



 **MONKEYDM**

WHAT LURKS BELOW

5TH EDITION ADVENTURE

DELVE DEEP WITHIN THE EARTH AND FIGHT A CERTAIN DEATH™

WHAT LURKS BELOW

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Plot Hook

Having heard of their massive skill, the Lord of the large town of Wolfvale has called upon the adventurers to aid in his town's current issues. In the recent weeks, savage spider-like dark elves have emerged from the dark below. And he needs help.

CHAPTER 1. UNLIKE US

In which the party are let in on a few discoveries, then go below the earth.

CHAPTER 1.1. WOLFVALE

Read this:

'Though your adventuring career has been long and fruitful, never has it occurred to you to be commissioned by the very leader of an entire town. And Wolfvale, it should be said, is no small town, but a city, posted on a large river turn. From there on, Wolfvale has enjoyed plenty of wealth with its industry of fishing, quick trade with the nearby regions and all the like. However, recently the situation has grown... dire. From the letter you were sent by the Lord of Wolfvale, Daelen Nightsong, you can see he is... disturbed to say the least. Now, as you are being escorted through his keep within Wolfvale, you can sense the urgency of the matter. The attendants of the keep seem to be darting to and fro, in a state of disarray. You notice townsfolk making their way within the keep, being escorted out by guards or complaining about various issues. It is surely not all alright. But, in but a few minutes, you are taken to a small room, a war room of sorts, with a large mahogany table and plenty of chairs. On one of the chairs, Lord Nightsong awaits, arms crossed.'

LORD DAELN NIGHTSONG (NOBLE):

Information: The lord of Wolfvale has had his fair share of life, as he is a dark elf himself. During his long 300 years, he's seen troubles come and go. But now he is more stressed than ever. He will be mildly rude to the party, but will try to fit their every need. He is, nevertheless, not in a good mood.

Lord Nightsong will now discuss with the party, first partaking in a bit of smalltalk, asking where they're from and how they'd form. (This is a perfect time for the characters to be introduced to each other!) After the brief smalltalk, he will get serious and tell them they must tackle business that is secretive and of the utmost importance.

Nightsong will now detail that he had hired the Jelmithas family architects in order to build a smaller settlement upstream, close to the mountains. But then disaster struck. Some of the builders decided to head towards the source of the river, deep within the mountain, in an attempt to maybe switch its direction. What they found is... deeply troubling.

Nightsong explains that, underneath the mountains, they found a portion of the underdark that somehow has a shore of sorts. And there are broken down ships there. From long before known history, most likely. Shortly thereafter... They found the inhabitants. Distorted, spider-like dark elves. Like them, but primitive, brutal, bestial. During this description of the dark elves from below, players may attempt a **DC 22 (Wisdom) Insight check** in order to discern if all that Nightsong is saying is true. On a success, they will discover that he is withholding information. If pressed about it, he'll say that he cannot explain. If he would, he'd be killed. This is the truth.

Players can, however, either intimidate Nightsong with a **DC 26 (Charisma) Intimidation check** or they may attempt to charm him. If they do so, he will detail how he was approached by The Temple of the Great Raven upon the discovery, and was asked to eliminate the problem without any remorse, in order to preserve the god's order.

With all that being said, Nightsong will end the discussion by telling the party he intends to pay them 12,000 gold upon completion of the task. They must simply head below and scout ahead, as well as destroy the biggest threat, the leader of these people. Once without a leader, he will send his soldiers to dispatch the rest.

Once the terms of the job are agreed upon, you may advance to the next chapter.

CHAPTER 1.2. THE YOUNG RAVEN

Read this:

'With the terms of your cooperation agreed upon, Lord Nightsong stands up from his chair and bows his head. You can tell he is relieved to have found a solution. He then turns his head towards the windows, which lead right towards the mountains, not too far off. He taps the table a few times, before turning towards you one more time. "I should probably mention", he continues. "The head of the project, Joaqin, the Young Raven. He'll be the one you are to communicate with. No one else. He'll lead you downwards. From there on out, you'll be on your own... mostly. But remember, to everyone else except him, you are simply fellow architects coming in for a review.." With that being said, you are taken out of the keep and guided towards the mountains upstream. You arrive with short notice at the base. You see plenty of workers, dwarven, elvish, human, dark elves, all of which are terraforming the surrounding area.'

With either a **DC 15 (Charisma) Persuasion check** or a **DC 18 (Wisdom) Perception check**, the party may find Joaqin. He is a skinny dark elf in beautiful dark robes, with large glasses and a regal build to him. If they fail to find him, the workers will approach them and ask them what they are up to. They must deceive them with a **DC 17 (Charisma) Deception check**. In case of failing to deceive the workers, they will experience no immediate repercussions, but they will do so in later chapters. Then, after a brief discussion with the workers, Joaqin will approach them.

JOAQUIN JELMITHAS, THE YOUNG RAVEN

Information: A politician, architect and follower of the Great Raven, Joaqin is secretive about his knowledge and cold with his words. Upon noticing the adventurers, he will instantly lead them up to his private chambers, where he intends to "iron out a plan".

Read this:

'Gaunt and yet driven, Joaqin quickly leads you away from the main worksite, a little ways into the mountain, where you see a make-shift cavern has been transformed into his office. From there on out, out of sight of everyone else, he slowly leads you into deep tunnels, heading closely underground, until you reach a large break in the rock, leading downwards into a massive drop, at the bottom of which you can just about make out the shine of water. Joaqin speaks with a grim tone. "I wish you good fortune. You can either choose to land in the water, or slowly climb down a rope ladder. As for your return, I shall give you this stone idol of the raven. Speak a message into its ear and it will return to me. At that point, we shall know to retrieve you." With those words, Joaqin hands you the raven statue he had mentioned. And now... the underground awaits.'

The party must now make their way underground, either by diving into the water or climbing down the rope ladder. If they choose to jump and try to hit the water, they must make a **DC 17 (Strength) Athletics check** and if they choose to climb down the rope they must make a **DC 15 (Dexterity) Acrobatics check**. Failing on each of the checks will result in them plummeting towards the ground. If not saved by others on the ladder, spells or other failsafes, they will splat onto the ground, taking 20d6 bludgeoning damage as they hit the ground.

Once all party members have reached the ground, read this:

'As you all make it into the underground, you find yourself in a cove of sorts. The only source of light seems to be a distant bunch of kelp, but other than that, you feel all on your own. You notice the water seems to be adorned with a shipwreck of sorts, and one of the portions of rock has a tower-like building around. This looks like it belonged out at sea. You look at the water and even notice the waves coming across the shore at a regular pace. It is almost as if this portion of ground is, at least to some extent, at sea. A shore like any other, just underground.'

The party must now explore the surrounding area. They may choose to do so stealthily, in which case they must all make a **DC 16 (Dexterity) Stealth check**. On a failure, they will be spotted by **2 cloaklers**, who are watching from above and will attack them in 1d6 turns.

Once the party has defeated the cloaklers (or if they haven't stirred them and are ready to explore), proceed to the next chapter.

CHAPTER 1.3. THE COVE

While the players are investigating the area, the **5 driders** that usually watch and guard are all hiding on the walls. They are the reason the ship is safe, and they also guard from the old tower ruins. Any player may attempt to spot them by performing a **DC 20 (Wisdom) Perception check**. Upon being spotted, they will try to hide once more. If spotted for a second time, they will attack. Once 2 or more driders are dead, one will run away, prompting the players to follow them.

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AREAS OF THE UNDERGROUND COVE

1 - SHINING KELP

Read this:

'Although there seems to be no other light, the small bits of kelp on the shore of the cove offer up a permanent fluorescent light, glowing with a low murmur.'

Any player next to the kelp may attempt to investigate it with a **DC 20 (Intelligence) Arcana or Nature check**. On a success, they realise that this sort of plant does not grow anywhere else, but it is very likely it can be used as a magical component.

Players may also attempt to cut bits of the plant off by making a **DC 16 Herbalism Kit or (Intelligence) Nature Check**. On a success, they gain 1d4 bits of fluorescent kelp. Whenever anyone casts a spell that targets only one target, one bit of kelp is consumed and the spell faerie fire is cast on the target (not as an area of effect), alongside the original spell.

2 - WRECKAGE

Read this:

'The wreckage of the boat surprises you, as the wood doesn't look as rotten as it should in the many years since anyone from above has supposedly arrived within here. Surely, such a wreckage requires investigating.'

Players may attempt to investigate the wreckage with a **DC 18 (Intelligence) Investigation check**. On a success, they discover that the ship is indeed pretty old, but seems to have been kept in a somewhat decent shape. Upon investigating, players also discover large, human-sized cobwebs on the insides of the ship.

This all hints to the many driders that defend the underground society of elves from this point, all of which are currently hiding.

Art by Jacob e. blackmon



3 - DARK WATERS

The waters seem to be flowing slightly, but with very weak waves. If tasted, the water is salty, signaling that this cavern system must in some way be connected to the sea or ocean. A **DC 18 (Intelligence) Nature check** will reveal this is most likely through an underground tunnel system.

4 - TOWER

The tower is filled with cobwebs, but they seem larger than that of a regular spider. Players may perform a **DC 15 (Intelligence) Investigation check** on the stone of the tower, discerning that its make looks to be of humanoid design, but it is indeed very, very old.

5 - SIGIL

Upon stepping on the sigil's platform, all creatures must make a **DC 18 Dexterity saving throw**, as the rune on the ground begins to glow. Then, a second later, the rune explodes in a mass of webs. All creatures that failed the saving throw are restrained for 1 minute. They may spend their action to escape the restraint by making a **DC 18 (Strength) Athletics or (Dexterity) Acrobatics check**. While under the web, they will begin to hear distant bug-like noises, as the **5 driders and 2 cloaklers** ambush them if they haven't fought already.

As before, if 2 or more driders die, 1 will run away, prompting a chase.

Once the players finish combat, describe how they notice a previously hidden tunnel, which can be arrived at only by climbing onto the webs laid out or by climbing on the difficult rocky surface. Then, proceed to the next chapter.

CHAPTER 2. UNCOVERING THE MYSTERIES

In which the players follow the trails to the core of the underground.

CHAPTER 2.1. THE TUNNEL

In order to first reach the tunnel, the players must first climb, fly or teleport there. The tunnel is about 40 feet high in the air and is surrounded with webbing. Any creature with a climbing speed can reach it with ease, while those without must make **DC 17 (Strength) Athletics check** to do so. If they haven't removed or burnt the nearby webbing, the check is also made at disadvantage. On a failure, they fall and hit the ground, taking 2d6 bludgeoning damage. They may then try again. For each turn they spend attempting to climb, the drider will get further and further away, alerting the guards. In case they have killed the drider running away, this does not happen.

Then, when all players have reached the tunnel, you may proceed to the next chapter.



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CHAPTER 2.2. THE CHASE

Read this:

'Faced with the possibility of finding the enemy's foothold, you make your way within the small tunnel and begin marching steadily forward, when you notice a wall of webbing before you. Certainly, this would be easier to climb and avoid for others such as them, but not for you.'

The webbing is also laced with a strong poison, which can be spotted on a **DC 20 (Intelligence) Investigation check** or by a creature with **passive Perception of 20 or higher**. If the players attempt to walk through the webbing while simply cutting it, the poison will splash onto them. Each player cutting the webbing or moving through it must make a **DC 16 Constitution saving throw** or take 4d4 poison damage and be poisoned for the next two chase tasks. Alternatively, burning the webbing will cause the poison to turn into fumes. Each creature passing through the tunnel will need to make the same saving throw. If instead water is used to either break the webbing through force or freeze the webbing, the poison is fully avoided. Upon completing the task, the party proceeds for a little while, until they stumble upon their next challenge.

Read this:

'You persevere with strength through the tunnel, going at a decently rapid pace, until you finally approach another small antichamber, a widening of the tunnel, if you will. Therein, you notice the room seems untouched, if only for one small rune formation on the ground that forms a circle inside about 30 feet worth of space.'

From the mouth of the chamber, before entering, the players may make a **DC 20 (Intelligence) Arcana check with disadvantage** to realise the rune is a protective ward. Once within the chamber, they may make this check without disadvantage.

The moment all players step within the room, the tunnel behind them will become covered with force energy. Also from within the chamber, the party can see plenty of small holes in the wall, the size of arrows.

In 3 turns, the trap will detonate. All creatures not within the middle rune must make a **DC 18 Dexterity saving throw** or suffer 14d6 points of piercing damage, taking half on a success. All creatures within the runes are protected by a shield-like ward. Then, after the arrows, the walls drop and they may proceed.

Read this:

'You quickly rush past everything, back into the tunnel, eventually arriving within a third antichamber. This one, a little larger than the previous ones, seems to have a large, fragmented worm-like body within it, which takes up much of the inside. Not only that, fumes of a deeply disturbing, fungus-like smell erupt from clusters of fungi that emerge from bits of the body. The smell, paired up with how cramped the room feels due to the dismembered remains of this worm make it incredibly difficult to walk through.'

Have the party roll initiative. On each turn, in order to move, they must make a **DC 15 (Strength) Athletics check**. On a success, they move 20 feet. On a failure, they only move 10. In addition, at the end of each turn of their turns, they must make a **DC 16 Constitution saving throw** or take 6d4 poison damage.

With their actions, characters may attempt to move once more (using the same check), cast any spells or attempt to drag, cut or otherwise move the worm body, making way for the rest to move to the other end of the chamber. This requires a **DC 17 (Strength) Athletics check** or an attack roll against AC 17, at the player's choice. On a success, the DC for the initial movement (Strength) Athletics check is reduced by 1.

Once the players have traversed 80 feet of movement, they make it back into the tunnel and you may proceed to the next chapter.

CHAPTER 2.3. THE ARRIVAL

Read this:

'As you rush past the remnants of what you think might've been a purple worm, you continue to make your way inside this tunnel, until you finally find yourself arriving in a fourth antichamber, though, a tiny bit smaller and this time, instead of being met with a challenge, you are met with force, as the guards await still, with two stairs behind them that you reckon must lead to a keep of sorts, as both the design and the stone themselves are well-outfitted. They await at their post, ready for any sort of move you might be inclined to make.'

The party must now fight within the small entrance area against **2 driders**, **1 drider-mage** and **2 drider-defenders**.

Upon defeating them, read this:

'You hear an angry female shriek emerge from above you as you deal the last blow to those that stand in front of you. You look into the back of the room, where, on top of a single black rune, awaits a small black spider. It quickly steps on top of the rune and you see it vanish, in a teleport-like movement. You are sure. That shriek could be nothing but your biggest enemy.'

Once the players take the teleporter, you may proceed to the next chapter.

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CHAPTER 3. THE BLACK WIDOW

In which the players deal with one mean spider queen.

CHAPTER 3.1. FIGHT

Read this:

'With a brief and quick flicker, you feel yourself transported, emerging on the northern side of what looks like a ballroom of sorts, the design of which looks mostly arachnid. In front of you, a blend between spider and humanoid, similar to that which you had seen before in the driders. Only this... female figure, its chythin legs black, its skin darkened and marks of red, as well as red hair coming from her head. This can be no other than a black widow of sorts. The thought of it instantly terrifies you, but you are sure this creature is what you've been looking for. Roll initiative!'



The players must now face the **black widow** within her ballroom. Upon defeating her, she shrieks in pain, as spider eggs begin to crack and break from small cracks in the wall. In need of a quick exit, the players return through the teleporter and rush back through the tunnel, but now, used to what it has to offer, don't experience any difficulties.

LAIR ACTIONS

At initiative 20 (losing initiative ties), the black widow takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects; the black widow can't use the same effect two rounds in a row:

- The Black Widow focuses her energy and venom, regaining 25 hit points.
- The Black Widow shrieks, calling to her children to defend her, summoning 1d2 drider defenders.
- Using the webs above her, the Black Widow jumps into the sky and back down anywhere within 120 feet of her initial location, without prompting attacks of opportunity.

Once the players reach the cove, you may proceed to the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3.2. RETURN

Read this:

'Upon your arrival within the large cove, you uncover the raven and quickly think of what you should say. Wounded as you are, you are in deep need of recovery.'

The party may now send the raven up. If they hadn't told anyone except Joaqin what they were up to, aid will quickly come in the form of ladders. If they had, no aid will come for a long while, as spiders slowly break through the tunnel and get nearer to the party. They must fight **6 giant spiders**. Only after defeating them does a ladder drop down. If questioned as to why he was late, Joaqin will say it was just an inconvenience. A **DC 21 (Wisdom) Insight check** reveals he might be hiding something, but he will quickly give the party their coin, then excuse himself.

CHAPTER 3.3. END

Fatter with a coin and a beat up, the party is now well on their way. It is a possibility that they might have even heard a few suspicious things about the Great Raven and his followers, which could be implemented into a campaign down the line! For now, the adventurers may head into the sunset, heads held high.

Art by Dean Spencer



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APPENDIX: MONSTERS

DRIDER-MAGE

Large monstrosity, chaotic evil

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)
Hit Points 49 (9d10)
Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (-1)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	17 (+3)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)

Skills Perception +4, Stealth +8
Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 14
Languages Elvish, Undercommon
Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Fey Ancestry. The drider has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put the drider to sleep.

Innate Spellcasting. The drider's innate spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 12). The drider can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *dancing lights*
1/day each: *darkness*, *faerie fire*, *levitate* (self only)

Spider Climb. The drider can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, the drider has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Web Walker. The drider ignores movement restrictions caused by webbing.

Spellcasting. The drider is a 10th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). The drider has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *mage hand*, *minor illusion*, *poison spray*, *ray of frost*
1st level (4 slots): *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *shield*
2nd level (3 slots): *alter self*, *misty step*, *web*
3rd level (3 slots): *fly*, *lightning bolt*
4th level (3 slots): *greater invisibility*
5th level (2 slots): *cloudkill*

Actions

Staff. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d6 - 1) bludgeoning damage, or 3 (1d8 - 1) bludgeoning damage if used with two hands.

DRIDER-DEFENDER

Large monstrosity, chaotic evil

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)
Hit Points 75 (10d10 + 20)
Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	19 (+4)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Dex +7, Con +5, Wis +5
Skills Perception +5, Stealth +10
Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 15
Languages Elvish, Undercommon
Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Fey Ancestry. The drider has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put the drider to sleep.

Innate Spellcasting. The drider's innate spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 13). The drider can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *dancing lights*
1/day each: *darkness*, *faerie fire*, *levitate* (self only)

Spider Climb. The drider can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, the drider has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Web Walker. The drider ignores movement restrictions caused by webbing.

Actions

Multiattack. The drider makes two shortsword attacks.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage plus 10 (3d6) poison damage.

Longbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage plus 4 (1d8) poison damage.

Reactions

Parry. The drider adds 3 to its AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so, the drider must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

THE BLACK WIDOW

Large monstrosity, chaotic evil

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)

Hit Points 287 (25d10 + 150)

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	23 (+6)	23 (+6)	15 (+2)	17 (+3)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Dex +10

Skills Athletics +8, Perception +7

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities acid, poison

Condition Immunities blinded, exhaustion, petrified, poisoned, unconscious

Senses blindsight 70 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 17

Languages Elvish, Undercommon

Challenge 16 (15,000 XP)

Legendary Resistance (3/day). If The Black Widow fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Magic Resistance. The black widow has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Magic Weapons. The black widow's weapon attacks are magical.

Spider Climb. The drider can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, the drider has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Web Walker. The drider ignores movement restrictions caused by webbing.

Actions

Multiattack. The black widow can use its Frightful Presence. It then makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its pincers. It can use its Cocoon or its Drain Life instead of its bite.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 22 (3d10 + 6) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or take 6d6 poison damage.

Pincer. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 10ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (3d6 + 6) slashing damage. The target is grappled (escape DC 18) if it is a Medium or smaller creature and the black widow doesn't have two other creatures grappled.

Frightful Presence. Each creature of the black widow's choice within 60 feet of it and aware of it must succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, with disadvantage if the black widow is within line of sight, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to the Frightful Presence for the next 24 hours.

Cocoon (Recharge 4-6). The black widow fires a web projectile towards one creature within 60 feet she can see and is not behind total cover. That creature must make a Strength saving throw (DC 19) or be instantly pulled to the black widow, as well as become grappled and restrained for 1 minute. The creature may attempt to break the cocoon on their turn by using their action to make a (Strength) Athletics check (DC 19). Right after pulling the creature, the black widow can use her reaction to make one bite attack.

Drain Life (Recharge 5-6). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 10ft., one **grappled or restrained** target. *Hit:* 41 (10d6 + 6) piercing damage. In addition, the black widow gains hit points equal to half the damage dealt.

Legendary Actions

The drider can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The drider regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Detect. The Black Widow makes a Wisdom (Perception) check.

Pincer. The black widow makes a pincer attack

Terrorize (Costs 2 Actions). The Black Widow makes one bite attack against a creature that is either frightened or grappled by her. If the attack hits, she recharges her Cocoon ability.

THANK YOU !

A big thank you to the reddit community, as well as all of those who follow and support me, without you I couldn't have brought this project to life.

Artists listed on each respective page. All art used with permission.

Covert art by bluefish_ds

Maps created by [CzePeku on Patreon](#).

And now onto the next project...

Cheers !

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A MASSIVE THANK YOU TO ALL MY PATRONS !