

= Dragons of Despair =

Dragons of Despair is the first in a series of 16 Dragonlance adventures published by TSR , Inc . (TSR) between 1984 and 1988 . It is the start of the first major story arc in the Dragonlance series of Dungeons & Dragons (D & D) role @-@ playing game modules , a series of ready @-@ to @-@ play adventures for use by Dungeon Masters in the game . This series provides a game version of the original Dragonlance storyline later told in the Dragonlance Chronicles trilogy of novels . This module corresponds to the events told in the first half of the novel Dragons of Autumn Twilight by Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman . Its module code is DL1 , which is used to designate it as the first part of the Dragonlance adventure series .

= = Plot summary = =

As with most D & D adventures , the exact storyline varies based on the actions that the game 's players choose for their player characters (PCs) , although a general course of action is assumed by the adventure . The story begins with the PCs meeting up in the elven settlement of Solace after five years of unsuccessful individual quests to find any sign of " true clerics " . A series of wilderness encounters are used to direct the PCs to find the Blue Crystal Staff and take it to the ancient ruined city of Xak Tsaroth .

In the jungle @-@ covered subterranean ruins of Xak Tsaroth the player characters search for knowledge of the ancient gods of good , and first encounter the invading draconians . They also find baby dragons and encounter Khisanth , an ancient black dragon . The PCs follow the fleeing dragon down a well , where they must negotiate the first level of a dungeon typical of Dungeons & Dragons adventures , filled with draconians , gully dwarf slaves , and other monsters .

On the second level of the dungeon the PCs must confront and defeat Khisanth . This is an extremely challenging task for the party. but if they have her Blue Crystal Staff , they will be aided by the goddess Mishakal . The adventure ends with the PCs recovering the Disks of Mishakal , allowing for the return of true clerics to Krynn for the first time in over 300 years .

= = Publication history = =

First published in March 1984 , seven months before the first Dragonlance novel , this module is the first Dragonlance product released . In January and February there were small teaser advertisements ? each less than a quarter page ? in Dragon magazine , simply showing the Dragonlance logo and the text " coming soon " .

The scenario is the first of an epic series set on the world of Krynn . The March 1984 issue of Dragon contained a short story titled " The Test of the Twins " by Margaret Weis , along with a sidebar describing Dragonlance as " an epic adventure usable with the AD & D game system , and will be detailed through a series of TSR products ? books , games , modules , and even miniature figures . " In the same issue a full @-@ page teaser advertisement showed a black @-@ and @-@ white version of the painting from the cover of Dragons of Despair with the text " Play the epic series ... Advanced Dungeons & Dragons Dragonlance " .

The module consisted of a 32 @-@ page book with an outer folder . The cover of Dragons of Despair features a painting by Clyde Caldwell depicting the black dragon Khisanth fighting three heroes ? Goldmoon , Tanis Half @-@ Elven , and Caramon Majere ? from the books upon which the adventure is based . This module features the first appearance of Draconians and Aghar (Gully Dwarves) in the game , and new locations such as Xak Tsaroth , Solace and Haven . It is the first appearance of the pre @-@ generated player characters (PCs) that form the Heroes of the Lance group of characters ? Tanis Half @-@ Elven , Sturm Brightblade , Caramon Majere , Raistlin Majere , Flint Fireforge , Tasslehoff Burrfoot and Goldmoon . Riverwind is played as a non @-@ player character (NPC) by the Dungeon Master . Tika Waylan makes her first appearance as an NPC ; she is available for use as a PC and joins up with the Heroes of the Lance in Chapter 7 of Dragons of Flame . The villainous hobgoblin lord Fewmaster Toede also makes his first appearance .

The original concept of the module was done by Tracy Hickman , who " designed a world and an heroic adventure to go with it " . The module was edited by Michael Williams . The module 's design staff included Tracy Hickman , Harold Johnson , Douglas Niles , Carl Smith , and Michael Williams . The module features cover art by Clyde Caldwell and interior artwork by Jeff Easley .

= = = Reprints and revisions = = =

The original series was updated to Advanced Dungeons & Dragons second edition and repackaged as the three Dragonlance Classics modules , using module code DLC . DLC1 Dragonlance Classics Volume 1 reprinted Dragons of Despair , along with Dragons of Flame , Dragons of Hope , and Dragons of Desolation , in 1990 .

In 1999 Wizards of the Coast published a new revision of the original Dragonlance story , including Dragons of Despair , in Dragonlance Classics : 15th Anniversary Edition as part of their TSR 's Silver Anniversary line . In 2000 the entire DL module series was reprinted exactly as the originals but in a smaller size . This printing was available as two slip case sets , with Dragons of Despair included in Dragonlance Volume 1 : DL1 ? DL8 . The four chapters of Dragons of Autumn , an updated version of some Dragonlance modules converting them to Dungeons & Dragons version 3 @. @ 5 , corresponds to the material in Dragons of Despair .

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons : Heroes of the Lance is a video game based on Dragons of Despair released in 1988 . It is a horizontally scrolling fighting game that represents the events of the module . Dragons of Despair has also been converted into the Neverwinter Nights computer game format . The adaptation requires both the Shadows of Undrentide and Hordes of the Underdark expansion packs as well as the original game .

= = Reception = =

The game module was positively received . It placed 25th on a 2004 list of the " The 30 Greatest D & D adventures of All Time " , the only Dragonlance module to make the list .

Steve Hampshire reviewed the scenario for Imagine magazine . He " enjoyed this module a lot " and felt it was " well @-@ detailed and original , and plays well " . Hampshire found it " good value " , his only problem having been reading " the rather flowery prose without being laughed down by the players " .

A review by Graham Staplehurst in White Dwarf magazine , issue # 60 , gave the module an 8 out of 10 overall , and noted that the lack of things such as gold and clerics in the adventure world " don 't destroy the feel of the scenario , whilst creating a very novel atmosphere " . Staplehurst felt that the adventure was " ... very much taken off from Lord of the Rings with a powerful magic item to be taken at all costs to the aggressor 's innermost defences and through them . The characters will have to get past a nice new race of humanoids as well as a couple of other monster @-@ concepts . The artwork (aside from the cover) is good and usable in the adventure . Another good product . " In his 1991 book Heroic Worlds , Lawrence Schick described the scenarios as " heavy @-@ handed in channelling the players to follow the plot " .