure is complete.

**Rain and Light Fog:** Weather lightly obscures anything within 5 squares of a viewer and heavily obscures anything 5 or more squares from a viewer.

**REACHING THE TOWER**

Vanamere’s Tower lies 25 miles west of Fallcrest, on the far side of the Cloak Wood, on the northern edge of the Witchlight Fens. Faringray urges the characters to steer clear of the forest and instead suggests that they follow the Nentir River south until they come upon the Witchlight Fens. Then they can trudge west across rugged, grassy terrain and avoid the fens. The total trek covers 30 miles. What’s left of the tower sits atop a hill north of the fens and can be seen from 2 miles away on a clear day.

If the characters travel the route that Faringray suggests, the journey to the tower is dreary and uneventful. Feel free to insert an encounter with the creatures of the Witchlight Fens if the players are spoiling for a fight. Here’s one you can use.

**Encounter Level 4 (XP 875)**

✦ 1 visejaw crocodile (level 4 soldier, *Monster Manual* 45)  
✦ 4 greenscale hunters (level 4 skirmisher, *Monster Manual* 178)

If the characters ignore Faringray’s advice and try to cut 5 miles off the journey by traveling through the Cloak Wood, use the following encounter to illustrate the dangers of the forest and why it’s usually avoided. During the encounter, Sorik does his best to hide and avoid combat. If the characters are defeated, he flees.

**Encounter Level 5 (XP 1,250)**

✦ 1 goblin underboss (level 4 elite controller, *Monster Manual* 138)  
✦ 4 goblin skullcleavers (level 3 brute, *Monster Manual* 137)  
✦ 2 spitting drakes (level 3 artillery, *Monster Manual* 91)