

WRITING FOR THE DMs GUILD

By Dave Zajac

What is the DMs Guild?

- Virtual marketplace for D&D content
 - Community content
 - WotC new and old content (0E to 5E)
 - Adventurers League content
 - Limited print-on-demand
- Hosted by OneBookShelf
 - DnDClassics.com
 - RPGNow.com
 - DriveThruRPG.com
 - WarGameVault.com

What kinds of products can you sell?

- Adventures, classes, backgrounds, races, spells, maps, art, character sheets, and more!
- You can use Forgotten Realms and Ravenloft IP
- You can create generic/non-setting specific content
- You cannot publish your own campaign setting!

Getting Started is Simple

- Create an account
- Upload a PDF of your product
 - **Tip:** Don't do this in advance!
- Set a price
 - Free
 - Pay what you want
 - Fixed price
- Make your product live!

Tools for Creating DMs Guild Content

- Microsoft Word, OpenOffice, etc.
 - WotC supplied templates (effective, but plain)
- Professional layout software (InDesign/Scribus)
 - Powerful, but a steeper learning curve
- Product creation websites
 - The Homebrewery
<http://homebrewery.naturalcrit.com/>
- GIMP/Photoshop
- More resources
 - DMs Guild forum on EN World
A List Of Online Tools For Building DMs Guild Products
<http://www.enworld.org/>

Layout Examples

Darkness before Dawn

In the shadow of rugged peaks painted in frost and fiery autumn, a proud city stares down an advancing army. Catapults and trebuchets are ready, axes sharpened, last testaments sealed and stored. There can be no surrender, no negotiation.

In the last light of the sun, a six-armed woman raises her swords high, and the demons charge.

Overview

This is a three hour adventure for two or more characters of 12th level or higher. The adventure is designed to stand alone, but can be integrated into a larger campaign.

The characters arrive at the dwarven city of Valhaspar, only to find it under siege by an army of demons. They discover that the demons are issuing from a gate in the nearby sacred cavern of the Deep Anvil.

The characters must race against the coming dawn to confront the demonic general and attempt to close the gate, or assist the dwarves in recovering the legendary Earthquake Gem from the dragon Galagos, and sink the demon army and the caverns of the Deep Anvil into the depths of the earth.

Out of the Abyss

This adventure dovetails nicely as one of the interludes in *Out of the Abyss*, showing the ramifications of demonic influence upon the surface world.

Tenebrous, in this case, can be an underling of one of the established demon lords such as Baphomet or Graz'zt.

Background

The Deep Anvil, a strain of unworked iron that stretches deep into the earth, has long been used by the dwarves of Valhaspar in their ritual forgings. Recently, the anvil was corrupted, transformed into utter darkness – a gateway through which the powerful demon Tenebrous and his legions intend to enter, and conquer, the world.

At the time of the characters' arrival, the dwarves have been battling demons for three days. The demons, under the command of the marilith general Senesthra, have beaten the dwarves back to the very gates of their city. They will not last until morning.

The source of the Deep Anvil's corruption is beyond the scope of this adventure.

Getting the characters involved

The characters can stumble into this adventure randomly, but it's more interesting if they have some connection to the Deep Anvil, the dwarven city of Valhaspar, or the Silverfall Mountains themselves.

In particular, one or more of the characters might be a member of the Guardians of the Deep Anvil, sent away to recover a lost artifact. If a player chooses to be a returning guardian, give them a *sun blade* (Dawnbringer from *Out of the Abyss* or the *Sunsword* from *Curse of Strahd* are also appropriate, if you link to those adventures). Give every other character a fun, flavorful rare item of your choice. They're going to need it.

Running the Adventure

The encounters in this adventure follow a branching progression. At the end of every encounter, the *Moving Forward* section provides guidance for possible future encounters.

Feel free to add or skip encounters as is appropriate for your group.

Prelude: Ashes to Ashes

The adventure opens as the characters crest a notch in a ridge, and get their first view of the siege of Valhaspar.

Setting the Scene

As the characters arrive, describe the general landscape being warped and corrupted by the concentrated demonic presence.

Feel free to embellish the scene with the following details:

- Though the skies are clear, ash from the battle falls through the air.
- Silhouetted by the last of the blood-red setting sun is the six-armed form of the marilith general, Senesthra.
- The distant peak of Mount Golgothor, home to the ancient red dragon of the same name, smolders in the distance beyond Valhaspar.
- Spanning the space between mountainous chasms and crags of the Silverfall Range, the walls of Valhaspar flare with dwarven runes.
- The constant thrum of catapults, ballistae, and trebuchets, and the fiery arcs of their payloads soaring over the battlefield to explode into the rear ranks of demons.
- A furious melee of dwarves and giants, holding back the demons on the field before the walls.

THE HOMEBREWERY



Welcome traveler from an antique land. Please sit and tell us of what you have seen. The unheard of monsters, who slither and bite. Tell us of the wondrous items and artifacts you have found, their mysteries yet to be unlocked. Of the vexing vocations and surprising skills you have seen.

HOME BREW D&D MADE EASY

The Homebrewery makes the creation and sharing of authentic looking Fifth Edition homebrews easy. It uses [Markdown](#) with a little CSS magic to make your brews come to life.

Try it! Simply edit the text on the left and watch it *update live* on the right.

EDITING AND SHARING

When you create your own homebrew you will be given a *edit url* and a *share url*. Any changes you make will be automatically saved to the database within a few seconds. Anyone with the *edit url* will be able to make edits to your homebrew. So be careful about who you share it with.

Anyone with the *share url* will be able to access a read-only version of your homebrew.

HELPING OUT

Like this tool? Want to buy me a beer? [Head here](#) to help me keep the servers running.

This tool will **always** be free, never have ads, and I will never offer any "premium" features or whatever.

PDF EXPORTING

PDF Printing works best in Chrome. If you are having quality/consistency issues, try using Chrome to print instead.

After clicking the "Print" item in the navbar a new page will open and a print dialog will pop-up.

- Set the **Destination** to "Save as PDF"
- Set **Paper Size** to "Letter"
- If you are printing on A4 paper, make sure to have the "A4 page size snippet" in your brew
- In **Options** make sure "Background Images" is selected.
- Hit print and enjoy! You're done!

If you want to save ink or have a monochrome printer, add the [Ink Friendly](#) snippet to your brew before you print

NEW THINGS ALL THE TIME!

What's new in the latest update? Check out the full changelog [here](#)

BUGS, ISSUES, SUGGESTIONS?

Have an idea of how to make The Homebrewery better? Or did you find something that wasn't quite right? [Head here](#) and let me know!

LEGAL JUNK


The Homebrewery is licensed using the [MIT License](#). Which means you are free to use The Homebrewery in any way that you want, except for claiming that you made it yourself.

If you wish to sell or in some way gain profit for what's created on this site, it's your responsibility to ensure you have the proper licenses/rights for any images or resources used.

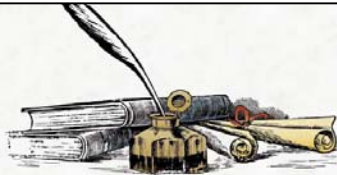
MORE RESOURCES

If you are looking for more 5e Homebrew resources check out [r/InearthedArcana](#) and their list of useful resources [here](#).



Create your own 

More Layout Examples



"We had the ledgers brought here hoping they would give us a clue as to why the harbormaster was murdered. Quila has been culling through them since they arrived, but thus far, they have born no fruit. There are many more to study, so there is still hope they will prove beneficial."

Did the guards or someone at the docks see or hear anything the night of the murder?

"Garis has personally questioned the men who were on duty that evening, but they neither heard nor saw anything out of the ordinary, which confirms our suspicions that Alistair knew his killer. Given the location of the harbormaster's lookout, I fear the body could have easily been dumped into the harbor without notice, and the sound of a splash amongst dozens of moored ships is hardly enough to arouse anyone's suspicion."

Can we examine the harbormaster's body?

"I'm afraid not. Alistair's body received a burial at sea early this morning."

What other suggestions do you have for us?

"I have spoken directly with the wharfmasters, but I have yet to question their bookkeepers. Perhaps they know something of benefit, but without more to go on, I really would not know what to ask them. We still have the ledgers to go through, and examining the harbormaster's lookout may be helpful as well."

Before the PCs depart, read the following:

Before leaving, Duke Calchais says, "I wish you the best of luck. If you find out anything of importance, please return to the castle and inform me."

CONTINUING THE ADVENTURE

At this point, the PCs should have several leads to follow. They can help Quila examine the ledgers, seek Renny Oppard, question the bookkeepers, or investigate the harbormaster's lookout. Proceed to encounters B1, B2, B3, or B4 as needed.

Time and Distance

Murder in Velen does not include a city map. Most locations can be reached with a short ten to twenty minute walk, making travel between the sites largely irrelevant.

B1: RENNY OPPARD

The Bass's Ass is a seedy tavern near the docks that does a fair business at all times of the day. When the PCs arrive, the establishment is crowded. If they politely ask the bartender or one of the patrons about Renny, they are directed to a frail old man sitting alone at a table surrounded by a haze of pipeweed smoke.

Roleplaying Renny Oppard

Renny is frail, sickly, and perpetually bitter. Decades of ale, pipeweed, and anger have decimated his health, and blackened his soul. He never recovered from the loss of Telle, who he considered the love of his life. Since her passing, he has worked steadily on drinking himself to death. In spite of his resentful attitude, he is a danger to no one but himself.

If questioned, Renny can provide the information below. He knows nothing of Alistair's murder, but he is glad the man is dead and freely admits it.

What was your feud with Alistair about?

The old man coughs violently before answering in a raspy voice, "I fucked his wife."

If pressed, he offers the following explanation.

"Years ago, when Alistair was a mere deckhand, his ship was lost at sea. Unknown at the time, the sea scourges captured him and held him as a slave for almost two years before their hideout was found, and they were eradicated. During that time, his wife, Telle, and I grew close. Eventually, she accepted that he wasn't coming home and agreed to marry me."

"It was a week before our wedding when Alistair returned. She left me and went back to him. By the gods, I wanted to kill him then! But she loved him more, and I loved her, and I could never hurt her like that."

"She said she'd still be my friend, but Alistair wouldn't allow it, and I didn't want to put her through that, so I wrote her a note and told her I never loved her and I had only used her for her body. She was devastated."

"Alistair found me drunk one night and nearly beat me to death. I could have fought back, but I just let him. I knew it was the only way to heal their love, so I took the beating—for her sake."

"She passed nearly twenty years ago. She was young to die and still very beautiful. I went to her funeral, hoping to see her one last time, but Alistair turned me away at the door and wouldn't let me in."

The lengthy tale seems to have left the old man winded and teary-eyed. A fit of coughing momentarily overtakes him, but when he regains his breath, he yells, "Now go away, and leave me to die! At least then I may have a chance to see her again!"

B4: THE LOOKOUT

The harbormaster's lookout is a 50-foot-tall tower located at the water's edge in the middle of the wharfs. Its central location and multiple windows allow those on its uppermost floor an unobscured view of the docks and all ships entering and leaving the harbor. In addition, a door on the top floor opens to the outside and a wooden deck, which overhangs the water. Another set of stairs lead from the deck to the ground.

The harbormaster's office occupies the tower's top floor. Quila hastily cleaned up any signs of foul play after she murdered Alistair. She dumped his body and a few of his valuable belongings into the harbor to make it look like he was robbed. Consequently, there is nothing but a few bloodstains for the PCs to examine.

If the PCs venture out of the office onto the adjoining deck, they find Bram, a small, dirty boy of ten years crying near the top of the stairs that lead to the ground. Bram is lonely, hungry, and sad. Alistair gave the boy odd jobs to keep him from starving, and now that the harbormaster is dead, Bram isn't sure how he is going to survive. To speak with the boy, a PC must make a successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check. Offering him food or money grants the PC Advantage on the check. Failing the check causes the boy to run away in fright. If the PCs give chase and catch Bram, he is too distraught to answer any questions. Otherwise, he can provide the information below.

If the PCs ask Bram about the harbormaster, read the following:

The boy sniffs and dries his eyes. "The harbormaster was a good and kind man, but he was old and sometimes his legs and knees hurt him really bad. He knew I didn't have nobody, so he found stuff for me to do. Nothing important, just sweepin', deliverin' messages, and the like. But it was real work and not beggin'. The people, they don't kick at you when you're doin' real work—or at least not the way they do when you're beggin' for coins."

If the PCs ask about delivering the messages, read the following:

Bram nods. "I did take a message to the castle the night he died. The harbormaster, he gave me a silver because the hour was so late. I don't know what it said. I don't read em'. I'm poor, but I'm honest—but it was for Lady Quila, it was."

CONTINUING THE ADVENTURE

If the PCs wish to speak with Quila Calchais, proceed to encounter B6. Otherwise, they are free to continue exploring leads.



Using Art in Your Product

- How important is art?
 - Cover art is important
 - Interior art is less important
- Use interior art to break up text walls and fill dead space
- Where to find free art
 - Google public domain image search (be careful!)
 - Wikimedia commons
 - https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Main_Page
 - Free for use sites
 - Dyson Logos free commercial maps
 - <https://rpgcharacters.wordpress.com/maps/commercial-maps/>

Editing Your Product

- How important is editing?
 - Well edited products sell better
 - Is the DMs Guild your game design résumé?
- Finding an editor
 - Professional editing is expensive!
 - Friend/relative
 - Self-editing
 - Tip:** Wait at least a week before editing your own work!
- Audience forgiveness
 - Update your product!

Promoting your DMs Guild product

- RPG Forums
 - EN World new products & DMs Guilds forums
 - RPG.net
- Social Media
 - Twitter, Facebook, etc.
- Reddit
 - <https://www.reddit.com/r/dmsguild/>
- Cross-selling

Building a Brand

- Consistency
 - A consistent look helps buyers identify your products
 - The Homebrewery is excellent for this!
- Reviews and complementary copies
 - Gaming blogs
 - Merric's Musings <https://merricb.com/>
- Incorporating feedback
 - Update your product!

Realistic Expectations

- The DMs Guild will not make you rich!
 - A 25/25/50 split of the selling price
 - Copper, silver, electrum, gold, and platinum metal badges only account for 11.59% of the total products available



- Pricing your product
 - Most products fall in the \$1 to \$5 range
- What kind of sales can you expect?
 - Writing, editing, and art all contribute to sales
 - Player products (classes/races) sell better than DM only products (adventures)
 - DM only products sell better than DMs Guild creator products (maps/art/covers)
- Most sales occur in the first week (and why)

Summary

- You can publish your own adventures, classes, backgrounds, etc. on the DMs Guild
- Create an account, make a title, upload a PDF
- MS Word or OpenOffice is all you really need
- Include art, edit, and then edit again
- Promote your product for better sales
- Use a consistent style if you want to build a brand
- Have realistic expectations (don't quit your day job)
- It's a hobby, have fun with it!

Questions?

- If you have questions, feel free to email me at dave@swordfin.com.
- If you would like a free copy of my DMs Guild adventure, Hand of the Wychlaran, just send me an email, and I will happily send you a complementary copy.
- Thank you for coming!