

## The Abandoned Dwarven Prison: Starter Module

Like many classic TTRPG starts, this one has the players locked up inside of prison with no items or any idea why they're there. This one is absolutely no different, except that there are potential plot hooks at the end if your players want to continue the campaign. This module is written assuming that the players do not yet know each other, but a few small tweaks can be made to insert this into the middle of a campaign.

Written for 4 players, around level 3.

### Background

It's the middle of the night when suddenly, the players, in jail for unknown crimes, are **woken up by a deafening noise**. Strangely, their doors are no longer locked. Unbeknownst to the players, the long-standing curse of the prison has been activated. The overall goal for the players is to escape from the prison, discover its secrets, and to hopefully clear their names.

#### About the Jail

The jail is located in Dhunbor Peak – a lone mountain in the furthest reaches of the *Kazadun* kingdom. It is an old mine converted into a high security prison. Locals, few as they are, say that the now-prison is cursed, with those effected having strange dreams before dying a bloody and gruesome death. The actual jail is fairly small, with one cell block with twelve cells. Prisoners are generally left down here to die.

The cells are simple, with a bed and chamber pot as the only furnishings. Surprisingly, for a dwarven mine, they are big enough even for nearly anyone.

#### Leaving the Cell Block/Common Room

When the players inevitably leave their cells, they will come into a room where guards normally would be, except, for some strange reason, there is no one here. (Opposite this is just more cells and eventually a large drop into nothing – try to steer your players the other direction.) Usually there are at least two people here at all hours, but now it is empty.

The ever-present **Chasm** serves as the opposite wall, and **as the players enter the room, they see a dwarf on the opposite side pushing a button that stops the hanging rail carts that span the chasm**. Some gears clatter loudly onto the floor. In the center of the common room, there is a table with four chairs. A large fireplace sits to one side of the room while *The Warden's Office* is opposite.

The players' immediate goal is to cross the Chasm. This can be done in a number of ways, but the most intended solution is for the players to fix the hanging rail carts with the gears that fell to the ground earlier. More points of note include a *locked chest* containing the players' armor, a shelf with some weapons (a light crossbow, a quiver with 20 crossbow bolts, and two

#### **Kazadun**

A remote kingdom made up of mostly dwarves in the far North mountains. The kingdom is run by a leader chosen by a Council of Elders. Kazadun is seen as mostly respectable, if a little strange, by nearby kingdoms. The current ruler is Keldor Stonefist, an honorable dwarf from the esteemed Stonefist Clan. Kazadun is made up of many clans that jostle for political power in the Council of Elders. Average citizens are usually serious yet friendly and welcoming, especially in the dead of winter. The capital, Kragthor, is located at the southern most part of the mountains and is where the majority of citizens live, kept warm by its giant forges.

longswords), and a shelf with a *clue* to restarting the hanging minecarts and some miscellaneous objects (bowls, plates, a deck of Dwarven-style cards, and a set of Thieves' Tools).

### **The Warden's Office**

The door to *The Warden's Office* is made of wood and stone and can be picked with a DC 12 Sleight of Hand check. Thieves' Tools are required to attempt this check. Alternatively, a player may attempt to kick down the door with a DC 15 Strength check. If a player points out that one of the hinges is starting to rust (DC 10 Perception check), reduce the DC for the Strength check to 8 as the players know where to strike the door.

The Warden's Office is simple, with a desk, bookshelves, some chairs, and a storage cabinet. The only items of note in here are the player's files located in the storage cabinet. They are easy to locate and do not require a check to find (assuming the players decide to check the storage cabinet). The files contain information about why the players were thrown here. The desk holds the keys to the chest outside and a leather pouch with 4gp.

### **Locked Chest**

A small chest containing the player's armor (or whatever they were wearing when they were arrested). This chest can be opened with 2 successful, consecutive DC 10 Sleight of Hand checks. Thieves' tools are required to attempt this check. Alternatively, the players can find the key to the chest in *The Warden's Office*. If any of your players would have had a spellcasting focus, it would be in here.

### **Clue**

The clue reads (in Dwarven),

*"Three stacked largest to smallest and the fourth's teeth in the middle."*



## **Restarting the Mine Carts**

To restart the hanging mine carts, the players must gather the four gears in the common room and bring them over to the platform overlooking the Chasm. On that platform is a control panel with two spokes where the players must place the gears in the correct order. The *clue* found on the shelf in the common room will provide a riddle that reveals the correct order. (The correct order is, from back to front on the left spoke: the largest gear, one of the 3ft. gears, the 1ft. gear, and on the right spoke, the other 3ft. gear interlocking with the middle gear of the other three). There is no check to put the gears in the correct spot; the players must simply announce the order that they are placing the gears. When the players believe they have the correct order of gears, they must pull the lever also on the platform. If the order is correct, the carts will start. If not, a loud grinding sound will be heard followed by the gears falling off the spokes for the players to try again. If the party is taking a long time to solve the puzzle, try ramping up the tension by suggesting that a monster is coming for them (one is).

### About the Gears

The brass gears are made using longstanding forging techniques created by the Kazadun dwarves. There are four gears: one 5ft. in diameter, two 3ft. in diameter, and one 1ft. in diameter.

## **The Chasm**

Looking down into the Chasm, one cannot see the bottom. The Chasm extends deep down and a mysterious fog hovers around 40 feet down from where the players are standing. If a player jumps or falls into the Chasm, when they reach this fog, a sulfurous smell fills their nostrils, and they reappear at the platform. Keep track of how many times the players fall into the Chasm. The players may cross the Chasm in any way that makes sense, though using the mine carts is probably the easiest. Once the mine carts have been restarted, the players can ride them by succeeding on a DC 5 Dexterity check. Use the map below to determine when the players will need to make these checks. Up to two players can fit in a cart at the same time.