

Venomfang as Mastermind

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July 22, 2019



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Introduction

This modification to the narrative of *Lost Mines of Phandelver* leverages the young green dragon *Venomfang* as a master manipulator working to his own ends. This also supposes that *Venomfang* has matured to the point that he is 1-5 years away from becoming an *Adult Green Dragon*.

It is advised to use the innate magic variant rules for dragons. That would give the *Young Green Dragon* 2 level 4 spell slots that replenish daily.

The workings of his nefarious organization can be broadened and expanded to make him the *Big Bad Evil Guy* throughout an entire campaign, or merely provide a larger role contained within *Lost Mines of Phandelver*.



Interaction at Thundertree

Venomfang should be played as an extremely crafty and intelligent creature. He will avoid any real threat to himself and, generally speaking, any real action on his part. He doesn't want a fight and realizes how easily he can lie to or placate the party.

A convenient approach is to play Venomfang's statements off of Reidoth's claims to garner sympathy. Venomfang is just misunderstood. If any of the party are played characters of monstrous or less-common races, have him make an appeal directly to them.

Surely, tiefling, you know how the commoners can come to rely on myths and tales. Our kind so easily villified. And the most self-righteous among them can be so *dangerous* for us, like that *druid*.

Combat With Venomfang

Depending on the party, and if you're interested in following through with this modification, it may be necessary to ensure that Venomfang isn't killed in combat. That may entail fighting harder, more hitpoints, fleeing as soon as it seems he will be reduced to half HP, or, of course, fudging a roll or two.

It may also be necessary to refrain from allowing Venomfang to fully unleash on the party if they do immediately enter into combat. An option there could be him *purposefully* missing with something that could be perceived as lethal, or rule that he can use his breath weapon to create something of an obstacle that characters would have to take damage to cross. This provides further evidence of his *pure* and *decent* intentions that he can point to.

Rewards

Award the players the normal XP for interacting with Venomfang. This will also help to maintain the illusion that he has been mitigated as a threat.

Treasure

If Venomfang is fought and must flee, his hoard will be left behind. That being said, he will be especially

vengeful if the party has hurt him and even moreso if his hoard has been taken.

In the latter case, he may work extra hard to punish the party through his minions, such as adding in more random encounters during travelling or facing a larger number of, or more aggressive, enemies elsewhere.

Possible Lies:

Reidoth is a liar: Reidoth is using the party to his own ends

Venomfang is the victim: He was ousted from his lair by his vile sister (there is no sister).

Reidoth is out to get him: He has no interest in the happenings of the area; just wants to go home.

Will happily leave: If pressed, he will let the party think that they convinced him to leave

Alternative Encounter:

It is, of course, completely valid to have *Venomfang* simply not currently be at Thundertree, opting instead to have the party interact with *Reidoth* and the cultists.

You could decide to have *Venomfang* work to communicate his lies through the cultists or by way of some other encounter of your choosing.

Venomfang Minions

Venomfang has been busy building his empire, but he is still young, and aware that if his allies were to all turn on him at once that they could defeat him. He has taken efforts then to keep these different factions ignorant of one another. It's a delicate balance of avoiding direct involvement and limiting the power that any one ally could ever gain from him in the short-term. As his own power grows he intends to tighten the reins on this shaky network.

Cultists

Venomfang has thoroughly tortured and harassed the cultists that sought to ally with him. They are now completely subjugated.

He is using them as his spies and agents in the world. Specifically they found the ruins at Thundertree and will attempt to use it as a base of operations for collecting information/recruits/resources in Neverwinter.



Nezznar "Black Spider"



Black Spider believes that he is an ally of Venomfang's and that he will be free to take control of Wave Echo himself. Venomfang has no such intention and plans on changing the nature of the arrangement and going back on his word as needed. Black Spider doesn't realize the number of other agents at play nor his odds of surviving a conflict with Venomfang.

Goblins (Cragmaw tribe)

The goblins know nothing of Venomfang and, at most, believe that Black Spider is operating alone. King Grol similarly believes that he has aligned the Cragmaw with Black Spider.

Venomfang will exert his direct control over the Cragmaw if they are not completely wiped out once Black Spider is dealt with.

Iarno "Glasstaff"

Unaware that Black Spider is an agent of Venomfang's, Glasstaff fled the area when the mansion hideout was infiltrated, figuring that he'd just move on to some other scheme. Venomfang is super pissed and has spies out everywhere trying to find him before the Lord's Alliance does.

He will likely be pressed into service directly by Venomfang and his usefulness as an agent is now, as it stands, limited due to the fact that he's a wanted man. He may end up as a personal servant.

Redbrands

The Redbrands have been broken by the party. Their inability as a gang to stop the party and Glasstaff's abandonment has broken their spirits. Those remaining in town will have given up the life of crime (the good ones that were on a bad path) and others will have skipped town.

Hamun Kost

The necromancer has his own dark ambitions and agenda. He has directly dealt with Venomfang and isn't directly involved in the Wave Cave plot.

Orcs (Many Arrows tribe)

The Many Arrows tribe elders were made aware of the opportunities that the new settlements in the area provide by an unknown agent of Venomfang's. Even Venomfang isn't completely certain as to how that happened, but regardless, it was done in a way that has left them more or less in the dark. As far as they are concerned, it was their idea to venture out towards Phandalin.

Venomfang plans to pay them a *"visit"* and bring them under his direct control through force when it becomes necessary. He's aware that Orcs have been known to worship dragons, but is waiting until they either decide to leave the area or generally impact any of his other plans.

Dopplegangers

Venomfang uses Dopplegangers as his elite agents, embedding them in any properly integrated group,

often without anyone in that group knowing.

In the case of Black Spider, he knows about the doppleganger in his crew, but believes that it is working for him and that it doesn't know anything about Venomfang. The doppleganger at Cragmaw Castle isn't known to be a doppleganger and is assumed to be an agent of the Black Spider. The orcs, cultists, and others have all, unknowingly, dealt with Venomfang's elite doppleganger agents without being aware. They are, however, aware of one another, but generally their tendency towards working in isolation is being leveraged by Venomfang such that they never know what orders, specifically, that others have been given.



Venomfang Motivations

Venomfang has lofty dreams of controlling the Neverwinter Wood area.

To this end, he is amassing minions and seeking out powerful items (Wave Echo, Old Owl, etc.).

At the very least he seeks to create a proper lair in Neverwinter Wood.

He is nearly grown to adulthood now. How close he is to that transition is up to the DM

He has any agent of his take on an assumed identity/altar ego. This is a paranoid protection against spells that require the caster to know the true name of an entity. It's unclear where he got this knowledge from however, as it most likely pertains to *Gate*, which is a 9th level spell.

Wave Echo Cave

Long-term, Venomfang hopes to revive the forge and amass an arsenal of magical weapons. Failing that, he will collect any available resources.

This is hardly his only scheme, but it is by far the most developed. Before the party's involvement, he saw his play for *Wave Echo Cave* as critical to his next steps. Failure will mean his overall plans being set back by years. *Years* for a dragon aren't much more than a nuisance, but he is petty and vindictive, and will certainly hope to make them suffer.

Old Owl Well

Hamun Kost has been tasked with following a thread of rumors and writings that lead to the tower at Old Owl.

The necromancer's work is one of the few threads that currently have nothing to do with *Wave Echo Cave*.

It can serve as a great plot hook to other adventures, expanded into a sidequest (maybe even pertaining to the zombies at *Thundertree*), or merely bolstered as a conflict in service of the main thread.

Wyvern Tor

The orcs are purely for the extra muscle and influence over the area. Venomfang sees their role as that of

destabilizing and drawing the focus of groups that could be a threat to his plans.



Conflict With Party

The party will interact with Venomfang at Thundertree and he will pretend that he doesn't know about the cultists, who have been instructed to claim that they have never met him. He will spin lies about being forced from his rightful lair by his half-sister and that he just wants to go home and if the party initiates combat he will hold a grudge.

Punishment

As the players interrupt his plans, Venomfang will punish his minions as he sees fit. Players may come across some minor evidence of this such as acid washed piles of corpses, claw marks, etc.

With each complication to his own plan he will hate the party that much more.

Just Misunderstood:

If Venomfang is attempting to trick the party into believing that his intentions are good, the evidence left behind might have deceptive elements to it.

- Scenes staged to look as though Venomfang was thwarting some sort of scheme
- Venomfang himself later drawing attention to connections between these various factions and schemes, however claiming that the nature of the arrangements are completely different

– And, no surprise, *Venomfang* is the one trying to make things right here... if you ask him...

Reveal

Once the party has compromised the Wave Echo plan, Venomfang will want revenge. He may throw more of his agents at them immediately, or perhaps tail them and see what their next plans are.

After being exposed and defeated, assuming he's still alive, he will do his best to disappear and lay low, having his various remaining agents work on his

behalf.

As much as possible, the party should be left believing Venomfang's overall narrative surrounding what's happened or at least questioning their own view of it.

Hoping for a Quiet Life:

If the party isn't aware of Venomfang's evil, he can make himself known and claim that he just wants to live in piece in the woods, if only that were possible.

This will provide you with opportunities for him to spread further falsehoods before retiring from the area for a few years while he works through his minions.

Future Interactions

When the party next sees Venomfang he should be an *Adult Green Dragon* and in all likelihood, he will have succeeded in finding a place to lair in Neverwinter Wood.

These changes leave Venomfang open to be a strong antagonist for the party moving forward. His transition into an Adult Green Dragon makes him that much more lethal.

What the turning point is where Venomfang unleashes his full power, both directly and indirectly, onto the party and anyone they've ever loved will depend on how your campaign unfolds.

Similarly, while the *Monster Manual* doesn't specify that chromatic dragons have the *Change Shape* ability, but the threat that Venomfang can pose to the party, area, and story are greatly increased if it is ruled that he can change into a humanoid form.

Sometimes You Need a Montage:

Skipping forward a year or two will allow for Venomfang to have established new minions, worked new deals, and made new enemies.

If you're playing a series of modules, new interactions with Venomfang could provide a narrative framework for tying everything together, culminating in an eventual, high-level confrontation.

An Example Finale

The following is the setup for the finale I used for my group's runthrough of *Lost Mines of Phandelver*.

Final Battle

ENCOUNTER

A bugbear and the doppelganger have retreated to join Nezznar.

Nezznar is aware of the party's approach and lights the way to him using *Dancing Lights*.

It's dark. As you make your way further inside, you can make out a door to your right.

As the players approach the door, Nezznar casts *Dancing Lights* to create a trail to where he is.

Suddenly 6 orbs of light spring into existence in two columns from your position. They lead directly down the hallway.

The doppelganger has morphed to look like Nundro and Nezznar has the bugbear holding him. When the fighting starts, he throws him to the ground and he runs off.

.Nezznar can cast invisibility on him as he runs off (to make it clear that they are working together)

.This is so the party can discover the unconscious real one in area 20.

Six cracked marble pillars line the walls of this hall, at the north end of which stands a nine-foot-tall statue of a dwarf seated on a throne, a mighty stone warhammer across his lap. Large emeralds gleam in the statue's eyes.

5 chandeliers once covered the ceiling, but now only the remnants of the largest remains. Small magical flames light it, but it only casts a dim light. It hangs 20 feet from the ground near, equidistant from the 4 pillars at the Southern end of the room.

Nezznar has already cast Mage Armor on himself immediately.

Have the giant spiders stealth immediately so that they can try to surprise the party as they enter the room.

Two bugbears stand by the table, flanking a dark elf dressed in black leather armor and robes. He clutches a black staff with a carved spider at the top and frowns as he sees you. In front him, a dwarf on his knees with his arms fixed behind him.

It seems that I must deal with you myself. A pity it must end this way. Your resourcefulness could have been an incredible boon to my work, but now you know too much. I suppose I should thank you in clearing out the undead. It saved me a great deal of effort.

Once fighting starts, the spiders shoot webbing trying to capture everyone that they can. The bugbear is made to be the front line and Nezznar hangs back casting spells until he is forced to fight. He will not retreat, both from arrogance and the knowledge that Venomfang would kill him anyway.



Exiting the Mines

The Black Spider is likely dead, either directly by Venomfang, his agents, or the party. Venomfang arrives as a shock to the players and does his best to make it seem as though he has been tracking this plot and working to subvert it. Hoping to provide justice to the surrounding land.

He even provides you with a fake Elven name, *Sylvanandoth*.

His reasoning for exposing the dopplegangers is to sow the seeds of doubt in anything that the party witnesses. It's a risky gambit, in that they are actually his own elite agents, but this is why he attempts to establish himself in the players eyes as an opponent of this doppleganger threat.

The best lies are mostly the truth.

As you exit the cave, you're struck with the bright sun of mid-day. The wind is cool; you see rain clouds in the distance.

Standing in the path, waiting for you, is the **other** dwarf. The mirror image of Nundro, who goes stiff and tries to hide behind the group. The path winds down behind him to the plains of Triboar.

He raises his hand.

That will be far enough.

Amid the gentle breeze, the sound of massive leathery wings.

A massive green form sails over the hill flanking the dwarf and lands behind him. The dwarf smirks, quite pleased with himself.

You see...

As he begins to speak, dripping with arrogance
WHAM

The hulking dragon slams down a claw piercing the dwarf and slamming its body to the ground. Finishing the motion, closing its talons and flinging the body to land a few feet from where you are standing. It rolls awkwardly and comes to rest, limbs akimbo, still.

The body is not that of a dwarf. Its features amorphous, it's skin dark hues of blue and black, nearly shiny, albeit covered in blood and dirt from the path now.

Such a nuisance these. They sought me out, probably tricked that old druid that makes so much trouble for me, and offered me riches for a hand in some scheme. Everyone assumes my intentions impure. All I've ever wanted is peaceful woods. Even cast out by my own kind... surely you understand?

The humans, the dwarfs, the elves...
so quick to believe simple fairy tale logic of good and evil.

Oh, my apologies, my name is Sylvanandoth. My kin called my "Venomfang" when they, too, assumed my nature by virtue purely of my blood, as does the old druid; "Reidoth" I hear the humans call him. He's a crafty sort.

EVENTUALLY

Emerald scales shimmer as a cloud overhead gives way to the sunlight and the hulking form gracefully takes to the sky. You watch as he disappears North, out across the plains.

Return to Phandalin

The town rewards the party with *Tresendar Manor* and *10% of the profits* from the mine.

There could be a timelapse to the point where that's started to happen if the campaign moves forward.

Each character can be followed up with for individual character action, leveling up, etc.

The entire town stopped what they were doing when you returned. You wouldn't have bet a single gold that a dwarf could be so overjoyed as Gundren upon seeing Nundro. The two embraced and danced and drank just about everything they could find well into the night.

The look of awe on old Harbin Wester's face may have been worth the effort alone. Slowly dawning on him that the threats to the tiny frontier town have been resolved.

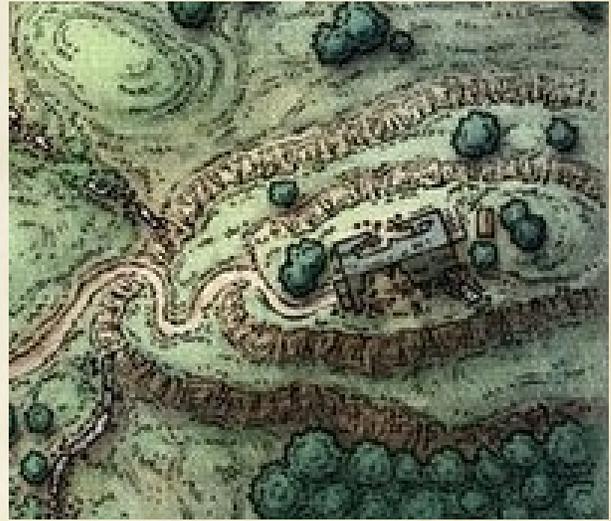
When narrating the response of the town folk, it will likely be necessary to adjust the following accordingly.

The Alderleaf boy had more questions than breath to ask them.

Sildar would never say it, but he assumed you would become the story of adventurers that came through, whipped the shit out of the local gang, and then died in a mine somewhere... happens every day...

Even the sharp tongued Linene Graywind, owner of the Lionshield Coster, while not a fan, seemed impressed.

Both the town and the Rockseekers are extremely grateful and excited to reward the party. It's the dawning of a new chapter for the adventurers, at least in this little corner of the world.



The semi-official, somewhat impromptu celebration culminated in a ceremony in the center of town as a not-officially-but-definitely-somewhat-rather drunk Harbin silenced the crowd and bestowed upon you the deed to the old **Tresendar Manor**.

The Rockseekers couldn't thank you enough. In fact, they would have thanked you to death if you had accepted every drink they tried to get you. After a hearty round of poorly sung mining songs, they whispered to one another for a moment and then grabbed your attention, and most of your arms, and gave you their word that 10% of all of the profits of the mine, once operational, are yours.

If a party member is wearing the Boots of Striding:

The Rockseekers were even alright with you wearing their dead brother's boots.

Toblen Stonehill comped your food and rooms, and you all settled in for long-overdue sleep. You remove your garments and realize how truly disgusting they've become. Not quite as foul as Grick blood and bile, but bad.

After a bath (one a month whether you need it or not), you lie down for the most restful time you can ever recall having.

Acknowledgements

The bulk of this idea was drawn from and built on the following Reddit posts:

- https://www.reddit.com/r/DnD/comments/8k2idc/lmop_spoilers_gm_linking_the_entire_narrative_to/
- https://www.reddit.com/r/dndnext/comments/2e682e/what_makes_the_green_dragon_work_in_lost_mines_of/